



**Investigating the Progress of Female Academics to Upper Leadership
Positions in the Saudi Higher Education Sector**

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ABSTRACT

Gender equality has been a constant subject of heated debate in general and in the higher education sector (HES) in particular across the world. However, the precise situation differs from country to country and culture to culture. The aim of the current research is to examine the existing patterns of under-representation of female faculty in the upper echelons of the leadership hierarchy in the HES in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, it intends to answer the following questions:

1. What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?
2. To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?
3. What factors can promote women's advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

The research methodology utilised a qualitative approach in the form of one single case study regarding the issue of Saudi female faculty members' advancement to senior leadership positions. The study was conducted at five sites and performed from a feminist standpoint. The research sample comprised 25 participants, all female academics from five state universities, selected purposively for this research, who had either been promoted to leadership positions or not. Additionally, there were five male participants who were considered key informants, closely connected with the formulation and implementation of policies in HE institutions in Saudi Arabia. The data collection involved both face-to-face and telephone-based semi-structured interviews as well as documentary analysis.

A thematic analytical approach was employed to analyse the qualitative data gathered. The research findings attempt to offer a clear picture of the target phenomena and the manner in which sex-segregated work and Saudi culture impact how gender is constructed in Saudi Arabia, shape educational leadership in higher education, and perpetuate gender inequality. The findings establish that the barriers Saudi female academics encounter within university settings reflect the influence of religion, culture, social discourses, and traditions on their professional roles and career progress, especially to top posts. Next, the study provides insights and recommendations to help overcome these challenges and promote Saudi female faculty members' advancement to senior leadership positions at individual, cultural, structural, and institutional levels. The recommendations have the potential to contribute towards reformulating future policy and practice to actively promote equality and justice for female academics in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world in general and stimulate them to pursue top leadership positions in the higher education sector.

DEDICATION

For my dearest and most beloved parents: thank you for nurturing in me the spirit of learning and always supporting me in my endeavours for the pursuit of higher education abroad. For the soul of my wonderful, deeply missed grandmum, who taught me the meaning of life (and without whom, I would never have started): you will remain in my soul forever. For my sweet daughter, Julayana, and my son, Qusi: without you, I would not have been able to continue. For my lovely husband: without you, I would have never finished this project.

To all of them, I dedicate not only my thesis but also my life and heart

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In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

I should start by sincerely thanking my God for giving me a healthy body and mind and the power, determination, ambition, and patience to endure challenges during my doctoral studies. I also consider this a great opportunity to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the government of Saudi Arabia for its financial support and for giving me the opportunity, as a Saudi woman, to gain a higher qualification from the University of Leicester. Next, I would like to express profound gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Hugh Busher, for his outstanding enthusiasm, care, and exceptional support throughout my doctoral study journey. It was a privilege to be supervised by this distinguished scholar. Without his frequent comments, feedback, and support, this thesis would not have been possible. I shall never forget his unwavering support over the years.

Most importantly, my deepest recognition should be extended to the participants in my research project, who contributed their time, thoughts, and insights as they responded during my lengthy interview sessions. They have offered me deep insights and improved my understanding regarding the issues involved in the under-representation of female academics in the upper ranks of the Saudi university hierarchy. On a personal note, I would like to thank the source of my success: my parents. They provided unconditional love and moral support as I pursued enlightenment and success. They planted a small and tender seed, closely tended it, and offered it love to help it grow until fruition.

I owe my deepest gratitude and thanks to my husband, Nasser, and my siblings, who inspired me all the time, stood with me, and shared their unconditional encouragement and endless love. I extend my sincere apologies to my sweet daughter, Julyana, and my wonderful son, Qusi, as they have been missing me and my love and attention. Even though you have grown up, I hope you will still be interested and waiting for me to tell you a bedtime story and to play with you. I promise you I will not say that I am exhausted anymore! Finally, my heartfelt and sincere appreciation goes to my friends and colleagues, who recalled me in their prayers.

Hanan Muhay Alenazy

DECLARATION

I wish to declare that this thesis, or any part of it, has not been submitted for the award of a degree in this or other institutions of learning or universities.

Signature.....

TABLE OF CONTENT

ABSTRACT	I
DEDICATION	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	III
DECLARATION	IV
TABLE OF CONTENT	V
LIST OF FIGURES	XI
LIST OF TABLES	XII
TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS	XIII
GLOSSARY	XIV
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	2
1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	6
1.5 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	6
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	7
1.7 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE METHODOLOGY.....	7
1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	8
CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUAL ISSUESOF THE STUDY.....	10
2. 1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
2.2 THE AREA OF STUDY	11
2.3 HISTORY OF SAUDI ARABIA.....	13
2.4 THE ESSENTIAL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FEATURES OF WAHHABISM.....	20
2.4.1 <i>Obey Those In Authority Among You’ From A Wahhabi Perspective.....</i>	<i>20</i>
2.4.2 <i>Cultivation of a Saudi Arabian Society.....</i>	<i>21</i>
2.4.3 <i>Censorship of Social Activity.....</i>	<i>21</i>
2.5 SAUDI WOMEN’S EDUCATION IN SOCIETY.....	23
2.6 THE CURRENT CULTURAL CONTEXT AND WOMEN IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS	27
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	30
3. 1 INTRODUCTION.....	30
3. 2 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER.....	31
3.3 AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN	34
3.4 TO WHAT EXTENT DO MUSLIM AND ARAB STATES PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY?	38
3.5 TO WHAT EXTENT DOES SAUDI CULTURE REINFORCE GENDER EQUALITY?.....	42

3.6 MAJOR CONSTRAINTS ON ADVANCEMENT THAT SAUDI WOMEN ENCOUNTER DURING THEIR CAREER JOURNEY TO THE UPPER ECHELONS.....	49
3.6.1 <i>Individual Perspectives and Related Policies (Micro)</i>	50
3.6.1.1 Psychological Traits and Socialisation Backgrounds	51
3.6.1.2 Professional Attributes, Work Orientations, and Career Choices.....	52
3.6.2 <i>Cultural Perspectives and Related Policies (Macro)</i>	54
3.6.2.1 Domestic Responsibilities	55
3.6.2.2 Childbearing and Childcare.....	56
3.6.2.3 Eldercare.....	57
3.6.2.4 The Choice Between Family and Work	57
3.6.2.5 Pressure by Husband.....	58
3.6.2.6 Lack of Socialisation and Self-Care	58
3.6.2.7 Family Commitment	60
3.6.3 <i>Structural Perspective and Related Policies (Meso)</i>	61
3.6.3.1 Organisational Culture.....	62
3.6.3.2 Gender Stereotyping and Leadership Styles.....	63
3.6.3.3 Male-Dominated Policy and Processes for Selection and Appointment of Leaders.....	67
3.6.3.4 Mobility of Women	69
3.6.3.5 Mharram, Wali, (Guardian System)	69
3.6.3.6 Unprofessional Attitudes	70
3.6.3.7 Employee Jealousy and Envy.....	71
3.6.3.8 Clannishness & Wasta (Nepotism).....	72
3.6.3.9 Lack of a Supportive Environment for Professional Learning	73
3.6.3.10 Limited Resources and Support	74
3.6.3.11 Career Breaks.....	75
3.6.3.12 Workload/Long Hours and Related Stress	75
3.6.3.13 Poor Networks.....	76
3.7 FACTORS SUPPORTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS OF FEMALE ACADEMICS	78
3.7.1 <i>Perceived Personal Support (PPS)</i>	78
3.7.2 <i>Perceived Social Support (PSS)</i>	79
3.7.3 <i>Perceived Organisational Support (POS)</i>	81
3.8 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	87
3.8.1 <i>Feminist Research</i>	87
3.8.2 <i>Fagenson, (1990) Models (The gender-centred approach, the organisation-structure perspective, the gender-organisation-system approach)</i>	90

3.8.2. 1 Gender Perspectives	91
3.8.2.2 Organisational Perspectives	92
3.8.2.3 The Gender–Organisation–System (GOS) Model	92
3.8.3 <i>Places, Spaces, and Power Brock et al. (2004) Model</i>	93
3.8.3.1 Actors	94
3.8.3.2 Knowledge	95
3.8.3.3 Spaces	97
3.8.3.4 Relationships between Places, Spaces, and Power	98
3.9 SUMMARY	99
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	100
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	100
4.2 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS AND APPROACHES	101
4.2.1 <i>Positivism</i>	102
4.2.2 <i>Interpretivism</i>	103
4.2.3 <i>Critical Research</i>	105
4.3 SELECTION OF AN APPROACH	107
4.4 FEMINIST RESEARCH.....	109
4.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH.....	110
4.6 BEING AN INSIDER-RESEARCHER.....	112
4.7 SAMPLING FRAMEWORK.....	115
4.7.1 <i>Rationale for Selection of the Sample Universities</i>	117
4.7.2 <i>Rationale for Participant Selection</i>	118
4.8 CASE STUDY DESIGN	120
4.9 DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY	123
4.9.1 <i>Document Collection</i>	124
4.9.2 <i>Semi-Structured Interviews</i>	124
4.9.2.1 Face-to Face and Telephone Interviews.....	127
4.10 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS	129
4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	132
4.11.1 <i>Gaining Access to the Sample and Key Informants</i>	132
4.11.2 <i>Informed Consent</i>	133
4.11.3 <i>Confidentiality</i>	134
4.11.4 <i>Emotional Protection</i>	134
4.11.5 <i>Data Collection</i>	135
4.12 SUMMARY	135

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS.....	136
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	136
5.2 RQ1: WHAT MAJOR INDIVIDUAL-, CULTURAL-, STRUCTURAL-, OR INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL CONSTRAINTS DO FEMALE FACULTY ENCOUNTER REGARDING THEIR ADVANCEMENT TO UPPER SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS?.....	139
5.2.1 <i>Individual Perspectives and Related Policies (Micro)</i>	139
5.2.1.1 Psychological Traits and Socialisation Backgrounds	141
5.2.1.2 Professional Attributes, Different Work Orientation, or Career Choices....	145
5.2.2 <i>Cultural Perspectives and Related Policies (Macro)</i>	151
5.2.2.1. Aeab (Shame) and Sharf (Honour)	153
5.2.2.2 Domestic Responsibilities	153
5.2.2.3 Childbearing and Childcare.....	154
5.2.2.4 Eldercare.....	156
5.2.2.5 The Choice Between Family and Work	157
5.2.2.6 Pressure by the Husband.....	157
5.2.2.7 Lack of Socialisation and Personal Care	158
5.2.2.8 Family Commitment	159
5.2.3 <i>Structural Perspective and Related Policies</i>	160
5.2.3.1 Organisational Culture.....	162
5.2.3.2 Gender Stereotypes.....	165
5.2.3.3 Structural, Process, and Mechanism Factors	167
5.2.3.4 Unprofessional Attitudes in the Workplace.....	173
5.2.3.5 Lack of a Supportive Environment for Professional Learning	176
5.3 RQ2: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE OBSTACLES THAT SAUDI FEMALE ACADEMICS FACE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY A REFLECTION OF THE INFLUENCE OF WIDER SOCIAL DISCOURSES, RELIGION, AND/OR TRADITIONS ON THE ROLE OF SAUDI FEMALE ACADEMICS IN WORK SETTINGS?.....	180
5.3.1 <i>Religion</i>	180
5.3.2 <i>Social Discourses and Traditions</i>	183
5.4 RQ3: WHAT FACTORS CAN PROMOTE WOMEN’S ADVANCEMENT TO UPPER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN ACADEMIA, AT THE INDIVIDUAL, CULTURAL, STRUCTURAL, OR INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS?	187
5.4.1 <i>Perceived Personal Support (PPS)</i>	187
5.4.2 <i>Perceived Social Support (PSS)</i>	190
5.4.2.1 Family Members	191
5.4.2.2 Parental and Mother-in-Law’s Support	192
5.4.2.3 Spouse.....	193
5.4.2.4 Babysitter/Nanny	194

5.4.2.5 Smart Security Cameras	194
5.4.3 <i>Perceived Organisational Support (POS)</i>	195
5.4.3.1 Constitution of Higher Education.....	196
5.4.3.2 Existing Legal Mechanisms	196
5.4.3.3 Training for Female Academics.....	197
5.4.3.4 Mentoring and Role Models.....	199
5.4.3.5 Raising Awareness and Addressing Organisational Factors.....	199
5.5 SUMMARY	200
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION.....	201
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	201
6.2 MAJOR CONSTRAINTS SAUDI FEMALE ACADEMICS FACE IN ADVANCEMENT TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS: INDIVIDUAL, STRUCTURAL OR INSTITUTIONAL, AND CULTURAL.....	201
6.2.1 <i>Barriers to Progress Linked to Individual Experiences of Female Academics</i>	202
6.2.2 <i>Obstacles to Progress Linked to the Wider Social Roles of Women</i>	207
6.2.3 <i>Obstacles to Progress Linked to Factors within Institutions</i>	209
6.3 THE INFLUENCE OF WIDER SOCIAL DISCOURSES, RELIGION, CULTURE, AND TRADITION ON THE ROLES OF SAUDI WOMEN PROFESSIONALS	215
6.4 PERCEIVED SUPPORTING FACTORS FOR CAREER SUCCESS OF SAUDI FEMALE ACADEMICS	228
6.4.1 <i>Perceived Personal Support (PPS)</i>	228
6.4.2 <i>Perceived Social Support (PSS)</i>	229
6.4.3 <i>Perceived Organisational Support</i>	229
6.5 CONCLUSION	231
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	232
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	232
7.2 SUMMARY OF THIS STUDY.....	233
7.3 THE OUTCOMES OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH	234
7.3.1 <i>RQ1: What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?</i>	<i>234</i>
7.3.2 <i>RQ2: To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?</i>	<i>235</i>
7.3.3 <i>RQ3: What factors can promote women’s advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels? ...</i>	<i>237</i>
7.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY	238

7.4.1 Contribution to Policy and Practice	238
7.4.1.1 Recommendations for Heads at Saudi State Universities	239
7.4.1.2 Recommendations for Saudi Cultural Bureaus Abroad	240
7.4.1.3 Recommendations for Intercultural Education, Curricula, and Media in Saudi Arabia	241
7.4.2 Theoretical and Contextual Contributions.....	241
7.5 LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY.....	242
7.6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY.....	244
7.7 CONCLUSION	245
APPENDICES	248
APPENDIX (I): ETHICAL APPROVAL.....	249
APPENDIX (II): INFORMED CONSENT IN ENGLISH	250
APPENDIX (III): INFORMED CONSENT IN ARABIC.....	252
APPENDIX (IV): INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH	253
APPENDIX (V): INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ARABIC	258
APPENDIX (VI): THE FINAL SAMPLE FRAME FOR THE FIRST SITE IN UNIVERSITY A AND ITS PARTICIPANTS	263
APPENDIX (VII): THE FINAL SAMPLE FRAME FOR THE SECOND SITE IN UNIVERSITY B AND ITS PARTICIPANTS	264
APPENDIX (VIII): THE FINAL SAMPLE FRAME FOR THE THIRD SITE IN UNIVERSITY C AND ITS PARTICIPANTS	265
APPENDIX (IX): THE FINAL SAMPLE FRAME FOR THE FOURTH SITE IN UNIVERSITY D AND ITS PARTICIPANTS	266
APPENDIX (X): THE FINAL SAMPLE FRAME FOR THE FIFTH SITE IN UNIVERSITY E AND ITS PARTICIPANTS	267
APPENDIX (XI): THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE IDENTIFIED EMERGING MAIN ISSUES.....	268
APPENDIX (XII): THEMATIC CODING OF THE DOMAINS BASED ON COLOUR CODES.....	269
APPENDIX (XIII): THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT IN ARABIC.....	270
APPENDIX (XIV): THEMATIC ANALYSIS	272
APPENDIX (XV) SAUDI LABOUR LAW (4.1)	274
APPENDIX (XV) SAUDI LABOUR LAW (4.2)	275
APPENDIX (XV) SAUDI LABOUR LAW (4.3)	276
APPENDIX (XV) SAUDI LABOUR LAW (4.4)	277
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	278

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1 THE GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX (2017).....	1
FIGURE 2.1 MAP OF SAUDI ARABIA	10
FIGURE 2.2 THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS OF BOTH GENDERS STUDYING ABROAD ON GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2015–2016	27
FIGURE 3.1 LONGWE’S WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK	83
FIGURE 3.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEDAGOGY AND SOCIAL AXES.	85
FIGURE 3.3 BROCK ET AL. (2004) MODEL.....	94
FIGURE 4.1 THE MULTIPLE PHASES OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS	130
FIGURE 5.1 INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES AND RELATED POLICIES (MICRO).....	140
FIGURE 5.2 CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND RELATED POLICIES (MACRO).....	152
FIGURE 5.3 STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVE AND RELATED POLICIES (MESO).....	161
FIGURE 5.4 PERCEIVED PERSONAL SUPPORT (PPS)	188
FIGURE 5.5 PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT (PSS).....	190
FIGURE 5.6 PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT	195

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 2.1 THE DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER IN DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL FIELDS IN 2016-2017	26
TABLE 2.2 ACADEMIC RANKING OF SAUDI MALE AND FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS, 2000–2001	28
TABLE 2.3 SAUDI FACULTY MEMBERS OF BOTH GENDERS BY ACADEMIC RANKING IN 2015–2016	28
TABLE 4.1 THE SAMPLE OF PUBLIC SECTOR UNIVERSITIES IN SAUDI ARABIA	119
TABLE 5.1 PSEUDONYM FORMAT	137

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

MOE	Ministry of Education (Saudi Arabia)
HES	Higher education sector
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
WEF	World Economic Forum
AGCC	Arab Gulf Cooperation Council
GOS	Gender–organisation–system model
HRD	Human resource development
PPS	Perceived Personal supports
PSS	Perceived Social supports
POS	Perceived organisational supports
DAI	Degree-awarding institution
BPS	Basic pay scale
GAFS	General Authority for Statistics.
SAMOFA	Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SLL	Saudi Labour Law

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
<i>Qur'an</i>	Muslims have a firm belief that the Qur'an, the sacred scripture of Islam, was verbally revealed by God and dictated to the last Prophet, Muhammad, via the archangel Gabriel, over a span of twenty-three years. Written down in the Arabic language, it comprised of 114 units of enormous length, which are better known as <i>suras</i> ; the initial sura is said as part of the ritual prayer. It is related to all aspects of human existence, involving matters of doctrine, legislation and social organisation.
<i>Sunnah</i> (Hadith)	A second source and supplementing the Qur'an for religious law and moral guidance from careful authentication by recording the words, and the silent approval actions of the Prophet Muhammad. To direct the path of Muslims during their daily life. They are now referred to as Hadiths (Rajkhan, 2014).
<i>Shari'ah Law</i> (Religious Law)	It arose from the religious principles, specifically from the Qur'an and the Hadith which are linked to ethical and moral codes, forming part of the Islamic tradition. It can be taught through religious traditions. Historically, religious law was interpreted via independent jurists (muftis). Their legal perspectives (fatwas) were taken into consideration via ruler-appointed judges.
<i>Wahhabism</i>	Wahhabism is attributed to Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab who called for a revival based on the doctrine of the pure Islam, and that society should return to what the previous generation of Muslims had practised. He refused and denied any innovations and fads in worship and faith.
<i>Salafi Movement</i>	A Salafi movement also known as 'fundamentalist Sunni Muslim', its key faction is related to peaceful religious political and social reform.

Term	Definition
<i>Higher Education Leader</i>	Higher educational leaders should meet the requirements and conditions for a top ranking senior academic appointment, involving <i>Higher Education Leader</i> fundamental and comprehensive administrative experience and academic qualifications. For example, Chancellors, Vice Chancellors, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Provost and Vice-Principal, Registrar and Secretary, Director of Finance, Head of College, Provost, Vice Provosts, Deans, Associate Dean, heads of units, head of the department (HOD) and other Senior Management and leadership posts.
<i>‘Awakening Movement’</i> (An extremist)	An extremist is conceptualised as someone who has extreme political perspectives and purposes and is willing to do uncommon or illegal things in order to gain them.

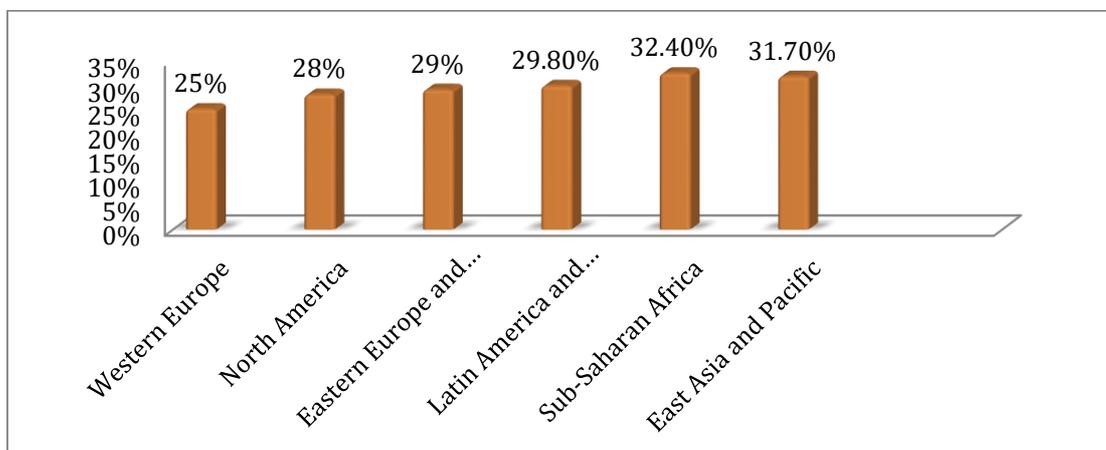
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Many empirical studies gathered by the United Nations Development Programme (2014) as well as the most recent Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2017), which covered 144 countries, make it evident that the gender gap in terms of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment among four global regions in 2017 was less than 30% — two regions are crossing this threshold for the first time this year. Western Europe records a gender gap of 25%, placing it ahead of North America (gap of 28%), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (gap of 29%), and Latin America and the Caribbean (gap of 29.8%).

Among the remaining regions, East Asia (gender gap of 31.7%) and the Pacific region (gender gap of 32.4%) ranked ahead of Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia recorded a gap of 34%. The Middle East and North Africa region crossed the threshold of a gender gap of 40% for the first time this year (it is now slightly lower than this figure) (WEF, 2017). This gap involves many aspects; one of them is the under-representation of women in the top echelons of leadership, which, it appears, is a globally shared phenomenon. The gap is almost the same across all the studied countries. Figure 1.1 shows the global gender gap index for 2017.

Figure 1.1 The Global Gender Gap Index (2017)



Source: World Economic Forum (2017)

Currently, the average proportion of Arab women who work in the Middle East and the North Africa region is the lowest in the world, involving under-representation in managerial positions in particular, but also employment and politics in general (WEF, 2017); at the same time, however, in many Arab nations, the rate of Arab women's education is becoming higher than men's (Arab WEF, 2017). However, Arab nations report the highest average economic inactivity and economic gender gap for women, and female unemployment is double that of men (WEF, 2017). In contrast, revisiting Muslim women's history, we recall that it is reported that women have played a considerable, core role in varied aspects of public life, thus having a large and positive effect by contributing towards economic, political and social changes (Seedat, 2013).

A great deal of the scholarly literature has identified the core barriers that inhibit the career advancement of women to the upper echelons of organisational hierarchies when compared with their male counterparts; these include the lack of role models and societal expectations (Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011c; Kawai & Strange, 2014); role socialisation, public-domestic divide (Shah & Shah, 2012); discrimination in relation to hiring and promotion (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010b); exclusion of qualified women from particular jobs and high-level jobs (Al-Manasra, 2013; Karam & Alfiouni, 2014; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011a); women's exclusion from male developmental networks (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015); and stereotypes that limit women's roles to teaching, restricting them from administration roles (Abu-Tineh, 2013). The general factors underlying these include patriarchal exclusion (Abou-Bakr, 2010), culture, and religion (Rwafa, 2016); in particular, the overlap between culture and religion has been identified as the core source of gender inequality. This clash appears in various contexts in the majority of traditional or conservative cultures and religions around the world (Rwafa, 2016), and this is certainly the case in Saudi society (Abalkhail, 2017).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Recent years have seen a global trend whereby opportunities for women have become more visible than previously, leading to them gaining greater recognition as professionals in the labour market. This is related to a variety of different factors at multiple levels (Shah & Baporikar, 2013; Smith, 2011), such as economic growth (WEF, 2017), a shift in societal attitudes (especially for married women and mothers) regarding women accessing the work force, and both political and legal developments (Abalkhail,

2017; Burke & Richardsen, 2016). However, according to the Global Gender Gap Index, despite the significant growth of women's participation in the labour force internationally, they have not yet obtained parity with their male counterparts. There remains a huge gender gap, particularly in terms of women's political and social empowerment and economic participation within society (WEF, 2017), a situation supported by the many findings that women are under-represented in higher institutional leadership (Karam & Afiouni, 2014; Powell, 2010; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011a).

In Saudi Arabia, the percentage of women participating in the labour force in 2017 was approximately 21.1%; in contrast, Saudi men made up 80.4% of the labour force. Among legislators, senior officials and managers, women made up 5.8%, and men made up 94.2% of the workforce. Among professional and technical workers, women made up 23.7%, and men made up 76.3% of the workforce. Moreover, 100% of government ministers were men. However, despite this massive gender gap, there is equality of wages for similar work (WEF, 2017). The phenomenon of Saudi female faculties in academia is unique and distinctive from the issues of women in varied contexts. They have been raised in the most conservative and segregated gender society in the world. This segregation is a politics, ideology and culture-based practice which has a vital influence on the nature and the structure of Saudi society.

This can be manifested in the spatial separation between both genders in all governmental places and their facilities, either for educational or work settings, which is often linked to and justified by the interpretation of the related Islamic instructions that women do not preside or take the chair over men in Surat An-Nisa (the Women) as the following:

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all)”(al-Qur’an 4: 34).

Although, in the Saudi Constitution, the policy does not have any clear statement for the prevention of women from progressing or holding top senior leadership posts, this has, however become a value and tradition of conservative Saudi society, as will be discussed fully in the context of the current research (see Chapter 2). To illustrate, for example, Saudi female academics cannot hold top posts such as Chancellors, Vice Chancellors, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Director of Finance, or Head of College. However, one distinctive feature of the reforms was the establishment of the biggest single-gender women's university in the world (Princess Noura University), which became the first institution to be headed by a woman. However, at all other universities, women's representation at higher administrative levels has been restricted.

Furthermore, in Saudi universities, in some specialties, there is the same department or school in both the male section and the female section, in either theoretical or practical specialism. However, the head is most often a male member and the deputy a female member. Another example is that the dean of the college is often a man and a female colleague is the deputy dean, which implies different duties and authority for both the head and his deputy. From these can be extracted the vital gender gap in Saudi Arabia in labour force participation in general and in senior positions in particular (Abalkhail, 2017; Taleb, 2010). Therefore, the current research project seeks to identify what gives rise to gender inequality between male and female academic leaders, specifically in upper leadership positions in academia, and the related question of what factors do (or can) hinder or support women in achieving these positions.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

There are several reasons for my decision to pursue this topic for my PhD thesis. This is a very relevant topic to me as a researcher. Since taking up my current role as a female faculty member in Saudi Arabia, I have seen first-hand the negative impact of gender segregation in academia. Female faculty members are largely powerless and excluded from policy-making decisions and processes. Those in power make little or no attempt to address this issue, which directly affects the way gender inequality in academia is understood within Saudi Arabia's unique culture. Therefore, I have been eager to explore the issue of female academics' unequal treatment not only for my own benefit but also to improve the policies and practices that will determine the future of Saudi higher education.

Alsubaie and Jones (2017) revealed the dearth of research on gender and leadership in the region. Nonetheless, broadly speaking, studies concerning gender inequality are increasing in popularity and tend to attract external research funding (Teelken & Deem, 2013). Most of these studies on gender inequality, however, have focused on the United Kingdom, the United States, and other Western nations; some have used surveys to track the number of women leaders in different countries (Elamin & Omair, 2010). However, those studies may apply to other countries (Shah, 2010). Comparatively few studies are concerned with gender inequality in Muslim nations in general and gender-segregated academic institutions in particular, and these have not received sufficient attention in the educational leadership literature (Taleb, 2010).

Moreover, while analysing educational leadership through the lens of culture and tradition generally has garnered much attention, less attention has been given to religious faith in particular (Monroe et al., 2008). Al-Fassi (2010) and Teelken and Deem (2013) also stress the lack of studies on how men and women view gender differences, particularly in academia in Muslim contexts. However, Seedat (2013) found that some researchers have explored gender issues in the context of Muslim culture from a historical point of view with regard to legal notions and policies regarding equality in Islam. There have been studies on Islamic identity, Muslim feminist identity, and feminist thought relevant to 'Muslim women's equality at work' (Timmers et al., 2010). The knowledge gap between male and female in employment in Muslim-majority countries has also been pointed out (Özbilgin et al., 2012).

With regards to Arab nations, among the relatively scarce studies are Elamin and Omair (2010), Karam and Afiouni (2014), Kauser and Tlaiss (2011b), Metcalfe (2011), and Monroe et al. (2008). Monroe et al. (2008) indicated the dearth of qualitative research on working Arab women, especially in Saudi Arabia; although there is a large body of literature about gender inequality in general, there is little documented evidence to record Saudi female academics' progress to the upper echelons of institutional leadership (Karam & Afiouni, 2014; Sidani et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, there remains an urgent need to study the under-representation of female academics in top positions in Saudi educational institutions in the context of the Islamic faith. One of the core objectives of this research is to help fill the knowledge gap

regarding this gender imbalance situation, where female academics are not only less represented in leadership but also have less formal power, authority, status, and income than their male counterparts. This introduction will proceed to examine the literature on this under-representation and on factors that contribute to or hinder women's advancement to senior positions in higher education.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The key reason for conducting this research was academic; I chose to focus on Saudi female scholars who progressed to the upper ranks of leadership, as the social status of women is regarded as a core indicator of social development (WEF, 2017), which, in turn, may fundamentally affect educational outputs, particularly in higher education and with regard to the development of society; the higher education sector is a cornerstone of social development, since it is the place where people gain the needed skills and knowledge to lead the country (Issa & Siddiek, 2012).

Therefore, the main goal of this research is to attract the attention of Saudi Arabian decision- and policy-makers so that they will 'expand their horizons' in order to see the global education system as a whole and the policies that affect it in particular; furthermore, I hope that the Saudi Arabian government and educational administrators will make sure that systems are put into place in order to support and empower female faculty members as a marginalised group and to promote their career development and pursuit of senior positions in the higher education sector.

1.5 The Purpose of the Study

The central aim of this study is to examine the career journeys of female Saudi academics, to investigate the manner in which the gender constructions of Saudi women in educational leadership shape higher education, thus perpetuating gender inequality in a Muslim society and a segregated society, and to determine the obstacles they face, while exploring solutions that may apply to Saudi Arabia in particular and women in academia in general.

1.6 Research Questions

As an insider (a Saudi female academic), I am able to provide rich exploration of the individual-, cultural-, structural-, and institutional-level constraints and supports that are provided to Saudi female faculty members with regard to their advancement to upper leadership positions. The current research has three research questions:

1. What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?
2. To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?
3. What factors can promote women's advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

In addressing the abovementioned questions, the study explores the phenomena of gender inequality in academia as it plays out in various circumstances, including the home, society in general, institutions, employment, and the family, as well as opportunities for accessing support and development. Because the nature of the study was exploratory, I started by asking general, open-ended questions to help themes emerge from the data.

1.7 A Brief Introduction to the Methodology

The current study used a qualitative approach in the form of a single case study at five sites. The case study approach involved paying attention to a single aspect of a specific phenomenon, which was, in this case, the issue of gender gap between Saudi male and female leaders in academia in order to provide in-depth details (Yin, 2014). The study takes a feminist standpoint. Feminist research brings gender to the foreground and endeavours to develop a deep understanding of social phenomena (Cohen et al., 2013); the purpose of such ideologically rooted study is to 'correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position' (Lather, 1991, p. 71).

My research sample consisted 25 participants, all female academics from five state universities, selected purposively for this research, who had either been promoted to leadership positions or not. Additionally, there were five male participants (considered key informants) who were closely connected with the formulation and implementation of policies in higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. Data collection involved both face-to-face and telephone-based semi-structured interviews as well as documentary analysis. A thematic analytical approach was employed to analyse the qualitative data collected (Miles et al., 2014).

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

The current thesis is divided into seven chapters, as follows:

Chapter One provides the introduction to this study. It presents an overview of the study, the problem of the study, the rationale of the study, the significance of the study, the purpose of this research project and its research questions; a brief summary of the research methodology; and, finally, the outline of the thesis.

Chapter Two will establish a brief historical, political, religious and cultural background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's establishment. This may promote an in-depth understanding of the evolved phenomena that have hindered Saudi female faculty members from accessing upper senior positions in the higher education hierarchy, and have contributed to existing patterns of gender segregation.

Chapter Three is mainly a literature review on the presence of female academics in the upper echelons of leadership in the Saudi higher education sector. It is structured into several sections: (1) the religious point of view on the status of women in Islam, (2) the construction of gender in Saudi Arabia, (3) the extent to which Muslim and Arab states promote gender equality, and (4) the extent to which the culture of Saudi Arabia in particular supports equality between men and women. Next, it considers (5) previously identified factors at different levels, including obstacles to progress, (6) potential supportive factors, and (7) the conceptual framework that supports this research.

Chapter Four focuses on the methodological approach and the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research paradigm; the trustworthiness of the research,

including the role of the researcher as an insider; the sampling framework; the case study; the research methods; and the instruments of data collection. It also addresses potential ethical issues and offers a description of the procedures used in data analysis.

Chapter Five presents the findings, illustrating themes and sub-themes and answering the three key research questions.

Chapter Six discusses the findings in the light of the research questions and the literature.

Chapter Seven offers a final summary, involving implications for policy and practice; an overview of the limitations of this research; and recommendations for future research and policy, based on the findings, to promote the status of Saudi female academics and their equality with their male counterparts. The thesis concludes with a personal reflection on the process of conducting the research.

In the next chapter I will present a brief historical overview of the political, religious and cultural background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's establishment and the relevant contextual issues of the current study that have played a core role in shaping the positions of Saudi women and identified their role in society.

Chapter Two: Background And Contextual Issues of The Study

2.1 Introduction

In order to promote a deep understanding of the status of Saudi women in their society and the pattern of gender segregation in which women academics have been excluded from accessing the upper echelons of the leadership hierarchy in the Higher Education Sector (HES) in the contemporary Saudi Arabia. It appears fundamental to establish and examine the complexities of the implications of historical economic, political, religious, and social context of Saudi Arabia in the last decades. Thus, this chapter will offer a concise background and historical overview of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's establishment, women's labour law and related issues. Figure 2.1 shows the map of Saudi Arabia.

Figure 2.1 Map of Saudi Arabia



Source: <https://bit.ly/2A8agOY> (December, 2017)

2.2 The Area of Study

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula and, located in the southwest corner of Asia, the Kingdom is at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. It is bordered by the Red Sea to the west, the Arab Gulf, Qatar and United Arab Emirates to the east, Kuwait, Iraq, Yemen and Oman to the south, and Jordan to the north. It covers approximately 2,150,000 square miles (SAMOFA, 2018). As of 2017, it has an estimated population of approximately 32,552,336 people; with an average annual growth rate of 2.52%. The population is divided by sex by 57.48% for males and 42.52% for females (GAFE, 2017).

The official language is Arabic and the official religion is Islam. The reform mission, upon which the state of Saudi was founded, demonstrates the prime key of the government. This mission is based on the realisation of Islamic rules, implementation of Islamic law (Shari'a) and enjoining good and forbidding evil, in addition, the reformation of the Islamic creed and purifying it from heterodoxies. Thus, it adopts its doctrine from the true Islamic principles, which were widespread at the very beginning of Islam (SAMOFA, 2018).

Indeed, one of the fundamental defining characteristics of Saudi Arabia is gender segregation in the majority of its public spaces (Meijer, 2010; Rajkhan, 2014), which is in accordance with the promulgated Royal Decree number 21/ M in 1969, in which it states that, in Article 160 of the previous Saudi Labour Law, in particular regarding policy regarding women, "Adolescents, juveniles and women are not to be employed in hazardous jobs or harmful industries. However, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs shall have the authority to determine professions and jobs that are regarded as harmful to health or that may expose certain risk to women" (SLL, 1969).

Additionally, one aspect to this Article is that it strictly and explicitly emphasised preventing mixing of both genders in a work setting or any the related facilities in any certain circumstances. That means that all public spaces are sexualised and prevents gender mixing in the workplace (Vassiliev, 2000); such spaces include charitable organisations, restaurants, hospitals, government offices, schools and universities. Therefore, there are some certain places where the entry of women is forbidden, and, vice versa, men are not allowed to access women's places (Meijer, 2010; Rajkhan,

2014). Furthermore, from the prior Saudi labour law in Article 161, which was established in 1969, it states that it is not permissible to employ adolescents, juveniles and women during the nightshift, specifically, the time between sunset and sunrise; their working hours should be less than eleven consecutive hours, except in cases where a decision is issued by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in non-industrial occupations and cases of extreme circumstances (SLL, 1969).

However, this law was amended by the promulgation of Royal Decree number 51/M in September 2005 regarding Women's Rights in the new Saudi Labour Law, and which involved several relevant aspects to women's work. Such as fields of work for women, work hours, rights relating to pregnancy and childbirth, rights related to custody, rights related to breastfeeding, and rights on the death of her husband. To illustrate, as stated in the text of Article 149, first of all, it should be taken into consideration the provisions of Article (4) in Saudi Labour Law, which states: "When implementing the provisions of this Law, the employer and the worker shall adhere to the provisions of Sharia" (SLL, p. 3). It also stipulates that women can work in all fields that are compatible with their nature and prohibits their work in two ways, which are firstly, hazardous jobs, secondly, harmful industries (SLL, 2005, p. 32) (see Appendix, XV).

On the other hand, the law in this Article does not include any law and rules concerning preventing mixing gender in work places compared with the previous Article regarding the same case. Also, at that time, the system did not specify what were the nature of the jobs and professions that are regarded as detrimental to health and are probable to expose women to certain risks, but rather it referred this to the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. He was empowered to either prevent employing women in hazardous jobs or industries or set conditions and restrictions (SLL, 2005, p. 32). Subsequently, in October 2006, the Minister of Labour accordingly issued Ministerial Decision number 2834, dated October 2010, which stipulates that the following jobs are considered to be harmful to the health of women or to expose them to specific risks: 1) Mining, quarrying and other works related to the extraction of mineral materials from the ground; 2) Industries which involve the conversion of materials, such as power generation, conversion and transfer; 3) Working in sanitary drainage, gas installations and distribution and other petroleum products (SLL, 2005) (see Appendix, XV).

Also in Article 150, established in September 2005, under the new Saudi Labour Law “Women should not be allowed from working during a period of nightshift the duration of which should be less than eleven consecutive hours, unless in some cases determined pursuant to a decision through the Minister” (SLL, 2005, p. 32). Accordingly, the Minister of Labour issued the following decision: "Notwithstanding the provisions of Article (150), women may be employed in the following cases: 1) If the work is healthy, charitable, educational or disciplinary. 2) If the establishment uses only family members. 3) Force majeure and state of emergency. 4) If night work is necessary to keep the materials from rapid damage (SLL, 2005, p. 32) (see Appendix, XV).

2.3 History of Saudi Arabia

The changes and development of the state law and policies can be attributed to some significant past events before the establishing of the contemporary Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a state in 1932. Through reviewing Saudi Arabia’s history it illustrates that the contemporary Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1932–present) emerged from two key political and religious movements, termed metaphorically the ‘initial Saudi state’ (1744–1818) and the ‘second Saudi state’ (1824–1891) (Al-Rasheed, 2010; SAMOFA, 2018). The initial movement related to the time when Muhammad Ibn Saud (the father of the current Saudi Arabian royal family, the Al-Dir’iya ruler¹ and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab² allied and joined forces to establish a society based on the principles of Islam, named Ummah al-Islam.

During the early 18th century, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab found that the Arabian Peninsula was full of political instability, chaos and weak religious faith due to the prevalence of myths and fads. This resulted in the individuals of the Arabian Peninsula having vital issues, mainly related to losing the correct and proper path of Islam (SAMOFA, 2018). Historians portrayed the situation in the Arabian Peninsula, in terms of the political and social aspects in that period, as insecure and disintegrated, with an enormity of rival scattered emirates. Therefore, the religious scholar felt that he had the

¹ Al-Dir’iya is as small city located on the North Western outskirts of the Riyadh, which is the Saudi capital.

² A religious scholar, the founder of Wahhabism and the father of the grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia.

obligation and responsibility to initiate and progress reform (Al-Rasheed, 2010; SAMOFA, 2018).

Regardless of his definition in relation to the correct and wrong path of Islamic principles which is beyond the scope of the present study, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab proceeded by calling for a revival based on the doctrine of pure Islam, in that the society should return to what the previous generation of Muslims had practised. He refused and denied any innovations and fads³ in worship and faith (Al-Rasheed, 2010; SAMOFA, 2018). The concept was, thus, commenced, as an Islamic revival in order to rectify and amend both people's beliefs and practices of Islamic teachings and principles (Al-Rasheed, 2010). Later, this call and action was recognised as 'Wahhabism'.

Muhammad Ibn Saud, as a ruler of Al-Dir'iyah, offered Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab comprehensive protection and provided him with full promotion for his new revival call. In 1744, the movement was initiated when both Muhammad Ibn Saud and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab gathered an oath to call for the preservation of the new Islamic reform in the Arabian Peninsula (SAMOFA, 2018). They and their families succeeded in obtaining subordinates and establishing a great number of allies amongst the Arabian Peninsula tribes (Al-Rasheed, 2010). On the other hand, at that time, the Arabian Peninsula belonged politically to the Ottoman state, in other words, the Ottoman Islamic Caliphate, as it is called in the Islamic literature. The Ottoman state was observing such new movement cautiously, in that they might be regarded as insurgency, and military campaigns were waged until 1818, after which the movement was controlled by the execution of the Al-Dir'iyah leader, Abdullah Ibn Saud (the founder's grandson) and the imprisonment of most of Muhammad Ibn Saud and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab's families (Al-Rasheed, 2010; SAMOFA, 2018).

A huge number of administrative systems and institutions were established. The initial state of Saudi took on a remarkable political status as a result of the principles of Islam and extended its effect to most regions of the Arabian Peninsula. Its rulers followed a balanced policy on the basis of the victory of Islam, community service and development of its civilisation level (SAMOFA, 2018). However, this First State of

³ Fads were identified in Islamic literature, such as Bidah.

Saudi Arabia ended in 1818, when Ottoman troops invaded the Arabian Peninsula under the command of Ibrahim, Mohammed Ali Pasha' son, the governor of Egypt. Ibrahim Pasha besieged Al-Dir'iyah and, after many battles, he demolished and destroyed most regions of the initial Saudi State in the Arabian Peninsula (SAMOFA, 2018). However, despite devastation by Muhammad Ali's forces, led by Ibrahim Pasha, in the middle of the Arabian Peninsula, the Diriyah demolition, and the destruction of several states, as well as the expansion of fear, Muhammad Ali's forces were unable to break the elements of the Saudi state. The loyalty of the residents in both urban and rural areas still belonged to the Al Saud family, who founded the initial Saudi state. They offered their appreciation for their treatment and their wise leadership; they also continued promoting the Salafi movement. Less than two years after the end of the first Saudi state, leaders of Al Saud emerged once again to re-establish the Saudi state (SAMOFA, 2018).

In 1820, Prince Mishari bin Saud attempted to re-establish Saudi rule in Diriyah. However, it remained only a few months, followed via a successful attempt led by Imam Turki bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Saud in 1824, which led to the establishment of the second Saudi state and its capital Riyadh. The second Saudi state continued on the same foundations and pillars upon which the first Saudi state was based, in terms of its reliance on Islam, the deployment of security and stability, and the application of Islamic law (Sharia) (Al-Rasheed, 2010; SAMOFA, 2018). The administrative and financial systems were similar to those in the first Saudi state, and arts and sciences prospered under the second Saudi state.

However, in 1891, Imam Abdul Rahman bin Faisal bin Turki left Riyadh owing to the conflicts between the sons of Imam Faisal bin Turki concerning who should become the ruler. Which resulted in them becoming less powerful and united and enabled another tribe to gain sovereignty and control, namely, Mohammed bin Rashid, governor of Hail (Al-Rasheed, 2010). Those prime two movements had a substantial role in paving and smoothing the way for a third attempt, which led to the contemporary modern Saudi Arabia. In short, in 1919, Abdul-Aziz Al Saud (the great-grandson of Ibn Saudi) managed to return from exile filled with a robust and strong determination aiming to re-establish the sovereignty of Riyadh. He quickly captured Riyadh, and subsequently

made a successful attempt to unite the tribes surrounding Najd⁴ according to a revival of Wahhabism which had already taken part of the area of Najd and had acquired great numbers of subordinates (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The Wahhabism subordinates who were for Abdul Aziz comprised a very strong military force and this afforded him the opportunity for spreading his sovereignty across the Arabian Peninsula. After 13 years of hard work, in 1932, Abdul-Aziz Al Saud officially announced the establishing of the new state, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, declaring that it was his property and himself as king.

The above historical review and discussion concerning the key roots and related factors of the Saudi Arabia states lead to following conclusions, which are sufficiently substantial for an appropriate and comprehensive understanding of the Saudi political, social and cultural context. It can be suggested that the notion of state seems not really applicable to the initial two forms of Saudi Arabia, the first state and second state, as they almost tend to be seen as tribal alliances between the leader of Al-Dir'iya, the family of Ibn Saudi, and other leaders of clans and tribes in the region. The two such movements relied on a 'chieftaincy structure' (Kostiner, 1993, pp. 4-5) that was prevalent in the peninsula (Kostiner, 1993). The institutional structures of the Saudi state and the identity and unity of the community were not shaped prior to the present Saudi Arabia being proclaimed in 1932.

The initial Saudi states experienced and witnessed the new Islamic revival provenance and birth in the Arabic peninsula, identified in the historical and political literature as 'Wahhabism'. The transformation of cultural identity was accomplished through three stages, specifically in the western region of Saudi Arabia in Hijaz⁵, where, at that time, it appeared comparable to an urban society. The initial period was in 1932 after the society's unification under one state, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Yamani, 2004). This was the first manifestation of the identity of Saudi Arabia. The second period was after the exploration of oil in 1938 and the huge oil revenues which affected the state in the 1950s (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

⁴ Najd is considered as a geographical central region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It consists of modern administrative parts and includes Riyadh, Qassim and Hail.

⁵ Hijaz is a historic area; it is one of the five geographical regions of the Arabian Peninsula located in its Northwestern and Western parts.

The third phase was in the 1980s when the price of oil fell; this stage also witnessed the occurrence of an extreme new movement, recognised by internal and external religious revivals (Otterbeck, 2012). That new group either competed with Wahhabism (fundamentalist Sunni Muslim) or were impacted via it (Otterbeck, 2012). This new movement was known as the intellectual movement, the 'Saudi Awakening', or the 'Awakening Movement' (Lacroix & Holoch, 2011).

However, on the other hand, it seems important to distinguish between fundamentalists and extremists according to the meaning of the core notions. The fundamental of something is the foundation of it; in other words, it could signify that Islamic fundamentalists are those people who have a greater knowledge about the Islamic teachings than others. They believe fully in the literal interpretation of and strict adherence to a religious or political doctrine without any additional interpretation or adaptation (Davies, 2008). Also, fundamentalism has a particular religious foundation, and is identified as a 'religious way of being' that manifests itself in 'a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group in the face of modernity and secularization' (Ruthven 2004, p. 8).

In contrast, an extremist is conceptualised as someone having extreme political perspectives and purposes and willing to do uncommon or illegal things in order to gain them. Therefore, Islamic extremists are those who are considered in Islam as 'heretics' on account of their excessive piousness. Those who violate the Islamic principles and teachings, a religion of peace, are regarded as extremists (Davies, 2008). Extremism is understood as when they do not permit any different perspectives; when they exclusively hold their own perspectives; and when they don't permit for the potentiality of variation (Tutu, 2006). Extremism is not only doing something to an extreme, for instance, extreme sport, it is also the denial of other realities. The extreme end of an extreme position is terrorism, by utilising violence and fear to attain political ends. It should be pointed that not all fundamentalists are terrorists or extremists. However, the issue is that fundamentalism might incline its adherents to 'extreme' positions. And extreme positions could be hurtful by actual violence, exclusion, or oppression, or all three (Davies, 2008).

This trend of the awakening movement emerged in the light of the consequences of the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the growth of the Islamic tide with the support of a group of Saudi scholars, such as Salman al-Awda, Safar al-Hawali, Nasser al-Omar, Awad al-Qarni, Saad al-Brik, Mohsen al-Awaji and Muhammad al-Hudayef (Lacroix & Holoch, 2011). Those sheikhs were active on social media, acquiring massive support from the educated youth. Over time, the Saudi awakening movement has attracted a great number of Saudi youth who have been influenced by the concepts through religious speeches, the sheikhs' lectures and the movement's iconography. The Awakening Movement adopts a concept which calls for preserving Saudi society from 'Westernisation' and protecting the Islamic faith, presenting itself as a movement which depends on 'moderate, anti-extremism' (Lacroix & Holoch, 2011).

The sheikhs and the movement's symbols have been influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, as the *Sahwa* movement emerged from the harmony and convergence of Muslim Brotherhood refugees from Egypt (and, to a lesser extent, Syria and Iraq) with the local Saudi Wahhabis. The orientation of the Muslim Brothers was for a rejection of any democracy, human rights and openness to others. They permeated this ideology at every level, acting as society's teachers and reconfiguring its curricula (Lacroix & Holoch, 2011). That has contributed to produce a generation inclined to be committed to social activism, directed and instructed via a fusion of both Wahhabi and Brotherhood doctrines. The *Sahwa* movement insists that Saudi women must be barred from paid work and that they should be forced out of public roles, thus, relegating them to the private sphere and the role of supporting men (Le Renard, 2008).

The *Sahwa* movement crystallised clearly in 1990, during the period of entry of foreign forces into the Arabian Peninsula when the Saudi Arabia government requested protection from the United States military against a potential invasion by Iraq. This led to considerable conflict breaking out between this group and the ruling and religious authority in Saudi Arabia, by challenging the political and religious authority represented by the Council of Senior Scholars, and entering into a conflict with them after they adopted positions on the regime's policies, openly criticising their state's cooperation with the U.S. in the 1991 Gulf War and the existence of foreign forces in Saudi Arabia. This acted as a catalyst for the diverse forms of discontent that had been germinating for some years (Lacroix & Holoch, 2011).

It has affected the general structure of Saudi society, either directly or indirectly, and brought about some significant social unrest and upheaval (Al-Rasheed, 2010). In addition, it has contributed to tension in Saudi society because of the social and economic advancement and an eagerness to preserve Islamic religious and social values and traditions. Maintaining the balance between them has been challenging, particularly in terms of the professional spaces of Saudi women (Le Renard, 2008; Meijer, 2010). In contrast, this shift has been limited; Saudi Arabia remains a conservative nation where Islamic instructions and teachings and Arab tribal values are strictly followed.

Within all three stages, Wahhabism was the official representative and the substantial factor directing the social transformation and changes of the Saudi community. In summary, the Wahhabism ideology is the fundamental key and the cornerstone for a comprehension and portrait of Saudi Arabia, in terms of the historical and sociocultural context of Saudi women. Wahhabism is a complicated ideology, which was subjected to and affected by certain Islamic teachings interpretations, political conditions and Arabic culture; on the other hand, specific properties are embodied within Wahhabism. Such characteristics will inform the wider research context. It should be recognised that Saudi Arabia consists of a great number of tribes and religious schools that respond to the ideology of Wahhabism in a variety of different ways.

Some of the prime political and social features of Wahhabism are related to the significant role that religion plays in shaping the social identity in Saudi society. Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia has been identified as the accurate and precise Islamic teaching interpretation and the reforming of the appropriate faith. In addition, in most cases, it has imposed itself for all Saudi citizens as a 'uniform moral code' (Otterbeck, 2012). This distinguished status has been achieved through three significant features: the obedience to the Saudi Arabia governors, cultivation of a Saudi Arabian Society and censorship in Saudi community.

2.4 The Essential Political and Social Features of Wahhabism

An extraordinary characteristic of Saudi society is the position that religion plays in shaping the social identity of Saudi Arabia. Wahhabism has been endorsed in Saudi Arabia as the proper interpretation of Islam and the reform of the right faith. It also has more desirability and has sometimes imposed itself as a ‘uniform moral code’ for the individual in the Saudi state (Otterbeck, 2012). This popularity has been achieved via the following three characteristics: obey those in authority among you, cultivation of a Saudi Arabian society and censorship in society.

2.4.1 Obey Those In Authority Among You’ From A Wahhabi Perspective

Overall, the religious scholars (Ulama) are regarded as the rulers of Saudi society, having the authority for decision-making and offering guidance in the form of Islamic teachings and who must be obeyed. This nation emerged from the Qur’an, specifically from Verse 59 in Surat An-Nisa (the Women), in which Allah states:

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day.”

This is the ideal approach and outcome since the term regarding who is in authority amongst you was interpreted through the ideology of the Wahhabi, which refers to religious and political leaders, since religion and politics are originated from this ideology. Religious scholars, named Mufti, generate legal perspectives (fatwa), which substantially lead to social and political activities, likewise, to individual actions (Otterbeck, 2012).

Thus, the Mufti has enormous power and authority and a firm alliance with the king (Al-Atawneh, 2011; Otterbeck, 2012). Wahhabi religious scholars have considerable influence in all aspects of Saudi lives, and their presence is felt in the education, legal life and social life of the Kingdom (Al-Hefdhhy, 1994). Hence, it seems very hard to distinguish between what is religious and what is political, as religion cannot be separated or isolated from individual and social life (Al-Atawneh, 2011). Therefore, obeying the authority among you is religiously fundamental, since total interrelation and union between religion and politics is the right and appropriate approach of life.

2.4.2 Cultivation of a Saudi Arabian Society

Owing to the overlapping relationship between the Saudi kings and Wahhabi religious scholars, the authority of religion and politics has shaped an allied and joint force that has significantly brought about cultivating the Saudi Arabia community and refining and shaping its identity according to religious values and political principles (Nevo, 1998). In other words, the government of Saudi Arabia has enforced the Saudi national identity through Wahhabism as means for the sake of promoting a united community. According to Nevo (1998), the present Saudi state has made massive “efforts to cultivate Wahhabism both as a state religion and as an essential attribute of Saudi national identity” (p.34). Wahhabism has reinforced Islam, not only as an individual’s religion, but also as a faith that is involved in each single aspect of all social, personal, public and private lives (Al-Atawneh, 2011).

It is “a comprehensive system for governing everything public, social and political and Islamic law is a complete moral code that prescribes for every eventuality, including governance” (Al-Atawneh, 2009, p. 733). Therefore, the ideology of Wahhabism has shaped the structure of the political and social organisations. That is because this ideology is embedded in the most significant governmental institutions: including. 1) The judicial system, which has been the implemented, performed and managed in light of Islamic law interpretation by the Wahhabi; 2) Stimulating the Saudi state to commit to the Islamic law as it comports to economic and social activities, for instance, the banking system; 3) Religious groups promoting the Wahhabi values; 4) Such groups are, in many cases, identified as the religious police, specifically, via the external media; this body has many offices around Saudi Arabia; 5) Religious education: they regulate theological and legal education at all levels; 6) Research in Islamic subjects: the education of girls, all curricula and texts are controlled and supervised via the Ulama; 7) The Ulama supervise the process of mosques via the Saudi state; 8) Islamic proselytising. This means regulating the preaching of Islam abroad; and 9) Religious jurisprudence (Al-Hefdhy, 1994).

2.4.3 Censorship of Social Activity

Censorship of social activity is the greatest and most effective approach in shaping the identity of Saudi society to ensure all private and public activities are committed to the religious values of Wahhabism (Mostyn, 2002). Multiple approaches have been

implemented in establishing a firm censorship over the Saudi community (Otterbeck, 2012), such as prohibiting specific newspapers and books, and TV shows that illustrate 'real' life (Yehia, 2007). One of the most successful approaches for maintaining censorship is "AL- Hay'ah", the religious police. In the early 1980s, this group framed a Commission, chaired by the King himself, in which it was officially named the "Commission of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice" (CPVPV). This commission is directly connected to the Saudi King, who is the prime minister.

The main mission of this agency states "this policing aims at upholding the official Wahhabi political theory of the social that is built on the premise that individuals are quick to err if not controlled by moral and legal codes pointing in the right direction" (Otterbeck, 2012, p. 343). In practice, certain acts should be prevented, and this group are in charge in maintaining them, including prohibitions on individual behaviour, perspectives, clothing, hair, symbols in all public places, and mixing between genders (Otterbeck, 2012). This can be done by enforcing public moral behaviour while out walking in the streets or in public places, including shopping centres, by assiduously enforcing gender segregation throughout the entire public sphere (Rajkhan, 2014). The other means of censorship for social control is gender segregation, which has become a traditional culture in Saudi Arabia since the contemporary "Saudi state has, through laws and regulations, spread the Wahhabi conception of segregation in the society" (Otterbeck, 2012, p. 343).

On the other hand, censorship has become remarkably hard owing to the technological revolution (Otterbeck, 2008). By visiting the official website of CPVPV (2011), the main task and duties of this commission involve: directing individuals and encouraging them to virtue; deterring individuals from committing vice and taboos; inhibiting inappropriate customs, traditions, preventing religious innovation; ensuring that individuals are performing their Islamic duties and tasks; and ensuring the Saudi state reflects an appropriate and perfect model of the Islamic world.

To sum up, it is strongly evident that from the brief historical overview of the establishment of the Saudi Arabia state, comprehension of the key features of Wahhabism (fundamentalist Sunni Muslim) and the implications of immersion and intervention of extremist ideology, known as the 'awakening movement', that these

actors have contributed to creating and practising a new phenomenon in Saudi Society, identified as gender segregation. Those actors have multiple objectives, with their own manifold interests, agendas and viewpoints, which can be interpreted sometimes clearly and sometimes more opaquely through their own omissions and acts in exercising their authority and power over policy (Meijer, 2010).

It has given them the opportunities in playing core role in many aspects, involving the conceptualisation and construction of gender, reshaping the social discourse, reinforcing the existing face of gender role interaction, and the implementation of policy and system in Saudi governmental institutions in general and the educational sectors and work setting in particular. The result of this ideology has been ‘cultured’ and impacted indirectly or directly the overall Saudi social structure and consolidated some social tumults and eruptions disseminated through extremist religious and political ideological discourse.

2.5 Saudi Women’s Education in Society

In order to understand Saudi women’s political and social positions, it is essential to understand Saudi women themselves, especially their education and the related issue of inequality, which, together, have played a crucial role in the constriction of gender roles. After the establishment of Saudi Arabia in 1932, it was still well-known as a poor nation, particularly in terms of the education system (Alamri, 2011). There was no official educational system, the girls of well-off and rich families were in, most cases, educated formally at home via private tutors, while the girls from less rich families often attended informal kutab⁶ schools where they could always learn reading and memorise the Qur’an under a motawa, who was a blind religious man, or a motawa'a, a religious woman; however, a huge plurality of girls had absolutely no education aside from the girls who studied at home (Al Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). In 1925, the Directorate of Knowledge was established and was noteworthy for the launch of the initial educational system in Saudi Arabia, which was considered as an educational cornerstone, but for boys only (MOE, 2017). In 1927, the decision was made to launch the initial Council for Knowledge is the main purpose of which was promoting the Saudi educational system

⁶ Kutab is one of the primary places for teaching the Qur’an, religion principles, reading, writing and speech.

for observing and monitoring education in the Hijaz region. The Authority of the Directorate of Knowledge was prevalent over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia establishment. Its main feature was no extra restriction to the monitoring of education in the Hijaz region. It, however, monitored the extraordinary academic affairs in the whole of Saudi Arabia. The Directorate commenced with four schools, later expanding to 323.

However, in the 1950s, following the discovery and production of oil in 1938, it led to transform the Saudi education system as well as many other aspects of the country (Al-Rasheed, 2010). In 1951, the Ministry of Knowledge was established during the reign of King Saud Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud. It was an extended and promoted form of the Directorate of Knowledge. Its main functions were related primarily for planning and observing government Education for boys only in primary, secondary and high schools (MOE, 2017; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). In 1941, the initial private formal girl's school, 'the Madrasat AlBanat AlAhliyah', was launched via Indonesia immigrants who had come to Mecca as pilgrims and decided to settle in Saudi Arabia.

The inception of girls' education in Saudi Arabia was via non-Saudis, which mean that, at that time, there was no interest among Mecca citizens in their daughters' education. Nevertheless, there was foundation, via Saudis, of some schools, such as in Mecca (1947), Jeddah (1956) and Riyadh (1955) (Al Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). After a short time, an incentive was proposed that established and set the policy in motion. In 1955, the Moparat (Foundation) was established by King Saud in Riyadh, and monitored via three of his daughters, initially providing girls with the Ministry of Education curriculum that was prepared for boys, with the addition of some curricula such as embroidery, home economics, sports, and English. In 1959, the first official girls' school was established. However, the establishment of formal education for women led to protests against Prince Faisal (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

In 1960, during the reign of King Faisal Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, the General Presidency for Girls Education was launched, with a budget of approximately \$4.4 million (MOE, 2017). The Presidency was in charge of 15 primary schools and one female teachers' intermediate institute. All Saudi schools at all levels remained gender segregated, and they were controlled and operated by the Department of Religious Guidance until 2002. As education developed, a Royal decree was issued in 2002 to

annex the General Presidency for the Education of girls, under the Ministry of Knowledge. After a year, the name of the Ministry of Knowledge was changed to the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2017). However, the religious conservatives were strongly against the merger with the Ministry of Education (Meijer, 2010).

In addition, gender segregation is maintained in all public spaces, not only schools and universities, but also government offices, charitable organisations, restaurants, and basically everywhere except hospitals. This has become one of Saudi Arabia's identifying features (Le Renard, 2008; Rajkhan, 2014; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). In 1970, the process of reconsidering girls' education was started, especially at university level, the initial girls college was launched in Riyadh under the supervision of the General Presidency for the Education, whereas the education of male students at ministry level had been established earlier in 1957. The national Ministry of Education was subsequently established in 1975 and administered all educational levels for male students only at that time (Alamri, 2011), while the education for females was operated and controlled by the General Presidency of Girls' Education, which is a religious establishment that had a different mission and much less prestige and funding than the Ministry of Education (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013).

Female teachers taught the female students, directly, or by male teachers, indirectly, possibly through the medium of closed-circuit television (CCTV) (Al Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). Moreover, the key objective of the education philosophy for boys and men is teaching them to be good citizens, whereas, for girls and women, it is to teach them to be obedient wives and perfect mothers and prepare them for their limited, restricted future role in society, which is performing household tasks and taking care of their children or working in socially acceptable jobs (Al-Fassi, 2010; Rajkhan, 2014), identified as 'pink-collar' professions such as teaching and nursing (Bernhagen & Gravett, 2017.). This philosophy has dictated education, curriculum, working opportunities and government regulations and has widened the gap between Saudi men and women (Rajkhan, 2014). Those stereotypes can be recognised clearly in the distribution of male and female students in the varied educational fields shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 The Distribution of Students by Gender in Different Educational Fields in 2016-2017

Field of Study	Male	Female	Total	Female	Total
Main Programmes	101,602	70,800	172,402	40.5%	101,602
Islamic Studies	90,329	87,071	177,400	48.5%	101,602
Teacher Training	12,622	49,098	61,720	79.4%	3.7%
Social Sciences	10,040	10,092	20,132	49.6%	1.8%
Art	1,902	8,388	10,290	81.4%	0.6%
Human Studies	9,421	18,323	27,744	66.0%	1.7%
Languages	63,097	120,870	183,967	65.8%	10.9%
Behavioural and Social Sciences	32,472	39,641	72,113	54.8%	4.3%
Press and Media	17,602	10,980	28,582	38.4%	1.7%
Business and Management	22,916	144,201	167,117	86.3%	21.7%
Law	22,043	14,210	36,253	39.2%	2.2%
Life Science	7,998	20,669	28,667	72.1%	1.7%
Environment Protection	2,937	0	2,937	0%	0.2%
Geography	3,743	9,484	13,227	71.7%	0.8%
Physics	18,648	34,080	52,728	64.7%	3.2%
Mathematics and Statistics	12,300	17,941	30,241	59.3%	1.8%
Informatics	04,940	43,004	47,944	89.9%	0.8%
Engineering and Engineering Industries	86,091	2,337	88,428	2.6%	0.3%
Production and transformation industries	1,110	1,798	2,908	61.9%	0.2%
Architecture and construction	20,290	0,003	20,293	100%	1.0%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2,947	1,671	4,618	36.2%	0.3%
Veterinary Medicine	1,030	0	1,030	0%	0.1%
Health	07,940	69,070	77,010	89.6%	7.6%
Social Services	4,004	7,886	11,890	66.4%	7.0%
Personal Services	4,440	12,412	16,852	73.9%	1.0%
Transport Services	99	0	99	0%	0.0%
Security Services	66	0	66	0%	0.0%
Total	871,794	809,119	1,680,913	48.1%	100.0%

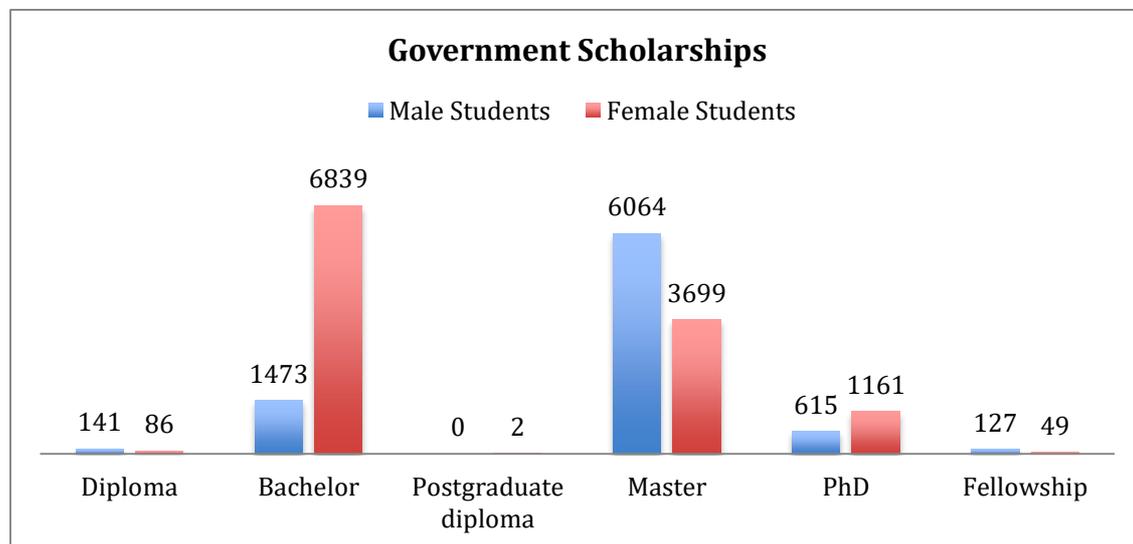
Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2017)

To sum up, the review of the history of education in Saudi Arabia demonstrates that Saudi females have encountered unique challenges realising the aspirations of their education in the face of considerably held conservatism coupled with the firm belief that the natural place of women is in the home, which leads to putting more pressure and restrictions upon women, in particular regarding their education.

2.6 The Current Cultural Context and Women in Senior Leadership Positions

Giving Saudi women access to domestic and international education, as illustrated in Figure 2.2, has not elevated their professional position or academic status (Issa & Siddiek, 2012). With a single exception (Princess Noura University), there is no balance of control between men and women in positions of power despite the great rise in women’s education. Men dominate all higher-level decision-making, planning, and policy-making, including the roles of Minister of Education, Deputy Ministers, University Chancellors, and Vice-Chancellors. In contrast, female academics are allocated only a tiny space in decision-making (MOE, 2017).

Figure 2.2 The Number of Students of Both Genders Studying Abroad on Government Scholarships in 2015–2016



Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2017)

Nevertheless, Arab Muslim women in general, and Saudi women in particular, have witnessed a massive shift linked to modernisation, globalisation, and westernisation over the last three decades (Metcalf, 2008). They have reported great educational achievements and good experiences of employment and have become less enthusiastic

about the traditional role of women (Elamin & Omair, 2010). As seen in Tables 2.3 and 2.4, they have established themselves to some degree as HE professionals

Table 2.2 Academic Ranking of Saudi Male and Female Faculty Members, 2000–2001

Academic ranking	Male	Female
Professor	1163	157
Associate professor	1820	314
Assistant professor	4377	1600
Lecturer	2359	1908
Teaching assistant	2030	2565
Tutors	-	-
Others	1732	656
Total	20,681	7200

Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2017)

Table 2.3 Saudi Faculty Members of Both Genders by Academic Ranking in 2015–2016

Academic ranking	Male	Female
Professor	1,630	227
Associate professor	1,923	714
Assistant professor	4,680	2,812
Lecturer	4,806	6,525
Teaching assistant	9,155	10,635
Tutors	3,962	913
Others	54	25
Total	26,210	21,851

Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2017).

However, practical difficulties and misinterpretations of regulations have led to discrimination against Saudi women, whether students, staff, or faculty, which can be attributed to the religious, political, economic and social systems that keep Saudi women powerless (Al-Fassi, 2010). Saudi education leadership is guided by certain rigid Islamic principles and criteria that all Muslim people must follow. As long as they are working within those parameters, there is much room for each educational establishment to define its character; however, the general ethos and approach to education remains the same (MOE, 2017).

In Saudi Arabia, education is closely managed by middle and senior level agencies (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013), and leaders' behaviours affect the institutions greatly (Taleb, 2010). Therefore, the situation in Saudi Arabia is somewhat unique in that leadership, management, and administration are carried out simultaneously in a segregated context. The education system has received criticism for its secretive approach and the way that it is structured and managed (Mathis, 2010). In 2008, one distinctive feature of the reforms was the establishment of the biggest single-gender women's university in the world (Princess Noura University), which became the first institution to be headed by a woman. However, at all other universities, women's representation at higher administrative levels has been limited.

This is always done through the male Shura Council and the King's representative bodies. At the education leaders' level, gender segregation has resulted in considerable imbalances. Women also do not share sufficiently in the decision-making process at the highest levels of government; men hold all the major upper posts in the Ministry of Education (Al-Munajjed, 2010). Similarly, at the university level, promotion and career advancement decisions are made by those in charge, where females are not represented, leading to further discrimination against female academics and the perpetuation of gender divisions. From the limited number of studies undertaken in sex-segregated cultures, it is apparent that cultural context significantly influences how leadership is conceived and experienced (Shah, 2010) and how gender roles are constructed. The prevailing patriarchal Saudi society and the use of religion to define gender roles have influenced the development of the education system, thus shaping the roles of female academics (Elamin & Omair, 2010). I will review the relevant literature in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Recently, it has been noted that, globally, women are obtaining better recognition and visibility as professionals in institutions. Such trend is associated with multiple factors involving economic growth and political and legal development and changes regarding societal attitudes in relation to working women, in particular married women (Burke & Richardsen, 2016; Powell, 2010). However, despite the growth of the contribution of women in labour markets around the world, they remain unable to obtain equality with their male counterparts (WEF, 2017). A great body of research on the career progress of women to senior leadership indicates that the most qualified and experienced women are still facing a glass ceiling (Karam & Afiouni, 2014; Powell, 2010; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011a; 2011b).

Such phenomena can be attributed to many factors, including gender discrimination in both recruiting and promotion (Alimo-Metcalf, 2010a); job segregation by gender, class, and race (Barone, 2011; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Caner et al., 2016); the exclusion of women from male developmental networks (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Cobb, 1982); fundamentally patriarchal socio-cultural norms, in particular in the Arab Muslim region (Karam & Afiouni, 2014); and expectations that women will go into 'feminine fields' (Hutchings et al., 2012).

This chapter is organised into sections based on major themes related to the research questions. In the first section, there is a discussion of the social construction of gender. This is followed by a concise background on Islamic perspectives regarding the status of Muslim women and their roles in the community. Following this, I will then discuss to what extent the culture of Muslim and Arab states promotes gender equality, I will then narrow my focus of discussion on Saudi Arabia, the context of the current study, and investigate to what extent the country's culture and policy reinforces gender segregation. This is followed by a brief analysis of the research on women's progress into leadership positions and the factors that hinder it at personal, social, and institutional levels. After this, I will discuss the support that can be provided to Saudi women to enable them to overcome such gender-related issues. The last section of this chapter presents the

underpinning models and theories that will guide the current study and clarify the factors that impact the career progress of Saudi women from academia to senior management posts in higher education.

3. 2 The Social Construction of Gender

Before proceeding to examine whether Arabic Muslim societies in general, and Saudi society, in particular supports gender equality, it seems necessary to conceptualise gender and how it is constructed, the roles of culture and religion, and in particular the concepts of *Ird*, *sharf* (honour), and *aiab* (shame), since all the named aspects interweave and play substantial roles in the social construction of gender.

For many people, talking about gender is like a fish talking about water (Lorber, 1994, p.111). These people recognise gender as almost an activity of daily routine. It has been argued that gender is often produced and reproduced out of human social life and interactions or that it is a human creation that relies on everyone constantly ‘doing gender’ (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Everybody does gender without thinking about it. Gender is identified as important and familiar aspects of the daily lives of individuals, in which there is often deliberate disruption of people’s expectations in relation to how both men and women are assumed to act in keeping with how it has been created. Gender signals and signs are very widespread whereby people, in most cases, fail to pay attention to and notice them, except if they are enigmatic or missing (Lorber, 1994, p. 36).

Therefore, it seems problematic, until we have conveniently located the other individual in the status of gender, otherwise, people feel socially dislocated. Furthermore, in society, for men and women, that status might be transsexual (a person who has sex change surgery) or transvestite (an individual who dresses in opposite-gender clothes). Transsexuals and transvestites carefully construct the status of their gender via dressing, walking, speaking and gesturing in ways that are prescribed for men or women, whichever they want to be taken for, just as any normal person (Lorber, 1994, p. 36).

The construction of gender is generally initiated at birth through sex assignment based on genitalia (Lorber, 1994). Sex then determines gender status through naming, dress, and other such gender markers. Once a child’s gender is evident to society, it treats those

of one gender differently from those of the other, and the children respond to the different types of treatment by feeling different and behaving differently (Lorber, 1994, p. 112). As a social institution, gender is a complex process of producing distinguishable social statuses in relation to the assignment of rights and responsibilities and then stratifying and ranking such statuses unevenly (Lorber, 1994). Fundamentally, gender is a social construct, whereas sex is a biological category (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012). This further implies that, unlike biological sex, which results from the differing physiological makeup of males and females, gender identity results from the norms of behaviour imposed on men and women by culture and religion (Rwafa, 2016), social interactions, or the dominant ideas of a particular culture or era (Weiner, 2010).

Culture, as a concept, exists on the societal level, grouping individuals who live and think in a similar way and providing them with common rules of behaviour, social organisation, and collective identity (Kuper, 1999). Culture can be classified into two categories, both of which are relevant to this study: first, *social culture* pertains to an individual's form of social organisation—how people interact and organise themselves in groups; and second, *ideological culture* includes what people think, value, believe, and hold as ideals. Patriarchy is 'a fluid and shifting set of social relations where men exercise varying degrees of power and control' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992 p. 3) and a societal structure that socialises men into such a dominant status, partly by placing them in positions of public or domestic authority (which, in turn, reinforce the other social roles).

Religion is often understood to refer to individual belief and spirituality, which can shape people's relationships with each other and with God or other spiritual forces (Rwafa, 2016). Therefore, it can be regarded as a part of culture in a wide sense and be institutionalised as such; it plays out within bureaucratic institutions that are focal points for economic and political power within the community. These features render religion less amenable to external adaptive pressures. Change should be wrought by the religious hierarchy in society and conform to religious dogmas (Hajj & Panizza, 2009).

The notion of *ird* is often linked with individual and family honour, specifically in relation to the chastity of women. The term does not occur in the Qur'an. However, it appeared amongst Arabs in pre-Islam. It has been highlighted in Hadith. As discussed by

Patai (1983), the term *ird* seems to not have a religious value but rather a secular value. Studying *ird* appears more sensitive than other things Baki (2004) and Soffan (1980) hold similar perspectives, which is that *ird* is, by and large, a sensitive concept, especially among the life of Arabs, that “‘woman is the repository of moral deeds in her family, thus she can destroy the honour of the family. She carries her family honour with her even after marriage and she continues to represent her family through modesty” (p. 18).

Honour, shame, and *ird* have massive impacts in patriarchal societies, particularly in terms of women’s roles in their communities and public life and their reputations (Wikan, 1984). In the Muslim context, Shah (2009) conceptualised *sharf* (honour) as ‘a notion defined through actions and activities’ that emerge from socio-cultural discourses ‘to centralise power to maintain control’ (p. 366). Wikan (1984) viewed *sharf* as:

a word with a very special quality. Unlike most of the words used in anthropology, it holds an alluring, even seductive appeal. I think its spell derives from its archaic and poetic overtones: it harks back to more glorious times when men were brave, honest, and principled. (What women were is beside the point, since they, in both anthropological and popular conceptions, have no honour of their own to defend.) This unacknowledged evocative quality has diverted the anthropological treatment of honour away from a concern with meaning in everyday life towards normative moral discourse among men. In the process, questions about the other half of humanity—if, how, and in what respect they might think and act in terms of, and indeed possess, honour—have been virtually unexplored. (p. 635)

Further, Wikan has defined shame as follows:

With shame it is different. ‘Shame’ is neither archaic nor poetic, but simply the reverse side of the coin—or so the literature would have one believe. Indicative of acts that are disgraceful, vulgar, or simply bad, it holds no fascination except in so far as it directs the listener’s attention to its contrast, honour. Could this be why those who study honour and shame always insist that they are binary terms and always focus their discussion on honour, as if it were dominant? This begs crucial questions, the answers to which might shed light on the

relationship between the two, the problem of what they mean, and whether they do indeed constitute a pair in the minds and hearts of people who purportedly live by them. (p. 635)

Wikan attempts to venture several generalisations to the contrary. To begin with, for great numbers of individuals in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, it may be shame instead of honour that is the common concern. In addition, it may not be self-evident that honour is a binary contrast to shame. In many communities, the evidence suggests that shame places an individual in opposition against the community more considerably. Additionally, while honour is an aspect of a person, shame may be attributed merely to an act (Wikan, 1984). Furthermore, honour and shame are ascribed through social interaction, so any evaluation of either should be anchored in a contextual analysis to identify, in each case, its public nature and where the power lies to grant or withhold honour or shame—in the everyday life context, not just in select discourse. Failure to do that may lead to a curious position, where the relevant community for women is a public gathering of men (Wikan, 1984).

Therefore, almost all Arab Muslim countries' context involving Saudi society is traditionally classified via men into prime separate spaces; which are the public and private spaces. The public spaces are the area of political activity and business that are regarded as the domain of men (Al-Munajjed, 2010). Thus, political, and religious, and economic activity is linked with the males, whereas women are forced to belong solely to the private space. This domain space is connected with the home, family life, intimate relationships, kinsmen or family members and gardens. Therefore, the private domain, in most cases, is regarded as a sanctuary and a retreat that a man has to keep and conserve it safely and reassured (Deaver, 1980). Thus, individuals from Arab Muslim world always sensitive and concern to what belongs to the private domains and also to what belongs to the public domains (Al-Munajjed, 2010).

3.3 An Islamic Perspective on the Status of Women

Over the last 1,400 years, women's rights as mothers, daughters, wives and sisters were outlined under Islam based on the precepts of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad, and they were afforded complete honour and privilege (Abou-Bakr, 2010). These primary sources demonstrate the religious foundation of gender equality. In the

same vein, Islam is the foundation of one of the rights that currently exists. These values accorded to women ensure that they are recognised as fully equal to men in several aspects, such as their rights, duties and obligations in respect to their individual and professional lives (Gupta, Turban, Wasti, & Sikdar, 2009). The following discussion will illustrate the most appropriate views of the status of Muslim women according to both sources, the Qur'an and Sunnah, wherein can be found considerable emphasis on stimulating gender equity and equality by emphasising that women, equal to men in many aspects, must be the masters of their own fortunes and possessions (Shah, 2010).

Practising gender segregation in the Arab and Muslim world is not a new phenomenon; it is firmly rooted in Arabic tradition pre-Islam. Their perspective seems very traditional regarding identifying gender roles in society. They hold a strong belief that men have the responsibility for working outside of the home and offering a safe, secure and stable life for their household members, wife and children, whereas, for women, their roles and obligations are limited inside the home: raising and caring for their children, taking care of their own affairs and serving their husbands. As stated in the Quran, some Arabic clans and tribes in the past regarded that having a girl baby was a flawed and shameful event, and such perspective was mentioned as a vice, requiring Arab Muslims to change their attitudes. For instance, in (verses) 58 (Surat An-Nahl 16:

“And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief! He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonour or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision” (al-Qur'an 16:58).

Also in the Qur'an, Surah: 4 – An-Nisa (The Women), it clearly expounds that both man and woman have been created from a single entity and are basically equal genders (Abu-Lughod, 2013). As a gender, one is not superior to the other (Tahir-Ul-Qadri, 2011):

“O mankind! Fear your Lord Who (initiated) your creation from a single soul, then from it created its mate, and from these two spread (the creation of) countless men and women.” (al-Qur'an, 4:1).

Moreover, in the following verse of the Qur'an, it points out that it is the right of men to enjoy the duties of the women and the duties of men are to serve the rights of women. This signifies a similitude between both men and women. There is no right conferred on man that a woman may be deprived of simply because she is a woman:

“Women too have rights over men similar to the rights of men over women.” (al-Qur'an, 2:228).

However, in the next Qur'an verse, it indicates the superiority of men by virtue of their obligations and the responsibility of the maintenance and protection of women and the fulfilment of their rights. Owing to their nature, which makes them stronger, more tolerant and responsible in reference to the mundane matters of life, men are, therefore, held superior to women in the grades of responsibility. The social and societal structure of Islam depends on the system of family, which can only be secure and safe if made subservient to natural discipline (Tahir-Ul-Qadri, 2011).

“Men, however, have an advantage over them.” (al-Qur'an, 2:228).

Further, with respect to the Arabic word 'qawwam' used in the next verse, according to the Arabic usage, it suggests promotion, protection and supervision. The relation between rights and duties in Islam is mutual and is not possible to be compartmentalised. On the other hand, men have been made more responsible regarding social performance and economic duties. Maintenance of women is the basic obligation of men under the law and Islamic teaching. At no place has this obligation been imposed on women. Therefore, women have been freed of any political and economic obligations, and social burdens. However, they have been offered more freedom than men under specific regulations and rules, and the opportunities for women to capitalise on them are greater than those enjoyed by men (Tahir-Ul-Qadri, 2011).

“Men are guardians and managers over women.” (al-Qur'an, 4:34).

Unfortunately, the majority of Muslims strongly believe that the meaning of the previous verse is that men are their protectors and providers, and, as such, they have superiority over women. Therefore, most Muslims use this verse to explain and justify the male role as head of the household, in having the authority for making the final

decision, and, in most cases, as having spiritual authority over the family especially their wife (Tahir-Ul-Qadri, 2011).

Furthermore, regarding financial matters, according to Qur'anic teaching, it is clear that, for both men and women, this involves what they earn. While women have not been burdened with any the family's financial obligations, this has been squarely placed on the shoulders of men; they have the full responsibility for ensuring the fulfilment of woman rights even though the women might be earning the same as them. Thus, women have no duties or responsibility to bear the financial burden of their family. Whatever they earn is their personal income to which men cannot stake any legal claim. However, it would be regarded as an act of benevolence on the part of a woman if both of them voluntarily spend on the wellbeing of their children. But, regardless of whether they earn or not, they have been offered a complete economic maintenance's guarantee; men have the responsibility for that, as revealed in the Qur'an, 4:32:

“Men will have a share of what they earn, and women will have a share of what they earn.”

As far as women's education is concerned, there are strong historical indications that both men and women were viewed as being equal under Islam, for example, in terms of pursuing their education and knowledge (Abdul Ghani, 2011). The Prophet Muhammad was the initial educator in Islam for both men and women, and this is indicative that men and women are both accorded the right to education (Abu-Lughod, 2013). The acquisition of knowledge and education is substantial and is an obligation imposed upon male and female Muslims alike, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad:

“The knowledge's seeking is obligatory for every Muslim..” (Al-Hakim al- Tirmidhi, Hadith Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 74).

Additionally, just like their male counterparts, women are accorded full freedom of expression, and, based on the various examples from the Qur'an and the history of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad and other Muslim leaders have respected the role of Muslim women and their authority in decision-making. For this reason, their views should be taken under consideration and not ignored on account of their gender

(Abdalla, 1996; 2014). In fact, throughout the history of Islam, several women have confronted the great scholars of their time when they felt that their rights and interests, granted to them by both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, were being neglected (Seedat, 2013).

Furthermore, Muslim women, even as early as the seventh century, actively participated in affairs such as trade and industry (Abdul Ghani, 2011). Islam does not prohibit women from seeking employment. Indeed, such a prohibition would be a violation of the law of Islam (Alsaleh, 2012) in that the Qur'an indicates, "to both men and women what they deserve; however, ask God of his bounty" (Qur'an, Surah Al-Nisa). Under the tenets of Islam, men and women are given the same duties and equal rewards (Alsaleh, 2012); thus, the variation in the treatment of Muslim women in different Islamic countries can be attributed to cultural differences and not to Islamic teachings. In some cases, such variations are caused by misinterpretation of the authentic sources, namely, the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Elamin & Omair, 2010; Metcalfe, 2010; Shah, 2017).

To conclude, it appears that, from the above discussion and presentation of Islamic views on the status of women, religiously this concept or attitude of gender discrimination has no basis in Islamic principles (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Metcalfe, 2010; Shah, 2017); indeed, it has been structured on a traditional historical perspective on gender roles that occurred pre-Islam. This traditional view always contributes to the creation of a masculine domain, resulting in separation of gender and the prominent identification of gender role in society wherein dominance and authority are exclusively for men over women (Karam & Afiouni, 2014). In contrast, some Muslim perspectives have stressed that the prime Islamic resources, such as the Qur'an and the Hadith, and prior historical practices, have suggested that the gender segregation phenomenon has not appeared in recent years as an Islamic order (Alsaleh, 2012).

3.4 To What Extent Do Muslim and Arab States Promote Gender Equality?

In most Arabic societies, the social structure is completely reliant on Islam (Alami, 2013). It has been observed that, over the past two decades, the Arab country societies have seen sharp and considerable changes, both politically and socially, along with their continuing economic development (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011b), the strengthening of state ideology, and urbanisation—all of which factors impact gender equality (Alsaleh, 2012).

Such developments have contributed to opening up the Arab world's economies to foreign investment and skilled labour. This, in turn, has led to a massive transformation of the workforce and of the employment opportunities for women, affording an enhancement of the overall economic, political, social and educational status of women in most Arab countries (Metcalf, 2008).

It is only in recent times that, in some regions, Arab women have been enabled to access managerial positions, albeit with certain power restrictions (Alami, 2013; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011b). However, each situation varies and is unique according to its own society, for example, in countries such as Lebanon (Rishani et al., 2015) and Jordan (Al-Manasra, 2013) whose cultures are based on elements of Arabic and Islam but with a more substantial influence from the Western world in terms of modernity and freedom than other Arab states (Alami, 2013). The evidence illustrates that, even though a great number of women in those countries are well-educated and highly skilled with rich experience, they remain at the lower levels of the leadership hierarchy in most fields (Al-Manasra, 2013; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011b).

Likewise, the countries mentioned above, as is the case with any other Arab states that have a strong religious identity and Muslim adherence (Moghadam, 2012; Shah, 2017), are all considerably less pro-gender equality and opportunity for women than the non-Arab Muslim states (Moghadam, 2012). This gender gap includes human capital investment in education, training and the development of skills and competencies (Metcalf, 2011). Human capital theory posits that investment in education translates into economic benefits and individual opportunities and rewards (Becker, 2010). This recognition may also shape behaviour among both men and women in their pursuit of these rewards. The theory also suggests that unequal treatment between men and women in work settings is an expected outcome of their position in the labour market (Becker, 2010), which, in turn, affects organisations' structures and practices in regard to recruiting Arab women (Abalkhail, 2017).

It also reflects the traditional bias of leadership with men dominating the top senior positions, whereas working women are excluded from the process of decision-making and are powerless. This negative attitude can be attributed, in many cases, to poor governance with attempts to infuse better gender parity into existing laws often giving

rise to conservative reactions, resulting in the reviews of existing laws or the promulgation of new ones that are often less liberal than the official declarations or the emerging social norms and practices (Abalkhail, 2017; ElKhouly & El Sedfy, 2014). In addition, core traditional social forces are considered to be the prime forces behind the discrepancy between the influx of qualified women into the labour market and the poor employment opportunities and provisions available to them (Fagenson, 1994) under the existing gender-biased legal systems and governance structures (Metcalf, 2011).

Gender stereotypes roles, patriarchal kinship patterns, the social subordination of women, ingrained male dominance structures (Al-Malki et al., 2012) and conservative orientation regarding the role of women (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011b) all limit women to domestic work and reproduction. However, these attitudes or roles are often not written into the policies or in the constitution to direct the practices and the structure of organisations (Becker, 2010; Berkery et al., 2013; Michailidis et al., 2012). They are also linked to *urf* (societal norms)⁷ (Yamamah, 2016). However, several authors emphasise that *urf* did not originate in Islam, but rather from tribal norms and traditional customs, some of which were pre-Islamic. It should be clearly understood that Islam is not against women's economic participation; in fact, it encourages it and discourages the belief that a woman's place is in the home — a belief caused by misinterpreting the Qur'an (Abdul Ghani, 2011).

With respect to Islamic teachings, the Qur'an acknowledges the biological differences between men and women and asserts that they have complementary roles in life (Metcalf, 2010). This is in distinct opposition to Arab gender relationships and roles, which hold, for example, that a woman will marry early and that her contribution to the family will be as a homemaker, while the man will lead and financially support and protect his household (Metcalf, 2011). The male custodianship role laid out in the Qur'an was traditionally used by male family members to exercise their authority over women in all areas of private and public decision-making, often disregarding women's education and experience (Metcalf, 2011; Karam & Afiouni, 2014). However, even

⁷ *Urf* is considered as an Islamic and Arabic term related to the custom or knowledge of a given community. To be recognised in an Islamic society, *urf* must be consistent with Sharia law. When applied, it might contribute to the deprecation or inoperability of a specific aspect of *fiqh* (Yamamah, 2016).

though tradition imposes a religious dominance in Muslim and Arab states, that does not automatically mean that Islam has had detrimental effects on promoting gender equality in those countries (Al-Malki et al., 2012). In fact, studies reveal that the observance of Islamic principles actually lessens incidents of discrimination against Muslim women.

However, the idea of Arab women as being passive persists “in the western myth that the powerlessness of Arab women must be a congenital condition of Arab/Islamic cultures” (Al-Malki et al., 2012, p. 23). Moghadam (2012) also highlights that some of the specific perspectives that are argued by critics of Islam as being indicative of a gender-biased theology are also present in other religions; for example, considering women as mothers and daughters first and foremost is strongly upheld amongst Orthodox Jews. In addition, various cultures, either do or do not segregate jobs according to gender lines, for instance, in administration and education or medicine and nursing (Morley, 2014).

It may then be questioned as to why Muslim nations are singled out for holding gender biases similar to those of non-Muslim nations (Elamin & Omair, 2010). Socio-cultural values in the Arab region prevent freedom of career choice for both men and women. The occupational structures are, thus, remarkably gendered; for instance, most women are employed in the health, education and social care sectors (Metcalf, 2008). In addition, the predicament is further complicated by development planners who customarily evaluate women’s needs on the basis of traditional gender roles (Abalkhail, 2017; Elkhoully & El Sedfy, 2014).

In summary, it seems needful to signify that, in regard to the status of Muslim women in Arab states, it is inaccurate to associate with the presumed intrinsic properties of the religion. The notion is extremely facile (Elamin & Omair, 2010). Since interpretations of Islamic teaching are highly variable, and some historical events have increased the domination of Arabic men in Gulf society (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013) and other Muslim majority nations, the majority of scholars do not believe that the gender gap in the Muslim nations is a product of Islam per se, but, rather, due to different implementations of the principles of the Islamic faith, which renders the status of women in the Muslim world different from country to country (Shah, 2017). Western scholars who debate the position of Arab and Muslim women’s education seem

unfamiliar with Islamic religion, or even its ideologies in terms of education.

Many argue that Islam, as the dominant religion of the region, is the prime factor behind some presentations against the education of women, it also discounts Islamic principles that enforce teachings that support the education of both males and females in terms of their education. It seems that the Quranic verses invite the utilising of the intellect for developing in-depth understanding. All in all, there is a great deal of confusion with regard to what 'real' Islam is and what has merely become culturally linked with Islam. Thus, all the discussed actors have contributed to the varied negative influences and implications that affect the roles Arab and Muslim women, including Saudi women, can play (Metcalf, 2010). This can lead to increased emphasis on the importance of allocating particular gender roles, which can be important in supporting gender stereotypes, in an undirected way (Alimo & Metcalfe, 2010a; Berkery et al., 2013).

3.5 To What Extent Does Saudi Culture Reinforce Gender Equality?

In Saudi Arabia, the monarchy's legitimacy is founded in *Sharia* law, as noted previously. The Saudi Basic Law consists of 83 articles, of which the first holds the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the main sources of the constitution (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013), thus emphasising and ensuring that religious institutions have a fundamental role in the country's governance and in daily life (Rajkhan, 2014). Qur'anic teachings express respect towards women in explicit terms and encourage equality; for example, the quest for education and work is a duty for all Muslims, both men and women. The Qur'an also indicates that women, like men, should be the masters of their possessions and fortunes (Shah, 2010).

Nevertheless, gender equality in Saudi Arabia has been the topic of many studies (e.g. Freedom House, 2010; Profanter et al., 2014) thanks to the unfavourable social and governmental conditions that beset the women of Saudi Arabia before King Abdullah came to the throne (Rajkhan, 2014). To illustrate, there is an obvious disparity in literacy and education between Saudi women and men (Profanter et al., 2014) as well as in the participation of women in paid labour, in particular in mixed gender fields, which still elicits social stigma and impedes the career advancement of women. In addition, women are still subject to restrictive laws (Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013); for example, they are subject to travel bans and cannot leave home without a chaperone. This leads to

excluding women from public places and their contribution in the process of decision-making, rendering them being powerless, resulting in their under-representation in senior positions (Abdalkhail, 2017; Abdul Ghani, 2011).

Through reviewing the history of Islam, it is found that women were not prohibited from mixing with men, but, on the contrary, they were allowed to mix with them in places of worship and mosques; not only that, but they also had an considerable role in society, including the fields of commerce, education and nursing (Abu-Shuqqah, 1999; Zant 2002;). On the other hand, over time, the revision of Saudi historiography and ideology confirmed the many accepted gendered cultural practices in Saudi Arabia today, including prohibiting women from driving, and barring them from studying certain subjects or working in particular fields. This, promoted by the governmental policy, led to forcing women to be dependent on their Mharram; for instance, women have to get their Mharram's permission for travelling, studying even primary education, or applying for a job even if it is related to a feminine field. The long-standing gender segregation in public spaces and treating women as not mature citizens have no any established basis in religious teachings, rather, it is related to multiple factors (Al-Heiss, 2012; Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013).

For instance, a major factor occurred around the 1980s with the *Sahwa* movement and conservative *ulama* who claimed that their aim was enforcing 'moral' public behaviour. Therefore, they maintained that gender separation, based on Islamic teaching, since the Islamic religion stimulates virtue and chasteness are essential for respecting an individual's ird (Zant, 2002). That enabled those groups to deliberately silence the voices of Saudi women in the name of Islam for their own agenda (Le Renard, 2008; Meijer, 2010). The significant role it has played in the construction of a restricted gender role and the social role for women is one main example, and this has involved forcing Saudi women out of public roles and relegating them to the private sphere and the role of supporting men (Le Renard, 2008; Rajkhan, 2014).

Conservative groups insist that Saudi women must be prevented from seeking paid work and emphasise their key social role of conducting domestic tasks and taking care of their children, and offering them their help (Meijer, 2010), linking these attitudes to Islamic instructions. Through their extremist misinterpretations of the prime religious

resources, these, with time, have become part of Saudi culture, traditions and practices. However, it is questioned whether those religious groups have forgotten the needs of the children, such as in the case of divorce. For example, women rarely take custody of their children in the event of a divorce, although this is against Islam, which gives women the right to look after their children unless they are immoral or have behavioural problems (Meijer, 2010).

Their point of view considers gender segregation as paramount for *sharf* and *ird*, protecting and preventing any shameful attitudes or actions, which, in turn, leads to an entrenched belief that gender segregation emerged from basic Islamic teaching (Al-Munajjed, 2010; Baki, 2004; Patai, 1983; Zant, 2002). Thus, the strong belief of the majority of Saudi citizens is that gender separation is a religious order from our God (Allah) and his messenger (Mohammed – Peace be upon him), and also their firm belief is that mixing genders is considered as a sinful practice. Therefore, the notion has solidified through the fundamental values of clans and tribes, and has been sanctioned and empowered institutionally via both the Saudi state and Wahhabism ideology (Achoui, 2006). Hence, the contemporary Saudi community has been structured in order to maintain both Islamic religion and the culture of *ird*, *sharf* (honour), and *aiab* (shame), within strictly identified limits, which helps in reducing the probability of losing them, since they are linked strongly with women's sanctity. Hence, accordingly, a great deal of restrictions has been imposed over women due to the fact that the concept of the honour of tribe and family is firmly associated to *ird*. Women are very likely to lose their *ird* if they commit adultery or even if they attempt to do so; once *ird* is lost, it is very hard to be re-obtained even after several generations (Al-Munajjed, 2010).

Aside from the adverse influence of traditional social forces, Saudi women have to deal with the sexist legal systems attuned to this ideology; in particular, in terms of the Personal Status Law, which is considered an embodiment of gender discrimination in the region (Elamin & Omair, 2010) and one of the greatest obstacles inhibiting women leaders from accessing the upper echelons (Monroe et al., 2008). As recently as 2001, a Saudi woman was regarded as an extension of her male guardians. Saudi women have no national identity at all (ID); however, the only form of the initial ID they can have is associated with their father and is known as the family's identity card. Later on, if she gets married, her name will be added to the family card of her husband, in the same way

as the death of her father where the guardianship is transferred to her nearest male kin (Alireza, 1987; Hamdan, 2005).

The lack of appropriate national identity prevents women from obtaining their independence and freedom and is brought about to establish many forms of gender segregation as the role of Saudi women should be dependent fully on her *Mharram* due to general stereotypes about their capabilities and also for maintaining the family structure and hence, of that of the society (Alireza, 1987). In addition, Saudi women are not allowed to drive or travel alone with no guardian (*Mharram*), or drives. Therefore, gender segregation is considered cultured in Saudi society since it is claimed that it is an ideal and perfect approach for censorship that helps in preventing them from committing vice and adultery, or any similar sins. It is important to mention that, in Saudi society, losing ird is linked with females only, not with male chastity (Alireza, 1987).

With respect to the education system in Saudi Arabia, it can be identified by certain distinctive characteristics, such as government funding, availability to citizens, focus on Islamic teaching, not being compulsory, centralised control, and gender segregation at all levels, with separate curricula for boys and girls (Kattan et al., 2016; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Gender discrimination in Saudi society has been supported by the education system, which plays a crucial role in perpetuating gender roles and distinctions by placing women in a subordinate status through the curriculum and the lack of supportive policies and system for women's education.

To illustrate, this might be related to the time when formal education for women began in 1959 (Al-Fassi, 2010), but an enormous number of people subsequently staged demonstrations in opposition to it. This was followed by giving religious establishments autonomy in running women's formal education (Al-Fassi, 2010), through the General Presidency for Girls' Education. However, this body does not enjoy the same status and prestige as the Ministry of Education. The conservative religious scholars have approved Saudi female education, but only under a set of particular philosophy, restrictions and conditions.

The core objective of this emerged education philosophy was to train and teach young female students to be obedient wives and perfect mothers, whilst boys were trained to be

good and qualified citizens who would be able to contribute to development and serve their country (Alireza, 1987; Hamdan, 2005). Thus, in order to normalise the variation of the role based on gender ideologies according to the conservative religious scholars, which are often associated to socioeconomic values and traditions, it obtained legal force in Saudi society by being connected to Islamic principles and teaching. It was made possible through the content of curriculum at all school levels for both male and female students (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). By limiting the fields open to women, female students were encouraged to study more 'feminine' subjects, for example. Social science (Metcalf, 2008), while boys were encouraged to take 'masculine' subjects, such as engineering science (Metcalf, 2008).

The variation in the aim of education for both male and female students is demonstrated clearly, especially at college and as postgraduates. It has generated significant social and professional obstacles and restrictions over Saudi women preventing them from accessing certain fields and occupations and stressing the importance of their role with family rather than progressing in their career path. Of all the female Saudi graduates in 2007, 93% were qualified in the fields of education, teaching, or human sciences (Al-Munajjed, 2010). An example of the professional restrictions imposed over women is related to excluding them from the field of engineering. To illustrate, female students are allowed to access engineering fields to some extent, in that they are enabled for studying computer science engineering and internal design engineering; however, other areas of engineering, such as, petroleum engineering, chemical engineering and electrical engineering, are forbidden.

That is attributed to the lack of employment opportunities available for women in the named fields. Such controlling of women's access to the labour market, despite being relatively highly qualified and educated, along with the lack of exploitation and consumption of their qualifications and skills via the labour market, has led to provoke a productivity crisis in the labour force in Saudi Arabia. In addition, in relation to the academic sector, current governmental policies and laws often keep women in secondary ranks, even when the purpose is to incorporate them into the economy; for example, in Saudi higher education institutions, the Heads of Departments are almost invariably men, whereas women serve as supervisors or deputies in the female sections (Abdalkhail, 2017).

The schools for female students are encompassed by high walls, which are supported by screens behind the entrance gate area (Hamdan, 2005). Every school, college or university for female students is assigned at least two male guards, whose age often ranges around the 50s or 60s. Their main duties and responsibility are checking the identity of people who enter the female institutions, and also picking up and delivering the mail and, overall, to safeguard the female students and staff inside their educational institutions until they are collected by their male relatives, such as fathers, brothers, husband or son (Alireza, 1987; Hamdan, 2005; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). In relation to Physical Education and related facilities for fitness, these are not available for female institutions. The school buses for female students or staff have, in most cases, tough and rigorous rules (Hamdan, 2005), such as the bus drivers should be selected from among elderly men. Buses must also be entered by the rear door, which is often monitored by a woman, who should be a relative of the driver (Alireza, 1987). This is linked to the fact that talking to Saudi women directly is socially and culturally unacceptable, alongside the Saudi policy prohibiting women from driving; hence, they depend on male drivers and the associated restrictions.

Furthermore, forms of gender segregation in Saudi Arabian society have been manifested in the access to public libraries. Saudi women are not able to enjoy the 200 libraries predominately connected with religious organisations, schools, universities and or even the 70 public libraries unless via a *Mharram* liaison and in limited visiting hours. The female sections in public libraries are very small, lack facilities and are poorly equipped (Arebi, 1994). In March 1989, Saudi women were eventually enabled to access King Abdul Aziz General Library in Riyadh. Such rigid rules and restrictions would explain the consequent low productivity of research and decline in their scientific achievement. Which will, in turn, affect their opportunities in gaining promotion in academia compared to their male counterparts (Arebi, 1994). As a consequence, under an educational philosophy that was heavily influenced by the religious dictates of conservative scholars, women were marginalised (Caner et al., 2016). The variety of options open to men naturally increases the possibility of their landing a job after college. This perpetuates a gendered imbalance in professional settings that helps to maintain traditional gender roles throughout society (Baki, 2004).

On the other hand, and although at a slower tempo, in recent years certain improvements have been made in the social and political conditions of women in Saudi Arabia (Sonbol, 2012; Taleb, 2010); these changes are associated with political pressure from trading partners and have resulted in major changes in the country's institutions (Abdalkhail, 2017; Sonbol, 2012). In particular, after September 11, 2001, women's position came to be demarcated by *ikhtilat*.⁸ Empowering women and enhancing their status during the reign of King Abdullah. At the same time, these developments have led to a widening of the gap between conservatives and reformists (liberals, the so-called *libraliyyin*)⁹. The *ulama* and the religious police consider any attempt to demolish the demarcation as a direct attack on the foundations of Islam (Meijer, 2010).

The influence of the conservative clerics has, thus, lessened, as seen in the establishment of the Princess Noura University, which offers courses for women without requiring the consent of the conservatives. Generally, however, women still have to conform to the demands of the clerical elite (Doumato, 2012). With all the mentioned challenges, reforming the higher education sector has become a prime objective of the government. This objective has been framed in order to improve the status of women in Saudi Arabia, pave the way for increasing the number of public universities, and allow the establishment of private colleges and universities, thus leading to improved gender equality. The recent statistics from 2017 indicate that the number of women studying in public and private Saudi universities has grown sharply (MOE, 2017).

Thus, Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in ensuring women's rights in the current century not only in educational contexts, but also elsewhere; for instance, women are now given a voice in the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia (MOE, 2017), and a royal decree has made it possible for them to vote in municipal elections (Doumato, 2012). In addition, legislation passed to promote women's rights has resulted in the creation of government posts where women are commissioned or appointed. In fact, the first woman to hold a senior post (Deputy Minister of Education) was appointed by King Abdullah in 2009 (*The Economist*, 2014). King Abdullah also made

⁸ *Ikhtilat* refers to the mixing of genders.

⁹ Reformists related to open-minded functionaries and intellectuals (liberals, the so-called "libraliyyin"), who believed reform was the only way to save the country.

international scholarships accessible to Saudi women (Doumato, 2012) under certain conditions, such as the existence of a *Mharram* able to accompany the woman during her study abroad (Ertürk, 2009; Rajkhan, 2014).

It can be concluded that the idea that gender segregation in Saudi Arabia has mainly been legitimised on religious grounds is, indeed, inaccurate (Maber, 2014), or that it is according to the interpretation of religious texts by extremist men in power (Gupta et al., 2009; Kauser, 2011; Shah, 2010). Rather, it is a result of the patriarchal interpretation of Islam that has affected the position of female leaders (or the leadership positions available to women) by linking to modesty and morality issues, as interpreted by the Saudi patriarchy; this involves substantive aspects of the Muslim faith, such as maintaining sexual purity, veiling and avoiding direct contact with non-*Mharram* men (Abdalkhail, 2017). Nevertheless, these practices have been detrimental to them and have helped to reinforce their invisibility; as noted by Shah (2010, p. 36): “Leadership is underpinned by visibility, while veiling and segregation aim for invisibility. The essential tension between the two makes it a challenge to define female leadership in segregated societies.”

3.6 Major Constraints on Advancement that Saudi Women Encounter During their Career Journey to the Upper Echelons

At least some literature has sought to investigate the key factors inhibiting the career progress of women to the upper echelons of leadership from varied angles: Shah (2012), and Smith (2011). Generally speaking, these studies indicated the overlapping and complex issues that obstruct women’s career progress, especially in more male-dominated fields (Abdalla, 2014; Abu-Tineh, 2013; Al-Manasra, 2013). Some related factors include socialisation and stereotyping at personal levels (micro), social levels (macro), and institutional levels (meso), which are described by Abdalkhail (2017), Powell (2010), and Smith (2011); the effect of these issues can be summarised as denying women agency (Smith, 2011). Here, I follow the theoretical perspective of the gender—organisation—system model (GOS) by Fagenson (1990), which breaks factors down into individual, cultural, and structural or institutional barriers (Monroe et al., 2008; Morley, 2014; Shah & Baporikar, 2013).

3.6.1 Individual Perspectives and Related Policies (Micro)

In relation to individual perspectives and the relevant policies, the gender-centred perspective (Fagenson, 1990; Timmers et al., 2010) attributes phenomena such as lack of women in upper leadership to the variation between genders in terms of psychological traits and socialisation backgrounds, which leads to variation in work orientation or choice of career. The common expectation of certain professional qualities in both men and women in the work field is common to all job types, though the specific qualities vary; therefore, certain work is often classified as being more suitable for males or females depending on its characteristics. This trait is a prerequisite for successful leaders, and its lack is said to result in the obstacles that women face in advancement to the highest leadership positions (Abdalla, 2014; Morley, 2014; Rhee & Sigler, 2015).

These commonly expected ‘essential traits’ for leaders often include characteristics such as being aggressive, rational, forceful, competitive, decisive, strong, independent, and self-confident and showing interest in imposing their own conception and shaping institutions based on one’s own vision (Gago & Macías, 2014). On the other hand, female leaders have been socialised to accept ‘feminine traits’, such as being kind, warm, selfless, passive, submissive, and non-rational; these ‘softer’ traits contrast with the requirements of leadership/managerial roles (Lopez & Ensari, 2014). For this reason, women are often perceived as being inadequate leaders, and their advancement to upper ranks is slower and at a lesser rate than that of men in their organisations (Gago & Macías, 2014).

Meanwhile, however, some recent discussions on leadership would claim that it is precisely these ‘softer’ traits that are essential for successful leadership, since female leaders are more democratically and interpersonally orientated and lean more towards transformational styles of leadership, as opposed to transactional leadership styles, as highlighted in Wang et al., (2011). As Saudi universities are searching for an appropriate model of ‘knowledge exchange’ to meet societal demands, such ‘feminine’ models of leadership could possibly become increasingly relevant (David, 2015).

Previous studies suggest that the barriers that prevent women from advancing to upper leadership at the individual level are mainly related to two key components: (a) their psychological traits and socialisation backgrounds, including a lack of self-confidence

and reliance and a lack of motivation and ambition to gain leadership positions and (b) their professional traits and behaviours—a different type of process orientation, career choices that involve a lack of career planning, lack of assertiveness in the workplace, perceived lack of competence, greater emotional approachability than men, greater process-focus, lack of awareness of legal rights, and non-maintenance of research profiles (Elamin & Omair, 2010; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011a; Metcalfe & Mutlaq, 2011).

3.6.1.1 Psychological Traits and Socialisation Backgrounds

It is evident that the most important features of a leader are aggressive traits such as those mentioned in the previous section (Rhee & Sigler, 2015). These promote a positive self-image, which leads to an optimistic attitude and a dynamic, responsible, and self-regulated life (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012; Perry & Patricia 2011). In addition, self-reliance and interest in imposing one's own perspectives and framing institutions according to one's own vision are meaningful (Gago & Macías, 2014). The capacity to depend on their own efficiency capabilities and manage one's own affairs independently is regarded as a fundamental trait of distinctive leaders, whereas the lack of this feature may be a serious barrier at a personal level that could influence women's progress to top leadership posts. A significant connection exists between low self-confidence (Abalkhail, 2017) and low professional development, and this leads to difficulties in advancing to top roles.

Another important trait is lack of the motivation and ambition required to gain a leadership position, which is conceptualised as career aspirations; the motivation to pursue any occupation is seen as an important component of it (Răducan & Răducan, 2014). Motivation, in turn, is conceptualised as the extent to which one is willing to engage in a particular behaviour (Al-Sada et al., 2017). Career aspirations are conditioned by factors including socioeconomic position, social environment, gender, occupations of parents, and academic credentials (Wiener & Craig, 2012). Lack of motivation to gain a leadership position is mainly not related to a scarcity of demand for highly skilled professional women but rather to the culture that militates against them (Kattan et al., 2016).

3.6.1.2 Professional Attributes, Work Orientations, and Career Choices

Variation in professional attributes, different work orientations, or different career choices can deeply influence one's professional advancement in general and, in particular, the factors that may negatively impact individual views on allowing women leaders to progress to upper leadership (Abdalla, 2014). Among the professional attributes that may be of relevance are career planning, professional assertiveness, competence, emotional approachability (and, conversely, emotionality or irrationality), process-orientedness, awareness of legal rights, and maintaining a research profile.

A clear, flexible, and appropriate career plan should be an ongoing, permanent work in progress (Budworth & Mann, 2010) that informs and is informed by career development, while professional assertiveness is an essential skill for appropriate work communication, forthright expression of one's feelings, perspectives and ideas, and defence of one's rights while respecting others' rights and opinions (Budworth & Mann, 2010). At the same time, while stereotypes of effective leaders are linked with stereotypical masculinity and clash with stereotypical femininity (Gupta et al., 2009), it is also indicated that female leaders can work long hours and handle challenging tasks with a level of performance that is similar to that of male colleagues and that the majority of men tend to not choose multiple roles or tasks; as indicated by Wajcman, (2013) who states:

women are better managers because they juggle with their life anyway. I mean women are naturally better at coping with multiple tasks than men because they have to. More and more women, work now, therefore, if they have arranged their home such that they have to juggle and women just seem to be more adept at it I mean I think if you put a man, most men, in women's situation, the situation I am in, they would fail dismally after about a week. They just do not have this ability to juggle. And I think that makes us women better at managing, because we have this ability to have three or four or five plates spinning at any one time and that's the norm (p. 69).

Another study has also illustrated the fact that female academics are more likely than male academics to occupy part-time, low-status, or temporary positions (Gago & Macías, 2014). In Hong Kong, Aiston (2014) found that significantly more female academics were hired on a non-permanent basis than male academics, which means that

they had a ‘shaky foothold’ on the academic promotion ladder. This situation can be ascribed to the social perception that women ‘lack’ these skills, which causes society to relegate them to such positions. Moreover, male and female professionals manage projects and issues at-hand differently; for instance, women are more process-oriented, and men are more results-driven when stimulated by concrete targets (Braun et al., 2012). Women leaders are, of course, as concerned as men with maintaining workflows and meeting targets, but they tend to believe that working more slowly and effectively can lead to better outcomes (Elkhouly & El Sedfy, 2014).

With regard to the awareness of legal rights, ‘legal consciousness’ refers to how individuals make sense of their own experiences while referring to legal notions (Karan & Afioni, 2013). However, responsibility in this matter depends on where power lies. To empower individuals regarding any legal matter, it is critical to improve their awareness of their legal rights and duties. Such legalities may involve authority and cultural practices, meanings, and sources (Timmers et al., 2010). Last but not least, maintaining a strong research profile and publication record, especially in top journals, is a major factor that promotes access to senior positions in academia. However, in many cases women have low research productivity compared to their male counterparts due to the need to balance their research with family obligations (Kattan et al., 2016).

Taking all these items together, we see that women are socialised to accept ‘feminine traits’ that are contrary to the characteristics viewed as desirable for leadership/managerial roles (Lopez & Ensari, 2014) and, for this reason, are often regarded as inadequate leaders, which, in turn, contributes to their slower progress to top positions (Gago & Macías, 2014; Kattan, 2016). Nonetheless, it is argued that the gender gap can be attributed to biological variations, which contribute to obstructing women’s access to senior leadership positions (McTavish & Miller, 2009; Peterson, 2015). However, on the flip side, recent heated debates on the appropriate features of leaders have emphasised that such ‘softer’ traits help women in leading roles to be perceived as more democratic and interpersonally orientated, thus creating the perception that they lean more towards transformational styles of leadership (Al-Malki et al., 2012; Phaneuf et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2011).

The orientation of the transformational leadership approach is in making changes and improvement of the performance, either individually or collectively (Bass & Bass, 2008). It appears that the selection of relationship-directed people for leadership positions be likely advisable when the context of the institutions is favourable. That can be true in particular for these individuals to create additional prominence, signalling that their institutions are reinforcing high consideration, promotion, innovation, visibility of objectives or latitude for employees in decision-making.

Further, due to institutional consideration being also directly connected with the behaviours of transformational leadership, it is highly recommended to promote the practices of institutions that support, respect and promote equal treatment. Utilising these practices might be useful for improving transformational leadership behaviours in leaders, regardless of their individual traits (Phaneuf et al., 2016). Hence, from this brief discussion, it is seems that there is great emphasis on the idea that promoting gender diversity in leadership positions and including women in senior leadership is useful for work (Wang et al., 2011). This will be discussed fully later in Section 3.6. 3 Structural Perspective and Related Policies (Meso), in terms of gender stereotyping and leadership styles.

Having discussed individual perspectives and related policies (micro-level factors), I will now move to consider cultural perspectives and related policies (the macro level).

3.6.2 Cultural Perspectives and Related Policies (Macro)

The argument for the importance of cultural perspectives to organisations is that their context involves history, ideology, culture, and policies, which lead to features such as, for example, lack (or presence) of women leaders in high posts. Institutions are located within societies and, thus, affected by certain ideologies, societal and structural practices, and stereotypes, which help determine the most appropriate behaviours and roles for both men and women. These factors can, in turn, massively influence institutional processes (Fagenson, 1990). In fact, women have been socialised into being in charge of most obligations and duties of the household, thus fulfilling gender stereotypes (Abu-Tineh, 2013; Michailidis et al., 2012). This constitutes a cultural obstacle (Fuller, 2013).

The low representation of women in top posts is a global phenomenon but also differs from nation to nation (Fuller, 2013). Factors affecting it include (a) domestic responsibilities and obligations, (b) childbearing and childcare, including the occurrence of role conflict and guilt and the dual-career problem, (c) eldercare, (d) the choice between family and work, (e) pressure by the husband, (f) lack of socialisation and self-care, and (g) family commitments (Casper et al., 2011; Elamin & Omair, 2010).

The statement has been made that the ‘lack of culture fit at the executive suite’ is a core obstacle for the career progress of women in the Gulf region but not so much in the West (Abdulla, 2014, p. 227). Culture has been conceptualised by Hofstede (1980, p. 43) as follows: ‘When we speak of the culture of a group, a tribe, a geographical region, a national minority, or a nation, culture refers to the collective mental programming that those people have in common, the programming, that is different from that of other groups, tribes, regions, minorities or majorities or nations.’ Thus, culture is not a characteristic of individuals; rather, it encompasses groups of people conditioned by the same education and life experience. In the following subsections, the influence of culture will be explained in detail in relation to each element that is considered as a barrier from a cultural perspective.

3.6.2.1 Domestic Responsibilities

Many studies have argued that the obligation and responsibility to conduct domestic tasks is a major barrier for women’s career advancement (Fuller, 2013); for example, a study in Jordan demonstrates that the career advancement of women is influenced considerably by family and social commitments (Al-Manasra, 2013). There are similar findings from Kauser and Tlaiss in Lebanon (2011a); Metcalfe and Mutlag (2011) and Metcalfe (2008) in Middle Eastern nations; Elamin and Omair (2010) in Saudi Arabia; and both Fuller (2013) and Smith (2011) in Western contexts.

Further, Jogulu and Wood (2011) acknowledge that both Malaysian and Australian women consider family and personal responsibilities and duties as prime inhibitors to their progress to upper senior leadership positions. It seems apparent that social and family matters are critical issues for both male and female academics (Abdalla, 2014). That this would be attributed to the considerable negative implications of the traditional

gender role expectations can be recognised, as women are responsible for all household-related matters (Caner et al., 2016; Fuller, 2013; Kelan, 2014).

3.6.2.2 Childbearing and Childcare

McIntosh et al. (2012) find that, statistically, motherhood has a noticeable influence on the career advancement of women. Motherhood involves a complicated relationship between working hours, career breaks, and dependant family. Moreover, dependent children have regressive effects on the progress of women during their career journey. The younger the child, the greater is the impact. The extent of influence appears directly proportional to the child's age. In addition, cumulative career break length has a vital effect on the career advancement of women but no remarkable influence upon their male counterparts (Timmers et al., 2010). The mechanism of this relative career drawback for women is associated with the complex relationship between dependent children, working hours, career breaks, and motherhood (McIntosh et al., 2012, p. 348). That is, motherhood inhibits the career progress of women even in some feminised professions, such as nursing, for instance.

This detrimental influence of motherhood upon the professional advancement of women has been discussed massively. However, its actual scale and magnitude has not gained sufficient research attention (McIntosh et al., 2012, p. 348). Typically, Arab women are similar to women anywhere in that they are the people who care most for their children and their futures (Al-Malki et al., 2012). In fact, due to the considerable influence of customs and mores, the majority of women prioritise their family and children rather than their career (Elamin & Omair, 2010). That prioritisation emerges clearly in many issues related to 'conflict and resignation' in the dual-career family.

A great deal of research has argued that the conflict encountered by women due to the obstacles they face in balancing their professional and personal lives adds a huge amount of stress and pressure, aside from directly reducing their already-reduced career opportunities (Abdalla, 2014; Elamin & Omair, 2010; Michailidis et al., 2012). Therefore, a considerable number of women leave their jobs before they can progress to top leadership positions (Shah, 2015; Smith, 2015), and despite some gains for female academics in recent years, there remains a significant gender gap favouring male academics in non-segregated contexts in terms of salary, contractual status, and health

(Elamin & Omair, 2010). In fact, recently, although there has been a significant increase in the number of women joining the labour market (WEF, 2017), this trend has created dual-career families. This, in turn, has led to other issues that make it difficult for female professionals to be represented in upper management. This can be attributed to cultural norms, which emphasise that the main role of women in their society is being mothers, which, in turn, gives rise to the dual-role conflicts that working women may encounter. Such conflicts may divert their career path. At the same time, while society and family members expect women to be in charge of all family-related obligations and responsibilities, they do not offer those women any kind of cooperation, help, or support when required or needed, which increases the dual burden (Abdalla, 2014; Michailidis et al., 2012).

3.6.2.3 Eldercare

A qualitative study by Archbold (1983, p. 41) classified the role of parents into two prime categories: *care provision* and *care management*. The care-provider identifies those services the parent needs to perform and performs them herself, while the care-manager identifies the needed services and manages their provision by others. A third method of caregiving is theoretically possible: complete transference of childcare to another caregiving agent. Care for elders is also a significant responsibility in some family units, and women who care for multiple functionally impaired parents are an at-risk and under-served population, who, in many cases, suffer a huge amount of stress and hardship (Ibid).

3.6.2.4 The Choice Between Family and Work

The common belief is that, for women, especially married women with children, balancing a professional life and family life is a challenging task despite the significant economic growth and change in social attitudes (Burke & Richardsen, 2016). When women are forced to choose, they will choose to, without hesitation, look after their children rather than progress significantly in their career (Abdalla, 2014; McIntosh et al., 2012). In a study of female educational leaders in Pakistan, which involved a similar context to the current study (a Muslim culture with schools that are sex-segregated), Shah (2010) found that the women she surveyed often encountered difficulties balancing their home and professional lives under the cultural expectation that they would be, first and foremost, mothers and wives. Therefore, many women do not welcome any work

obligations, responsibilities, or extra hours of employment and, instead, focus on their family based on their own choice (McIntosh et al., 2012, p. 348); furthermore, one of the most often identified career progress inhibitors for women is their preference for specific kinds of occupations in specific economic circumstances (Gupta et al., 2009).

3.6.2.5 Pressure by Husband

Spousal understanding is a main factor for women's effectiveness and excellence at work (Omair, 2010). Situations involving the husband differ significantly from those that involve the children. Married women also encounter other issues related to the restriction of being under their husband's guardianship and the need to get the husband's permission in order to make certain career choices. Thus, single, divorced, or widowed women without children or with grown-up children have some benefits in this regard according to Omair (2010).

That fact may be associated with the concept of men's domination in relation to even women's work, which can be a key factor in destroying the quality of family life; as suggested above, in some cases, women themselves prefer exclusion from public life (Elamin & Omair, 2010). Another common notion is that a woman's working and pursuit of a career damages the husband's power and prestige at home and, thus, his authority over the household (Taleb, 2010).

3.6.2.6 Lack of Socialisation and Self-Care

As suggested, dealing with overlapping work-and home-related tasks and responsibilities, requires a great amount of time and effort. Those clashes are considered a crucial source of stress for women that is distinguished by their by gender (Nelson & Burke, 2002) owing to the fact that "women continue to carry the bulk of family responsibilities, even when they work long hours" (Nelson & Burke, 2002, p.125). That brings some restrictions in allocating spare time to rest after a long, hard day (Abdalla, 2014), especially if those jobs are related to leadership roles or jobs that are often held more by men than women (Michailidis et al., 2012).

Stressors mainly involve long working hours, basic travel, insufficient time for developing relationships with their children, possibility of high risk of being fired for unsatisfactory or poor performance, and corporate politics and competition in the work

setting, (Alvesson & Billing, 1997). The stress it engenders may give rise to health issues and stress hormones, for instance, epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol remaining high after work hours for working women, which is likely to cause feelings of fatigue and finally lead to ill health (Lundberg & Frankenhaeuser, 1999). It was reported that women have greater levels of psychophysiological symptoms, for instance headaches, insomnia, nightmares, pounding heart, nervousness, trembling, dizziness and lack of motivation (Jenkins, 1991).

Professional women regularly record more symptoms of mental ill health; they have higher average of acute illnesses and greater chronic conditions, and often make regular healthcare visits. They are also higher users of medical services and prescriptions, and experience a great deal of psychological distress and somatic disorders than do professional men (Jenkins, 1991). In addition, a study conducted by Wilkins (2010) indicated that high pressure in the work setting might contribute to accretion and increasing the risk of heart disease amongst professional women under 50; however, for women of average age between 50 and 64 other factors have become more significant in identifying the risk.

Muhonen's (2011) study on the health and work locus of control among women managers indicated that only nine out of the 38 research participants had maintained their health during their career, while other female managers had suffered from enormous health problems and, in some cases, 'burnout syndrome'. The idea that women also suffer a greater impact because of their biological clock is often used to explain the divergence of career patterns between men and women, while ignoring the fact that most women will, at some point in life, suffer a maternity penalty (Kelan, 2014), gendered expectations of family obligations, and the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth (Al-Sabah, 2013). Female academics, in particular, are more likely to suffer from stress in the workplace than male academics, regardless of the type of institution, single-gender or mixed (Nelson & Burke, 2002).

Meanwhile, the masculine discourse in academia normalises high workloads and a primary commitment to the organisation (Abdalla, 2014; Balsoy, 2012; McTavish & Miller, 2009; Michailidis et al., 2012). Overall, there are considerable differences in terms of their favoured overcome techniques; men tend to be problem-focused in coping

strategies with planned and rational action, humour and fantasy. In contrast, when education, occupation, and position are comparable, both men and women use problem-focused coping ((Nelson & Burke, 2002, p.86.) whereas women utilise emotions-focused strategies through expression of emotions, social support, self-blame, denial and avoidance (Nelson & Burke, 2002, p.7). The strategy of women in coping with stress is likely to be ‘tend and befriend’, which is to nurture and form relationships with others (Nelson & Burke, 2002, p. 8).

3.6.2.7 Family Commitment

Family commitment imposes a greater amount of pressure on female professionals than on men and reduces opportunities for them to advance on their chosen career paths (Abdalla, 2014). Middle Eastern women face traditional duties and obligations and very often play a central role in their families as wife, mother, sister, and daughter. They are also required to engage emotionally on occasions such as family illness or childbearing; thus, failure to uphold family commitments is deemed unacceptable and, consequently, has bad impacts on family relationships (Ibid).

Therefore, working women have been forced to adjust their individual lives, obligations, and sacrifices in order to deal with the overlaps between the responsibilities and tasks they face in their professional and personal lives and thus maintain a balance. They must pay considerable attention to their family circumstances before making any decisions related to their career advancement or job transitions. For example, in some cases, professional women do not undergo available training that they are required to take because of family commitments and the difficulties that they face in balancing professional and personal life (Morley, 2014).

3.6.3 Structural Perspective and Related Policies (Meso)

The attitudes and behaviour of men and women vary, influencing and influenced by variations in opportunities offered, power and the proportions of group representation in institutions by gender (Kanter, 1977). The prime assumption of this theory is that individuals who are more likely to progress in their career path will have greater opportunities, hold more power and enjoy higher status (Meijer, 2010). The structural perspective, related mainly to the organisation's nature and work instead of gender roles and other characteristics of individuals within it (Fagenson, 1990), suggests that the influence of hierarchy can be recognised in variations in entry and the promotion through the ranks. Kanter (1977), a great proponent of the structural approach, defined three central explanatory dimensions: opportunity structure, power structure, and proportional distribution of male and female leaders. In skewed groups, where women are a minority, men tend to dominate them and treat them as 'tokens': 'representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals' (Kanter, 1977, p. 208).

This would harm the situation of women by excluding them. Both entry and promotion chances for women are also negatively influenced by restricted access to information about job openings (Morley, 2014). The procedures of informal recruitment in upper leadership positions also have been found as a place where discrimination and prejudice towards women creep into educational institutions (Monroe et al., 2008). Power structures, in general, affect the career prospects in an institution and determine its attractiveness; moreover, universities' demographics may also impede the career progress of women if the number of female academics is low and the rate of creating new posts is slow. This leads to vital concerns regarding the time potentially required to conduct reform to empower women to access the upper hierarchy (Kanter, 1977).

The findings establish that the obstacles Saudi female academics encounter within university settings reflect the power structure in general, affecting career prospects in an institution and determining its attractiveness; moreover a university's demographic may also impede the career progress of women if the number of female academics is low and the rate of creating new posts is slow. This leads to vital concerns regarding the time potentially required to conduct reform to empower women to access the upper hierarchy (Kanter, 1977). These involve: a) organisational culture (Schein, 2017); b) role stereotyping, including restrictions on leadership roles for female professionals and

disregard of women's leadership styles; c) the policy and mechanisms for selection and appointment of leaders, including related issues such as the formal powerlessness of women, the Mharram and guardian systems and law, women's mobility and institutional hurdles (Toren & Moore, 1998).

All of which all explain the lower ratio of women in top senior positions and their slower progress, which can generate a glass ceiling above which variation in achievement by gender often disappears or is associated with cultural, but not individual, factors (as distinct from below it, where both may apply); d) unprofessional attitudes and the strain of being expected to give *wasta* (nepotism) or tension at work settings; and e) lack of a supportive environment for professional learning, including excessive workload and hours and related stress, limited resources and lack of network support (Abdalla, 2014; Abdul Ghani, 2011; Al-Fassi, 2010; Budworth & Mann, 2010; Gentry et al., 2010; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011b; Richards et al., 2015; Smith, 2011; Timmers et al., 2010). These items will be explored in detail below.

3.6.3.1 Organisational Culture

National culture has been influentially classified into the four key dimensions of variability by Hofstede (1980): *power*, *distance*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *individualism*, and *masculinity*. In his later work, he introduced a fifth dimension: *long-term orientation* (formerly called 'Confucian dynamism') (Hofstede, 1991). Organisational culture is conceptualised by Schein (2017, p. 12) as

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Large institutions contain multiple unique cultures within them (Schein, 2017). As a result, it seems important to find their smaller subcultures or conglomerates in which individuals may function to meet their targets (Schein, 2017). For the current study, the adopted definition of organisational culture is 'the common and shared understanding [within an organisation] in terms of many respects such as beliefs, values, norms and philosophies of how things work' (Wallach, 1983).

Separately, cultures have been classified into three categories: bureaucratic, innovative, and supportive. Overall, institutional cultures often contain some elements from the named three categories to varied extents (Wallach, 1983). The main features of bureaucratic cultures are systematic strategies, which are well-organised, with obvious specific obligations, responsibilities, and authority. Institutions promoting such cultures are normally structured, cautious, regulated, solid, power-oriented, hierarchical, ordered, and procedural (Taormina, 2009). Innovative cultures concentrate on internal systems and competitive benefits by stimulating openness towards the brand concepts (Rasool et al., 2012).

Its prime features are creativity, challenges, results-orientedness, encouragement, risk-taking, pressure, enterprise, and drive (Valencia et al., 2010). Supportive cultures are those that are considered warm to work in and, in general, those that employ people characterised as helpful and friendly (Wallach, 1983)—they are sociable, relationship-oriented, trusting, safe, and equitable, thus possessing traits that promote a collaborative atmosphere in work settings (Berson et al., 2008). However, most literature on leadership has drawn upon models from Western cultures (Abdul Ghani, 2011; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011a), whereas concepts of leadership as well as gender concepts can be perceived dramatically differently by different cultures (Gago & Macias, 2014).

In Hofstede's terms, Saudi Arabia is a fairly masculine society (Abalkhail, 2017), which entails, in part, more distinctive roles between men and women (Hofstede, 1998). It is reported that women in Saudi Arabia often feel powerless because of cultural restrictions; for example, female leaders have to delegate all financial matters to male financial officers, as financing and banking are considered a purely male domain (Al-Fassi, 2010). This feeling of powerlessness also extends to decision-making processes, with women reporting that their words often go unheard or are ignored by their male colleagues (Abalkhail, 2017).

3.6.3.2 Gender Stereotyping and Leadership Styles

The relationships between sex and gender stereotypes and leadership styles were initially studied in the 1970s (Powell, 2011). Leadership is often conceptualised as encompassing multiple processes at the individual level, which are meant to influence and encourage a group of people to perform work in order to meet a goal or vision

(Norhouse, 2015). Leadership is a complicated phenomenon, which is affected by personalities, circumstances, relationships, and other components related to work settings (Berkery et al., 2013). Although leadership and management in institutions are, in principle, gender neutral, they very often include practices consistent with stereotypical maleness and preferences for characteristics traditionally valued in men (Elamin & Omair, 2010). Although male and female leadership styles are completely different, the evidence suggests that they can both be effective (Coleman, 1994).

Leadership style can also be broken down into dimension categories: tasks and interpersonal leadership relationships (Berkery et al., 2013). Leadership in the former dimension involves goal-setting, direction, and control, whereas the second dimension is linked with support, interaction, communication, and active listening (ElKhouly & El Sedfy, 2014; Hersey et al., 2012). Male leaders tend to employ an autocratic, task-oriented leadership style, and female leaders tend to adopt a democratic, collaboratively oriented style that involves bringing people together and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Gevedon, 1992; Lopez & Einsari, 2014). Bass (1985) found that transformational leadership consists of the following core elements: idealised influence (in other words, a leader can act as a role model and is highly respected); inspirational motivation and encouragement; high expectations of communication skills; and provision of intellectual encouragement, attention, and care to followers. This style of leadership is associated with female leaders (Braun et al., 2012; Ng, 2016).

In contrast, male leaders are associated with transactional leadership, which features a strong focus on completing tasks and allocating rewards or punishments (Braun et al., 2012). Previous studies on leadership have promoted the premise that leadership can be biologically identified through male behaviour; such a biologically driven approach makes it very difficult for women to access top leadership posts (Abu-Tineh, 2013). As a consequence of this assumption, leadership has been viewed as a male domain, and women have been denied leadership positions because it was assumed that the higher levels of power should be monopolised by men (Burns, 1978).

This attitude may explicitly reflect the fact that, to do so, they may need to be perceived as strong or masculine (for example, in the vein of the ‘Iron Lady’ model)¹⁰ (Li, 2016). On the other hand, some countries that are more masculine oriented have had prominent women leaders that emphasised their ‘feminine’ leadership style, perhaps even playing up the contrast; these include several Muslim countries.

Since women were stereotyped as being submissive, dependent, and conforming, they were perceived as lacking the traits and features of leadership (Burns, 1978) and viewed one-dimensionally as either nurturing ‘mothers’ or career-oriented ‘feminists’. Such narrowly identified domains contributed to reducing their self-esteem and, consequently, to reducing women’s professional confidence regarding their abilities, thus promoting the perceived incongruence between leadership and womanhood (Joasil, 2008). It was argued by Eagly (1987) that those gender expectations are core to the socialisation process and that individuals often, therefore, behave based on societal expectations of gender roles. The expectation for women is that they will be relationship-oriented and be more caring than men; this accounts for a great portion of the gendered approaches in leadership.

However, such expectations may justify situations where women hold supportive roles, and men hold leadership roles, thus furthering discrimination (Timmers et al., 2010). Teelken and Deem (2013) criticise gender bias in performance evaluations and consider it one of the greatest causes of the lack of female leaders at the top. Nonetheless, women have made substantial progress in academia but not in resource-rich academic fields linked or attributed to commercial research (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Ghani, 2011; Hofstede, 1980; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011; Metcalfe & Mutlag, 2011; Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2008). In Kuwait, Tunisia, and Sudan, women managers suffer from a work atmosphere that seems hostile and aggressive owing to role stereotyping, gender segregation, and social exclusion, and those who have succeeded in attaining leadership posts have endured bad experiences, bad feelings, and lack of sympathy (Abdulla, 2014; Gentry et al., 2010).

¹⁰ ‘Iron Lady’ theory argues that, in patriarchal societies, ‘iron’ women are more likely than other women to become leaders (Li, 2016, p. 542).

Budworth and Mann (2010) place the blame in this regard more directly on *urf*, while Abdalla (2104), Smith (2011), and Berkery et al. (2013) argue that the prime hindrance is formal and informal gender-discrimination. Moreover, as far as the leadership styles of women are concerned, the majority of the points discussed above influence them in direct or indirect ways by reducing the functions, obligations, and power of female academics within their institutions. It is often argued that men in conservative communities tend to resist overt dominance by women, especially if the women are characterised as forceful or assertive (Budworth & Mann, 2010).

Attempts to clarify the significant correlation between culture and power in such patriarchal cultures have identified the indiscriminate use of power that leads to inequalities (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). Gender stereotypes and discriminations were promoted in many cases through governmental and institutional policy and regulations and tended to infiltrate all decisions upon any matter related to women (Booyesen & Nkomo, 2010; Fuller, 2013). Gender-stereotypical thinking can create discrimination in multiple forms including restrictions on the authority and power of women leaders, which, in turn, affect and frame their leadership styles (Berkery et al., 2013; Taleb, 2010).

Along with women leaders being powerless (Fuller, 2013), restrictions on their leadership and administrative roles can be attributed to societal norms, especially those within patriarchal cultures, in which a major feature is treating individuals differently based on their gender (Taleb, 2010). In such contexts, women managers encounter both social and institutional obstacles in work environments owing to gendered organisations, patriarchy, overt or legalised segregation, and cultural practices (Abdul Ghani, 2011; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011b). On the other hand, there has been a heated debate based on recent research that is not compatible with such an assumption, and in particular, it argues that female leaders are better equipped for modern institutions but also held down by patriarchy (Abu-Tineh, 2013; Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012; Powell, 2011). As educational institutions move towards a model of 'knowledge exchange' to meet the needs of society, 'feminine' leadership may become increasingly relevant (Blackmore & Sachs, 2012).

However, research has also argued that men and women leaders need to have the same amount or quality of task- and interpersonally-orientated leadership (Al-Sada et al., 2017). In fact, mainly due to socialisation, women have managed to develop characteristics and values that foster different leadership behaviours from the traditional leadership behaviours of male leaders, which tend to be controlling, aggressive, and competitive (Rosener, 1990); female leadership styles meet modern organisations' leadership requirements in terms of teamwork, non-coercive guidance, and relationship-building (Abdalla, 2014; Abdul Ghani, 2011; Smith, 2011). Studies indicate that such a leadership approach is naturally adopted by female leaders (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012; Kelan, 2014), who have strong skills in communication and listening (Al-Fassi, 2010; Taleb, 2010).

In addition, it has been suggested that the central engagement of women in raising children, managing households, and juggling careers can increase their ability to prioritise in leadership roles, a trait that male leaders typically do not possess (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012). Given these evident advantages, a great number of researchers lament the lack of female leaders in upper-ranking positions (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010a). This is, no doubt, in part, because female leaders still suffer from prejudiced evaluations of their efficiency and ability as leaders (Rhee & Sigler, 2015).

3.6.3.3 Male-Dominated Policy and Processes for Selection and Appointment of Leaders

Organisational policies have led to radical inequality in the representation of male and female leaders, especially at the top (Alami, 2013). At state universities in Saudi Arabia, this situation has been exacerbated by lack of “clear institutional measures and organisational policies and mandates”; as Powell (1988, p. 98) has argued, “the decisions made by individuals and organizations cumulatively affect the representation of the sexes in managerial positions.” The barriers that impede the advancement of professional women across developed nations have been reported to be related to gender stereotypes, biases in relation to recruitment and selection, and the dearth of female role models, among other factors (Abu-Tineh, 2013; Berkery et al., 2013; Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012; Metcalfe, 2008; Peterson, 2015; Richards et al., 2015). The case in the Arab Muslim nations seems, by far, to be much more complicated than the case in Western developed countries regarding the same issues.

In the Arab Muslim nations, the gender gap in terms of rights between both genders is noticeable and vital, and the resistance to equality is clearly recognised, if not precisely pronounced (Gartzia & Van Engen, 2012). Earlier studies have pointed out the limitations and restrictions on leadership and promotion opportunities for women and the limited power of leadership positions held by women (Rhee & Sigler, 2015; Teelken & Deem, 2013). The notion of ‘power’ here is conceptualised as the capacity of an individual or a group to influence, either positively or negatively, material and psychological resources (Al-Fassi, 2010; Karan & Afioni, 2013; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011b). Arguably, the attitudes of male decision-makers in institutions can feed the career gap between genders in favour of men (Abou-Bakr, 2010; Jogulu & Wood, 2011). This exemplifies a broader point: associating power with culture implies exercising it in a way that may lead to the danger of additional unfair inequalities (Lumby & Foskett, 2011).

Generally, women leaders in education have very little decision-making authority and merely implement decisions made by men far removed from their cultural context (Al-Fassi, 2010; Hein et al., 2015). Masculine leadership has been promoted through the organisational process subconsciously (Abu-Tineh, 2013; Elamin & Omair, 2010; Elkhoully & El Sedfy, 2014; Timmers et al., 2010). This is a fact that will perhaps be recognised in various fields; in higher education organisations, women are considerably exceeded by men in positions of formal power, status, and income (Berkery et al., 2013).

Professional women in academia in KSA complain about higher education sector policy and regulations. Promotion and leadership opportunities also display a gender gap in non-segregated contexts; globally, women are vastly under-represented in HE leadership roles, with the gender disparity becoming increasingly pronounced with seniority (HEFEC, 2012; Morley, 2014). For example, tenured professors in the United States are four times more likely to be male than female (Morley, 2014), and in the UK in 2010/2011, 51% of assistant academics were women, but only 21% of full professors were women (HEFCE, 2012). This lack of representation results in women being less likely to contribute to decision-making processes at the university. This represents a lost opportunity for universities because women can enhance leadership and decision-making processes (Aiston, 2014).

This has also been supported by the findings of Dah and El-Kassar (2009) in the banking sector in Lebanon, where opportunities for women to accede to upper positions are also few. Therefore, it is proposed that leaders within institutions have supported masculine leadership subconsciously (Abdul Ghani, 2011). This leads women's situation to worsen, as they are under male domination and lack a supportive environment for their professional learning. In order to address such issues, it has been suggested that employers and HR managers can implement policy measures such as selection procedures that are conducive to hiring women (as opposed to preferential treatment of women or gender-neutral hiring) (Abdalla, 2014; Timmers et al., 2010).

3.6.3.4 Mobility of Women

Various formal and informal practices contribute to gender segregation. Examples include restrictions on women's travel, which limit their access to training and education, or obstacles to joining particular professions that transcend gender, social networking, and assistance (Abdalla, 2014). Women's mobility has been affected by the openness, or lack thereof, of people's mind-set, which influences their understanding and approval/disapproval of women working in regions different from their residence (Abdalla, 2014). The case of Saudi Arabia is unique to some extent due to the segregation of men and women as public policy, which is attributed to tradition and conservatism (Le Renard, 2008). This restriction limits women's mobility, activities, and involvement in public life (Le Renard, 2008). Therefore, it is very rare to see Saudi women in mixed public places, and their activities have been limited largely to the domestic and private sphere (Le Renard, 2008).

3.6.3.5 Mharram, Wali, (Guardian System)

According to the discriminatory law of Saudi Arabia, all Saudi women must have a *wali* (*Mharram*), which means a male guardian, typically from among relatives, such as a father, brother, husband, uncle, or even a son, regardless of their age. Those male relatives have the authority to make critical decisions on the women's behalf regarding many areas of life (Ertürk, 2009). The consequences of this law are that Saudi girls or women remain forbidden from travelling, establishing official businesses, or even undergoing specific medical procedures without male *wali* permission (De Schutter, 2010). According to a United Nations report (2013), the male guardians of Saudi women have power to give or withhold *wali* for education, employment, marriage, divorce,

travel, opening a bank account, or elective surgery, particularly when an activity is sexual in nature.

3.6.3.6 Unprofessional Attitudes

Academic women face the glass ceiling form of discrimination during their career path in becoming organisational promotion leaders (Glass, 1992). This can be attributed to the fact that “women have been excluded of the power, socially isolated and, sidetracked and ...men are reluctant to give power; they feel uncomfortable dealing with women, who they believe are different from themselves, and are, therefore, unreliable or unpredictable” (Glass, 1992, p. 410). Also, the “academicians tended to believe that women are remote, controlling, inconsiderate, annoying, not trusted and sometimes irate” (Glass, 1992, p. 4012). The significant influence of unprofessional behaviours and gender discrimination are manifested in work settings through the work relations, interactions and work life experience between colleagues of both genders.

Organisational professionalism is a ‘discourse of control implied via [an] individual with professional leading roles in an institution and [it] integrates rational-legal forms of hierarchical structures and authority of decision-making and responsibility. Further, it involves the growth [and] standardisation of the practices and procedures of the work and managerial controls. It depends on externalised forms of accountability measures and regulations: for example, the review of performance and target setting’ (Evetts, 2010, p. 129). Organisational professionalism is explored in relation to three key perspectives, namely ‘activity, politics, and ethics’, from which the concept of an organisation is advanced.

‘Organisations’ as used here has three known meanings: an organisation relates to ecologies of action and routine; has collective, material, and informational dimensions; and is distributed among objects and people. The second meaning is related to the political angle of performing a professional activity and its sensitivity (i.e. discernment attentiveness). The third meaning considers ethics and screens loyalty towards an organisation (Gaglio, 2014). Based on the named aspects, some attitudes and behaviours become relevant: employee jealousy and envy; clannishness; and *wasta* (nepotism). These will be examined in the next sections.

3.6.3.7 Employee Jealousy and Envy

According to theoretical work by Vecchio (1995, p. 203), employee jealousy is ‘a pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that results from an employee’s loss of self-esteem and/or the loss of outcomes associated with a working relationship. The loss, or merely the perceived threat of loss, involves the perception of a rival’s intrusion. This rival has the potential to reduce one’s self-esteem or undermine a valued relationship.’ Jealousy in the workplace is triadic in that it includes three poles: the rival, the valued target person, and the focal employee. The critical characteristics of jealousy at work are stress reactions, for instance, inducing a desire to react defensively or withdraw, which is a strong emotional response.

In contrast, envy can be identified formally as a pattern involving emotions, thoughts, and behaviours that is generated when employees lose their self-esteem in reaction to obtaining outcomes other than what they had strongly desired to obtain. There are thus noticeable differences between the two qualities, since jealousy includes winning or losing a contest with a rival for relationship control, whereas envy includes competition with a rival for relationship control. In addition, we should consider the distinction between anger, which stems from jealousy, and hostility, which stems from envy (Thompson et al., 2016). This feeling may emerge when people compare themselves with other people, see themselves as having unequal individual features, or see their circumstances as not being as desirable as those of people considered to have or hold senior positions (Thompson et al., 2016).

This can be attributed to the organisational structures and context in which the rules of organisations stimulate variation amongst followers. This results in supporting the competition but also antagonism when women employees compete to gain supervisor attention or a greater proportion of the available resources (Thompson et al., 2016). Vecchio (1995) stresses some factors that affect employee envy: (1) individual attributes (for example, dependency, work ethic, self-monitoring, gender, in-group status, and external locus); (2) work unit attributes (for example, job rotation, reward system, unit size, supervisory considerateness, and supervisory variations of subordinates); and (3) national culture attributes (for example, employee participation norms, collectivist norms, and cooperative norms) (Kattan et al., 2016; Teelken & Deem, 2013).

3.6.3.8 *Clannishness & Wasta (Nepotism)*

One detrimental practice in institutions in shaping gender discrimination is the lack of objectivities in organisations. In other words, the utilisations of varied standards to evaluate and judge professional men and women in terms of their qualifications (Glass, 1992). Clannishness and *wasta* (nepotism) are considered the other face of subjectivity (Karan & Afioni, 2013). Clannishness, which, in academic contexts, brings negative influences, such as lack of consideration for the public good, to the work environment due to a politicised work setting that promotes nepotism and undermines meritocracy (Karan & Afioni, 2013). Under such a system, promotion is guaranteed, and wrongs are forgiven and accepted. Vanity is prevalent, and the expectations of outsized rewards and appreciation for everyday achievements are rampant (Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011a).

Nepotism and favouritism are unprofessional practices giving preferential treatment to relatives and friends in employment. Nepotism and favouritism lead to job stress in the work environment and this raises staff dissatisfaction regarding their organisations. Nepotism has the greatest negative effect on job stress (Arasli & Tumer, 2008). Nepotism has the potential to influence human resource management, negative word of mouth, job satisfaction and quitting intention (Arasli, Bavik, & Ekiz, 2006). The forms of nepotism include (a) “the employment of one’s relatives” (Arasli & Tumer, 2008, p. 1238), regardless of whether they are in the same institution (Hayajenh et al., 1994, p. 53); (b) “working or being supervised via [one’s] relatives in the same department” (Abdalla et al., 1998, p. 557); (c) “showing favouritism to...relatives, such as offering them positions due to their relationship [with one] rather than their qualifications or merit” (Abdalla et al., 1998, p. 555); and (d) “having the power or a high status that enable[s] the practice of favouring [one’s] relatives [over] others” (Abdalla et al., 1998, p. 555).

The main problem with nepotism is that, in most cases, candidates are not selected because of their abilities but because of the fact that great employment opportunities in all cases require them to have important family names or *wasta*, which is the utilisation of powerful social connections and nepotism. Social norms also play a role by forcing people to work in specific sectors such as the public/government sector (Abdalla, 2014).

Tlaiss and Kauser (2011b) revealed that *wasta* still has a great impact on Saudi society and individual careers. Despite its unfairness, *wasta* shows some similarities to mentoring and networking. For Arabic workers, networking is often not a natural activity in terms of career progress, and only very senior individuals tend to network. Women leaders face constraints in shaping networks within their institutions, since they are excluded from environments that are male dominated (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011b). In the Middle Eastern regions, social networks are often grounded in the extended family, which is a great force in all respects for individual decision-making and, thus, can play a substantial role in career progress; however, women were affected negatively in most cases attributed to fact of women being powerless and having no authority compared to their male counterparts (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011a).

This makes *wasta* a massive hindrance for the career advancement of Middle Eastern professional women in the public sector (Al-Manasra, 2013). It is argued that the practice of nepotism in the Gulf has contributed to a culture that utilises men for recruiting purposes and allows them to give preference to their (male) friends and relatives (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011c). This phenomenon is reflected in the third dimension of Hofstede's social capital theory (1980, p. 45), which puts

individualism in opposition to collectivism—the former involving a loosely knit social framework where people should look after only themselves and their direct family, and the latter involving a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in- and out-groups and expect their in-group (clan, relatives, or organisation)—to look after them. Saudi society is strongly collectivistic. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as resources dependent on group membership, relationships with others, and the influence and support of one's network.

3.6.3.9 Lack of a Supportive Environment for Professional Learning

The lack of required supportive environments is regarded as an inhibiting factor for the advancement of women professionals in general and women's advancement to the leadership level in particular (Kawai & Strange, 2014; Sandman et al., 2009). The benefits of professional learning for academic faculty could promote acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience (Marris, 2010); it is essentialised through continuous

reflection, professional collaboration, and refinement of teaching practices (Sandman et al., 2009).

The core objective of professional development for faculty is to build skills and knowledge that are aligned with standards of academic content and to also include substantial partnerships in their daily activities (Quick et al., 2009). Programmes and strategies for leadership development need to meet the needs of professional women and stimulate potential leaders, including by laying out paths into leadership roles (Calizo, 2011, p. 3). These objectives should be achieved along with determining gender-related obstacles to benefit women themselves and their institutions and by generating a supportive environment (Eddy et al., 2015). In contrast, lack of a supportive environment may involve limitations in sources and references, poor networking skills, excessive workload/long hours, and related stress (Ibid).

3.6.3.10 Limited Resources and Support

Working women have identified the lack of several essential elements as having a noticeable negative influence on their career advancement (Al-Manasra, 2013); these include childcare, mentors, and networks (Timmers et al., 2010). Differences in working conditions are reflected in differing work experiences. In most HE institutions, academics are evaluated and rated in terms of their research activities (Lallukka et al., 2010; Venancio & Fonseca, 2013). The way in which resources are allocated and support is provided to research can be gendered; for example, studies on the allocation of grants and funding in the sciences have shown that women with the same qualifications as men are less likely to be allocated grant money because the women tend to be labelled 'good' rather than 'excellent' (Saiti, 2012).

It has been reported that some Saudi women do not see the practice of sex-segregation as implying a lesser social status; they are, instead, of the opinion that it opens up access to job opportunities, as they do not have to compete with men (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). However, sex-segregation has also been reported to result in less funding and a lower status for female researchers and academics, as well as a lack of access to educational resources for women, because of the separation of libraries and resources (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). Furthermore, gender segregation reinforces the gendered belief that women are inferior to men and do not deserve the

same education as men, thus failing to equip both men and women for life as members of the international society into which they will emerge after their studies (Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013).

3.6.3.11 Career Breaks

Taking career breaks for maternity leave, childcare, or accompanying a spouse or family member abroad to work or study has a vital effect on the professional development and progress of women, particularly to upper-ranking senior grades (McIntosh et al., 2012). Extending breaks can impede the progress and advancement of the individual on leave, and extra effort at work after a vacation is very important to overcome these gaps and maintain professional competitiveness (McIntosh et al., 2012). Organisations tend to prefer permanent, continuous employment, disproportionately handicapping women who take long-term career breaks. In particular, women with children (or childcare responsibilities) often spend less time in the work setting than men and, consequently, have fewer opportunities for investment in the accumulation of marketable human capital (McIntosh et al., 2012).

3.6.3.12 Workload/Long Hours and Related Stress

Radical social and economic developments brought substantive changes to attitudes about women's engagement in the workforce (WEF, 2017). On the other hand, professional women who manage multiple tasks at the same time and overcome challenges during their career have to be 'superwomen' and undergo the 'superwoman squeeze' to prove that they are as qualified and competitive as their male counterparts. This adds a great deal of pressure, which, in turn, leads to health issues (Sumra & Schillaci, 2015). Time constraints have been identified as a primary issue on several accounts: in particular, heavy teaching loads and administrative obligations.

In the UK, male academics are up to five times more likely to be classified as 'research-active' than women; this means that they are more likely to have their research assessed and externally evaluated (Zou, 2015), which is a process that benefits promotion. Studies have shown that non-research responsibilities are more likely to be allocated to women than men (Gago & Macias, 2014). Furthermore, women are often more highly involved with teaching duties because of the gendered expectation that women are better at tutoring and looking after students' welfare (Aiston, 2014). As such, there is often a

gendered division of labour in academia, which positions women as intruders in a male-dominated academic world; they complete tasks that are essential to the running of the institution, but they are not recognised or supported in their research, which ultimately inhibits their promotion and career success (Aiston, 2014).

3.6.3.13 Poor Networks

Professional network development is a substantial support for an individual's professional progress within an organisation (Tlaiss, 2011c); in particular, this is essential for women who have poor networking skills (Karam & Afioni, 2013). Gender based variations in networks can lead to gender differences in occupational/income achievement, as networks are a key source for gathering job information (Budworth & Mann, 2010). On the other hand, the use of social networks or individual contacts in a job search has generated great interest in using such techniques to mediate gender differences in the work setting (Powell, 2011), for example, in terms of earnings and gender segregation.

However, the major issue women face in this regard is exclusion from male-dominated networks (Karan & Afioni, 2013; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011c) and, consequently, benefits like professional mentoring (Abdalla, 2014; Berkery et al., 2013). The commonly held belief of women is that being part of male networks would enable their career success with regard to obtaining the relevant resources and information to achieve high fulfilment and progress during their career path (Bierema, 2005; Linehan, 2001). The finding of a study conducted by Ismail and Rasdi (2007) with a group of 31 executives in relation to their experiences about networking suggested that networking gave them the opportunities for accessing upper senior positions. Concerning the networking with other female leader peers, this offer indispensable and needful psychological, emotional, and social which is important for them to survive in a male0dominated field in the work environment (Quinlan, 1999).

Generally speaking, Arab women represent a weak group in the power structure of their organisations and also possess relatively low levels of informal power because of their exclusion from informal networks (Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011c). Particularly in sex-segregated institutions, females report less access to support than their male counterparts. Women in academia in the KSA find themselves situated outside the 'old

boys' network' and lack access to resources (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). However, Arab women from elite and educated groups have more ability and willingness to be competitive in the world of men and network with them according to assumptions promoted by gender equality (Al-Malki et al., 2012).

In fact, one of the challenges of male-dominated organisational culture is the obstacle of the clannishness of old boys' networks, which are a key instrument of discrimination against professional women's success owing to the fact that women find it extremely hard in accessing such a network (Abdulla; 2015; Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Metcalfe & Mutlaq, 2011). A Malaysian study by Man et al. (2009) demonstrated that female middle managers faced a glass ceiling owing to lack of institutional support, for example, networking, mentoring and family-friendly initiatives. The inadequacy of women's networks and mentoring resources is matched by the lack of initiatives to help them support their family roles. Consequently, the rate of male professionals who are promoted is higher than that of their women counterparts (Kausar & Tlaiss, 2011). These men are then placed in positions that allow them to mentor and promote more men (Torres & Huffman, 2002).

This discussion is in accordance with Burke and Vinnicombe (2005, p. 248) who argue that segregating women from male networks limits their 'social capital'. Consequently, they have very little professional support and promotion decisions are often open to bias (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005, p.248). Also, Budworth and Mann (2010) see exclusion of women from networks as a huge barrier to their career progress, particularly when they are in the minority and/or in conservative communities. They add that, owing to the heavy load of work and family life, women are prevented from applying sufficient time and effort to networking, especially outside immediate work settings. The findings of Eagly and Carli (2007) illustrate that, when Arab women are heavily involved in their careers instead, it is likely to affect their reputation and tarnish it; this also limits their networking ability, in order to avoid receiving a bad response which would also probably tarnish their reputation. Therefore, they are very cautious in dealing with male counterparts.

3.7 Factors Supporting Career Development and Success of Female Academics

All the mentioned challenges that women professionals have faced during their career journey at personal, social, and organisational levels are attributed to gender stereotypes and role expectations. The issue of gender inequality requires an urgent, effective solution that involves interventions at all three levels in order to empower working women and facilitate their progress (Al-Fassi, 2010), including through legal and political processes (Michailidis et al., 2012).

3.7.1 Perceived Personal Support (PPS)

Qualities and attributes of individuals are identified as the features, behaviours, emotions and temperament of the individual, whereas skills are learned capacities to conduct certain tasks, which are recognised as competences (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). Human capital is identified as a core resource and a factor that promotes the institution's mission and offers a competitive edge (Holland et al., 2007). However, human resources' value for institutional performance is affected by varied factors, many of which are either directly or indirectly linked to both institutional culture and leadership style (Al-Sada et al., 2017). Promoting competition for scarce resources may increase attention to determining the most strategic ways for institutional managers and leaders to satisfy and stimulate their employees' work motivation and commitment (Al-Sada et al., 2017; Powell, 2011).

Therefore, it has been proposed that the prime strategy for the career development of working women, regardless of their institutional level, should be closely associated with individual factors, such as personal merit, putting effort into maintaining a strong portfolio or overcoming gender segregation, and the negative impacts of role stereotyping, rather than with institutional factors (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Powell, 2011). Investment in the human capital of women is required to enable them to overcome these obstacles. In a similar way, Mincer (1984) argued that human capital has a crucial role to play in economic growth and that the variations among individuals in this realm are linked mostly to two core components, which are inherited and acquired abilities:

Individuals differ in both inherited and acquired abilities, but only the later clearly differ among countries and time periods. Human capital analysis deals with acquired capacities which are developed through

formal and in formal education at school and at home, and through training, experience, and mobility in the labor market. The central idea of human capital theory is that whether deliberate or not, these activities involve costs and benefits and can, therefore, be analysed as economic decisions, private or public. The costs involve direct expenses and earnings or consumption foregone by students, by trainees, and by workers engaged in labor mobility. (p. 3)

Mincer (1984) considered inherited abilities as the following:

Inherited abilities, or what is called the "original" endowment is an important part of the human capital stock, yet the line between heredity and Environment is by no means clear. Much of the physical and intellectual deficiency shown by infants born in poor conditions can be avoided by improved nutrition of mothers and sanitary environments for childbirth. Similarly, subsequent child care presents an investment in better adult health and, thus, in greater productivity of the adult worker (Mincer, 1984, p. 10).

3. 7. 2 Perceived Social Support (PSS)

Social capital is grounded in cooperation and trust and leads to purposeful solutions for real social problems. Cultural capital serves as a shorthand sign that certain individuals should be recognised as accepted members of a community. Social and cultural capital, like moral action and moral thought, are related and sometimes even dependent on each other, but they are different phenomena that sometimes work towards different purposes. I suggest that moral action is actually an originating source for social capital and that moral thought is an important form of cultural capital in many social groups (Kang & Glassman, 2010).

In particular, social support is recognised as a significant resource in relation to family stresses (for example, in times of divorce or bereavement) (Cooke et al., 1988). It can play an essential role in the adjustment of both individuals and families, thus defusing stress and avoiding crisis experiences (House, 1981). Cobb (1982) defines social support more precisely by classifying it into four key aspects: love, esteem, security, and appraisal. And also House, (1981) classified social support into four forms: (a) *emotional support*, as in esteem, caring, listening, empathy, love, trust, and concern; (b)

instrumental support, which involves offering help such as time, labour, money, or any direct aid; (c) *informational support*, which involves offering directives, recommendations, advice, and information to overcome issues; and (d) *appraisal support*, which involves offering self-evaluation, feedback affirmation, and social comparison. Familial support is considered an inner driving force that can help individuals cope with career obstacles (ElKhouly & El Sedfy, 2014; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011c). That means women may obtain strength and support from the protection of their family in their professional sphere, which is especially important in a culture that discourages women from moving into public spaces (Al-Fassi, 2010).

Social exchange theory (Kawai & Strange 2014) argues that resources which can be acquired from others are more valued if they are grounded in discretionary choice instead of circumstances outside the control of the donor; for example, voluntary help is seen as an indicator that the donor genuinely respects and values the recipient (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1987). Social support from male relatives plays a substantial role in Arab women's career progress to upper leadership positions, in part, by promoting their motivation and confidence (Abalkhail, 2017; Omair, 2010). Male family support from husbands appears fundamental, particularly within traditions which obligate women to ask their guardians—most often, fathers or husbands—for permission in order to make any decision in relation to their career (Omair, 2010). This understanding of women's emotions plays a fundamental role in their aspirations to gain equality (Al-Malki et al., 2012).

Conscientisation is a process through which women can realise their comparative lack of status to men, and, therefore, includes the individual development agency. Underpinning agency is the ability of women to mobilise and organise collectively to smooth and facilitate in order to promote changes in society, social changes and development (Longwe cited in Wallace & March, 1991, p.151), thus dissolving cultural challenges and implementing cultural reform for gender equality (Al-Malki et al., 2012). As mentioned above, social support is provided through interactions and exchanges of people and through their relationships (Turner & Avison, 1985, p. 882). Morley (2014) argues that reforming policies to include women in the public realm must overcome socio-cultural perspectives and stereotypes about roles of women. This can be done, in

part, by promoting women role models in society. Legislation against discrimination and knowledge among women of their legal rights can also help improve their lot.

In addition, the importance of raising the confidence and self-assertiveness of women should be emphasised; this is conscientisation along with the increase of agency, and it helps them believe in their own efficacy. As UNDP (2013) stresses, women can function as and should be viewed as ‘agents of change’ through the process of development, and helping them gain knowledge and understanding regarding transnational feminism, gender relations, and the ways in which such relations can be changed to be compatible with Islamic cultural law will help them function as agents of change. Therefore, the empowerment of women occurs on multiple levels and incorporates intersecting social and economic dimensions (Syed, 2010). It must include the ability of women to access money and education and also their ability to control life choices and engage in active involvement in society.

3.7.3 Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

The considerable role of organisational promotion and encouragement has been widely discussed as a significant factor informing the achievement of an individual’s success throughout their career journey (Metcalf, 2011). Most scholars in this area have implemented either the person-centred or the situation-centred approach (Muhonen, 2011). Fagenson (1990) attempted to move beyond this dichotomy by proposing the *gender–organisation–system* (GOS) as an alternative approach, which recognises that discrimination against women occurs at the individual, organisational, and societal levels. This discrimination has the capacity to differentially affect their career progress (Fagenson, 1990). A possible means to address women’s lack of human and social capital would be coaching, mentoring, and training (Timmers et al., 2010).

According to various structural perspectives, the best remedies for the issues that women face in academia are appropriate intervention, recruitment, and promotion of policies; in addition, attempts to retain junior talent should priorities a focus on women, and these might also include new appointments and financial incentives (Monroe et al., 2008). These can be implemented at the organisational level, to counter external barriers, while governmental health and safety regulations and union negotiations can address intra-institutional disparities (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 1997).

Engaging women in learning and assisting them to develop themselves can bolster commitment to politicised feminist reforms with advantages for all areas of society. This stresses the significance of Islam's important commitment towards enabling women to play a leading role in social change, instead of just being passive recipients (Metcalf, 2011). In this regard, the core role of organisations is to observe and monitor hiring/selection statistics and involve gender principles in strategic planning. Promoting networks of women also offers them the opportunity to share knowledge and enable skills development (Walby, 2009). The theory of perceived organisational support (POS) reflects the tendency of employees to assign humanlike characteristics to an organisation (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

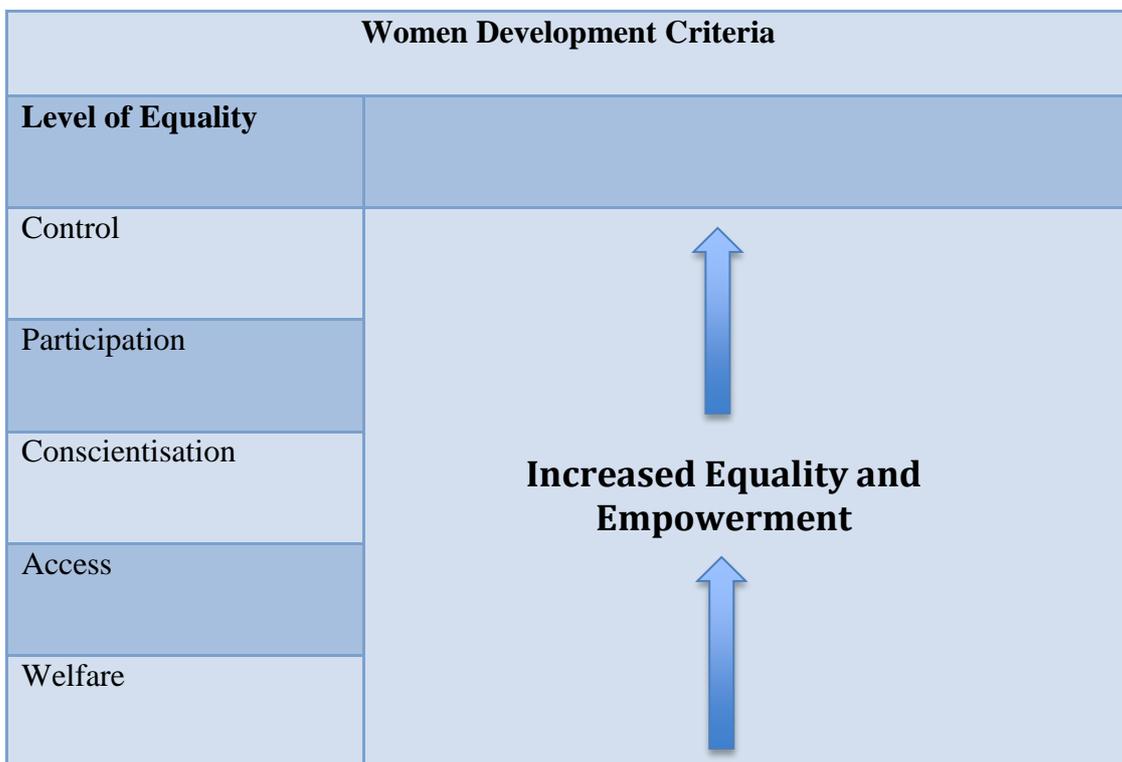
Supervisors as organisational agents can serve as a major vehicle of POS. The positive aspects of such relationships relate to the extent to which employees recognise a supervisor as such an agent, as opposed to considering the actions of a supervisor as idiosyncratic (Eisenberger et al., 2002). The value placed on women in Muslim and Arab states, as opposed to those who stay at home, views them as partners in progress and development, because of their presence and capabilities (Juhn et al., 2014). Governments can play a core role in enabling women to have a capacity to balance the obligations and duties of work and family life, as witnessed in Western contexts (Walby, 2009; Michailidis et al., 2012). Muslim scholars have noted that Islam and democracy appear to be compatible in all cases (Ramadan, 2009).

However, legislative frameworks must consciously and consistently engage with departments that manage women's affairs; for instance, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, when establishing rights to counter sexual discrimination (Richards et al., 2015), and when emphasising national training, enabling entrepreneurship for women, and creating educational policies to enhance women's political knowledge and literacy (Metcalf, 2011). Ensuring that organisational codes are governed through formal equality measures is a policy development strategy (Walby, 2009), although this might look different from country to country and culture to culture. It is also important to build professional women's networks and associations through Human resource development (HRD) planning, by building agency, confidence, choice, and a skills base for women (Metcalf, 2008).

An important aspect in this regard, and one that complements the present work culture is leadership education for women, which enables them to build knowledge about the leadership achievements of other women around the world, and build their confidence working in mixed gender environments (Walby, 2009). Putting institutional measures in place in this way can assist the wider transformation of cultures, gender relations, and women’s well-being and livelihood. Metcalfe (2011, p. 144) indicates five important aspects contributing to empowerment agendas that underpin the tripartite approach: labour market and the legal, political, socio-cultural, and psychological dimensions, which ‘encompass both economic and social development outcomes’.

Labour market participation can be promoted by macroeconomic policies, which offer a ‘supportive environment’ in which to enable the participation of women in the economic sector, entrepreneurship finance and support, gender-sensitive public policy planning, employment rights, and awareness training. Sara Longwe’s Women’s Empowerment Framework (Wallace & March, 1991, p. 151), as shown in Figure 3.1, proposes five key support factors for women, suggesting five levels of equality in the following order: welfare, access, conscientisation, participation, and control.

Figure 3.1 Longwe’s Women Empowerment Framework



Source: Wallace & March (1991, p. 151)

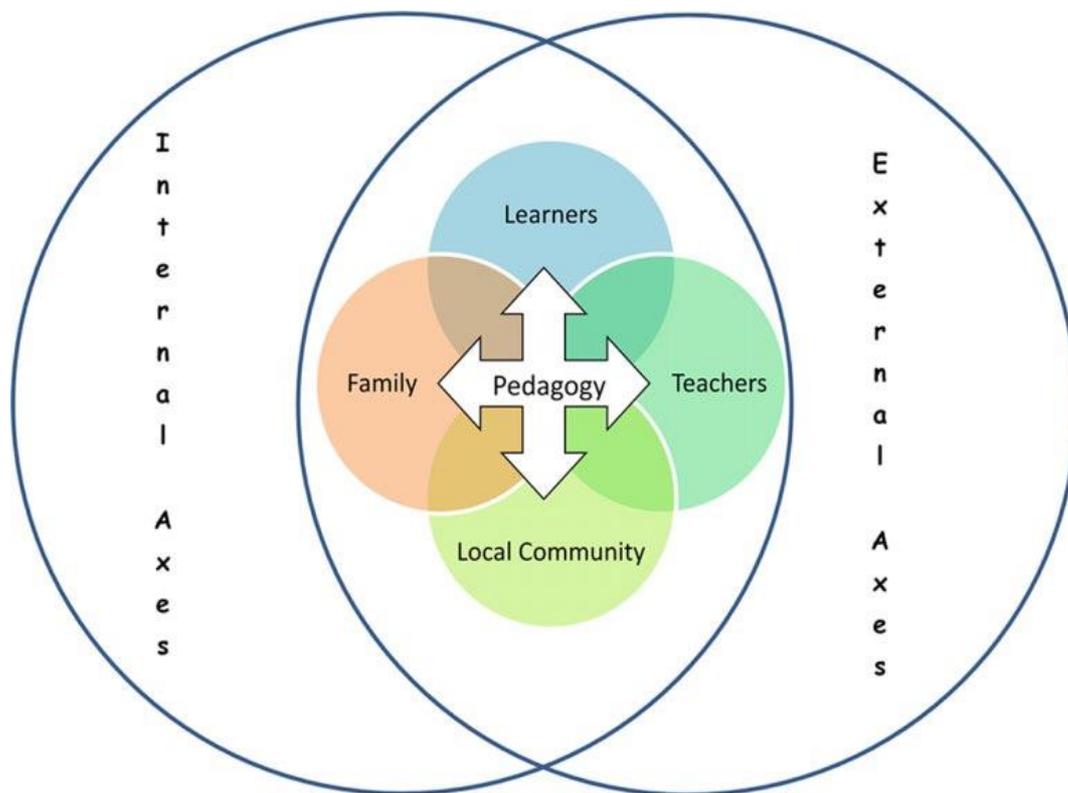
Policy measures that align with this perspective, such as gender and diversity training, are intended to shift the behaviour of those leaders in charge of processes of recruiting and selecting promotions (Willemsen & Van Vianen, 2008). According to the theory of organisational support, by which development is directed according to the desirable features of employees as regards recruitment, the extent to which employees agree with the values and contributions of their organisation affects their socio-emotional well-being (Kawai & Strange, 2014). Although the definition, roles, and functions of institutional support vary in the literature, there is a shared view that the concept of support involves legal and governmental mechanisms (Kawai & Strange, 2014). Male and Palaiologou (2015) highlighted the value of shifting to a perspective that views leadership not merely as a praxis of teaching and learning, but as an integrated conceptualisation of the correlation or ecology of teaching and learning in the community, and the social axes in which educational institutions are set.

This understanding of pedagogical leadership concerns the links between desired educational outcomes and the set of social realities surrounding the educational setting. 'Pedagogy was defined as 'a set of practices that shape educational organisations around teaching and learning in order to match externally applied standards and expectations of student outcomes. In this scenario leadership is integrated as an overarching process for effective functioning of these educational organisations' (Male & Palaiologou, 2015, p.215). Male and Palaiologou (2012) emphasised that those serving in educational settings should consider families, policies, reforms, and services, such as health, social work, and local, national, and global issues. They refer to these facets collectively as 'the ecology of the community' (p.115).

Pedagogy is viewed by Male and Palaiologou (2015) as a triangulated concept that is reliant on the relationship of social praxis, which, in turn, pays attention to theory, practice, and a set of social axes. Thus, pedagogy is significant to the creation of environments for learning, in which the centrality of interactions and relationships among learners, teachers, family, and community, such as their beliefs, values, culture, customs, religion, and economic circumstances, interact with external factors (for example, societal values, social phenomena, climate, global economy, mass media, social networking, information and communication technologies, national curricula, and the 'academic press' associated with students' test scores) (Geber, 2010, p. 225). In

order to collectively assist in constructing knowledge, to deliver an understanding that gives us opportunities to identify aspects of the environment, the relationship between pedagogy and social axes is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 The Relationship Between Pedagogy and Social Axes.



Source: Male & Palaiologou (2013, p. 220)

- Internal axes (values, beliefs, culture, religion, customs and local economy); and [SEP]
- External axes (societal values, global economy, mass media, social networking, information communication technologies, national curriculum, the ‘academic press’ responsible for students’ test [SEP] scores) Male & Palaiologou (2013, p. 220)

Mentoring is conceptualised as a natural interaction process that takes place among highly skilled experts, and those who are less skilled. Mentoring occurs in situations in which experts are model tutors, thereby providing stimulating and useful counsel for

mentees (Geber 2010). Promoting women's awareness regarding the legal and official rights and main role of policy-makers, who are the primary agents in the policy process of adjustment/adaptation, is a significant step towards addressing under-representation (Abdalla, 2014; Morley, 2014). Therefore, a comprehensive reference for related rules and regulations, involving rights and obligations, must be offered, rather than forcing women to obtain information from 'word of mouth' sources, thereby providing flexibility in working practices to meet the needs of working women in terms of their personalities and physical and mental health (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

This section has identified the perceived barriers and enablers at personal, social, institutional levels. There much remaining for Saudi decision-makers to do to address the scope of gender inequality: to involve women in decision-making in public spaces and to support the policies approved by King Abdullah to uplift the condition of women (Abdalkhail, 2017). The freedom of women in Saudi Arabia is frequently still curtailed, as they are required to seek permission for *wali* from guardians to travel, work, receive medical treatment, and so on.

3.8 Conceptual Framework

All of the theories and models that will be discussed in this section offer a crucial perspective on the limited number of women in leadership positions and relevant issues, in terms of feminist research, the gender-centred approach, the organisation-structure perspective, the gender–organisation–system approach (Fagenson, 1990), Brock et al. (2004) Model (places, spaces, and power).

3.8.1 Feminist Research

Feminist research brings gender to the foreground and seeks to understand social phenomena from women’s point of view (Ackerly & True, 2010). The purpose of such ideological research is to correct the invisibility and distortion of female experiences so as to end women’s unequal social position (Maynard, 2013). “Women’s under-representation in educational leadership across the Western and developing world could be situated in the feminist theory of equality, which argued that women should not be excluded from the field because of their sex” (Fuller, 2013, p. 3). Western feminist history is conventionally understood as having had three waves (Weiner, 2010).

The issue of gender and education was first brought to society’s attention in the nineteenth century, during the first wave of feminism. At that time, women from many Western countries formed organisations to promote reforms that directly affected women (Weiner, 2010). These movements brought about a number of positive changes for women, including the right to vote, increased access to birth control, and safety and rights within employment, but failed to address the roles of women within the family and outside the home (Schlaffer & Kropiunigg, 2011).

Additionally, the first wave was mainly a bourgeois fight, which ignored the difficulties encountered by women who were marginalised by society due to ethnicity or social class (Weiner, 2010). These groups were not included in the second wave of feminism, which began in the 1960s. The 1960s revolutionised the way in which women in Western societies were perceived; women were encouraged to pursue an education and career opportunities outside the home. Academic research in the areas of gender and education focused on macro differences between genders in order to bring equality to education (Weiner, 2010).

Three aspects were considered: political (concerning the improvement of opportunities for girls and women); critical (an intellectual critique of male-dominated knowledge); and practice-oriented (concerning the development of more ethical forms of professional practice) (Al-Heis, 2011). The second wave of feminism was deeply concerned with individual self-realisation, which brought about some positive changes for women, including increased access to HES; however, all inequalities were not addressed (Durbin & Fleetwood, 2010). Consensus about what it meant to be a 'girl' or a 'woman' was difficult to achieve, as factors such as culture (Elamin & Omair, 2010), class, and ethnicity fundamentally impact the construction of gender and the life-chances of girls and women (Weiner, 2010).

As a result, the third wave of feminism, beginning in the 1990s, aimed to address inequalities and focus on the micro-perspective of the individual, as well as how to shape gender in relation to education, ethnicity, and social class (David, 2012). As for Muslim nations, feminist sociologist Valentine Moghadam (2012) wrote extensively on the gender gap in the Muslim world, especially with respect to employment inequality. According to Moghadam (2012), women in many Islamic countries are victims of apparent political, social, and economic disparities that inhibit their ability to participate in government or to advance in the private sector. Moghadam (2012) explicitly pointed to low female labour force participation across the board in Muslim states as a sign of gender inequality, as have other scholars (Blackmore et al., 2015).

Islamic scholars have been categorised into two broad categories: traditional and modern. The traditional scholars' stance towards women involves satisfaction with women staying at home and devoting their lives to their families and being allowed to work in specific feminine professions (Sidani, 2005); in this view, women's involvement in male domains has to be prevented, and strict separation between genders is maintained. Women must be supervised, and the face veil is a must. In contrast, modern researchers have expressed disappointment because of women's situation in Arab societies and the under-representation of women in economic and political fields, the lack of stimulating work, the conservative preoccupation with veiling, and the lack of consideration towards the challenges women encounter in the work force; they assert that, for equality to be implemented, some amount of gender mixing has to be accepted and expected (Sidani, 2005).

Then, furthermore, feminist movements within the region assert that Islamic societies have attempted to promote institutions to control women and that 'elite men' have exploited women in work situations. Each woman must be enabled to choose appropriate roles (e.g. domestic, professional) for her own life. In order to promote women's advancement and progress, there have been calls for a revival of Islamic teaching and thought through reformation of Islamic jurisprudence. Despite the long-term disagreement between Islamic and feminist researchers, they have together made remarkable and fundamental contributions in framing attitudes about women and their actual roles in life in their region. For example, in Egypt and Lebanon, feminist perspectives enjoy great popularity and are recognised as a significant factor that has led to the participation and emancipation of women.

Feminist stances, as they appear in the region, mix reformist ideas and resistance to gender stereotypes (Lorber, 2001), whereas Islamic traditional scholars very often demand strict accordance with religious thought; they are dominant in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, decision-makers in GCC nations have attempted to educate women and train them in traditional tasks such as domestic ones (Thakur, 2013); these efforts are supported by family pressure to fulfil one's responsibilities and duties at home and let men support and protect the wife and the family (Metcalf, 2008). Current research on HES and gender focuses on comparing specific issues between male and female academics, including issues such as pay and promotion opportunities (Aiston, 2014).

These studies focus on the constructs underpinning issues such as access, power relations, and processes for promoting equality in society, while emphasising the need to accrue knowledge from women's perspectives (Cohen et al., 2013). Such research seems quite useful, considering the lack of insight regarding Saudi women in leadership positions (Alami, 2013; Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013; Al-Rasheed, 2013). A large body of research that centres on women in senior positions from international perspectives has been taken into consideration, analysing issues such as gendered national legislative systems; higher education policies, practices, and governance systems; and micro-level factors such as the perceived traits of women managers (Abdalla, 2014).

These should give rise to a better understanding of the factors that influence the representation of women in various leadership positions from varied views, and different approaches that can be taken to improve the current situation (Airini et al., 2011; Elg &

Jonnergard, 2010; Morley, 2014; Shah, 2012). The contemporary research on HES and gender draws on diverse fields: liberal feminism; psychology, in terms of how gender affects power relationships and leadership styles; and cultural studies concerning society's beliefs about gender equality in leadership positions. "In increasing our understanding of women academics' position, status, and experience in differing cultural contexts, we can explore points of commonality and divergence internationally" (Aiston, 2014, p. 60). Thus, by studying the experiences of women in different cultures, further insight into gender construction may be obtained. The principles extracted from this feminist research in Saudi society can be applied within Muslim contexts and aid the development of a global perspective.

3.8.2 Fagenson, (1990) Models (The gender-centred approach, the organisation-structure perspective, the gender–organisation–system approach)

I follow Fagenson (1990) in distinguishing three key components, namely, individual, cultural, and structural or institutional barriers and enablers, to improve the representation of female academics in senior positions. The theoretical approach implemented should be holistic and involve both positive and negative factors, as well as their overlaps, at individual, cultural, structural, and institutional levels, based on prior research. The theoretical perspective implemented here is the gender–organisation–system (GOS) model; it will influence the core research questions, the appropriate methodology, the elements involved in the analyses, the findings, and the conclusions (Yukongdi & Benson, 2013, p. 2). In addition, the first research question of the current study concerns the barriers that impede the advancement of women to senior positions in higher education, and the third question is related to the perceived supportive factors; the theoretical framework that will guide this part of the study is based on three discrete schools of thought (Timmers et al., 2010a).

- The gender-centred approach
- The organisation-structure perspective
- The gender–organisation–system approach (Fagenson, 1990).

The discussion that follows covers these three main theories, as well as the constraints encountered at individual, cultural, structural, and institutional levels by these women, along with potentially supportive factors. It should be noted that the first two

perspectives do not include all of the related elements and only concentrate on the internal or external factors (respectively); thus, neither offers a holistic framework that involves all of the factors relevant to the career advancement of women. A combined gender—organisation perspective can cover both organisational policies and policies regarding gender to better understand variation between men and women leaders, discrimination against women in the organisational context, women's capabilities, and factors that impede or promote the career advancement of women (Monroe et al., 2008).

3.8.2.1 Gender Perspectives

The gender-specific school of thought states that there are inherent differences between men and women, and therefore, they should be placed in varied roles in society (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010a). In Arab nations, only recently has gender discrimination been recognised as a concept; previously, treating women differently than men, including holding biases against women, was viewed as a part of the natural order of things (Balsoy, 2012). This attitude has persisted in many traditional societies, including Arab and Muslim nations in general and Saudi Arabia specifically (Timmers et al., 2010a).

Some of the most persistent preconceptions about women's capabilities affect how they are treated in the workplace. Women in traditional societies are (broadly) viewed as being weak, indecisive, intellectually inferior, unable to manage others, disorganised, and not properly motivated to succeed in the business world (Yukongdi & Benson, 2013). This stereotyping is used to justify the view that women are unsuited for higher management positions and has resulted in their under-representation in such positions in the Arab and Muslim world (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015).

It should be noted that most traditional societies do value women highly; however, their perception of women's value relates to their skills in parenting, keeping a household, and—from the emotional perspective—their traditional roles as caregivers, peacekeepers, and informal therapists for their children and husbands (Alesina et al., 2013). For much of history, and in many modern as well as traditional societies, most jobs have been viewed as 'man's work', while nurturing, caretaking, and homemaking were viewed as 'woman's work' (Alesina et al., 2013). Many people, including those in businesses responsible for hiring, firing, and promotion decisions, still view management positions as suitable only for men. This has led to the present under-

representation of female managers in virtually all settings and locations (Norris & Inglehart, 2013)

3.8.2.2 Organisational Perspectives

This approach explains gender bias and attitudes towards women in the workforce as a consequence of established organisational practices, both formal and informal (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011c). This manifests itself at all levels, but, particularly, in the lack of women in senior management (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011c). The literature indicates the formalised nature of the structures that prevent women's advancement (Răducan, 2014; Timmers et al., 2010a). Such research has concentrated on the construction and maintenance of organisational structures rather than the qualities of women that make them suitable for management; this is logical given that the fact that a candidate is a woman is often enough to disqualify her, regardless of her actual abilities and capabilities as an individual (Abdalla, 2015).

These effects can be attributed to the dynamic culture and structure of institutional and departmental organisations and to the invisible and substantial influences on the leadership style and departmental functions of middle managers. The work is done by making distinctions, either formally or informally, in terms of power and authority (Busher & Harris, 1999). This could be as simple as management being composed primarily of men, which causes decisions in hiring and promotion to be gender-biased (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011c). This effect does not even *have* to be based on any perception of women as inferior for management positions; it could be based simply on male managers being more comfortable with men as colleagues (Caner et al., 2016).

3.8.2.3 The Gender–Organisation–System (GOS) Model

Fagenson (1990) argues that the lower and slower rate of women's progress in institutions is not related to only their gender-particular traits (as proposed by the gender-centred perspective) or to only discriminatory organisational structures (as suggested by the institutional structure perspective) but that the two standpoints simultaneously shape women's careers (Yukongdi & Benson, 2013). The gender–organisation–system model as a broad theoretical framework is more popular than other models in attempting to locate the hurdles to the progress of women's careers (Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011c).

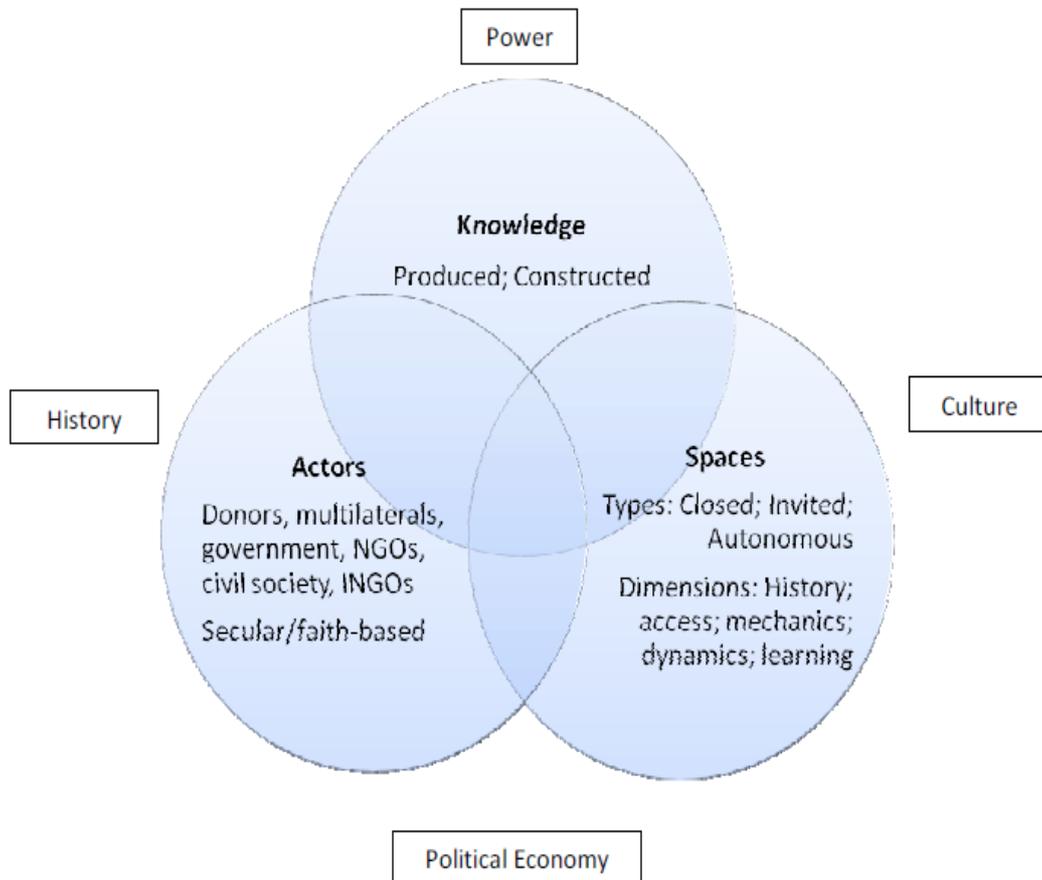
The GOS framework highlights how the structures of organisations hinder women's entry into and achievements within the workplace (Răducan & Răducan, 2014) and explains women's position and experience in organisations with varied organisational structures in relation to opportunities for informal networking, diversity performance evaluation, stereotyping, and preferred leadership (Al-Sabah, 2013). Relevant structures can involve job recruitment, job assignment, mentoring, retention, training, work and family balance, and promotion and reward systems (Fagenson, 1993).

The gender–organisation–system model may, therefore, serve as a promising theoretical framework for analysing the complex, multi-faceted issues facing women in management in many states and regions (Yukongdi & Benson, 2013). Nevertheless, to date, the gender–organisation–system model has only been implied as a framework and has not yet led to models that incorporate all three levels (individual, cultural, and structural) to explain women's career prospects in management. In addition, the GOS model is based on premises that support the gender-centred approach, in which women are recognised as possessing features thought to be incompatible with senior management positions (see, for instance, Horner, 1972; Spence & Helmreich, 1979). However, others reject this idea (Al-Sabah, 2013) and emphasise that women have qualifications that are equal to those of their male counterparts, despite the fact that they are still marginalised.

3.8.3 Places, Spaces, and Power Brock et al. (2004) Model

This study has adopted the theoretical and conceptual framework developed by Brock et al. (2004) in order to answer its second research question. Brock et al. (2004) examined the policy processes utilised in reducing poverty in two developing countries; this task was undertaken in the light of Muhonen's (2011) explanation that the outcome of educational and employment opportunities in certain classes of the population are a direct consequence of the policy frameworks and approaches adopted by various actors within their political, cultural, and historical contexts. Brock et al.'s (2004) study addressed similar research problems regarding female education in developing countries; its conceptual model used the concepts of actors, spaces, knowledge, and context to explore how women's inclusion in higher education is achieved and controlled by various actors and also the resulting implications, as seen in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Brock et al. (2004) Model



Source: Brock et al. (2004, p. 23)

3 8.3.1 Actors

Brock et al. (2004, p. 9) defined *actors* as parties holding interest and opinions that are embedded in political and institutional cultures. Different actors with different perspectives and interests underpin the conceptualisation and implementation of policy in a country. Through their acts or omissions, actors exercise power over the policy and institutional frameworks in the country. In the Saudi Arabian context, the main actors are the government, the community as religion-based actors, and the educational institutions (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013; Al-Sabah, 2013). Donors, present in the original model, are removed here due to the huge resource endowment in Saudi Arabia, which makes their role insignificant (Al-Rasheed, 2013).

Actors differ in their modes of influence over policies; as conceptualised in Muhonen (2011), this influence can be direct (through action) or indirect (through inaction). Muhonen explains that different actors' relative effectiveness depends on their nature and context. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, religious and political actors wield strong influence over matters of policy due to the lack of separation between religion and state (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Actors have durable and transposable dispositions that function as part of a matrix of actions, perceptions, and appreciations (Brock et al., 2004). Further, Brock et al. (2005) assert that actors belong to many networks, each of which has complex power dynamics and diverse interests, with their own different influences on the actors, in a constant, mutually reinforcing dynamic interplay (Brock et al., 2004, pp. 9–10). Finally, different expectations regarding the behaviour of actors and their roles affect their power and agency and that of their networks.

3.8.3.2 Knowledge

Knowledge is defined as a justified belief that boosts one's capacity for effective action. This definition incorporates three aspects (Bhatt et al., 2014): first, that knowledge is crucial for *effective action*; without such knowledge, actions are likely to not achieve the desired effect. Second, knowledge is a *belief*, perceived in the mind of a person. Lastly, knowledge is acquired through experience, which gives it an objective *justification*. Bhatt et al. (2014) explain that knowledge endows actors with the ability to use it for effective planning (Elamin & Omair, 2010) and thus influence the future. An important type of knowledge in the current context is *organisational knowledge*, which is particularly valuable given the numerous institutional actors in Brock et al.'s model.

Bhatt et al. (2014) explain that organisational knowledge arises when individual knowledge is shared and amplified within a group or organisational setting. However, they point out that organisational knowledge is not the simple sum of knowledge of individuals within the group (2014). Bhatt et al. (2014) separately categorise knowledge as being *core*, *complementary*, or *peripheral*. They define core knowledge as foundational ideas and thoughts that result in the shared purpose and commonality of interests in organisations. It is embedded into organisational systems and processes and is critical to the successful functioning of organisations.

Complementary knowledge refers to inert knowledge that remains inside the boundaries of the organisation and gains meaning only after being assimilated into existing organisational knowledge. Bhatt et al. (2014) give benchmarking as an example of the fusion of complementary knowledge with existing but inert complementary knowledge within the organisation. The assimilation of complementary knowledge results in higher productivity because of the resulting change in processes and systems. Last, peripheral knowledge motivates organisations to gain complementary knowledge (Bhatt et al., 2014).

Bhatt et al.'s classification of knowledge aligns with Brock et al.'s division of it into knowledge *produced* industrially through research studies and statistics and knowledge *constructed* in a population, which is implicit and changeable (2004, p. 12). Produced knowledge is used to inform policy decisions (Blackmore et al., 2015) and reflects the ideological biases of actors—similar to Bhatt et al.'s conceptualisation of complementary knowledge and its influence on core knowledge—as argued by Alami's (2013) study, whereas constructed knowledge is interpreted differently by different actors, again, based on their biases and sometimes overlapping notions of reality (Brock et al., 2004). It follows that actors can have differing interpretations of gender-based disparities in education, as they interpret various acts in line with their biased construction of disparities.

Brock et al. (2014) further explore the role and impact of *experiential* knowledge, *narratives* of education for development, and gender equality *discourses* in education. They explain that discourses and narratives are visible forms of knowledge, but with a hidden character (Al-Fassi, 2010). They form an important part of social construction in the minds of actors, evoking sentiments and persuading policy, that is, forming and affecting *ideologies*; these are the principal means through which people make sense of the world around them, the foundation of derived social meanings, which, in turn, inform actors engaged in the production of knowledge.

They are also a basis for interaction among social groups and structure perceptions in a particular manner. Ideologies help individuals make sense of the prevailing social order and the individuals' place in it (Feuer, 2010). HE also explains how dominant groups exert their ideologies among the rest of the society, and it follows that dominant

ideologies in society originate in the dominant groups (De Paola & Scoppa, 2015). In the case of Saudi Arabia, the dominant ideologies can thus be assumed to be those of ruling classes and religious authorities, through which they have their say in the policy formulation of the country and major institutions, including those of higher learning.

3. 8. 3.3 Spaces

In the present context of globalisation and international policy transfers, leadership in most institutions, including educational institutions, has moved towards democratisation. This has given rise to participatory policy initiatives involving the government and other actors such as civil society. In Saudi Arabia, the main actors include religious authorities, since the country's constitution is based on *Sharia* law (Răducan, 2014). Brock et al. (2004) conceptualise *policy spaces* as specific sites of social interaction that make it possible to separate policy processes into small elements that can be influenced (Brock et al., 2004, p. 16).

Spaces are moments in which events or interventions give rise to new opportunities by reconfiguring relationships between actors and establishing new actors; the result is a possible shift in direction. Brock et al. (2004) give examples of the inclusion of civil society in policy formulation or the propulsion of gender discourse into the educational policy debate. It follows that the concept of space raises questions of access, power, and recognition of women in institutions as equal partners in the development of those institutions (Arar, 2013; Brock et al., 2004). Brock et al. (2004, p.18) list three types of spaces: *closed*, *autonomous*, and *invited*. Gaventa (2006) notes that many decision-making spaces are closed, and as such, select actors make decisions without broadening the boundaries for inclusion. Gaventa conceptualises closed spaces as a preserve of elites, experts, bureaucrats, and heads of organisations.

These actors make decisions on behalf of the people without the people's involvement, accountability, or transparency. Invited spaces are those that are accessed when the elite make an effort to widen participation and thus invite citizens and beneficiaries. These invited parties can also be government and civil society organisations. Such spaces may become regularised or institutionalised (Gaventa, 2006). Claimed or created spaces, in contrast, are those that belong to less influential actors. Such spaces arise out of popular mobilisation or for the purposes of identity formation or protection. They can be claimed

by invitation, by right, or through a collective transitory unilateral action. These spaces have little to no influence on the policy outcomes of institutions.

Each of the aforementioned policy spaces rests on underlying assumptions that are important in determining possible intervention points in policy processes. Five broad dimensions define policy spaces and their potential: *history*, *mechanics*, *access*, *dynamics*, and *learning* dimensions (Brock et al., 2004, p. 20); this study focuses on women's career progression in higher education to senior positions and therefore will focus mainly on access to and the dynamics of the spaces.

3. 8. 3.4 Relationships between Places, Spaces, and Power

Power is important in leadership; the level of influence wielded by actors is proportional to their power (Gaventa, 2006). Gaventa presents various perceptions of power among individuals and actors in a social and organisational continuum. Given that those in power do not cede it willingly, Gaventa describes the notion of power struggles in organisations, with dominant players fighting to maintain the status quo. In contrast with this situation, in which the notion of power rests on the control and suppression of subjects, we may recognise that power is not a finite resource and can thus be shared, used, and created by actors (Castells, 2011). Gaventa offers three main forms of power that interact in social contexts: *power over people*, *capacity to act*, and *power within an individual* (self-confidence).

The dynamics of power are dependent on the space within which it is found and the level at which it operates (Gaventa, 2006). Gaventa explains that change can only happen when social actors acting across all dimensions simultaneously demand the opening of closed-up power spaces and challenge the visible or hidden barriers to such a change. Gaventa recommends no particular strategy for confronting actors to achieve this change; rather, he recommends careful navigation across the intersection of the relationships, noting, however, that this can also result in new distortions and the mismanagement of power or the creation of new boundaries. For instance, interventions by local and international actors to address the plight of women in higher education can reinforce hidden power in Saudi society, creating new boundaries and/or new forms of knowledge. In the same way, opening up previously closed spaces can accelerate the

potential for change. Finally, Gaventa (2006) notes that initiating social change requires actors to devise new strategies at every level.

The three elements of the conceptual framework help us understand the current state of women in higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. The three elements act together to shape the policy processes in institutions. Outside the interlocking unit they form, there are external influences on policy processes, including political, historical, cultural, and power relations outside the organisations of higher learning. Actors, acting within spaces and empowered by knowledge of the local context, are capable of changing the leadership role of women in higher education in the country (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011).

As noted, different actors with different perspectives and interests underpin the conceptualisation and implementation of policy in the country and therefore have the capacity to change the institutional framework of the country through their acts or omissions. Endowed with the requisite knowledge, as described in the conceptual model, they can change the course of leadership in institutions. In fact, there is general agreement that women encounter a great deal more obstacles to becoming leaders than men do, in particular for leading roles that are already male-dominated (Abdalla, 2014).

3.9 Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature relevant to the transition of female leaders to upper-ranking posts in academia in Saudi Arabia; in doing so, it has covered many studies and concepts of broader relevance for the understanding of women's career success. It has covered (1) the religious perspective (concerning women's status in Islam), (2) gender construction in Saudi Arabia, (3) the discussion of gender in Muslim and Arab states, (4) Saudi culture and women's issues, (5) perceived barriers that Saudi working women encounter at multiple levels, (6) perceived enabling factors that help women succeed, and (7) the conceptual framework used in this research. The next chapter will describe the methods utilised to conduct the qualitative empirical investigation in the context of these background concepts.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The current study is characterised as an exploratory design in order to address the intrinsic and substantial aim of the enquiry. The key purpose of this research was to explore and examine the perspectives and attitudes of academics, both male and female, who are closely involved with policy formulation and implementation in Saudi Arabian institutions of higher education, in order to see the whole picture and enhance the overall understanding of female Saudi academics' situation in relation to policies and practices that affect their career trajectories and their perspectives on the matter. The existing pattern of the under-representation of female Saudi academics in senior positions is also investigated in detail; furthermore, the study aims to examine the nature and root causes of discrimination at the personal, social, and structural levels, which leads to gender inequality in the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia and prevents female academics from holding senior positions in the academic hierarchy. I also aim to explore support systems for female Saudi academics as well as the policies that reinforce the gender inequality and resultant gender segregation that are ubiquitous in Saudi Arabia. The qualitative approach provided a logical and 'rational' reasonable ground justification for the aim of the study and for the research practice as well (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Therefore, this research study uses a qualitative approach in the form of a single case study conducted across five sites, undergirded by a feminist viewpoint

The research project was guided by the following three key research questions:

1. What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?
2. To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?
3. What factors can promote women's advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

This chapter aims to provide a detailed, theoretically rooted description of the research and data-gathering methodology. In addition, I reflect on my personal experiences from conducting the research as well as ethical issues that were raised and that may impact the trustworthiness of the study's findings, in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability (consistency), and conformability.

4.2 Methodological Paradigms and Approaches

A research paradigm is a technical term that is utilised to clarify and describe the ways in which we perceive research (Thomas, 2017). It also constitutes the basic belief system that guides the researcher not only in the selection of methods, but also in establishing the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research (Creswell, 2017). During the planning stages of the research process, it is important for a researcher to consider their assumptions about the world, the nature of reality, how reality can come to be known, and how it can then be conveyed (which relates closely to how the research should be reported) (Lodico et al., 2010). Going through this process helps the researcher choose an approach that best matches their assumptions and the research aims of the study.

In this section, three different paradigms and their underlying assumptions are considered and evaluated in terms of the exigencies of the current study and my own beliefs. These paradigms are *positivism*, *interpretivism*, and *critical research*. For each paradigm, four research elements are discussed: *ontology*, *epistemology*, *axiology*, and *methodology* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). Ontological assumptions relate to the nature of reality and its characteristics (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Epistemological assumptions are related to how the social world should be studied and whether a scientific approach is the right stance to adopt (Bryman, 2016, p. 6); they are manifested in the ways of researching and inquiring into the nature of reality and the nature of things (Cohen et al., 2013). Axiology is identified as the philosophy of values and ethics. Axiological beliefs, in study, are concerned with the role of values and ethics in knowledge acquisition; they deal with the question of how one would be a moral person in the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Each of these three processes influences methodological considerations, such as the instruments used to collect and analyse data (Cohen, 2013, p. 3). How does the researcher implement assumptions in practice? In a qualitative approach, the enquirer admits the value-laden nature of research and of information gathered from the field and actively reports any values and biases (Creswell, 2013, p. 20).

4.2.1 Positivism

Under positivism, which is the theoretical underpinning of the scientific method, speculative and metaphysical approaches are avoided in favour of observable facts (Flick, 2015, p. 20); the ontological assumption is that there is ‘one real world’ (Hacking, 1981, p. 2). That is, there is a singular and objective reality that abides by natural laws, and it is independent of the individual’s perspective (Hartas, 2010; Waring, 2012). Epistemologically, meaning exists independently of the human mind, so knowledge is objective and tangible, and the researcher can gain access to this knowledge through observation (Cohen et al., 2013). Positivist researchers in social and psychological fields assume that these fields can be studied similarly to how the natural world is studied (e.g. by dividing complex phenomena into constituent sections and studying the correlations between them) (Lodico et al., 2010).

As this implies, the methodology used in positivist research is quantitative—that is, it deals with quantifiable data to summarise findings (Ary et al., 2010). In this orientation, social reality is viewed as an objective fact that can be observed and measured, scientific methods are used to study it (e.g. experiments, quasi-experiments, correlational studies, and surveys), and the data are analysed using statistical procedures. The axiological assumption is that the researcher should strive for objectivity and, while it is recognised that values may influence what is studied and how (Cohen et al., 2013), the researcher should make efforts to ensure that personal biases do not influence outcomes (Lodico et al., 2010).

Positivist approaches to educational research have received a great deal of criticism. Positivism neglects issues such as choice, freedom, and individuality (Cohen et al., 2013); thus, a full picture of the educational environment may not be presented. Furthermore, the characteristically positivist breakdown of the social world into variables has been criticised for failing to take into account the complex nature of

educational institutions (Ary et al., 2014). Furthermore, individuals may act differently in different environments, but the positivist researcher does not take this into account and prefers to make generalisations about behaviour. In addition, the extent to which a researcher can be truly objective is debatable; in social research, the observer often makes subjective decisions about what they choose to observe, how they interpret observations, and how findings are assessed (Ary et al., 2014). Thus, positivist research may not always be as objective as it claims.

Finally, positivist research is ‘concerned with the empathic understanding of human action rather than with the forces that are deemed to act on it’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 28). Therefore, it has been criticised for its reduction of human behaviour to passivity, where the assumption is made that people act in a certain way because of external circumstances and not because of their own free will (Cohen et al., 2013). As a result, the creative and individual aspects of human behaviour are neglected when using a positivist research approach. Given these criticisms, the nature of this research study, and my own basic assumptions, a positivist orientation was not the right choice for the current study. The research questions posed in this study call for explorative answers and interpretations of thoughts and actions.

This necessitates a naturalistic research approach capable of illustrating the impact of context or setting, at the individual, institutional, and social levels, on perceptions and practices (Silverman, 2014, p. 24). As positivist ontology does not accept that there can be multiple meaningful realities depending on how an individual interprets his/her environment, positivism is not capable of providing appropriate answers to research questions like these. Furthermore, my own personal intellectual values and perspectives influenced the choice of study, from the formulation of the research questions to the methods used and the interpretation of the findings as well. Thus, my axiological position runs contrary to the positivist paradigm, and another paradigm should be sought.

4.2.2 Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm was developed in reaction to many of the criticisms of positivism. It rejects the ontological position that there is one objective reality that can be broken down and studied; instead, it adopts an idealist position, where reality is

viewed as a complex ‘whole’ that cannot be broken down into constituent parts (Lodico et al., 2010). This interpretation of reality is socially, historically, and culturally contingent, and different people experience this reality in different ways. Thus, meaning ‘comes into existence in and out of our engagement with realities in our world’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 8), and there can be multiple perspectives on the same incident or object. The epistemological position under interpretivism is one of social constructivism, centred on the idea that knowledge of the world is not deductive and objective, but inductive and subjective and that it is gained through active engagement (e.g. with others). This idea probably extends to all human interactions and interpretations of their experiences (Lodico et al., 2010); people ‘give’ meaning to the social world (Masson, 2013). The interpretivist paradigm tends to call for qualitative research methods (Cohen et al., 2013) that are characteristic of what Flick (2015, p. 13) has termed ‘inductive hypothesis’, which is commonly understood as a theory-generating approach, as distinct from hypothesis of investigation, which is a deductive means of testing a theory.

Bryman (2012) states that all types of qualitative research hinge on the fact that reality is a result of individuals interacting with their social environment. It is therefore important to be in sufficient contact with the research subjects and their milieu to fully understand the issues inherent in the education system that affect or are bound up in the matter the research seeks to unravel (Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell, 2013). In the interpretivist approach, it is recognised that the researcher’s values are intertwined with the research process and that the researcher and the subject under study cannot be separated: “The inquirer and the ‘object’ of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b, p. 37). Moreover, the researcher must continually strive to be aware of and control their biases to ensure that they do not affect the analysis process (Lodico et al., 2010; Miles et al., 2014).

In most respects, interpretivism is compatible with the research aim of this study (i.e. to explore the experiences and perspectives of Saudi female educators working in higher education in Saudi Arabia) due to the paradigm’s *emic* perspective—that is, one that aims to investigate social phenomena from the perspective of the participants: how they make sense of their own behaviour, their interactions with others, and their situation (Riazi, 2016). As this study is focused on uncovering the multiple realities of the

participants, this paradigm is suitable in that it recognises that these realities depend on how individuals interpret meaning within their particular sociocultural context.

On the other hand, interpretivism does not align with the research aims of the study or with my own axiological position. For instance, interpretivism has been criticised for neglecting institutional structures and divisions of power in society. Critics argue that, while the pre-existing systems of meaning we are born into do distort our understanding of phenomena, we may be unable to perceive the real nature of this influence on our actions (Cohen et al., 2013). Individuals' understandings are 'structured historically in the traditions, prejudices, and institutional practices that come down to us' (Taylor, 1993, p. 59), but the extent to and ways in which these practices influence actions may be unclear to the individual.

As a result of this lack of understanding, it is argued that accounts of phenomena by participants who experience them are incomplete and do not provide a full explanation (Cohen et al., 2013). This study aims to explain how Saudi society influences the career trajectory of female academics, and structures of power within Saudi Arabia are a vital part of the explanation. Thus, the interpretive paradigm is deemed insufficient, as it does not take these structures explicitly into account and, instead, focuses solely on how an individual or group interprets experience—an important but insufficient perspective.

4.2.3 Critical Research

Like interpretivism, the critical research paradigm views reality as socially constructed and asserts that multiple realities can exist. However, critical research also considers reality and individual subjectivity to be influenced by the social, political, and cultural inequalities that exist within a society (Lodico et al., 2010). Critical research theory is mainly concerned with empowering human beings to overcome obstacles they have encountered due to their gender, class, and race (Fay, 1987). For researchers who use a critical approach, the main concern is not just to offer an explanation of (aspects of) society and behaviour, but also to realise a society that strives to achieve both equality and representation for its entire populace.

In this light, the aim of research is then not only to understand phenomena, but also to shift perspectives attached to them. In particular, critical researchers have the fundamental agenda of improving the lot of disadvantaged or marginalised groups by exposing the power structures that lead to inequality and enhancing the freedom of individuals in a democratic community (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 31). The ontological position is one of historical realism, where it is assumed that reality is shaped by social, political, economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender values (Guba & Lincoln, 1994a).

In this paradigm, an individual's knowledge depends on and is shaped by not only their social and historical contexts, but also the economic and political context they are born into (Briggs & Coleman, 2012). With this, it is recognised that knowledge is judged and assessed in society according to an individual's social position; as Cohen and colleagues (2013, p. 27) explain, 'what counts as knowledge is determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge'.

Using a critical research approach, the researcher gains knowledge through collaboration and communication with members of the community being studied (Lodico et al., 2010). The subject is studied from their own perspective, and research begins with an understanding of their personal situation. Interpretations of the participant's reality should naturally be verified with the participant during the research process (Hartas, 2010). Data collection and interpretation in critical research are generally done through qualitative methods; however, quantitative methods can also be used when appropriate to the study's aims, as the goal is to find data of the sort most likely to empower the subject, rather than to adhere to a particular method (Lodico et al., 2010).

In critical research, the researcher's values are explicit, and the ideology that 'no research is value free' (Pring, 2015, p. 250) is embraced. The researcher judges reality, criticises it, and considers how things ought to be; the aim is to expose injustice, challenge social structures, and engage in social action (Crotty, 1998). The hope, aside from the scholarly contribution of the study, is that participants become critically aware of their situation and then embrace change. The applicability of this research paradigm to this research project is discussed next.

4.3 Selection of an Approach

In order to select an appropriate research approach, a researcher must decide what kind of knowledge is being sought in relation to the social world (James & Busher, 2009). However, “there is no formula...my choice depends in large part on my research questions” (Yin, 2014, p. 45). Alternatively, as pointed out by Thomas (2017), my research approach should be the servant of my research questions. Using this perspective, the current study aimed to elucidate the career journey of Saudi female academics and examine the factors that hinder them from accessing the upper rank senior posts, leading to the existing pattern of underrepresentation in particular, and explore possible solutions in overcoming these challenges for those who seek senior posts; thus, it was critical to interact with this population.

The justification of my decision to use a qualitative approach stemmed primarily from several reasons related to consideration of the nature of the study, which is an exploratory design for highlighting the fundamental aim of the enquiry which is in “grasping the subjective meaning of issues from the perspectives of the participants” (Flick, 2015, p.11). Hence, it is justified in drawing from the qualitative approach concepts such as ‘experiences’, ‘perceptions’ and attributes/skills that are not quantifiable and which, as such, can best be investigated from the respondents’ perspectives, and the recognition that a laissez-faire, distant, or purely quantitative research approach would not probe much below the surface of the issues at hand. Bryman, (2016, p. 380) argues that a qualitative approach can be defined as “a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data...broadly inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist.” Silverman (2014) adds that “the common belief is that qualitative research can offer a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative methodology” (pp. 22–23).

Qualitative perspective is more concerned with understanding individuals’ perceptions of the world. They doubt whether social “facts exist and question whether a ‘scientific’ approach can be used when dealing with human things” (Bell, 2014, p. 9). Robson (2011) asserts that qualitative research supposes that, in peoples’ experiences, therein lies their embedded meaning, whereas Creswell (2013) maintains that meaning relates to an identified experience that one has either lived, felt or, better yet, undergone. It is

implicit to realise that meaning in this context is socially constructed by the identified faculty staff based upon what the researcher is interested in and, hence, seeks to understand in depth. Qualitative approach is also justified due to the fact that it is necessary for the researcher to get closer to the respondents and capture their perceptions and perspectives; hence, the need to employ in-depth semi-structured interviews as well as analysis of all the relevant documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

The utilisation of qualitative methods is also favoured by a great number of researchers since it enables them to provide ‘rich descriptions’ of the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The argument of Geertz (1973) about “thick description” (p. 3) and the variation between “thin description” and “thick description” is that the former can offer a description of acts or events without providing any meanings to them, whereas thick description ordinarily attaches a record of subjective justifications and ascribes meanings offered via individuals involved in the behaviours to such acts and how and why they are occurring, thereby making the gathered data of greater value for studies via other social sciences (Geertz (1973). Thus, because meanings are generated by the participants of the study, and interpreted by the researcher, a qualitative approach is required to accomplish the aim of conducting this study.

This research paradigm made it possible to gain an in-depth picture of the perceptions and experiences of faculty and education officials, as they relate to the progress of Saudi female academics to leadership positions or the lack of progress. This was achieved in practice by examining the perspectives and experiences of male and female academics as they related to gender disparities, as well as the factors that contributed to how these disparities are perceived. The need for a qualitative approach, which this prospect implied, excluded the use of the positivist paradigm. In addition, the theoretical approach implemented in this study was influenced considerably by my own philosophical inclination to feminist research. My philosophical position has its roots in how I have come to view education and the needs it fulfils.

Some major factors contributed greatly to this perspective, including my position and my identification of myself with the research participants as a former academic colleague, my personality, social background, gender and age, and my interest in the perspectives of female academics in Saudi universities regarding their career progress to

higher ranking leadership positions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Furthermore, the research questions required that the social and political context of Saudi Arabia be critically examined in order to determine how sociocultural and political factors influence the career progression of female academics in Saudi institutions of higher education.

As the interpretivist paradigm excludes external institutional factors that may influence career progression, I concluded that this approach did not fit with the research aims of my study. Thus, a critical research stance was deemed to be the most suitable approach to fulfil the research aims. While the other two mentioned paradigms give an inconsistent account of social behaviour and do not take into consideration the political and ideological contexts of most educational research (Gage, 1989), critical research tends not only to be able to offer an account of behaviour that reflects the role of the community, but also, on this basis, advocates a society characterised by democracy and equality for all within it (Cohen et al., 2013); this is in keeping with the key aim to not only understand the cases and phenomena, but also change them — to promote the disempowered, tackle the issue of inequality, and establish and assert the freedom of the individual in a democratic community (Cohen et al., 2013). This choice was bolstered by the recognition of the problematic lack of adequate research into gender inequalities in education in Saudi Arabia in general and discrimination against female faculty members in academia in particular (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Al-Heis, 2011); there is a need for research that questions the status quo, empowers women, and suggests a move to action.

4.4 Feminist Research

In general, feminist researchers are concerned with the issues women face and aim to improve women's situation (Creswell, 2017). Creswell adds that *domination* is a prevailing theme of feminist literature, as it is always a component of patriarchal societies. The key objective of feminist research is to 'correct both the invisibility and distortion of [the] female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position' (Lather, 1991, p. 71). Feminist research involves transformative developments, such as transnational feminism and globalisation, and critical trends, such as postcolonial research, intersectionality, and endarkened epistemology, which are deployed to push back against traditional bias, pursue social justice, and ensure that

women's voices are heard. These issues impact women's professional and personal lives (Olesen, 2011).

Starting in the early 1980s, feminist researchers began to emphasise that the principles and practices of quantitative research do not function in concord with feminist research and do not explain the actuality of women's situations. Instead, they argued, qualitative in-depth interviews, either semi-structured or unstructured, are a more effective method of data collection, as they (are considered to) constitute the one process that enables the interviewer to extract perspectives and information about the interviewee (Bryman, 2012). For these reasons, the current study uses a feminist qualitative approach to extract and examine the varied perspectives of male and female faculty members on inequality within the power structures of Saudi Arabia and to elucidate the female members' experiences in academia. Notions of equality have been associated with social acceptance of how power imbalance across genders is perceived in the Saudi higher education sector. Therefore, it seems important to develop a deeper understanding of individual experiences (Creswell, 2013).

4.5 Trustworthiness of the Research

Qualitative research is commonly evaluated on the basis of its *trustworthiness* (Lincoln & Guba, 1984b). In feminist research, *reliability* refers to the adherence of the researcher to a specific, openly described procedure to ensure the strictness of the enquiry (Cohen et al., 2013). The criteria usually used for the validity of a qualitative study are *interior and exterior validity*, *credibility*, and *objectivity* (Creswell, 2017). However, in this study, the criteria for reliability proposed by Cohen et al. (2013) are used instead. These are *credibility* (internal legitimacy), *transferability* (external legitimacy), *dependability* (consistency), and *conformability* (objectivity). Credibility involves the relation between the opinions of research participants and the researcher's own views (Flick, 2015). Transferability is the generalisation of findings in a qualitative inquiry; it entails the transfer of information from one case to another (Swanborn, 2010). Dependability of the collected data, the process of data analysis, and generation of theories are dependent on the correctness and suitability of the methods used. Finally, conformability ensures that the research findings are interpreted based on the collected data.

There are (at least) six methods that can be used to ascertain the credibility, transferability, reliability, and conformability of research in order to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b): *prolonged engagement*, *constant observation*, *debriefing peers*, *analysing a case negatively*, *member checking*, and *triangulation*. This study's ability to harness all these methods was, however, limited, given that the time and resources available to the sole researcher were inadequate for prolonged work. Thus, in this study, participant observation was not used, as it was suspected that the participants would resist being followed around the university by the researcher, especially when observation might interrupt their activities.

Similarly, the peer debriefing technique was also not used because only a single researcher conducted the research project. Member checking, however, was carried out: each participant was provided with a summary of the interview transcript in order to affirm the dependability and conformability of the findings. The prolonged engagement technique was also viable because some participants participated in two interview sessions. In some cases, the time allocated for the first interview session was insufficient because of urgent circumstances or participants' academic duties, and as a result, another session was required to cover all the questions.

The most important method of checking the trustworthiness of the research, however, was triangulation. The four most common types of triangulation are *data triangulation*, which is concerned with persons, time, and space; *investigator triangulation*, which uses several observers; *theory triangulation*, which deduces phenomena using two or more theoretical perspectives; and *methodological triangulation*, where data are collected using several methodological strategies. In this fourth case, the depth and quality of the research findings are enhanced by the use of several data sources and by cross-checking and validating the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

Triangulation is important because it provides an in-depth representation of data; it enhances the reliability of research findings and enables the researcher to consider a problem in several dimensions (Walliman, 2011). Using a combination of methods enables a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon, which raises the level of accuracy and consistency of the data being used. Many texts refer to triangulation as a means of enabling the researcher to have a more comprehensive and holistic view of the

phenomenon being studied (Cohen et al., 2013). For the current study, data triangulation was used. Denscombe (2017) advises using different data sources so as to be able to view a single study from different perspectives; this study collected data from several interviews as well as from administrative documentation at five universities. Considering different perspectives on the subject matter can validate findings, and this is made possible by using multiple sources of data (Swanborn, 2010).

Data triangulation can itself be divided into three subtypes: *time triangulation*, *space triangulation*, and *person triangulation* (Cohen et al., 2013). In time triangulation, the researcher collects data at different time points, such as at different times of a single day, days of the week, or months of the year, depending on the nature of the investigation (Miles et al., 2014). This study, however, is not concerned with changes that occur on such a short timeline, nor is it interested in evaluating the systems and policies used in higher education over a period of time.

This study, therefore, did not use time triangulation, though it did utilise the other two subtypes. In space triangulation, data are collected from multiple sites (e.g. from five universities in this study) (Neuman, 2014). The effectiveness of a research study can be evaluated and its validity can be increased by analysing data from all sites, which also makes a study more comprehensive (Cohen et al., 2013). In person triangulation, data are collected from respondents in a range of demographic categories in order to support and validate findings (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). In this study, both male and female academics participated in the research.

4.6 Being an Insider-Researcher

Being an ‘insider’ in research has a number of ethical implications, especially for the trustworthiness of the research. Given its importance, this issue is discussed in its own section here; other ethical issues are discussed at the end of this chapter. There are a number of advantages to being an insider-researcher. My general familiarity with, and background in, the politics of Saudi academic institutions—not only their formal hierarchy but also how universities ‘really work’ in the country—facilitated my understanding of the research topic and the subject matter of the interviews (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002, p. 10). In addition, being a Saudi citizen and a native of the area where all five universities were located, my fluency in the local language facilitated effective

communication, which made the task of gaining access easier and encouraged cooperation from participants in the field.

My background also yielded an insider's understanding of local values, mores, and taboos. My understanding of the formal and informal power structures involved allowed me to easily obtain permission to conduct the research, schedule interviews, and gain access to records and documents (Mercer, 2007; Unluer, 2012). My understanding of the Saudi higher education system made me aware of the best way to approach participants—a task that could be difficult for an outsider (Mercer, 2007). Moreover, my personal connections to some of the participants facilitated interactions and helped me gain the necessary cooperation to conduct interviews, either face-to-face or over the telephone (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). This cooperation led to the establishment of meaningful personal relationships and an intimacy that enhanced the research narrative that emerged (Mercer, 2007).

In addition, being an insider-researcher enabled me to gather rich, relevant, and valuable data. Knowing the 'rhythms' of the Saudi university setting enabled me to identify implicit messages and select proper methods (Unluer, 2012). I was accepted by both faculty members and administrators because of my current status as a researcher and my past experience as a faculty member. Conversely, the participants in the five case studies were familiar with the research methods and understood what it means to undertake academic research. As a result, they were willing to support my work, as they had received similar support in the past for their own endeavours.

The ethical challenges I faced during the research process included coming to grips with the power dynamics associated with my role. I was aware that some informants might have felt obliged to participate in my research project because of my position as a former faculty member. Furthermore, there was the possibility of role strain, with some participants relating to their current positions as senior staff members and my current role as a researcher, rather than our status as colleagues. Cotteril and Letherby (1994, p. 116) note that, once in the field, "the researcher puts himself into different roles which are relevant to the identity of the researcher as a person." Citing evidence from their own research and elsewhere, they point out how certain elements of the researcher's personal

identity can produce relations to a research topic and participants that can encourage positive effects.

In their view, for instance, perceiving the researcher as a person who shares similar experiences with study participants can reduce participants' fear regarding the purpose of the research and pave the way for more informative interviews. In my case, this familiarity likely helped participants trust me during the research process and prevented me from losing valuable qualitative data. However, it is important to note the potential dangers of being an insider-researcher as well. For example, I was concerned that overfamiliarity could lead to a loss of objectivity. Unconsciously making wrong assumptions about the research process based on prior knowledge is a form of bias (Mercer, 2007). Insider-researchers may also be confronted with role duality (Unluer, 2012) and struggle to balance their insider and researcher roles. As an insider, the problem is not that the researcher may not receive or see important information, but, rather, that access to sensitive information might be granted.

In order to overcome such issues and conduct credible research, at each stage of the research, insider-researchers must have an explicit awareness of the possible effects of (perceived or actual) bias on data collection and analysis, respect ethical issues related to anonymity, and consider and address issues that may influence their role in terms of coercion, compliance, and access to privileged information (Smyth & Holian, 2008). As I was a junior faculty member, I did not have power or authority over the participants, nor did I have access to privileged information, so this did not hamper the data collection process.

However, the issue of potential bias did need to be addressed. In order to reduce the risk of bias, I considered my own opinions about the barriers faced by female academics in Saudi Arabia and the support they receive or do not receive and tried not to reveal these ideas to the participants (Mercer, 2007). Revealing one's personal viewpoint to participants can be a distraction, encourage acquiescence, or even set up a self-fulfilling prophecy (Powney & Watts, 1987). Therefore, I gathered the study data without prejudice to the best degree possible (Unluer, 2012). Furthermore, I continually questioned my own views, their validity, and whether they coincided with participants' views. Being an insider-researcher can lead one to take some things for granted or

assume that one's own view is more commonplace or representative than is actually the case (Brekhusm, 1998). Therefore, I challenged my own assumptions and tried to evaluate the data with a neutral eye. By overcoming these biases, I hoped to find richer themes (Smyth & Holian, 2008), thus increasing the research's rigour.

4.7 Sampling Framework

Researchers need sufficient access to data, which they can gain via several avenues—in this case, personal interviews or reviews of documentation, files, or previous observations (Yin, 2014, p. 28). Sampling a population is a vital component of research (Cohen et al., 2013). Qualitative researchers tend to choose non-probabilistic sampling methods (Cohen et al., 2013), as their interests lie in understanding social processes rather than achieving statistical representativeness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). In non-probabilistic sampling, it is not possible to state the probability of a given unit being included in the sample; techniques include purposive sampling, convenience sampling, theoretical sampling and quota sampling (Wellington, 2015). The samples produced by this practice, although not statistically representative, can be highly relevant to the research questions (Neuman, 2014); in fact, qualitative research methods can provide more valid data than quantitative research methods when investigating themes such as the meanings people attach to their experiences (Yin, 2014).

Among the non-probabilistic sampling methods, purposive sampling is one of the most common types (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). This technique, which involves making choices about who should comprise the sample according to the research objectives (Wellington, 2015), is often used to allow the researcher to focus closely on the particular area under research. The technique relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting units (i.e. the people, cases/organisations, events, or pieces of data to be researched) (Cohen et al., 2013). Bryman (2016) identified this technique of sampling as “essentially strategic [...] entail[ing] an attempt to establish an appropriate correspondence between both the questions of the research and sampling.” Hence, participants are chosen for their relevance to the research, and to guarantee that the research questions must provide a hint and allusion of what units are to be sampled (Bryman, 2012, p. 416).

The researcher identifies the characteristics of a population of interest and then strives to trace such individuals in the population who have the characteristics relevant to the particular research questions (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009). Purposive sampling is useful for accessing ‘knowledgeable people’, that is, those who have in-depth knowledge about a particular issue, for instance, by virtue of their professional role or experience (Cohen et al., 2013). Purposive sampling was used in this study because it allowed me to choose individuals whom I believed would provide the information that was most relevant to the research questions (namely, successful female academics in Saudi Arabia who had encountered opponents and supporters along their career trajectory).

In snowball sampling, members of the sample introduce the researcher to other, similar individuals who might also be suitable for inclusion in the research (Wellington, 2015). I used snowball sampling for two reasons; first of all, it was a very difficult task to acquire participants who would be willing in taking part in the research and be able to answer and address specific issues related to Saudi women’s underrepresentation in senior leadership positions; the second ground related to the necessity to build trust with the research participants. Therefore, asking the early participants to introduce me to other male and female academics of their acquaintance, friends or colleagues that could help in building trust with other potential research participants meant that a wider sample became available for analysis.

The final sample, which was meant to answer questions related to the interplay of personal, societal, and organisational factors, consisted of 15 female academics having access to higher academic leadership positions and 10 women having no opportunity for accessing any academic leadership positions. The sample also included five male academics from five state universities; these men were included because they would be able to provide a different gendered perspective to the female academics and consider the issue from a different angle with their rich experience in the executive senior leadership positions

Sample size will depend on the resources and time available, as well as on a study’s objectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In qualitative research, “the subgroup in a sample should not be so small as to prevent data redundancy or data saturation...each subgroup should contain no fewer than three cases” (Neuman, 2014, p. 95). However,

giving a particular number that is ‘enough’ across all contexts is not possible (Cohen et al., 2013). For my study, the sample was selected to represent a range of women with different experiences in relation to management positions in public sector universities in Saudi Arabia; that is, I specified the required characteristics of potential participants, which is the most advantageous approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The next section will discuss the rationale for the selection of the sampled universities followed by discussion of the rationale for the research participant’s selection in more detail.

4.7.1 Rationale for Selection of the Sample Universities

As previously stated, the central aim of this study is to examine the career journeys of female Saudi academics, to investigate the manner in which gender inequality is perpetuated in academia. Therefore, the selection of the five universities made in light of the following criteria: (1) I selected the five sites, which are state and public universities only. The reason for only focusing on public sector universities is that, unlike the private sector, they have uniform systems of promotion, selection, seniority and salary structure as well as a basic pay scale (BPS). (2) Of the universities in Saudi Arabia, some are male only, some female only, and others mixed gender, which is the majority in the country. I have chosen the universities that recruited female staff only, among which are mixed gender universities and those of single gender, as in women-only institutions. (3) I was looking for the distinctive features of each university, affording diversity of contexts in terms of culture, traditions and customs for the research study.

The criteria of sampled universities are situated in four different cities, each city, both big and small, having its own features with a mix of conservative and open-minded society and having both old and new universities, such as: (1) Riyadh, the Capital of Saudi Arabia, which is an important part of the Najd region; (2) Jeddah, which is located in the heart of the Hijaz region that has a long history with modernity and development due to the mix of other races who settled in the region after the Hajj and formed significant and distinct cultures and traditions in this region of Saudi Arabia, as has been discussed in the context of the study (Chapter 2); (3) Medina, known as the city of the Prophet Muhammad, which has religious value for Arabs and Muslims; (4) Shagra, which is a Saudi province located about 185km northwest of the capital, Riyadh. The reason for choosing this blend of institutions was to explore a range of perspectives and provide broad analysis of the factors that may contribute to women’s career progression.

When selecting the sample, I initially limited myself to five Saudi public sector universities in order to develop a level of detail about each place and to be more closely involved in the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2017). Another reason for limiting the choice of universities was practical; as a full-time student at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom, conducting research in my home country (Saudi Arabia), my choice of venues was, to a great extent, a question of physical access.

I was able to visit Saudi Arabia for only two months to collect data. Access was also facilitated by the fact that I used to work at one of the universities before my obtaining my scholarship for studying abroad. For the other sites, I asked colleagues, friends, and relatives to help me gain access, and their proximity to the venues made data collection easier (Yin, 2014). In addition to the data collected from the sampled universities, I also had access to the basic statistics available for the overall Higher Education Sector (HES) of Saudi Arabia and some governmental websites, such as General Authority for Statistics (GAFS), Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SAMOFA), and Saudi Labour Law (SLL). There are 38 HEI-recognised degree-awarding institutions (DAIs) in the country; these include 24 universities in the public sector and 12 universities in the private sector (HES, 2018).

4.7.2 Rationale for Participant Selection

The selection of participants in a purposive sample should involve participants with a typical but wide range of experiences in order to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon or concept (Walliman, 2011). The criteria of selecting the participants was the following: (1) Saudi academics from both genders, men and women, working in the higher education sector; (2) in relation to female participants, I selected them from two categories, those who had held middle or senior leadership; (3) with respect to male academic participants, there was a certain concentration on participants who engaged in the policy and administrative formulation and process of the higher education sector in general, and the university in particular in order to obtain a clear picture of the career journey of female academic and their opportunities in accessing upper senior leadership posts.

As described above, the final sample in this study was selected in accordance with pre-determined criteria: Thirty participants were selected from the five sampled public

sector universities in Saudi Arabia (see Appendices VI, VII, VIII, IX, X). Fifteen participants were to be senior female academic leaders, 10 non-senior female academic leaders and five male academic key informants with great authority over decision-making. Participant selection was conducted both pragmatically (i.e. those with whom I had personal connections) and purposively (i.e. those representing a diversity of ages, levels of seniority, years of experience, departments, and universities). Table 4.1 depicts the location and gender make-up of the targeted universities. It also indicates the number of participants who were interviewed at each.

Table 4.1 The Sample of Public Sector Universities in Saudi Arabia

Number Designation	Name of the University	Rural/Urban	New/Old	Mixed-/Single-gender University	Number of participants at each site		
					Senior female academics	Non-senior female	Key informants (male)
1	University A	Rural	New	Mixed-gender	3	2	1
2	University B	Urban	Old	Mixed-gender	3	2	2
3	University C	Urban	Old	Mixed-gender	3	2	1
4	University D	Urban	Old	Mixed-gender	3	2	1
5	University E	Urban	New	Single-gender	3	2	0
Total					15 + 10 + 5 = 30 participants		

The sample included both married and single women, women with and without children, and women working as Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, and representatives of other management units. Each male informant held multiple roles in Saudi society in

addition to his academic position, such as being a member of a Saudi association or columnist. Including both senior and non-senior women as well as male academics allowed me to focus on experiences involving personal, familial, organisational, and societal levels. This, in turn, helped to identify factors that impede or facilitate the promotion of ambitious women to senior management positions, the challenges these women face in getting to the top of their profession, and the difficult decisions that must be made to balance a career with domestic responsibilities.

I had hoped to have equal numbers of participants from each sample university. Unfortunately, this was not possible, but the use of purposive and snowball sampling provided access to a larger sample of possible participants than purposive sampling alone could have provided. This gave me the opportunity to select the most relevant accessible sample and to include representatives from all five universities, including employees from both the oldest and the newest universities in the country.

4.8 Case Study Design

A research design should consider the implications for the work's usability by future studies (Creswell, 2017, p. 49). A case study is "a type of research that focuses on a single thing with depth, looking at without aiming to generalise it; the thing can be person, group, an institution, a country, an event, a period in time or whatever" (Thomas, 2016). A case study is a study of social phenomena, conducted in terms of the boundaries of one or more social systems ('the case (s)')(Swanborn, 2010). Yin (2014) understands a case study to be an experimental investigation of a current trend in 'real life', whereas Stake (2005) describes a case study as "not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied...by whatever methods we choose to study the case" (p. 443). Case studies primarily aim to obtain a deep understanding of a trend, concentrating on the process and results, and do not require the controlling of a behavioural event (Yin, 2014).

According to Yin (2014), relevant behaviour cannot be manipulated if one relies on interviews with the people engaged with the studied event or the opinions of participants from the research field (Swanborn, 2010). The researcher can, instead, be actively engaged in these events due to direct involvement with the research participants (Yin, 2014), which is the only valid way to resolve the complicated processes afoot and enable

conclusions to be drawn in a specific case (Creswell, 2017). Despite these fundamental benefits, however, case studies also have some limitations. An important issue in conducting any academic research is the extent to which the findings are relevant to people and settings outside the immediate context of the research. Cohen et al. (2013) mention the common criticism that time and geographic characteristics make a case study unsuitable for generalisation to other contexts.

This means that the character and meaning of a case study are relative and change with time and space. However, Yin (2014) asserts that case studies do have a capacity for generalisation; for example, analytical generalisation can be used to draw conclusions for outcomes related to theory rather than population; this is due to replicability, whereby more than one case can be found to be consistent with a theory. This concept is in line with the idea of transferability in qualitative research, wherein readers can draw inferences about a study after interpreting findings in terms of their own context (Dimmock & Lam, 2012).

A further limitation of case study research is that researcher bias prevents the use of outcomes to prove external validity. This problem can be overcome by using evidence from multiple sources and carefully reviewing the core participants during the drafting process (Swanborn, 2010). Furthermore, case studies often include long narratives that make it difficult to develop a clear summary, common propositions, and theories (Swanborn, 2010). However, this is not necessarily a problem and can, in fact, be an indication that the study has uncovered a particularly rich problem. Thus, a clear summary is not always provided because mutually exclusive concepts that have been uncovered may thereby be lost (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

A case study consists of two parts: the subject and an analytical frame (or object) (Thomas, 2017, p. 14). There are different types of case studies relevant to achieving this purpose: *intrinsic*, *instrumental*, *evaluative*, *explanatory*, and *exploratory* case studies (Thomas, 2017, p. 3). In the current research, the case was identified as a single *exploratory* case (Stake, 1995) at five sites, which enabled me as researcher to gain a deep understanding of particular issues and phenomena related to Saudi female faculty members and the issues they face in accessing top leadership jobs. Therefore, it may be considered explanatory. However, explanations can only be tentative or context specific,

and this study also has an exploratory aspect in that the topic had not been investigated before; thus, we required thorough knowledge of ‘what’ happened and ‘why’ the situation came to be.

The case study design was applied in the following ways in this research. First, the topic was chosen for a number of reasons: 1) my own interest as a Saudi faculty member in the issue of gender inequality in Saudi Arabian higher education and my background in the field; 2) similarities across sites — same policy and law system — but also differences in institutional culture offering specific, appropriate examples to further knowledge; and 3) the potential of the case study to also illustrate something interesting that is different from the norm (Thomas, 2017, p. 96), such as the gendered effects on educational contexts and the development process.

Data collection regarding the named phenomena occurred at five state universities, as noted. This enabled me to gather information presenting a level of detail about the individuals and places involved in the participants’ experiences and investigate whether the same issues could be found at all five sites (Creswell, 2017; Yin, 2014): “If a finding holds in one setting and, given its profile, also holds in a comparable setting but does not in a contrasting setting, the finding is more robust” (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 33–34). I deliberately selected my case study; each university was the unit of a single case study, but the study as a whole covered five sites (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013).

The universities are all in the public sector and, thus, have uniform systems of promotion, selection, seniority, salary structure, and BPS when compared with the private sector. Therefore, they allow comparisons to be made between similar settings. The information gathered was meant to include ‘thick description’ of the context of the study under the assumption that a person who wants to generalise or transfer the findings to other contexts has full responsibility for judgment of the extent to which this generalisation and transfer are reasonable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994a).

4.9 Data Collection Methodology

Data were gathered from a review of relevant documentation and 30 semi-structured interviews. As mentioned previously, critical research, specifically feminist research, does not restrict what methods can be used to collect data and uncover meaning; the aim is to critically examine realities from a cultural, historical, and political stance, and a pragmatic stance can thus be used when choosing suitable research methods (Cohen et al., 2013). However, as this research study involved dialogic relations with a marginalised group (i.e. Saudi female academics), evidently worth considering were qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, journals, and personal observations (Lodico et al., 2010).

This was the rationale for the choice of interviewees, which was done to allow maximum critical engagement with the participants' experiences. Furthermore, feminist research should fully acknowledge the political, historical, and social norms of the cultural context within which the research is conducted (Cohen et al., 2013). To illustrate, in order to answer the first main research question —“To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university setting a reflection of the influences of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?” — I had to ask interviewees several initial questions, for instance:

1. What are the main causes of gender imbalance, that is, of favouring the recruitment and promotion of male academics over female academics?
2. From the female academics' perspective, what are the reasons for the existence of obstacles, such as the overt and covert gender segregations, that substantially affect their career progress?
3. What are the differences and similarities in the working conditions of male and female leaders with regard to pay, working hours, job descriptions, and responsibilities?

The same approach was applied to the two remaining research questions (see Appendix IV for English translations of the questions [p. 249] and Appendix V for the original Arabic questions [p. 254]). In addition, documentation was used to present a full picture of the contexts where the case study occurred. Both semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were used to facilitate data triangulation, with the aim of

achieving trustworthiness (Silverman, 2014). This triangulation method ensured interactivity and a broad-based approach to unravelling gender inequality in the ranks of higher education leadership (Creswell, 2017). The documentary analysis is described below.

4.9.1 Document Collection

Documentary evidence was collected from a variety of sources, including policy statements from the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Saudi government as well as five universities and some governmental websites, such as General Authority for Statistics (GAFS), Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SAMOFA), and Saudi Labour Law (SLL). For each institution, I familiarised myself with the organisational structure and relevant policies by reviewing pertinent public domain documentation available online. This information detailed each institution's organisational structure, mission statement, history, and vision statement. These documents provided vital information on the culture of each university and were utilised to verify the interview data.

My documentary analysis focused on the classification and analysis of meanings and themes (Flick, 2015) and utilised an *inductive* coding approach (Flick, 2015). This refers to the reductive process of formulating categories to describe data (Cohen et al., 2013). Data were first reviewed to determine these categories and to determine how they could help answer the research questions. For example, documents about senior-level female academics were coded to identify information about the structural barriers faced when seeking a leadership position. In this way, tentative categories were formed and then reviewed for overlap and combined/reduced in number accordingly. These qualitative findings were then compared with the semi-structured interview findings in order to discover any discrepancies between official documentation and the participants' experiences.

4.9.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are a widely utilised technique for data collection and an essential aspect of case studies (Miles et al., 2014). Qualitative interviews can be conducted face-to-face or by telephone, individually or in groups, or online via synchronous or asynchronous computer-mediated interaction (James & Busher, 2007). The goal of an interview is to

engender many forms of discussion (Miles et al., 2014). Interviews are classified as using open-ended questions or some form of a three-part taxonomy of structured, unstructured, and semi-structured queries (Denscombe, 2017); this study adopted semi-structured interviews because this format gives the researcher more flexibility in exploring emerging issues (Miles et al., 2014); semi-structured interviews can raise further questions, whereas structured interviews, with their set line of questioning, can force responses, resulting in data that are underdeveloped and ‘thin’ (Roulston, 2010 p. 13).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity to modify the line of enquiry if interesting responses are received and can also ensure that a participant’s attention is focused in a manner that cannot be achieved by self-administered or written questionnaires (Fawcett & Pockett, 2015). Open-ended interviews, which do not start with pre-planned questions, permit respondents to say more or less whatever they want; for example, when I asked the participants the initial question, which was “What are the main causes of gender imbalance that often tend to favour the recruitment and promotion of male academics over female academics?”, that led to probe questions such as “What do you understand by ‘gender discrimination’? Could you give examples of your personal experience?”

However, this method sacrifices considerable comparability across interviewees, as the information the researcher obtains may only be relevant to the individual respondent (Cohen et al., 2013). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the best method for this study; participants were permitted the freedom to add extra information when needed, but comparisons could still be made across participants given that the same general structure was followed for each interview, and thus, valid and logical comparisons could be made for the respondents (Bryman, 2016). The same semi-structured interview format was followed for all of the interviewees. The interviews began with a brief ‘settling-in’ period characterised by small talk, and then questions were posed according a set schedule. At the end of each interview, the participant was thanked, and arrangements were made for verification of the transcript. A consistent approach was adopted to make the data comparison more valid.

As can be seen in the interview schedule, each discussion started with broad questions (see Appendices IV and V) based on statistics gathered from the Ministry of Higher Education website (e.g. “Why are women not in the majority in senior leadership positions?”). Lodico et al. (2010, p. 126) call such questions ‘grand tour questions’ because they ask the interviewee to talk in a general way about the topic under consideration. Following these broad questions, the enquiry narrowed down to focus on one particular part of the research question (how work responsibilities affect the participants’ families and how family responsibilities affect their work).

The interview questions were initially developed based on extant literature and personal experience, but these original questions were changed during the research process to allow emerging concepts to be pursued (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This is because, as Denscombe (2017) has suggested, semi-structured interviews allow respondents to discuss and raise issues that have not been considered; piloting the interview (see below) also revealed new ideas. Both prompts and probes were employed during questioning so that interviewees would fully divulge their perceptions (Cohen et al., 2013). The prompts were concerned with eliciting what the interviewees did not (initially) say while the probes were concerned with exploring what the participants had said, but did not justify or fully defend (Walliman, 2011).

For example, a prompt was used to ask how family members help when difficulties arise at work (Appendix V, Question 12), while probes were used to justify the answers given (e.g. how each family member helps, the extent to which a husband supports his wife’s career and work obligations, etc.) (Appendix V, Probes 26–27). Potential problems during such interviews include respondent difficulty in comprehending the questions, potential bias of the researcher, challenges to maintaining a neutral stance, and inequality between the interviewee and the interviewer (Cohen et al., 2013). Semi-structured interviews are more difficult to conduct than structured interviews, as the interviewee’s responses cannot be predicted and therefore the responses of the interviewer have to be improvised, which requires mental preparation.

Thus, semi-structured interviews necessitate careful preparation, discipline, creativity, and adequate time for later analysis and interpretation (Bryman, 2016). To overcome these drawbacks, pilot interviews were carried out with four female and three male academics at the five universities; the goal was to test the clarity, effectiveness, and validity of the research questions. In each case, interviews were digitally recorded and transcripts were emailed to the participants to seek clarification and invite feedback. The interview questions were revised based on the informants' feedback, which ensured optimal 'theoretical relevance' (Miles et al., 2014); the pilot interviews also helped me familiarise myself with the interview process and enhanced my interviewing skills (e.g. in establishing rapport, paying attention, taking notes, and providing feedback).

In the actual interviews, the participants were treated equally: they were assured of strict confidence in the case of sensitive questions, and a neutral stance was maintained to avoid influencing their responses, as described. The semi-structured interviews were carried out face-to-face (preferred) and by telephone (where necessary). Potential problems with reliability and validity due to the use of these interview methods are discussed in the next section.

4.9.2.1 Face-to Face and Telephone Interviews

When possible, face-to-face interviews were conducted. There are a number of disadvantages to telephone interviews; these include the absence of visual cues, which could result in data loss or distortion, and this, in turn, could harm data quality (King & Horrocks, 2010) in three principal ways: 1) loss of non-verbal data, which include responses such as facial expressions and body language; 2) loss of contextual data, which include information about the environment as well as the physical features of the respondent (e.g. appearance, demeanour, race, and age); and 3) loss or distortion of verbal data, which consist of spoken words (Novick, 2008).

The absence of visual cues via telephone is also thought to compromise rapport, probing, and the interpretation of responses. Further disadvantages to telephone interviews include limited telephone coverage in certain areas, lower response rates (Bernard, 2002), and the need for a shorter interview (Bernard, 2002). Moreover, it is hypothesised that telephone interviews could have several deleterious effects that may induce bias, such as an increase in social distance (Novick, 2008), an increase in the

amount of socially desirable responses, a reduction in 'feedback cues', and, again, decreased rapport (McMunn, 2013). Finally, there is the potential for environmental distraction during a telephone interview (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006), although such distractions are also (less) possible during in-person interviews (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Gupta, 2014).

In order to overcome these disadvantages and thus provide data comparable to data collected from the face-to-face interviews, several precautions were taken. Prior to the formal interview, conversations regarding the organisation of the interview were undertaken with the participant in order to establish contact and rapport (Opdenakker, 2006). Furthermore, during the formal interview, attention was paid to the participants' intonations (Gupta, 2014) as well as to any hesitations or sighs (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004) so as to partially compensate for the absence of non-verbal responses. It should be noted that, as the data used for analysis from the face-to-face interviews was in the form of a transcript rather than field notes, by including information about non-verbal behaviour, data from the telephone interviews can be considered similar to face-to-face interviews (Novick, 2008).

Despite the aforementioned disadvantages, there can also be advantages to conducting a telephone interview. For example, using the telephone decreased my travel costs and maximised my ability to reach the geographically dispersed respondents (Gupta, 2014). A further advantage of telephone interviews was that they enabled interviewees to remain on their 'own turf' and thus feel more relaxed, which may have helped increase rapport and encouraged them to share more personal information. The participants in my study seemed relaxed during the telephone interviews and seemed willing to express their perspectives freely and disclose sensitive information. Thus, by my estimation, there were no adverse consequences in terms of the richness of the data obtained by phone compared to data obtained during face-to-face interviews.

In total, 8 of the 30 participants were interviewed by phone. After contacting the participants by email and text message and speaking to them by phone several times to explain the purpose of my research, I used a cellular phone to conduct the interviews; all conversations were broadcast on speakerphone so as to record the interviews using a digital recorder. In contrast, the face-to-face interviews were carried out in the

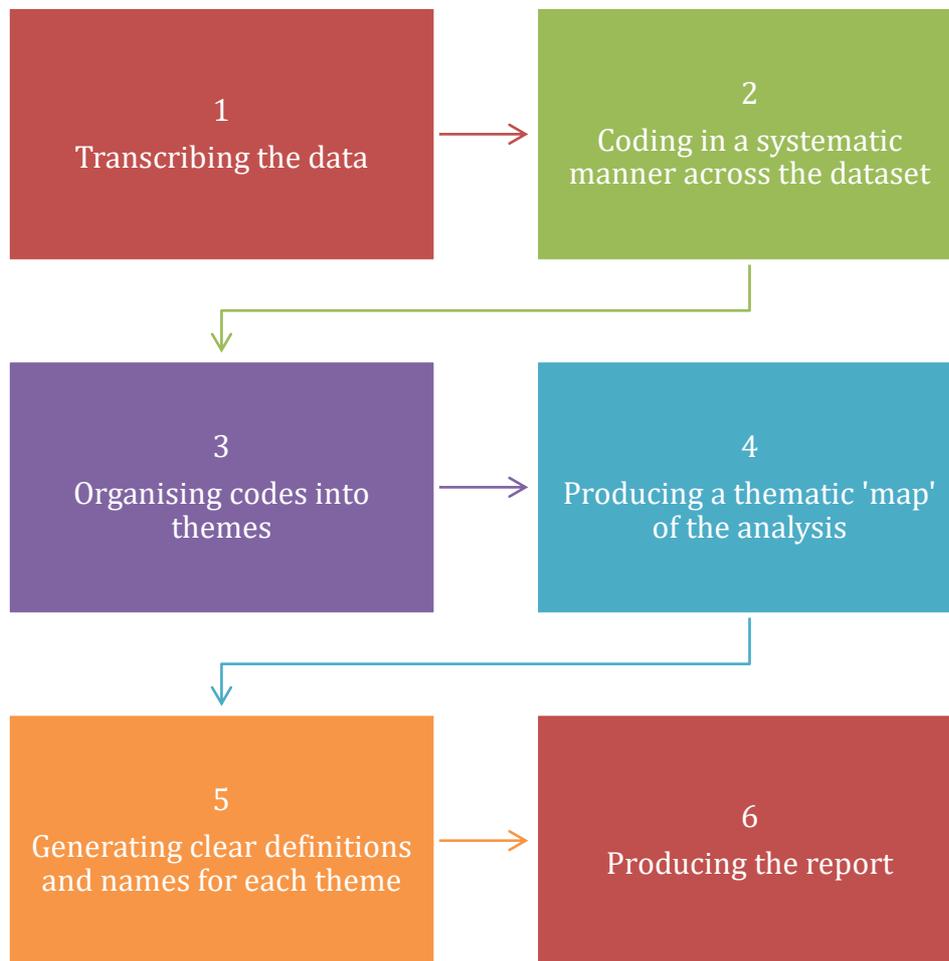
participants' offices or in a quiet space in their workplace; these interviews were also recorded with a digital recorder. All interviews lasted approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes.

4.10 Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis is often considered the most time-consuming stage of a research project (Denscombe, 2017). The analysis of qualitative data is a complex process; steps include data collection, organisation, categorisation, synthesis, pattern-finding (i.e. finding what is essential, as well looking at what is to be learnt), and informing others. Thematic analysis, which is the most commonly used approach for qualitative data analysis, was the one used in the current study (Cohen et al., 2013); the core concern of thematic analysis is determining meaning and enhancing a systematic and rigorous interpretation of the data (Greg, 2012). Thematic analysis also serves as a way to identify and analyse patterns and any recurring themes that may be relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2016). A theme is, in this context, a cluster of associated patterns that often emerge through the process of inductive analysis and characterise qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2013). Inductive data analysis allows critical themes to emerge from collected data (Creswell, 2017). This process requires creativity and challenges the researcher to place raw data into logical, meaningful categories and examine them in a holistic manner (Bryman, 2016). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) consider thematic analysis as “a foundational method for qualitative analysis”, adding that this method “provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis.”

In addition, they stressed that thematic analysis should be considered as a method in its own right. It offers a beneficial and flexible research instrument which has the capacity for offering rich detail, however complicated the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The current research aims to adhere to maintaining a balance between a justification of the phenomena and thematic analysis, whilst guaranteeing flexibility in utilising emerging themes. That prevents the analysis from being restricted, hence, losing one of its core advantages (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the central steps of thematic analysis informed the process of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 the Multiple Phases of the Thematic Analysis



Source: Braun and Clarke's (2006)

Themes do not rely on 'quantifiable measures' such as the number of times a related factor was mentioned, but, rather, on whether they highlight and address the prime principles of the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). According to Bryman (2012, p. 578), this analysis approach lacks "an identifiable heritage, or has been outlined in terms of a distinctive cluster of techniques", and, therefore, "the themes and the sub-themes are the product of a thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts or field notes that make up the data" (see Appendix XI, p. 264). (Bryman (2012, p. 579). During the first phase of analysis, the data were transcribed from digital recordings in Arabic (see Appendix XIII, p. 266); the answers were not translated for fear that the intricacies of the meanings would be lost in translation.

However, the themes that emerged from the findings were translated from Arabic into English (see Appendix XIV). It is argued that “coding points out issues, problems, concerns and matters of prominence to those being examined” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An analysis of the interview data offers insights to the researcher in relation to how people can make sense of, and act upon, their own experiences. The researcher read transcripts line-by-line (open coding) with notes taken of themes and classified them into categories as they occurred in the data. This strategy helps in recognition of “something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represent[ed] some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). This structure helped in the first categorisation process of the fundamental notions in the findings.

Bell (2014, p. 230) emphasises that “a hundred separate pieces of interesting information will mean nothing to a reader unless they have been placed into categories [...] grouping, patterns and items of particular significance.” In most cases, that often occurs through reflexivity whereby the researcher “will try to make explicit how intersubjective elements impact on data collection and analysis in an effort to enhance the trustworthiness, transparency and accountability of their research” (Finlay, 2002, pp. 211–212). In this situation, the researcher had to go back and monitor the research participants objectively, which enabled answering the epistemological question ‘what do I know?’ (Hertz, 1997, p. viii).

In the second phase the researcher reflected on the observation itself, which addressed second central question indicated by Hertz (1997, p. viii), ‘how do I know what I know?’ In order to fulfil that, the researcher enabled all research participants to either to confirm her comprehension of the data interpretation or to amend it, which confirmed engagement in the meaningful process of the researcher’s own investigation. “A reflexive researcher is one who is aware of all these potential influences and is able to step back and take a critical look at his or her own role in the research process”(Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 275). Moreover, notes of interview were read from beginning until end, therefore obtaining a holistic vision of the data. The thematic analysis in the present research exceed counting words or phrases in a text, whereas moving on to identifying implicit and explicit concepts within the data (Guest et al., 2012).

In addition to manual thematic analysis, ATLAS.ti software, which supports Arabic and allowed me to analyse the data without the need to translate the answers into English, was used for the data analysis.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

This section describes ethical considerations involved in the research process, including how consent was requested and granted, how confidentiality was assured, and the data administration procedures used, but not considerations related to conducting insider research, which were covered in section 3.5.

Busher (2005) asserts that ethical principles are necessary to facilitate an investigation's trustworthiness. It is difficult for a study to be completely free of ethical issues, although the nature of these issues varies by method (Flick, 2015). According to James and Busher (2009), ethical issues in qualitative research can be described as occurring prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, in data analysis, in reporting the data, and when publishing a study. This research follows the ethical framework of the University of Leicester, and I gained ethical approval for this research from the University of Leicester's Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix I, p, 245). Additional details on ethics matters are below.

4.11.1 Gaining Access to the Sample and Key Informants

Since ethics are "a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others" (Jones, 1977, p. 810), in this study, issues surrounding identity, culture, and the barriers faced by Saudi female academics might be considered ethically sensitive issues. At the start of a project, protocols that ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' information should be put in place (ESRC, 2010). To meet my institutional ethics committee's requirements, all participants were informed about their rights (i.e. the right to refrain from answering particular questions, the right to withdraw from the research at any time, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the data, etc.) and what the author intended to do with the collected data, following which they were asked for consent to confirm their participation; in this way, informed consent was gained (University of Leicester, 2015).

This study required permission only from those who participated directly (i.e. the female and male interviewees). Ethics issues surrounding access to participants differ to a great extent depending on the nature of the research agenda (Farrimond, 2013). As, in this case, I needed permission from the participants' universities, in the initial phase, I contacted the graduate faculty and the Vice-President of research at each university by email or phone in order to get written permission to carry out the research. I provided each representative with information about the start and end dates of my fieldwork. This information was also submitted to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in London to keep them informed about my research.

Next, I contacted the participants by phone, email, or both. I sent them an information pack that included my permission letter from my supervisor, Dr Hugh Busher; a letter from the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau; and the consent and information form in which I explained the context of, reason for, and intention of my enquiry, the questions that would guide the interviews (see Appendix II, P. 246), and the confidential nature of our conversations (see Appendix III, P. 248). I acknowledged the time pressures under which the faculty and key informants worked and left it to each participant to choose a day and time for their interview within the two-month window during which I was in Saudi Arabia. This flexible approach resulted in most participants agreeing to be interviewed.

Gaining access to the key male informants was more difficult and more time-consuming. In several cases, their personal assistants acted as gatekeepers, making it difficult for me to gain access to them. Cohen et al. (2013) rightly state that access depends on the goodwill of gatekeepers, which "creates risks that are beyond the control of the researcher and which are difficult to predict or avoid" (p. 56). Despite the obstacles, I managed to contact a key informant from each university, and all of them agreed to participate; my being an insider and a colleague likely helped with this.

4.11.2 Informed Consent

The implications and purpose of the study were made clear to the participants prior to the interviews (James & Busher, 2009) (see Appendix II in English [p.246] and Appendix III in Arabic [p. 248]). The participants were asked to consent to the study, without coercion, and were given one week to consider the request. During the interview

process, they were also given the liberty to stop participating at any time without explanation. In addition, I ensured that the participant could check the content and analysis of each transcript before it was released to others for analysis. If the participant did not agree to release the analysis, their decision would be respected unconditionally. In practice, no participant terminated the interviews before completion or objected to the analysis.

4.11.3 Confidentiality

The confidentiality of research participants should always be protected (James & Busher, 2009). Transcripts of the interviews, as well as the subsequent analyses, were emailed to the participants in order to ensure that no part of their identity was revealed (Silverman, 2014). As such, the participants were protected from any judgement or embarrassment; however, according to Cohen et al. (2013), maintaining anonymity may not always assure confidentiality, since other information may indirectly identify a participant. With this in mind, it was ensured that no information in the report revealed any of the participants' identities. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities, positions, and institutions of the participants.

4.11.4 Emotional Protection

The researcher must try to be sensitive when dealing with emotionally fraught questions (Bryman, 2016), as the interview process should not cause emotional distress to any participant. This was ensured in the present case by actively watching the participants for any distress signs or, in the case of telephone interviews, listening for signs of emotional distress and stopping the interview whenever necessary. While the nature of this study did not really allow participants to come to physical harm during the interviews or when the findings were released, the interview questions may have had the potential to trigger traumatic or otherwise painful memories from the participants' personal and work lives. Thus, during the interviews, I constantly monitored the participants for emotional distress signals and was prepared to stop the interview process whenever necessary. Fortunately, none of the participants experienced emotional distress during the interview process.

4.11.5 Data Collection

The interviews were all voice-recorded with the consent of the participants. These recordings were then transcribed. At all times, the data, both audio and written, were stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher and supervisor had access. Once the final research report has been evaluated, the data will be destroyed.

4.12 Summary

The current chapter has covered the main objective of this study and described the methods used in the research, including the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research paradigm, measures taken to ensure trustworthiness, the insider status of the researcher, the sampling method, descriptions of the study activities, analysis methods, data collection instruments and ethical issues. In the next chapter, I will present the main findings.

Chapter Five: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my findings on the under-representation of Saudi female academics in upper positions in higher educational institutions. These findings were derived from the following: (a) interview responses from female academics who had or had not been appointed to leadership positions, (b) responses from male academics, who were the key informants in my study, (c) integrated documentary analysis and results from the resources examined in the five sites of the single case study, and (d) information from the Ministry of Education (MOE). Excerpts from the responses, which were collated alongside the research questions, and references to other related interviews are also included. All the participants were affiliated with public universities, which, in Saudi Arabia, have the same promotion policy, funding structure, and pay scale, but each of which also has its own character and culture.

The first site is A, a mixed-gender university (where male academic staff can teach female students online, and female staff can meet when required through telephone speaker). It is a rural university established in 2009, with 277 academic staff and about 37,340 students. The second site is B, also a mixed-gender university, located in an urban setting. It is considered an old university in the Saudi context, established in 1967 by a group of businessmen as a private university but converted into a state university in 1974. Meetings between academic staff of different genders can be conducted face to face. The third site is C, an old, urban mixed-gender university with approximately 40,000 students. The fourth site is D, a mixed-gender urban university established in 2003 that has since witnessed a sharp increase in its student population to around 20,815. The fifth site is E, an urban, innovation-oriented single-gender university in terms of students and staff. It has over 60,000 female students who study in 34 colleges, approximately 3,767 faculty members, and around 2000 administrative staff. For anonymity, participants were assigned coded labels in the following format (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Pseudonym Format

Date	Pseudonyms	Assigned	Reference	Pseudonym Meaning
University	U	U	UAFP1, pers. comm., July 1, 2015	In the first site, the first female participant had been promoted to a senior level position and was interviewed on July 1, 2015
The five sites of case study	A/B/C/D/E	A		
The type of participation: Although gender is typically represented with M or F, in this case, because of the context, the male participants have been assigned K for key informant.	K for male key informants F for female participants	F		
Promotion experience	P for promoted to senior position NP for not promoted			
Participant numbers	1/2/3			
Medium	Pers. comm.			
Date of interview	Month Date, Year	July 1, 2015		

In summary, the pseudonyms follow the notation format 'University (U) + the individual university letter (A/B/C/D/E)', 'type of participant (K [male]/F)', 'promotion experience [senior or non-senior position] (P/NP)', 'participant number (1/2/3)', and 'interview date'. Therefore, for the first case study, the participants would be named 'UAFNP1, November 2015', 'UAFP1, July 2015', and 'UAK1, September 2015', respectively. In order to analyse the data clearly, job titles and data were also given (see the tables in appendices VI–X, p. 259-263).

The semi-structured interviews proceeded on the basis of classification of participants by gender and leadership experience. However, the participants, of course, were also differentiated based on social class and other factors; as a result, determining the specific features that meaningfully distinguish them in practice may be a difficult task. All the data in the mentioned tables are summarised and tabulated based on the standardised use of comma, name, designation title, and assigned code.

The data were subjected to thematic analysis, as explained in the methodology chapter; the results pertaining to each theme are explained in the present chapter. The first part addresses the major constraints these women face at individual, cultural, structural, and institutional levels, which prevent them from being elevated to upper-ranking positions. The second section discusses and reflects on the extent of the obstacles faced by Saudi female academics as a result of religion, wider social discourses, or culture and their effects on the professional role of Saudi women. The final section discusses factors that could support women's advancement (see also Appendix XI, P. 264), which present the domains in relation to the research questions.

5.2 RQ1: What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?

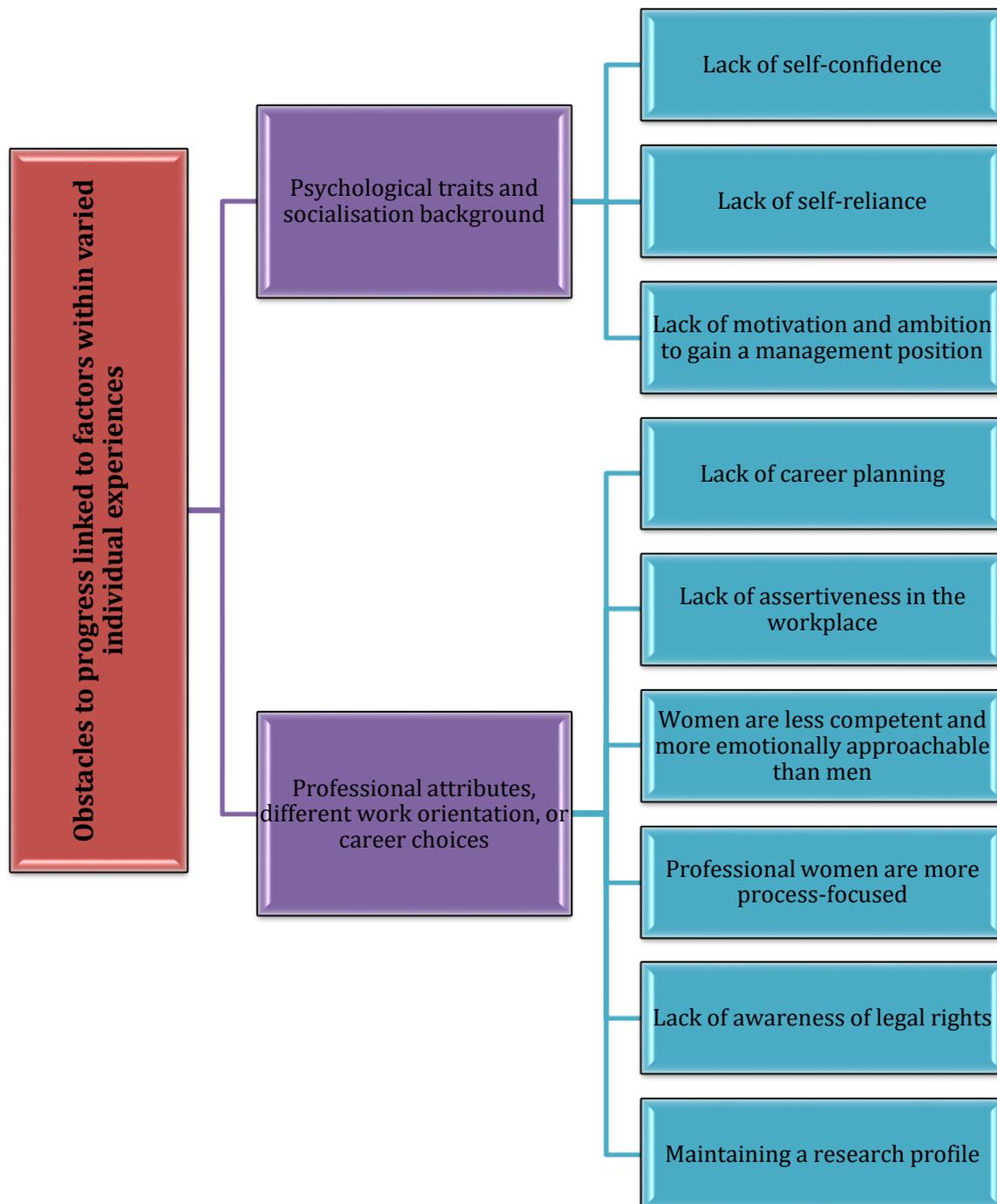
There is general agreement that Saudi women encounter a great deal more obstacles in becoming leaders than men do, in particular in relation to leading roles, which are (therefore) male dominated (Abdalla, 2015). Thus, the second research question aimed to identify the barriers that hinder the advancement of professional women in Saudi Arabia. My empirical research has indicated that Saudi female academics have progressed to leading roles in single-gender universities, but in mixed-gender universities, their role is limited to that of middle leaders. This is the accumulated result of various obstacles at multiple stages along women's career paths (Timmers et al. 2009).

As I mentioned in this study's theoretical framework in the literature review chapter, I follow Fagenson (1990) in viewing individual, cultural, and structural or institutional barriers as the three key components that explain the under-representation of female academics in senior positions in the academic hierarchy. Therefore, this section is divided into the following key themes concerning obstacles to progress: (a) individual perspectives and related policies (micro level), (b) cultural perspectives and related policies (macro level), and (c) structural perspectives and related policies (meso level).

5.2.1 Individual Perspectives and Related Policies (Micro)

Individual-level barriers preventing Saudi women from advancing to senior leadership positions are related to two main aspects: (a) their psychological traits and socialisation backgrounds and (b) their professional traits and behaviour. Such barriers can be conceptualised in terms of the lack of specific important characteristics, as summarised in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Individual Perspectives and Related Policies (Micro)



Source: Researcher's own construction

This data-driven figure presents a summary of the individual-level findings regarding the second research question. In the next subsections, I will discuss in depth the data summarised in this figure, especially the major individual-level obstacles that prevent female academics from advancing to senior positions.

5.2.1.1 Psychological Traits and Socialisation Backgrounds

Common beliefs and expectations regarding men's and women's professional qualities in the workplace often indicate that certain kinds of jobs are or are not appropriate for one or the other genders, and these are then conceptualised as male work or female work.

Lack of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence promotes self-efficiency and the ability to ascend professionally; a positive self-image leads to an optimistic attitude and a dynamic, responsible, and self-regulating life (Perry & Patricia, 2011). More than half of my participants mentioned, directly or indirectly, the lack of self-confidence as a vital barrier for female academics in leadership roles. Some of them were not confident about their professional capacity in the competitive organisational environment, leading them to hesitate to apply for more challenging roles, which, in turn, resulted in their further marginalisation. The following comment by a female participant illustrates the lack of self-confidence that led her to refrain from seeking promotions or applying to senior positions.

Senior leadership posts in Saudi Arabia are very attractive and associated with varied advantages. I rejected the post of vice-dean when I was nominated recently...., even though I am qualified academically and professionally, because the position requires continuous and direct contact with my male colleagues in university meetings, including presenting my views on any arising issues. To be honest, personally, I do not feel confident. I prefer teaching rather than being involved in administrative tasks or roles that require special skills other than teaching. (UAFNP2 pers. comm., December 4, 2015)

As for the male viewpoints obtained in this study, approximately four out of five male participants had negative perceptions about the abilities and efficiency of their female counterparts in top leadership positions, as illustrated in the following two quotes, which emphasise that (a) women 'are the reason' behind their own under-representation, and (b) women who have advanced to senior positions still demonstrate lack of self-confidence professionally.

The under-representation of female academics is related to individual characteristics that are influenced by our conservative societal and cultural

norms rather than certain official regulations or policies. (UCK4 per. comm., August 15, 2015)

Saudi female academics do not progress to the top management positions not because they are undeserving but because such posts require specific personality traits. If we assume that Saudi female academics can access top leadership positions, they will face considerable challenges because of their nature and personality, which may be related to their insufficient experience or knowledge. This can affect their confidence and performance. Thus, this is not due to certain customs and traditions or even religion. I will give you an example. There was a regular meeting for the pro-vice-chancellors of all Saudi universities, and there was a member from X University who did apologize for her absence from the meeting several times because the meeting was held in a different city from the one in which she worked or lived. Therefore, in this case, I think it seems obvious that the reason behind her apologies was her lack of self-confidence, which is personal, and not because of other reasons, such as culture or the university policy. (UAK1 per. comm., July 26, 2015)

In contrast, approximately 11 senior and non-senior female participants acknowledged a strong negative correlation between low self-confidence and professional development, although the latter is necessary for top leadership positions. This is explained in the following quote from a senior female leader:

In my opinion, the issue of confidence is mainly related to being updated about the regulations and rules constantly and developing professionally. In one case, I was not confident during the discussion of a specific issue in the meetings because of my insufficient knowledge. (UDFP3 pers. comm., August 17, 2015)

A significant number of female senior and non-senior participants strongly believed that they could not speak confidently in public, which can be attributed to Saudi culture, which does not encourage women to speak loudly like their male counterparts. The following quote demonstrates how Saudi culture reminds women about the sanctity of privacy and decency.

No one can deny that a senior and experienced leader should have self-confidence. However, I confess that our private and conservative culture has frowned on women speaking loudly or mixing with men. In fact, such behaviour is perceived as immoral. Therefore, a large number of female academics in senior positions, including myself, become nervous in seminar discussions, conferences, or university meetings. Otherwise, I enjoy my senior position and working from the office, but I avoid situations where I can be uncomfortable. (UEFP1 pers. comm., July 6, 2015)

Lack of Self-Reliance

Self-reliance, which is an essential trait of distinctive leaders, is the ability to rely on one's own efficiency and capabilities and manage one's own affairs independently. Its lack is a serious individual-level obstacle affecting women's career path and progression to leadership positions. In the present study, around 18 interviewees, including all the male participants, appeared to believe that Saudi female academics exhibit a lack of self-reliance, as illustrated by the following comment from a male participant:

Saudi female academics, such as the female academic members in the consultative councils, do not like speaking publicly in situations that require intensive discussions or arguments. They prefer being invisible in any public forums and, on many occasions, such as in the scientific council, I realised that a great deal of the discussion was generated by the male academics, whereas the female academics kept quiet or spoke unconfidently. Such behaviour is unacceptable for such a position; therefore, they are responsible for destroying the image of female academic leaders. (UAK2, pers. comm., August 5, 2015)

A similar perspective was voiced by a senior female participant, who suggested that female academics do not appreciate their own abilities and efficiency:

Even though Saudi female academics are fully qualified and experienced for such posts, they have negative self-perceptions and lack self-reliance regarding their capacity to manage the work. (UBFP2 pers. comm., July 12, 2015)

Lack of Motivation and Ambition to Gain a Leadership Position

The motivation to pursue an occupation is obviously an important component of one's career aspirations. Career aspirations are conditioned by varied components, such as the social environment, occupational environment of parents, one's socioeconomic position, gender, and academic credentials (Wiener & Craig, 2012). With relation to the motivation and ambition to hold senior posts in the university hierarchy, the findings illustrated varied perspectives; on the whole, though, it is clear that a significant number of Saudi female academics do wish or aspire to fill such posts. The following responses explain the main causes of the motivation/ambition issue:

It is well known that female academics face limitations in their career paths, especially for upper senior positions in educational institutions. In short, female academics have been excluded from specific high positions, such as the posts of Vice-chancellor and Pro-chancellor or from mixed-gender universities, whilst such posts are available for women in single-gender universities. In basic terms, this has limited and reduced their professional ambition; thus, naturally, they do not wish to progress to top-ranking posts. Owing to the culture of Saudi educational institutions, female academics cannot apply for upper senior management positions. (UBFP1 pers. comm., July 10, 2015)

One female participant who had not been promoted to a leadership post attributed the lack of professional aspiration to the discouraging process of promotion and selection:

Senior posts were often not advertised, and the nomination procedures were carried out internally amongst male members, who dominated as decision-makers, while the women were not allowed to even nominate a person suitable for the post. Therefore, these procedures result in women's diminished desire for higher positions. For this reason, they tend to not nominate themselves as potential candidates for such posts, even though they are qualified and highly skilled. (UDFNP1 pers. comm., December 2, 2015)

Another female participant commented as follows on female academics' reluctance to seek professional advancement:

Despite the fact that some female academics are in leadership positions, a large number of women, with or without experience, are, in most cases, unwilling to accept senior posts because of the workload that deviates us from our main role as researchers...[and] the overlap between the obligations and responsibilities of professional and family life, which, in turn, affects the relationship with the husband. (UCFP2 pers. comm., July 16, 2015)

On the other hand, some female academics possess strong desire and ambition, as exemplified by this female senior leader who enjoys her leading role, as opposed to only teaching:

Owing to my seniority and high qualification, I was appointed as the Vice-Dean, and I was happy and satisfied professionally because I found myself. Furthermore, I can bring the benefit of my personality traits into this post, whereas I had the opposite feeling when I was teaching. (UEFP2 pers. comm., July 4, 2015)

Thus, it can be concluded that the issue is not related to a scarcity of demand for highly skilled and professionally trained Saudi women but rather to personal- and cultural-level effects and obstacles related to family responsibilities and work obligations that prevent them from applying to higher positions.

5.2.1.2 Professional Attributes, Different Work Orientation, or Career Choices

Variations in professional attributes, work orientation, and career choices can be key components that can influence the perspectives of people towards the possibility of allowing professional women leaders to enter the organisational hierarchies of an institution (Abdalla, 2015). Characteristics that may be consequential include lack of career planning, lack of professional assertiveness, women's lesser competence and greater emotional approachability compared to men, professional women's tendency to be more process-oriented, lack of awareness of legal rights, and lack of maintenance of a strong research profile.

Lack of Career Planning

Ongoing career planning is the first step on a professional path; formulating a detailed scheme is necessary for one to meet one's career goals. A career plan must be considered a 'work in progress', since it requires flexibility for modification over time. In this sense, career planning occurs in dialogue with career development. The present findings indicate that some female staff members lack the ambition or aspiration to aim for leadership roles and, as a result, do not compose career plans; rather, their advancement, when it occurs, is due to chance, external factors, or their effort to fulfil parental wishes:

The Vice-Chancellor had a discussion with me about a high post, such as the Vice-Dean post, and he gave me time to think about all the implications of such a post. However, to my surprise, he appointed me to the position without my final say, so I assumed this position without prior planning or choice. (UDFP1 per. comm., August 22, 2015)

I was not looking for a high post in my work, and I prefer the routine work of teaching and conducting research, but because of my father's encouragement and his wish that I should gain a leadership post, I wanted him to be proud of me. (UDFP2 per. comm., August 23, 2015)

Lack of Assertiveness in the Workplace

Assertiveness in the workplace is an important skill for communicating and dealing with others appropriately, expressing one's feelings, perspectives, and ideas confidently without fear or hesitation, and defending one's rights while respecting others' rights and opinions (Budworth & Mann, 2010). Thus, this trait is needed by successful leaders. It is claimed that the lack of this trait results in women facing obstacles in reaching the highest leadership positions (Abdalla, 2015).

According to 25 research participants from all three categories, many Saudi female professionals are not assertive in their communication, which consequently generates barriers that prevent them from advancing to senior positions and protecting their rights. The following quotes illustrate the non-assertiveness and assertiveness of professional women in the workplace, respectively:

The female academics are in charge of their rights.... On many official occasions, I have observed my female colleagues' silence during several

committee and scientific meetings. Although they are professionally qualified and have valuable insights, they prefer to remain silent rather than create a fruitless confrontation that can contribute to strife and enmity between male and female colleagues. Consequently, their actions reduce their opportunities for leadership or management roles. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Decisive and rigorous, I am very lenient in my work, and I always pay attention to the feelings of my colleagues. Because of my sensitivity, the others take advantage of this trait of mine; I am especially aware of the negative impact it has on me and my work. (UAFNP1 pers. comm., November 27, 2015)

Conversely, another participant shared her negative experiences with her male colleagues and related their unprofessional conduct when she tried to express her views or thoughts during the many official meetings:

Even though I was the head of the disciplinary committee, which is often headed by women, I was not invited to join either the university meeting or the scientific council. However, I forced them to accept my presence in those meetings via the landline speaker, but, unfortunately, when I argued against the opinions of some male members on several occasions, they would switch off the speaker. When I tried re-contacting them, I would find that the landline was busy because they had put the phone receiver aside. (UBFP2 pers. comm., July 12, 2015)

Women Are Less Competent and More Emotionally Approachable Than Men

The stereotypical effective leader is associated with the stereotypical masculine male: tough, competent, and lacking in warmth. This contrasts with the stereotypical concept of femininity, which thus clashes with the requirements of leadership and management roles (Abdalla, 2015). This study found that about three male participants and 23 female participants strongly believed that women are characterised by the capacity for high performance efficiency—parallel to and often superior to their male colleagues. However, some highlighted additional characteristics of women leaders in the workplace, as in the following quote by a senior male participant:

The Saudi faculty members are highly skilled and qualified, but only in specific tasks that can fit their nature as Saudi women in our conservative society...although there are some [women leaders] who are dominant like their male counterparts in their position. To illustrate, Saudi women cannot conduct an inspection in the university campus designated for males. In addition, they are not allowed to perform practical tasks, such as conducting a follow-up on the construction of new buildings. (UBK3 pers. comm., September 5, 2015)

All 25 female participants disagreed with this male viewpoint, as illustrated in the following example by a senior female participant with a unique perspective concerning women's competence and emotional accessibility compared to men:

Professional women have higher efficiency levels, which enable them to work long hours and handle challenging tasks with a level of performance parallel with our male colleagues in the workplace, and they exceed their male counterparts in some cases. For example, men try to avoid being involved in any committees that require sustained concentration and hard work, [if they are not] getting paid for that. Therefore, some committees, such as (x), are headed by women or have women as main members.... Women are more punctual in their attendance than their male counterparts, who are often late and sometimes absent. Such [male] attitudes are facilitated by the help of their other male colleagues, whereas women do not have the same attitudes towards work, although they have more family obligations and responsibilities. (UCFP1 pers. comm., July 15, 2015)

Professional Women Are More Process-Oriented

Male and female professionals manage the projects and issues at hand differently; the former are more results-driven and can be encouraged by setting specific targets, whereas the latter are more process-oriented. Professional women, in contrast, are more stimulated by the details of processes adopted to meet the target (Abdalla, 2015). All the male and female participants in this study agreed that women tend to focus more on the process than the goal, with negative implications for their productivity. The following example by a male participant illustrates his experience with women in academia:

I have extensive experience in the higher education sector that allowed me to work with female colleagues, some of whom were very tough, unemotional, and rational with their strict adherence to the policies, rules, and regulations. For example, when we voted to decide on students' cases or new faculty recruitment,...the women very often imposed actions in accordance with the policy, which caused vital delay in the work process and fulfilment. (UDK5 pers. comm., June 25, 2015)

Lack of Awareness of Legal Rights

Legal consciousness entails the ability of individuals to make sense of their own experiences by referring to legal concepts (Karan & Afioni, 2013). In order to empower individuals concerning any legal matter, increasing their awareness of their legal rights and duties is necessary, which, in the aggregate, produces a 'legal culture'. The legalities in question may relate not only to law per se but to authority and cultural practices and their meanings and sources. My empirical findings demonstrated that all or almost all the interviewees emphasised a strong positive correlation between professional women's awareness of documented policies and regulations in governmental or educational institutions and their leadership position, which was affected by their knowledge of their own rights, as illustrated by the following example:

Women in the higher education sector who wish to advance to a senior position ought to update their knowledge and awareness of all written documents pertaining to the policies and regulations of governmental or educational institutions. This can not only enable them to understand their rights and duties but also help them in changing their undesirable circumstances and facilitate their career advancement to the desired position. Women become confident in any debates that require reference to the policies. In addition, they can protect themselves by referring to the correct policies and rules. Compared with the male faculty members, who are more aware of their financial rights than the female academics, especially concerning any additional tasks for which they may get paid, female academics perform many tasks for free because they think it is part of their job. (UEFP3 pers. comm., July 5, 2015)

A further example that supports the above comment was made by a female senior participant:

The ignorance of female academics, in terms of their rights and duties at the workplace, is sometimes self-inflicted; for instance, they often lack awareness about financial matters such as overtime pay and the correct procedures for requesting or applying for promotion, holidays, and training. The procedural tediousness results from [the lack of] tangible guidelines or clear policy from the Saudi universities: for example, no deadlines are provided for promotion applications. The lack of guidelines contributes to the delay in [female academics'] progress to leadership positions. (UDFP3 pers. comm., August 17, 2015)

On the other hand, a senior female participant reported her negative experience as a result of possessing knowledge of the policies and regulations as follows:

In contrast, because of my full knowledge and understanding of the regulations and rules of higher education, on several occasions, I have participated by giving my opinions, which were, in many cases, against those of my male colleagues. This led to them excluding me from the most important administrative positions available to female academics and putting me in some commissions that were tiring and required hard work and effort. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Maintaining a Research Profile

All the respondents in the study strongly believed that the key factor that enables access for women professionals to senior positions is maintaining a successful, strong research profile throughout their career by conducting research continually and publishing papers in notable journals. Almost all the female participants, especially the married ones, shared deep anxiety due to their unexceptional research profiles, as reflected in the following comment by a senior female participant:

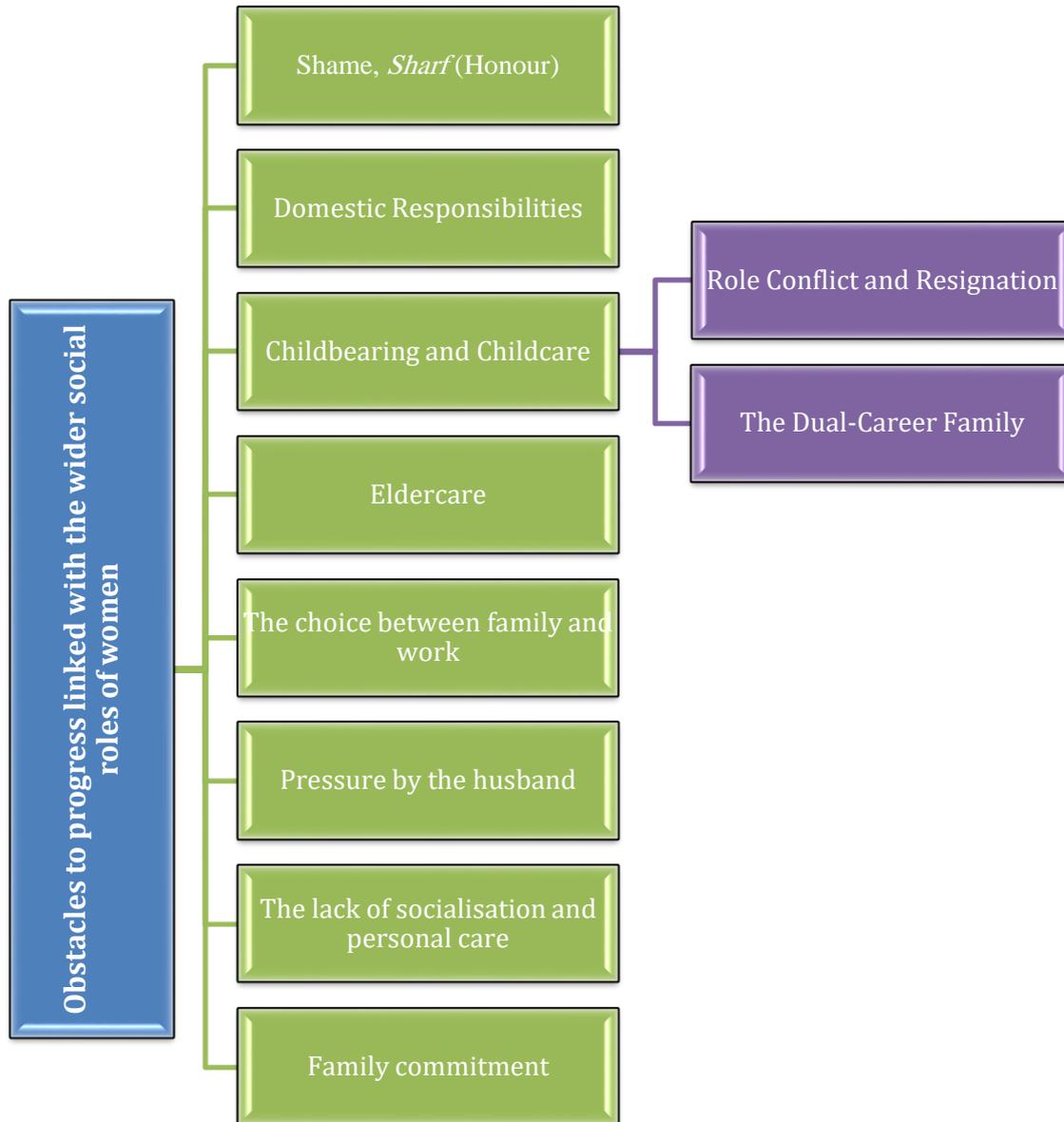
Although my experience in academia is very extensive, the ratio of my scientific production is very low and slow when compared to my male counterparts. This influenced the success of my research profile and my chances of scientific promotion to a higher ranking. The mentioned aspects are considered essential requirements for my career advancement to a senior position, so the lack of research can affect my career negatively. My

predicament is due to my responsibilities as a mother, which hold back the advancement of my career. (UCFP2 pers. comm., July 16, July)

5.2.2 Cultural Perspectives and Related Policies (Macro)

We turn now to the second part of the second question, which is related to challenges at the social level that hinder female academics' progress. Saudi cultural perspectives incorporate expectations that women will fill a traditional gender role and be responsible for all home- and family-related matters. This can account for their low representation in senior leadership positions (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010a). Based on female participants' responses, the barriers that inhibit Saudi female academics from advancement to senior positions in terms of their wider social roles include (a) domestic responsibilities and obligations, (b) childbearing and childcare and related role conflict and guilt, (c) the dual career, (d) eldercare, (e) the choice between family and work, (f) pressure by the husband, (g) lack of socialisation and personal care, and (h) family commitment. These barriers are summarised in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Cultural Perspectives and Related Policies (Macro)



Source: Researcher's own construction

The diagram above is data driven and summarises the findings concerning the second research question. The themes and subthemes deduced from the data will be presented in depth below.

5.2.2.1. *Aeab (Shame) and Sharf (Honour)*

The concepts of *Aeab* (shame) and *sharf* (honour) have vital influences in patriarchal Arab communities (Wikan, 1984) and tribal social structures, especially with regard to the role of women in the community (Shah, 2009) and public life in relation to the matter of reputation. According to Wikan (1984), the majority of people in the Mediterranean and the Middle East tend to use the word ‘shame’ rather than honour, indicating that the former is the dominant concern. Moreover, it seems that honour being the binary contrast to shame is not considered to be self-evident, which is unusual in the global context. Whether individuals are preoccupied with shame or with honour is linked to differences in behaviour. Participants of both genders, particularly participants from the rural and/or central regions of Saudi Arabia, emphasise that shame is a remarkable factor with vital direct and indirect impacts on women’s career progress via their reputation, as suggested below by a rural woman participant (UAFP2 pers. comm., July 4, 2015)

In Saudi society, we are governed by customs, customs and traditions. They are regarded as one of the most significant factors individuals should hold on to in order to preserve their good reputation and keep themselves away from behaviours that are considered defective and to comply with behaviours and morals that are characterised by honour. Unfortunately, some behaviour and attitudes of shame and *sharf* are justified by linking them to the Qur’an; these links are, in many cases, not precise. They are just related to the structure of Saudi society, the main feature of which is that it is male dominated. For example, women are not allowed to talk freely with men; if [they have to, it should be] with submissiveness [, and they are not allowed to meet] men face to face.... I question how the women can lead while their personality [is] modest, invisible, and weak.

5.2.2.2 *Domestic Responsibilities*

Members of academia each have their individual experiences and perspectives, particularly in terms of the relation between professional life and family life, and perspectives on gender biases. In addition, participants expressed their concerns about the obstacles that they have encountered in which they faced a conflict between balancing professional and personal responsibilities. It seems apparent that social and family matters are critical issues for both male and female academics (Abdalla, 2015). However, the findings of this research show that Saudi women professionals tend to have more varied social roles, and this is also true for

women in academia. Women's management of multiple roles is aptly illustrated in the next comment by a female participant:

Yes, the domestic responsibilities present an extra load for me as a working professional.... Instead of coming home to rest after a long and hard day, when I do get home, I immediately start doing all the domestic tasks, such as cleaning and cooking, even though I have a housekeeper, which alleviates the workload at home, but not completely. (UBFNP1 pers. comm., December 5, 2015)

Another female participant highlighted the importance of third-party assistance, such as a housekeeper or nanny, in order to maintain the balance between professional and personal life:

To be honest, having a domestic helper at home is not an ideal solution, but, at least, it is a possible and available solution, although I do feel some financial constraint because of this. My husband, like any Saudi man, believes that domestic duties are part of my responsibilities. Therefore, when I could not manage all the tasks at home, I had to employ outside help. (UCFP3 pers. comm., July 17, 2015)

In another comment, a senior female participant compared her monthly expenses with those of her male counterparts:

Yes, the male and female academics have the same pay scale, but, unfortunately, we have more financial obligations than they have ... I pay for the driver and nanny (domestic helpers) from my salary every month so that I can balance my professional life and personal life. However, this is not so in men's cases. (UDFP3 pers. comm., August 17, 2015)

5.2.2.3 Childbearing and Childcare

Almost three-quarters of the female participants strongly believed that raising children and caring for them has affected their career advancement, especially those with young children, as illustrated in the following response by a senior female participant:

Twenty years ago, even though there were great opportunities for the faculty members of both genders because the competition then was not as stiff, all my professional projects were deferred until my children had

grown. I rejected any administrative position or leading roles, since those posts required longer hours at the workplace, constant travel, and participation in scientific conferences. At that time, I found it hard to balance my personal life with my professional life, even though I had no intention to climb the career ladder. However, now my children have grown up, and I have plenty of time to spend on my professional life. I regret those lost opportunities, and I hope I can still catch up. It is unpleasant when I see younger male colleagues have progressed in their careers because they do not have any family or household responsibilities that have held them back. (UEFP3 pers. comm., July 5, 2015)

Another young female participant expressed her deep concern regarding her children as follows:

My children are very young, and two of them are not even of school-going age. They stay with their nanny while I am at work, and she looks after them. However, because of the news of child abuse or murder by nannies, I find it hard to focus on my job, as my mind is busy all the time thinking about them.... The solution that has helped in reducing my stress and worry at work is the use of modern hidden cameras, since I am able to monitor my children; also, I connect with them using new apps in my smartphone. (UCFNP1 pers. comm., December 1, 2015)

Role Conflict and Guilt

Due to the conflict faced by women professionals in balancing their professional and personal lives, there are also added stresses and pressures aside from reduced career opportunities (Abdalla, 2015). This is illustrated in the following response:

Sometimes, you find an overlap between family responsibilities and work obligations; this is something that happened to me during the exam period. I had to leave my child at home with the nanny one day when he was ill. This situation affected my focus on my work, as I just kept thinking about my child all the time. This led to increased remorse, and I left the workplace earlier than usual so that I could look after my son. (UDFNP2 per. comm., November 29, 2015)

Another perspective is given by a female participant with a similar work–home conflict:

Undoubtedly, even if the mother has a job outside the home...by the end of the day, she is responsible for all the domestic tasks and duties, which include looking after her children. (UEFNP1 pers. comm., December 6, 2015)

The Dual-Career Family

Recently, there has been a significant increase in the number of Saudi women joining the labour market, which has created dual-career families. This, in turn, has contributed to other issues that prevent women professionals from being represented in upper management. This can be attributed to the cultural norms in Saudi society, as explained in the following comment by a senior male participant:

In our Saudi society, although lifestyles and daily trends have changed, we still believe that a man's job is prioritised more than a woman's job, which I believe is true. I witnessed many cases of women who moved from their current job to follow their husband's new job, which naturally affected their professional advancement.... We had a female colleague whose husband had moved overseas to work. She had applied several times for non-paid vacation, but when she was unable to obtain leave, she had to resign from her job, and she lost her professional advancement because of family obligations. (UBK3 per. comm., September 5, 2015)

5.2.2.4 Eldercare

Eldercare is another of the responsibilities of the Saudi family unit. Nonetheless, only one male participant and four female participants provided such care for their parents. The latter felt that their experience with eldercare is considerably different from that of men in many respects, as explained by a female participant below:

My experience in relation to caring for my parent differs from that of my brother. I look after my mother directly and attend to all the smallest details of her daily life ... unlike my brother, [whose] role is limited to just financial support, which is mainly a specific monthly allowance to my mother. He does not visit her every day, and sometimes when he is busy, he will only call to ask about our mother. (UEFNP2 pers. comm., December 7, 2015)

The following response from a male participant who cares for his father supports the above comment:

My wife does not work, as she is a homemaker. She looks after my father while I am not at home with the help of a nurse hired to look after my father. (UAK2 pers. comm., December 4, 2015)

5.2.2.5 The Choice Between Family and Work

Evidence from this study's data shows that almost all the participants of both genders, especially married women with children, agreed that balancing professional life and family life is a difficult task. Furthermore, when forced to choose, women professionals will choose without hesitation, as proposed by Abdalla (2015), to look after their children rather than progress significantly in their career. This point is further illustrated in the following comment by a male participant about his female colleague:

One of my female colleagues, an associate professor, had an unmarried daughter. Her daughter wished to complete her studies abroad. My colleague did not hesitate to accompany her daughter, since, in Saudi Arabia, it is difficult for unmarried women to study abroad alone. Therefore, the mother's choice was her daughter rather than her career, and she resigned from her job. (UBK3 pers. comm., September 5, 2015)

5.2.2.6 Pressure by the Husband

Spousal understanding is a critical factor for Saudi women to excel at work (Omair, 2010). In all, 20 of 22 married female participants and three of five male participants argued that, once women are married, they are bound by their husbands' guardianship. On the other hand, according to the data, there is a considerable difference between the viewpoint of single and married participants on pressure by the husband. The following response encapsulates the issue:

I was just promoted as a professor. I know [my promotion] is a little late compared to my male counterparts because I will be retiring very soon.... However, I will summarise my long and rich personal experience with my husband's career path as well as my own in these short sentences: 'A man can advance and succeed significantly in his professional life once he is married due to the support and assistance of his wife, who understands the requirements of his job. In contrast, a woman will struggle and stumble

once she is married.’ My husband has been the main obstacle in my professional life. Men are always envious of women’s success and independence. More than thirty years ago, I was studying for my master’s degree in the US, but after a few months of my arrival, I stopped and returned to Saudi Arabia, where no programme was available for my subject at that time. This delayed my professional progress. (UBFP1 pers. comm., July 10, 2015)

The second example considers the husband’s effect on a woman’s professional life from a different angle; it comes from a senior female participant who was a widow:

My family had supported my education and employment. After I was married, I received support from my husband as well, who tried hard to understand the nature of my work as a faculty member and researcher. However, now I am a widow, but I work more freely without any obligations occupying my mind. No one can deny that even a supportive husband can become a barrier to career progression because women professionals need to balance their personal and professional lives. (UBFP2 pers. comm., July 12, 2015)

The final comment presents a single female participant’s positive perspective on the presence of a man in a woman’s life:

Although I am single, I view the presence of a man, in many cases, as beneficial. For example, I have two brothers who very often take part in domestic tasks, even though their wives are homemakers and do not work. (UDFNP1 pers. comm., December 2, 2015)

5.2.2.7 Lack of Socialisation and Personal Care

The findings established another impediment; according to 23 female academics, owing to the workload and the responsibilities of a professional life and family obligations, self-care and social life are difficult, as illustrated by the following example:

The overlapping work- and home-related tasks and obligations require a lot of time and effort, which means there is no spare time to rest after a hard and long day. After I leave my workplace, I carry out other duties at home. My young child prevents me from sleeping well during the night, which

affects my performance at work and my psyche.... This pressure has stopped me from spending quality time with my children or with my own self. Because of the time constraints and the heavy workload and duties, I become upset not because I do not have time to rest but because it would appear that 24 hours are not sufficient for me to complete all my tasks. (UEFNP2 pers. comm., December 7, 2015)

5.2.2.8 Family Commitment

Family commitment puts a great deal of pressure on female professionals to meet the expectations held of them by the patriarchal community (Abdalla, 2015), which include playing a central role in their families as sisters, wives, mothers, and daughters. The failure to uphold and meet traditional, typical family obligations is deemed unacceptable, which consequently affects family relationships or forces women to adjust their life and priorities to overcome the conflict, as revealed by a female participant in the comment below:

According to the social expectations held by the patriarchal Saudi community, women should be concerned with all family matters, and these include not only their husbands or children but also siblings and parents. They must participate in any social events, such as marriages, engagements, graduations, new births, house movings, and other periodic family meetings. I cannot find time for myself for either relaxation or research, [the latter of] which is a prerequisite for a promotion. To cope with my multiple roles and responsibilities, I had to adjust my life (UDFP1 pers. comm., August 22, 2015)

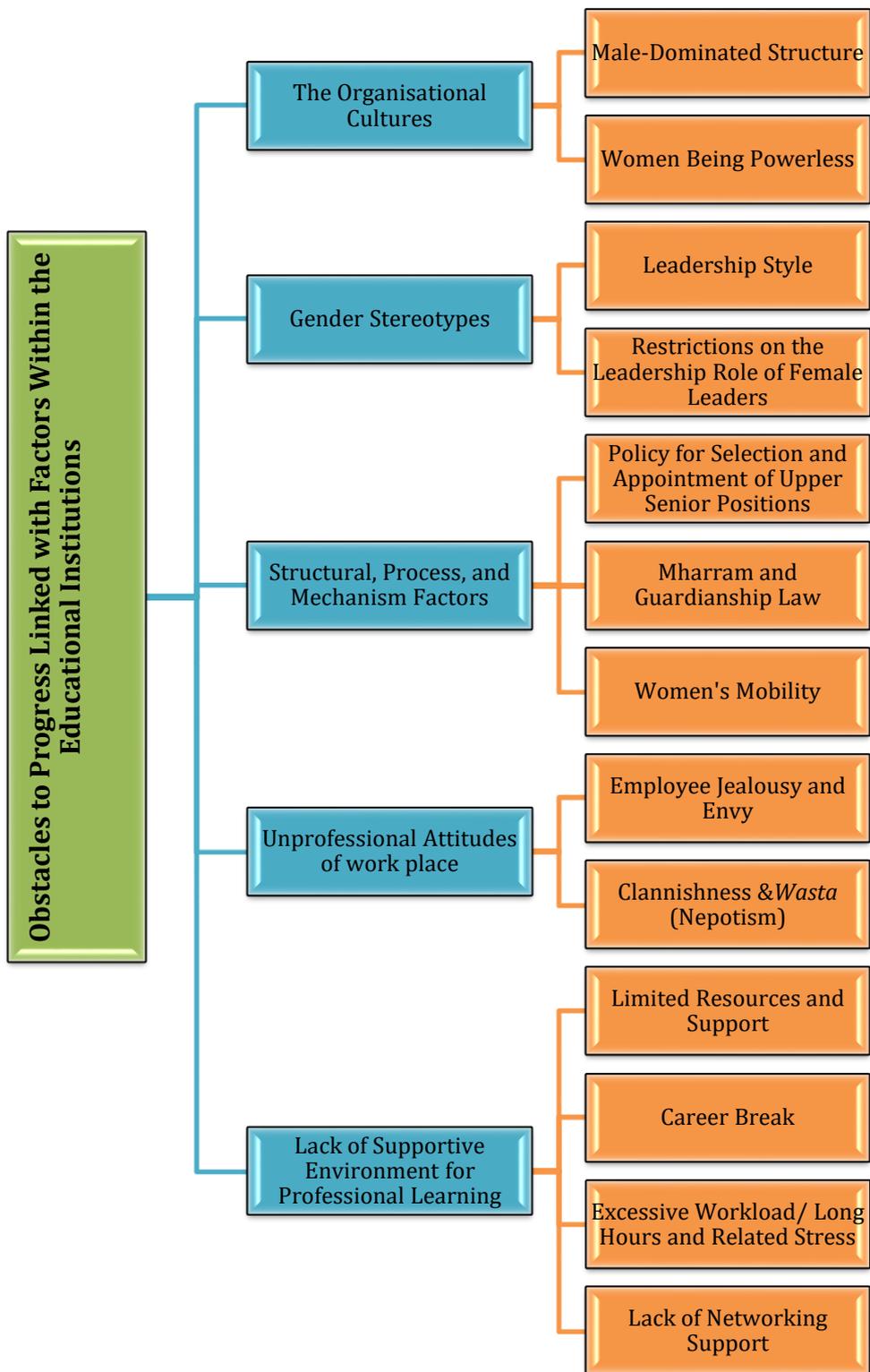
The following issue highlighted by a senior participant should also be taken into consideration:

As soon as you reach a leadership position, you will face social pressure from relatives, friends, and colleagues when they request *wasta* from you to help with their employment. This expectation has deterred me from joining my family's events on several occasions. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

5.2.3 Structural Perspective and Related Policies

According to Kanter (1977), the difference in attitudes and behaviour between men and women may be associated with unequal opportunities, power, and group representation in organisations rather than gender per se. The key premise of this theory is that individuals who have a greater ability to advance hold more power and enjoy a higher status (Meijer, 2010)—placing it within what Fagenson (1990) terms the structural perspective, which understands individual outcomes in terms of the structure, function, and goals of the organisation. The present research findings help answer the third part of the second research question by revisiting documents pertaining to the policies, regulations, and restrictions of the Ministry of Higher Education and the participants' educational institutions alongside data from the semi-structured interviews, particularly on all aspects of women's progress to leadership positions as text and thus as discourse (Budworth & Mann, 2010). The data analysis identifies organisational barriers as vital obstacles to the career progression of female academics due to factors summarised in Figure 5. 3.

Figure 5.3 Structural Perspective and Related Policies (Meso)



Source: Researcher's own construction

The diagram above summarises the findings concerning the third research question. Those obstacles will be elucidated with examples in the following subsections.

5.2.3.1 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture was identified in the literature review chapter (see section 3.6. 3.1). Schein stressed that especially large institutions will consist of varied unique cultures. Therefore, it would appear necessary to identify smaller subcultures within conglomerates through which individuals may meet their objectives (Schein, 2017). The overall culture in Saudi universities is a masculine one, as noted, which militates against the success of female leaders, even as some of them prove themselves against assumptions and against the odds. For this reason, women leaders often feel their gender prevents them from playing a leading role in an organisation, as the example below shows.

Our key issue in the Saudi community in general and in the work setting specifically is our gender as women. Even if we proved our skills as leaders, in a masculine world, we are still considered as unqualified leaders. That can be attributed to the notion that men have *quamh*¹¹ upon women, which the majority of men kept saying, referring often to Qur'an surah An Nisa 34. (UCFNP1 pers. comm., December 1, 2015)

Male-Dominated Structures

Arguably, linking cultures to power can yield additional unfair inequalities in some cases (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). The findings show that, in all Saudi universities, leadership positions are always awarded by men. This notion was raised in a comment made by a female participant with reference to Article 19 of the policy and regulation of Higher education and universities about the university council (2007, p. 35):

The influences of Saudi culture are evident in many forms in educational institutions. Our own subcultures reinforce male dominance and power. For example, in our university, even though the proportions of female and male students are approximately 60% and 40%, respectively, the female students do not have any female representation in the scientific council, as female academics are absent from or have left the top leadership positions.... Although the vice-chancellor has the authority to engage three members from the faculties even if they do not have any administrative or leadership

¹¹ The misunderstood notion that men hold the authority and strength to make decisions regarding any matters related to women themselves. This contrasts with the accurate meaning in the Qur'anic *tafseer* (interpretation), which ensures men's undertaking of the duties of caring and looking after their female relatives and offering them a decent life.

role, the only committee with a female head and members is the disciplinary committee for students. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Another senior female participant was upset about the time-consuming and laborious work assigned to female faculty, as explained below:

It is worth knowing that women are not involved in any committees unless it requires hard and exhausting work. For example, I joined ‘the National Committee for Drug Control’ or the ‘Nebras’ committee with two female colleagues who were always silent during meetings. They did not want any conflict with their male counterparts because this could lead to expulsion from the committee and would thus affect their professional CV. However, in my case, I told them that I should have a practical role and voice, or I would rescind my membership in this Committee. That is why I am considered a ‘pariah’ by my male colleagues. (UAFP2 pers. comm., July 4, 2015)

The following quotation illustrates the unfavourable work conditions in a mixed university that were caused by one woman’s male colleagues’ demonstrations of disrespect.

There is a confrontational and fanatical atmosphere in the workplace because of the male colleagues; therefore, if I could, I would choose to work in a single-gender university so that I would have colleagues that would treat me fairly and respectfully without segregation. The subordination of women by men empowers them to be tyrants. (UAFP2 pers. comm., August 23, 2015)

Another female participant offers insight into her experience in a committee appointment process.

I was a member of the appointment committee, and there was a female applicant who was the daughter of a senior management member of our university. When his daughter’s application was rejected, he was misinformed that I was the reason for her rejection. Consequently, he cancelled all my financial benefits—for example, any monetary claim for overtime—as a punishment to me and as his response to his daughter’s application rejection. He was able to do that because he has the full authority to do so. However, no policy that empowers me as a faculty

member or, at the very least, protects me from such behaviours by my male colleagues exists. I think that this is due to the lack of respect and appreciation from the male colleagues towards their female colleagues. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Women Being Powerless

Power is the ability of an individual or a group to affect material and psychological resources, either positively or negatively (Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011; Karan & Afioni, 2013). This section presents the participants' responses on existing legal mechanisms that may help counteract discriminatory and marginalising practices towards female academics in the Saudi higher education sector (e.g. the under-representation of women in academic staff associations and university and scientific councils). The head of the department and the dean of the school are men who enable other men, but not women, to join and attend formal university and council meetings. This situation is explained in the following responses:

There is no fixed percentage of female academics who can be involved in the committee; it varies between 10% and 20%, depending on the committee functions. However, this small percentage does not mean ignoring or marginalising female academics but is linked to educational issues that are relevant and should be discussed. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

In general, the president and members of all formal meetings at the university level should [be] people who assume the top leadership roles, for example, the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, deans, and the heads of departments. This is why we are often excluded from the most important official meetings. (UBFP3 pers. comm., July 8, 2015)

A female faculty member in any formal meeting has the right to voice her opinions, and she can participate in the decision-making process, but she cannot be the decision-maker. The majority of the members and the presidents of the standing committees are all male academics, even the new recruitment staff in charge of the female section. The women's role is limited to heading the board of the department and the school, and even

then, they pass the council papers to the scientific council members, who have the decision in their hands. (UCFP2 pers. comm., July 16, 2015)

Female faculty members do not deal with any financial matters or budgets except annual salary increments.... They have no significant role except a marginalised administrative role as a coordinator between the male and female sections in the university. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Regardless of the differences between male and female faculty members in terms of post designations, females enjoy the same power in my department as the male faculty members. (UBK3 pers. comm., September 5, 2015)

5.2.3.2 Gender Stereotypes

Even in institutions identified as gender neutral, in most cases, leadership and management often involves practices that include stereotyping and biases towards characteristics that are considered typical for men and traditionally valued in men over women (Elamin & Omair, 2010; Timmers et al. 2010). Based on the data, stereotypical thinking creates discrimination in Saudi state universities in forms such as restrictions on the authority of women leaders, which then influence and shape their leadership styles. Such discrimination is then reinforced via the policy and regulations of the higher education sector and can infiltrate all decisions up to royal decrees. The following aggressive response by a senior male participant reflects conclusive evidence of gender-based discrimination:

As an experienced academic and practitioner in educational leadership, [I believe that] there is no Saudi woman who is qualified completely for upper senior positions; this prevents her from imposing herself on such positions. What I meant by qualified is not only scientific qualification but also the personal and professional development to be highly skilled, experienced, and equal or superior to her male counterparts. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

Conversely, the next comment by a female participant summarises the issue of marginalisation:

Female academics are excluded from joining the plenary councils as members in many cases, so do not ask me about our chances of achieving any headship posts. (UAFP2, pers. comm., July 27, 2015)

Women's Leadership Style

The patriarchal society of Saudi Arabia has had considerable implications for the leadership styles of its women professionals, as explained in the following example:

The subordination of women and their dependence on men is one of the main characteristics of patriarchal Saudi society, which may contribute indirectly towards minimising the functions and responsibilities of the female faculty within the organisation, either formally or informally. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

All the male participants and 22 female participants concurred with the following example in relation to women's leadership styles:

Comparing men to women, men are very flexible in applying the policy to facilitate workflow, whereas women are very tough and strict in adhering to the policies, which, in many cases, can hinder the work process. (UCK4 pers. comm., August 15, 2015)

On the other hand, a senior female participant challenges claim above as follows:

Perhaps female academics and students are characterised by more flexibility, sympathy, and compassion compared to men because they share the same circumstances, and they have opportunities to discuss these issues face-to-face with each other, as opposed to with men, whom they can see only through official 'peepers'. (UDFP1 pers. comm., August 22, 2015)

Restrictions on the Leadership Role of Female Academics

Saudi female academics are restricted in their leadership and administrative roles, which reflect Saudi societal norms that treat individuals, especially women, differently based on their gender, as indicated in the following example:

In order to resolve the matter of spatial segregation of the male and female sections of one department, two posts are allocated, namely, the head of department for the male section and deputy head of department for the female section. These posts were created to prevent a conflict of tasks of both designations, since it is impossible to have two heads of the same department, which is against the policy of higher education. However, both (head and deputy head) are assigned equal tasks and positions in their section of the department. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015).

A number of female respondents argued that the higher education policy allows them to practise their role freely without restrictions, but in reality, some Saudi universities have not enforced the policy appropriately. In an interview, a senior female participant cited Article 6 in the policy ‘The Regulations for Graduate Studies in Universities, 1997: The Policy and Regulation of Higher Education and Universities’ and also Article 19 about the university council (2007, p. 35). The marginalisation and exclusion of female academics in universities are illustrated below:

In fact, the policy of all Saudi universities allows three members to join the board of the university to discuss the issues of female academics and female students and to provide them with opportunities to voice their opinions and perspectives. However, in reality, female academics have been excluded from joining such a board. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

5.2.3.3 Structural, Process, and Mechanism Factors

Masculine leadership has been reinforced implicitly by the organisational process (Abdalla, 2015). Based on the participants’ responses, this study found no difference in pay or working hours between men and women in the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia; however, there are considerable differences in terms of job descriptions and responsibilities as well as the names of the designations assigned to workers of each gender. Discrimination against professional women can be recognised in the form of this differentiated hierarchy of leadership posts and administrative roles in educational institutions, in which procedures, designation titles, and designated responsibilities favour male staff. Such practices are prevalent, even though the policy does not restrict women from accessing these rights, as argued by senior female participants. (For further information, please refer to Article 28 about the scientific council [2007], Article 36 on appointed deans [2007], Article 38 on vice-deans [2007], and Article 44 on the head of the department [2007]).

Saudi female academics are disadvantaged by the structure of the state universities, since the Saudi universities are divided into male and female sections. There are some disciplines that exist exclusively in the female sections, with an equivalent counterpart in the male sections. However, the head of department is designated in the male department, whereas the deputy head of department is designated in the female department, which reflects the lower status accorded to the latter. This implies massive differences in relation to job titles, responsibilities, and decision-making

authority. To illustrate, the post of a deputy head of department does not allow participation in the scientific council. However, the policy has not forbidden women's participation or appointment as the dean, vice-dean, head of department, and deputy of department.... The difference in the designation titles is annoying, to a large extent, especially in formal letter writing. You get confused about to whom the letter should be addressed, or whether it should be addressed to the head or deputy head of the department. (UBFP3 pers. comm., July 8, 2015)

The following comment by a female participant who had been denied opportunities for senior posts highlights the structural and process factors as per the policy and regulation of higher education and universities in article 23, which concerns the designation of the vice-chancellor (2007, p. 39).

It is well known that males can occupy and access senior positions in Saudi universities, although the nominations to fill the highest posts were undeclared, so there is no competition among the faculty members of both genders, specifically the women. (UDFNP1 pers. comm., 2 December)

This is explained further in the following comment by a non-senior female participant:

The salary scale, requirements, and conditions for promotion are unified for both male and female faculty members. However, because male academics play the majority of leadership roles in Saudi universities, they enjoy the benefits, such as overtime. (UDFNP2 pers. comm., November 29, 2015)

On the other hand, it seems that perspectives on this matter differ according to gender. One male participant, who was a professor, had a different perspective from the female academics. He stated:

[E]ven though there are differences in the name of the post and its responsibilities, this does not reflect gender segregation. This is to solve the issue of spatial differentiation of the building. The two sections are integrative to each other administratively. Thus, it is not possible to appoint two people with the same name and responsibility in one department. The deputy head of department enjoys the same authority but with a different title in order to facilitate the work process. There are some disciplines that belong to the female section only, such as the kindergarten section;

therefore, the head of the department is a female, and even if there were some male members in this section, they would not progress to headship. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2016)

Policy for Selection and Appointment of Senior Positions

The findings show that the under-representation of female academics in senior positions is related to the selection and appointment policies in educational institutions. Many women professionals consider the existence of such policies unfair, a form of discrimination that impedes the advancement of their careers.

One response explains the selection and appointment procedures and policy for senior positions:

The mechanism for the appointment of faculty members is by announcements through the university [web]site. The applicants must complete a test, and upon success, the applicants will be interviewed by the interview panel. Nomination is based on scores for aspects such as personal character, qualification, and training or experience.... Furthermore, the mechanism for the appointment to a leadership post, such as the dean[ship], is, firstly, by nomination of the most experienced and qualified faculty members regardless of their gender. Three personnel in the highest leadership positions of the university, such as the vice-chancellor and two pro-vice-chancellors, do this. Then, the names are submitted to the committee that is formed to finalise a decision. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

The majority of female participants from the four case studies indicated that their core grievance in a mixed-gender university is their deliberate exclusion from any leading roles, as illustrated in the following comments:

For staff recruitment, after the official announcement on the university's website, the role of women is limited to receiving applications from applicants and then conducting the test and interviewing the applicants. They then send all the test and interview results to the university administration, which has only male members, to decide. We are powerless when it comes to deciding the recruitment of staff. Although the female

section has offered suggestions regarding female recruitment, unfortunately, their perspectives in most cases have not been taken into consideration. (UBFP2 pers. comm., July 12, 2015)

During the process of appointing faculty members in a particular university, firstly, the selection committee checks the candidates against the criteria by interviewing them. The chairman of this committee is the dean of the school, and there are three or four male academics. The interview is often conducted using Skype. Such commitment sometimes requires the vice-dean to meet the candidates personally in order to check the personal characters of the candidates, who are often women. (UAFNP1 pers. comm., November 27, 2015)

The resident and the main members of any university committees comprise members of the male faculty because the vice-chancellor and the pro-vice-chancellor are men.... The female academics exist as ordinary members but not as residents of the committee. As per the higher education regulation that states that such posts are exclusive to the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor of the university, men often form the majority of the residents of a committee. However, in a single-gender university, the case is different, since such posts are held by women; therefore, the resident of the committee is a woman. This means the policy of the higher education sector does not prevent women from becoming leaders, such as a vice-chancellor or a pro-vice-chancellor. (UBK3 pers. comm., September 5, 2015)

A female participant offers a different perspective from her male counterparts with regard to Article 29 and the scientific council:

Not only are the [senior] leadership positions not available for women, but the posts of middle leadership are also limited. To illustrate, the post of Head of Department can be filled by a female if there is no male student in the male section. Typically, women are given the position of the deputy head of department rather than the head of department.... There is no particular text in the governmental policy and regulations that prevents women from occupying the upper senior positions; rather, it is the male

decision-makers that have not provided younger women with the opportunity to progress to leadership positions. In contrast, the government has enabled women to progress to higher positions than those in the universities, as evidenced in the [accession of women to the] Shura Council. (UCFNP1 pers. comm., December 1, 2015)

Mharram and Guardians

The Saudi government has enforced rules and policies in higher education to encourage and support female academics to obtain higher qualifications from international and well-known universities. This includes provisions not directly related to education, such as equal opportunities for health insurance and a monthly allowance equivalent to that of the women's *Mharram*. However, the government has also stipulated that women working or studying in academia, either locally or internationally, need to obtain approval from their guardians.

Women studying abroad must also be accompanied by their *Mharram* during their scholarship period, as stipulated by article 6 about the regulation of scholarships and training for employees of universities, Scholarship conditions (1997), and MOE (2017). From the participants' perspective, such imposed conditions present a significant hindrance to the professional development of women; for example, one female participant who has yet to be promoted to a leadership position despite her long service commented as follows:

The [rarity] of female faculty members, [most of whom] have not reached the top leadership position, can be attributed to their failure to achieve the most important requirements or conditions for such a post, which is gaining high qualifications.... This is due to several reasons; however, in my case, my *Mharram* and guardian could not accompany me to study abroad. I have been working in academia as a teaching assistant (demonstrator) for more than fifteen years. This is because, for the last fifteen years, the master's degree programme of my specialisation has been unavailable in Saudi Arabia. Although it was available in a foreign university, it was not possible for me to travel to study abroad because my father, who is my guardian, could not accompany me because of his family and professional obligations in Saudi Arabia. This means I did not meet the requirement for studying abroad; as a result, I am not qualified to compete with other

colleagues for any important posts, although I have been recently promoted to assistant lecturer. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 12, 2015)

A senior woman professional who has often been promoted to leadership positions made the following remark:

In the last decade, the Saudi higher education sector has witnessed substantial financial governmental support during the reign of King Abdullah. On other hand, such support is paradoxical. To illustrate, Saudi faculty members were forced to study abroad regardless of their gender rather than study locally, even though desirable postgraduate programmes were available. Furthermore, they were required to obtain the necessary degree within a certain period. The contradiction is in the coercion for female academics to bring a *Mharram* when studying abroad.... As studying abroad involves a long period of time, situations change over time. There have been cases where the *Mharram* left the country of study for urgent matters, which resulted in the suspension of the scholarship allowance for the female student. With such an imposition, I question the decision-makers regarding how Saudi women can manage their study life and achieve their scholastic goals. Fortunately, I have not personally faced such issues with my *Mharram* and guardian simply because my husband and I are academics, so we studied abroad together. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 12, 2015)

Women's Mobility

Varied formal and informal practices lead to gender segregation; these include women's travel for specific purposes (e.g. trainings or scholarship) and challenges in joining particular professions—challenges that may transcend gender, social network, and assistance available (Abdalla, 2015). From the interviews, it can be deduced that the mobility of Saudi women is limited due to the huge land mass of Saudi Arabia, which makes it difficult for women to travel between the regions.

Women's mobility is also impacted by the openness of people's mindset, which affects their understanding and acceptance (or disapproval) of women working in regions different from their residence (Abdalla, 2015). This attitude often restricts women to a particular region

where they can likely commute from their accommodations to their workplace, as illustrated in the following examples provided by two female participants:

First of all, women require their male guardian's permission for traveling. In addition, the vast geographical expanse of Saudi Arabia makes it very difficult for women to be appointed in remote areas, especially when they are married and have young children. A man, however, can move anywhere, even if he has a wife and children. (UCFP3 pers. comm., July 17, 2015)

The freedom of women's mobility is widely accepted by people who live in the western region of Saudi Arabia, whereas the case might be different with people who live in the central regions of Saudi Arabia. (UAK1 pers. comm., May 29, 2015)

5.2.3.4 Unprofessional Attitudes in the Workplace

Organisational professionalism is a 'discourse of control utilised by people with professional leading roles in an organisation and integrates rational-legal forms of hierarchical structures and authority of decision-making and responsibility. In addition, it includes the growth standardisation of the procedures of work and practices, and managerial controls. It depends on externalised forms of accountability measures and regulations: for example, the review of performance and target setting' (Evetts, 2010, p. 129). Organisational professionalism is examined from three angles, namely 'activity, politics, and ethics', from which the concept of an organisation is advanced (see chapter three). In this study, 26 respondents believed that the non-professional attitudes of women, such as being envious of each other, affect their career advancement in numerous ways, as elaborated in the following subsections.

Jealousy and Envy

Because of the nature of women, they often feel envious of their female colleagues, or have fears and anxieties specifically directed at those who are similar to themselves in age or qualifications as well as gender. One female senior participant described it as follows:

This can be manifested sometimes when new matters arise at the workplace or when they are in doubt of the solution or relevant policies regarding an issue. In this case, most of them prefer to be ignorant of their part. This is consequently reflected on their career advancement to senior positions

because full awareness of the policies, regulations, and legal rights that can be obtained by stable and continuous professional development is one of the main requirements for such posts. (UCFP1 pers. comm., July 15, 2015)

A male participant commented further as follows:

From my personal experience, I would say that not all women like to be led by female leaders in general. This may be related to their leadership style which is characterised by either their misplaced exactitude or because of their being envious of other women's achievements. This may cause delays in work tasks or assignments, or affect the interpersonal relationship between colleagues and the work environment. (UDK5 pers. comm., June 25, 2015)

Clannishness

The strong evidence of earlier studies shows that clannishness is regarded as a negative trait and has impacts and implications in the work environment. Politicised work settings may lead workers to not consider the public good, reinforcing nepotism and undermining meritocracy (Kausar & Tlaiss, 2011a; Karan & Afioni, 2013). The majority of participants in the current study criticised the practise of clannishness in academia, as shown below:

Since their promotions were guaranteed, their wrongs are forgiven and accepted. Vanity is prevalent, and the expectations of reward and appreciation for everyday achievements are rampant. (UEFNP2 pers. comm., December 7, 2015)

Furthermore, another comment highlights the practice of institutional clannishness:

The fears and anxieties of some female academics are reflected in their behaviour in the workplace [of] avoiding their professional competitors. Unfortunately, there are many cases such as that of our vice-dean, who thanks and appreciates [excessively] any simple and normal tasks done by her 'clan' (group). Furthermore, these women project a misleading image of their 'clan' to people who are in charge of final decisions [in the men's section] because the particular member belongs to their clan, regardless of the presence of others with more qualifications and efficiency. (UCFP3 pers. comm., July 17, 2015)

Wasta (Nepotism)

The data indicate the negative influence of family connections on the work process and workers' professional rights. For example, a person in an important position with the power to make decisions will often face pressure from family or friends to employ or promote an undeserving person on the basis of some relationship, at the expense of someone else who is deserving. My participants repeatedly referred to nepotism because their perception of *wasta* (career progression) is usually through social and family connections instead of achievement and education. The following citations illustrate the belief of 22 participants that *wasta* is a significant factor in career advancement, often impacting women negatively:

Wasta is often in the hands of the decision-maker, who is often our male counterpart in educational organisations and has the power and control to dominate decisions. Such a great deal of power is only available to men because of their varied and many high posts. There was a female academic who was appointed to an administrative role ... she has high qualifications, but she is not qualified as an administrative leader. (UBFP1 pers. comm., July 10, 2015)

Wasta and nepotism are the main key factors that control the process of employment and promotion without considering experience or qualifications. I will explain to you honestly that I was appointed in X University just last year, and I have been offered high posts, such as the post of vice-dean, even though there were some colleagues who were more qualified than me. In addition, I do not have enough experience working in academia in general, particularly in leadership roles. When I was appointed as an assistant professor, I did not progress from assistant lecturer to lecturer like the others did. I was chosen because of the influence of my husband's friend in the university, who had wanted to do my husband a favour. (UCFP2 pers. comm., July 16, 2015)

5.2.3.5 Lack of a Supportive Environment for Professional Learning

Nearly all the research participants argued that they have not received encouragement or resources from policy-makers for professional learning. Despite some available funding and the existence of experienced people who have assumed leadership roles in education and who could thus help to establish strategies or techniques to reinforce women's capabilities and leadership skills, such services have not been established. This has created huge obstacles for women's progress.

The interview and documentary data establish the scarcity of efficient and supportive work environments for Saudi professional women. For example, the issue of supportive factors appears in the policy for selection and appointment to senior positions, the concept of women being powerless, excessive workload/long hours and related stress, limited sources and resources, lack of formal/informal networks, *wasta* and nepotism, *Mharram* and guardians, and issues around women's mobility. These factors are explained in detail in the subsections below.

Limited Resources

Limitations in terms of relevant resources were mentioned frequently by all the female participants.

The lack of an appropriate academic environment for women professionals in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the rural regions, has prevented us from gaining access to the most important resources and sources. Their availability is necessary and significant to enable us to develop professionally and effectively.... In Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, there are no facilities such as integrated and comprehensive libraries. In several cases, I have gone to X library for some English resources that were not available in the female section. However, only my *Mharram* can go to the male section to check the reference. Can you imagine my *Mharram*, who is not fluent in English and does not have any background in my research area, having to do so? (UEFNP2 pers. comm., December 7, 2015)

Career Break

The participants considered career breaks as detrimental influences on the professional advancement of women, especially in the more senior grades (McIntosh et al. 2012). This response from a female participant illustrates this sentiment and considers that career breaks at certain stages in the career journey are critical in terms of later trajectory:

Undoubtedly, a career break affects our career advancement significantly, be it for maternity leave, childcare, or accompanying a spouse or family member abroad to work or study. Since Saudi universities have undergone fundamental changes and restructuring, a strong and competitive culture has emerged; therefore, I think extended vacations can impede the progress and advancement of the individual on leave at work. Therefore, extra effort at work after a vacation is necessary to maintain professional competitiveness. (UAFNP2 pers. comm., December 4, 2015)

Excessive Workload/Long Hours and Related Stress

Time is a core issue stressed by the participants due to their struggle to maintain the balance between the tasks and duties of personal and professional life; according to them, the situation is getting worse because of heavy teaching loads and administrative obligations that prevent female academics from allocating sufficient time to their professional development or advancing into managerial roles. This was highlighted by all female participants, senior or not:

The additional work that lacks any clear procedures and requires long hours of work without achieving the goals can negatively affect the health and psyche of female academics and increase their work pressure and stress. Furthermore, in many cases, women professionals need to double the time and effort [compared to] their male counterparts just to prove that [they are] qualified; as such, this creates a great deal of pressure on [them]. (UDFP2 pers. comm., August 22, 2015)

In our new and emerging university, we complain about the long hours as compared to our male colleagues. This is because women are more committed in their attendance and leaving work on time [and not early], but this is the complete opposite of our male colleagues; they would just come

to the university during their lecture time. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

To be honest, our university even has a deanship for development and skills advancement, which offers annual training for all faculty members. Training also includes upper leadership development, but owing to my heavy workload, I do not have the spare time for professional development; therefore, professional development is at the bottom of my list of priorities. In other words, I strongly believe in its importance, but my priorities in completing my work have prevented me from having any involvement with professional development initiatives. (UEFNP1 pers. comm., December 6, 2015)

Lack of Networking Skills

Utilising social networks or individual contacts in a job search to mediate gender variations in the workplace, which include earnings and gender segregation, and in the employment outcome has generated a great deal of interest (Kausar & Tlaiss, 2011; Karan & Afioni, 2013). The literature argues that both men and women hold diverse social and occupational statuses; therefore, their individual networks differ markedly in terms of contact positions and gender composition. Moreover, this diversity will contribute to gender differences in occupational and/or income achievement when networks are utilised as a main source of job information (Budworth & Mann, 2010). That is, the ratio of male professionals who are promoted will be higher than that of their women counterparts because of the male advantage concerning opportunities via personal networking or other informal channels to secure any job-relevant information. In particular, men have greater opportunities to be mentored via senior executives.

While there are more and more women professionals at the junior level, upper management still tends to be male dominated, placing men in a better position to receive promotions from their mentors (Torres & Huffman, 2002). This study's data indicated that poor networking skills and the lack of significant means of support are considered to be vital constraints at the institutional level, preventing women from gaining emotional and instrumental reinforcement via counselling and mentoring (Abdalla, 2015) and gathering power within an institution. This notion is elaborated by the following comments by several female participants:

Generally speaking, women's networking skills are very poor, especially with their male colleagues, and there is limited professional talk in many cases between them, which can be attributed to the notion of *shame* and *sharf*. Furthermore, female colleagues tend to gossip when they meet. (UCFNP2 pers. comm., December 3, 2015)

... Saudi female faculty members have their own network that can enable them to develop their own contacts. However, they lack effective professional networks with their male counterparts in higher management, which, in turn, affects their contact range.... We are still not an open-minded society. We are still a very conservative society; therefore, a relationship between male and female colleagues is unacceptable, but if they need to foster a relationship between themselves, they should be cautious, particularly the women, who should not be spontaneous, and that connection must be minimalistic. (UEFP2 pers. comm., July 4, 2015)

I believe that including women in men's networks can help in obtaining the required and essential information and resources to facilitate career success. This plays a positive and important role in our sustainable and continuous career advancement.... I am a senior member based on my experience and qualifications. This enables me to deal with individuals of all characters regardless of their gender.... I personally prefer to network with both genders to exchange experiences and opinions. My male colleagues are respectful of the privacy of Saudi society. There is no point in limiting my network to only female communities, as it is already limited. (UDFP1 pers. comm., August 22, 2015)

The university is primarily counterproductive and does not have any initiative or partnership between male and female faculty members, whether it is within the university or at any external organisations. (UAFNP1 pers. comm., November 27, 2015)

Our exclusion from the male-dominated networking channels creates obstacles to our advancement. Therefore, we still face obstacles in building

our professional path owing to the limitations of the network access for gathering information that is relevant to our jobs. Our male counterparts have their own network that enables them to advance professionally. (UCFNP2 pers. comm., December 3, 2015)

5. 3 RQ2: To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?

5.3.1 Religion

The influence of religion has been widely perceived as a deterrent to the progress of female professionals in Saudi Arabia (Al-Heis, 2011). The data collected in my study affirm that religion itself does not negatively affect the professional role of Saudi women; on the contrary, all the participants have a very clear and firm consensus that the Islamic religion is the most important factor promoting support and encouragement for women in all aspects of their lives, especially their education and career, via religion's emphasis on education equality for both genders and the right of women to join the labour market. One female participant explained this as follows:

Islam does not only ensure the importance of male-female equality, irrespective of whether they are Muslim or not, but also, in certain cases, obliges men to take on more responsibilities than women, which is known as *qawamih*,¹² not guardianship.¹³ For example, men are responsible for providing comfort, security, and a decent life for the women, and they help with all the difficulties encountered by women. However, these rules have been misconstrued as women being less empowered compared to men (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015).

The last sentence of the quotation above draws attention to some distinctive perspectives of the research participants regarding Islamic rules and the perceived correlation between Islam and the professional role and under-representation in senior positions of Saudi women. Those

¹² The situation where a woman's male relatives, such as her father, brother, or husband, has the responsibility to take care of her and support her needs.

¹³ As used by the participant, 'guardianship' conveys treating women as incompetent and, thus, asserting that they should have a guardian.

views are mainly centred on Islam being the most supportive factor in women's lives, although there remain other vital issues related to the lack of comprehensive understanding and clarity regarding the rules of Islam, particularly in terms of matters pertaining to Muslim women. Some interviewees have classified the misconceived notions of Islam into two main aspects; the first is linked to Muslim people, and the second is linked to non-Muslims. These viewpoints were affirmed by 27 out of 30 participants, who tried to explain that the misunderstanding of religious restrictions on Muslim women in education and professions can be attributed to the misconceived notions of Islam, which are derived mainly from the activities of the *Sahwa* movement; this has resulted in an inaccurate, extreme picture of Muslim views on women (and other things), which are, in some cases, linked to specific tribes, clans, families, or regions. Some participants from different sites confirmed the above point:

It should be stressed that the roles and instructions of Islam are unified and fixed. However, the way that people understand these roles and instructions has a great impact on their implementation. In other words, there are significant variations in the implementation of Islam in governmental institutions or even people's daily lives in different countries. For example, some countries that are considered officially and legitimately Muslim countries, such as Egypt and Jordan (with both countries seen as representing the West region), are very different from the Middle (Centre) region [including] Saudi Arabia. This goes back to how each country understands and interprets the Islamic religion. Unfortunately, in Saudi Arabia, the main source for the interpretation of Islamic teaching [has been] influenced massively since 1979 by the *Sahwa* movement, the implications of which can be reflected in the attitudes of people, especially in the city of Riyadh. This is different from us in the western region of Saudi Arabia. People in my city and, in particular, my colleagues at my work [in] academia are flexible and friendly; they communicate regularly for work (UBK3 pers. comm., September 5, 2015)

In addition, all my participants considered gender inequality as a worldwide phenomenon and not a regional or national issue confined to Saudi Arabia as a Muslim community, as illustrated by the following examples:

The gender discrimination is not exclusively evident in Saudi Arabia as a Muslim country.... [I]t is also widely prevalent in non-Muslim contexts, not only in the Middle Eastern context, in varied examples, such as in educational, political, and economic contexts.... The difference in the degree of emphasis on or conformity to certain things can be found in other Muslim countries, which I think is related to the understanding and practice of Islam in each different location.... In a Muslim country, such as Saudi Arabia with its sequestered culture, you can find multiple perspectives on a single matter. These differences depend on the region or city, as the people in my city [for example] are very strict and stick to the norms and traditions. For example, a woman working in a mixed-gender environment is not acceptable in some regions in Saudi Arabia; in addition, studying abroad for women, especially for single women, is considered to be against the norm and immoral. (UAFP3 pers. comm., August 6, 2015)

On the other hand, regarding the misunderstanding of Islam in non-Muslim groups, approximately 16 research participants strongly believed that any misconceptions about Islam among people of different ethnic backgrounds and religions should be attributed to the great influence of some Western and Middle Eastern mass media and their representation of Islam in terms of the *Sahwa* movement. Such misrepresentations include, but are not limited to, obscuring the good aspects of Islam and presenting a distorted picture of Islam by emphasising the purported ‘evils’ of the religion and negatively sensationalising Islam for varied reasons, be they economic or political. Because of this, it is only natural that people would misconstrue the Islamic religion and its teachings. For example, the international media portray gender segregation as a norm exclusive to Muslim societies, although it is an international phenomenon. Some relevant responses are cited below:

Islam should not be judged solely on the actions of certain groups of people. For an accurate understanding of the Islamic religion, the most correct, accurate, and comprehensive two sources are the Qur’an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon them). Such sources are stable, well established, and valid across time and place, and they would not be influenced by the capricious forces of societal transformation. The mass media have always been a medium of manipulation for politicians, economists, and clerics to meet their target.

Recently, the media have been seeking to portray negative images of Islam for certain purposes. The mass media play a significant role, in many cases, in influencing the non-Muslim people's understanding of Islam. However, they do not have any background information or knowledge about Islam, which leads to their readiness to accept any information, irrespective of its accuracy. As such, governments should increase censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression (UCK4 pers. comm., August 3, 2015).

The comment below was made by one of the (male) key informants about misconceptions regarding Islam among non-Muslim people:

I question the actions of individuals who control the media in their international dissemination of the stereotypes about the roles of Muslim women, specifically Saudi women, which they attribute to Islam. Why have the media not done the same favour for non-Muslim women who suffered similar gender segregation? (UDK5 pers. comm., June 27 & 28, 2015)

5.3.2 Social Discourses and Traditions

Social discourses and traditions are key factors that determine a society's way of life. When the participants were asked about their own influence on views of the role of Saudi women in the workplace, there was some evidence from male participants that suggested the presence of gender-bias in their answers. The findings of this study confirm that Saudi society, a very conservative society, has a pervasive patriarchy.

Patriarchy is conceptualised as 'a fluid and shifting set of social relations where men exercise varying degrees of power and control' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992, p. 3); the concept emphasises the influences of a societal structure that socialises men into a dominant status and grants them authority due to that position, enabling men to be the key decision-makers in all matters associated with household members, which, in turn, reinforces their authority in society and establishes stereotypical expectations of male and female members, as seen in the following response.

Saudi society accords authority to male relatives, even younger male children, over their elder sisters, whereas Saudi women remained without any authority or power to make decisions, even in issues that are related

directly to [them], be it for study, work, or marriage. (UEFP3 pers. comm., July 5, 2015)

A woman should request permission from her male relatives, such as her father, brothers, husband, or even her son who has turned 18 or 20 years old, in order to study, work, or even to travel abroad because those males are considered her guardians. This attitude is reinforced by the governmental policy that disallows women to travel without permission from their guardian who, in some cases, is less educated and qualified to have such authority over the women, aside from being male. (UAFP2 pers. comm., July 11, 2015)

The patriarchy in Saudi families can be seen in many ways over the individual life cycle, beginning with birth, followed by contentiousness in education, and disillusionment and discrimination at work. These norms have contributed greatly to discrimination in terms of familial and societal roles. The following comments give examples of the influence of societal structures, wider social discourses, and traditions:

In the Arab Gulf, and Saudi society specifically, even though they claim that it is not true or try to hide their feelings at the birth of a baby girl, it is very common, in the majority of Saudi families, for members, including the mothers themselves, to prefer a male baby over a female baby. (UAFNP2 pers. comm., December 4, 2015)

Upon the birth of a male child, all Saudi family members are very pleased, whereas the birth of a female is considered an unpleasant event. This attitude of preferring a male child to a female child is to preserve the family name for many generations. (UAK2 pers. comm., August 5, 2015)

In addition, concerning orientation towards women's education, the data revealed that the Saudi government has imposed a policy where women are considered secondary to men. The social norm of guardianship, in particular, has limited the resources and materials that allow women access to higher education. Comments reflective of this include the following:

Men have had great opportunities and encouragement to complete their study abroad or locally; in contrast, women have been discouraged from even studying basic education in the last three or four decades because it

was seen as unnecessary or immoral to study abroad. The target of the Saudi family is to just prepare their daughter to conform, that is, to be a good mother and wife. I think the women in the area (the western region of Saudi Arabia) where I live have experienced less of this attitude than women who live in the central region of Saudi Arabia because women in my city, over the last 50 or 60 years, have witnessed several [structures of] support and promotion for their work and education (UBFP2 pers. comm., July 12, 2015)

There have been generally negative perceptions towards education for women, but this attitude has evolved in line with modern values because the culture and lifestyle in Saudi Arabia has changed as well. This includes women's refusal to study outside the region. (UDFNP1 pers. comm., December 2, 2015)

A senior female participant expanded on this with the following insight on female education in Saudi Arabia:

Education for women and girls was previously managed by the Department of Religious Guidance, whereas the education for men was within the jurisdiction of the MOE. The reason behind the control of women's education by the Department of Religious Guidance is to ensure that Saudi women are educated in accordance with Islamic principles, as interpreted in Saudi Arabia (*Wahhabism*), which traditionally espouses the idea that women should assume roles seen as gender appropriate, for example, in motherhood, housewifery, teaching, or nursing, whereas other Saudi women from the western region of Saudi Arabia can join other fields, which are not considered as feminine ones (UDFP1 pers. comm., August 22, 2015)

In contrast, another senior female participant described Saudi women's education as follows:

The lack of correct understanding regarding the necessity for female academics to gain high qualifications has led to erroneous perceptions and strong beliefs, among some residents in some areas, that a woman's completing her postgraduate study is insignificant. This is contrary to

reality, because a postgraduate qualification is a prerequisite to be a member of the academic faculty. (UBFP2 pers. comm., July 12, 2015).

On the other hand, regarding women in professions, 22 participants (e.g. UBFP3, UAFNP1, and UAK1) acknowledged that, even when Saudi women could overcome all the segregation-related challenges (e.g. stereotyping and getting consent from their guardians), they remain powerless and continue to lack autonomy at work. Therefore, their autonomy for decision-making and seeking available professional opportunities remain limited compared to men. The following responses elucidate the reasons behind these limitations:

Over the past few decades, women's work has been rejected by a great number of male members of Saudi society, specifically by the husband, who considers the fact that his wife's work will allow her financial independence. Consequently, he thinks that this could make him lose his prestige and authority at home, although, historically, we can find many examples of Muslim women who worked in different fields, such teaching and commerce. (UBFP3 pers. comm., July 8, 2015)

Saudi men are selfish. Even though his wife has a job outside the home, he strongly believes that such work is not important and that the most important thing is for her to work at home by performing domestic tasks and childcare. (UAFNP1 pers. comm., November 27, 2015)

However, the following viewpoint by a male senior participant offers a different perspective:

It is considered that the negative orientation towards women's education in the past may have contributed towards issues in the supply and demand of human resources in Saudi universities, since some senior positions require highly qualified and skilled candidates—candidates that cannot be sourced from female departments. However, recent opportunities are equally available to all, regardless of their gender. Even though some participants may not feel the direct effect of equal opportunities, they have justified their responses by stating that this is influenced by strong cultural values related to specific geographical locations. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

5.4 RQ3: What factors can promote women’s advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

The findings in this section answer the third research question. The responses of 18 of the research participants from all three categories in the study indicated that all the above-mentioned challenges, which female academics encounter in their career paths at personal, social, and organisational levels, are mainly due to their being women and also due to traditional role stereotypes. The solution to this requires effective interventions at all levels to overcome the mentioned challenges. Personal-, social-, and institutional-level supportive factors mentioned by the research participants are summarised in three separate diagrams below.

5.4.1 Perceived Personal Support (PPS)

Increasing the representation of Saudi women in education has resulted in better assessment of their educational status (WEF, 2017). However, it has been argued that, even though education is a substantive means of meeting the target of political and socioeconomic change, this does not mean female leaders are owed access to upper leadership posts (Calizo, 2011). Along the same lines, male interviewees largely perceived Saudi female faculty as not necessarily good leaders even with strong educational achievement.

However, the majority of female senior participants, who have managed to overcome obstacles to promotion, attributed their success to having developed specific personal and professional traits such as self-confidence, resilience, determination, ambition, honesty, and the ability to multitask (Karam & Afioni, 2013). In this way, such skills can help dismantle the typical image of Saudi women and their role (David, 2012). The suggested supporting factors for female academics at personal level are summarised in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 Perceived Personal Support (PPS)



Source: Researcher's own construction

In contrast to the female participants, however, the male ones strongly felt that acquiring such qualifications does not ensure that people are highly skilled as leaders, as explained in the

next response:

Meeting the conditions and requirements of qualification, such as a postgraduate educational degree accomplishment, does not reflect a great leader's skills. That [is true for] men [as well;] we have seen several male faculty members who do have qualifications but no capacity for a leading role, whereas there are also many instances of the opposite case being true (UAK1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

The majority of the women's responses stress that female faculty are in charge of their own professional development and should not wait for opportunities from colleagues or employers, as explained below by a female participant who had experience in a leading role:

We should not blame our personal circumstances. Female academics are in charge of their entire professional development; therefore, they should not give up when faced with any challenges that may reduce their opportunities for promotion. Possessing significant traits such as self-confidence, resilience, determination, ambition, honesty, hard work, and the capacity for multitasking and developing their research profiles are necessary in order to be recognised as a good faculty staff [member]. Women should not be silent in formal meetings and must be confident enough to participate and defend their views in order to prove that they have the required abilities and that they deserve it. (UCFP3 pers. comm., July 17, 2015)

5.4.2 Perceived Social Support (PSS)

This study's participants indicated that the social support offered included support from extended family, parents and mothers-in-law, nuclear family (including support from husbands), or outside parties such as nannies. Figure 5.5 summarises the main providers of social support.

Figure 5.5 Perceived Social Support (PSS)



Source: Researcher's own construction

The next subsections will present participants' views of each of these items in more detail.

5.4.2.1 Family Members

Family background and support are inner driving forces that can help overcome or reinforce career barriers (Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011). Some female participants shared their personal experience of family support and stressed its fundamental positive impacts, which in most cases enabled them to balance the responsibilities and obligations of their personal and professional life. This extends not only to ongoing support provided by family but also to family background and how the women grew up. For instance, it frames and shapes their personality, fosters or hampers independence, and encourages or discourages them from taking advantage of the freedom to make decisions regarding all aspects of their life. The majority of female participants acknowledge that the unlimited support and unconditional love of their families helped them progress during their career journey but also emphasised the major negative impact in cases where such support is lacking, especially within the Saudi patriarchy. This is explained in the following comment by a female participant who had had significant support from her two brothers:

[D]ue to the nature of the patriarchy system in Saudi society, the existence of the *Mharram* and guardianship law is an important condition in the application for a foreign scholarship by Saudi women. However, I was luckier than other Saudi students, who wanted to study abroad but were unable to do so. I was able to meet the *Mharram* condition because my brothers mutually agreed to accompany me during my study abroad tenure. My oldest brother accompanied me in the first year, whereas my youngest brother was with me in the following year. I admit I would not have been able to achieve my goal and complete my study without their valuable support although there has been a negative impact on their professional careers in many aspects: for example, delay in promotion, discounting their overseas stay as experience, and cessation of monthly salary.... If they had not accompanied me, I could have faced crucial financial problems because my monthly allowance would have been discontinued if my *Mharram* had left. (UEFPN2 pers. comm., December 6, 2015)

5.4.2.2 Parental and Mother-in-Law's Support

Women's professional commitment and advancement may be facilitated in many ways, including logistical support offered by parents (Kawai & Strange, 2014). All the research interviewees stressed the significant role of their parents' care and commitment in their education and career—even among parents without a higher educational degree or qualification. Senior female participants explained that, through nurture and education, parental support was evident since birth. The following response illustrates this sentiment:

Even though I am a Saudi woman who grew up in a rural area, I had considerable support from my family in general and from my father in particular, who has kept challenging me since I was a little child. He called me 'doctor' and encouraged me to complete my higher degree. He has also helped me overcome any challenges that I have faced personally or professionally. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Another example described a participant's mother's support while she was studying abroad:

I cannot deny my parents' continuous and endless aid in all phases of my life. They have always been there when I needed them emotionally or financially. For example, during my scholarship tenure abroad, my mum cared for my son after I had left him with her for almost seven months without grumbling or fatigue. Furthermore, my father supported me financially during my study abroad. My mother helped me again when I faced the problem of obtaining childcare for my son. My mother took care of him while I was at work. (UBFPN1 pers. comm., December 5, 2015)

Yet another example highlights the considerable support provided by the participant's mother-in-law in managing the dual demands and obligations of home and work life.

At the beginning of my marriage, my husband and I used to live with my in-laws. That was really helpful at that time, since my children were too young, and they required comprehensive care. My mother-in-law took care of my children during my absence. (UCFP3 pers. comm., July 17, 2015)

5.4.2.3 Spouse

Support from one's spouse is also essential, first and foremost, because of the law that obligates women to have permission from their male guardian (in the case of married women, this is the husband) for certain work and study plans and the broader tradition of asking permission prior to making any decision regarding their career (Omair, 2010; Ertürk, 2009). All married female participants also strongly believed in the crucial role of women's spouses in facilitating their career progress and helping them balance their personal and work lives through encouragement and advice, even though some of them sadly had not received sufficient support from their own husbands.

They attributed such a lack of support to the mentality of some Saudi men, who do not like to see their wives surpass them with respect to education or a professional career. The majority of the women maintained the necessity of intellectual compatibility and sympathy between spouses for their home life and the women's career advancement. When married female participants were asked about the support provided by their husbands, one non-senior female participant laughed for a short while before giving the following comment:

The most important support that can be provided by husbands is to not hold their wives back by putting some obstacles in their professional path. In short, some professional women, in some cases, do look for some form of support from their husbands, but they do not want any new obstacles from their husbands. (UEFNP1 pers. comm., December 6, 2015)

The following comment by a senior female participant further emphasises the importance of husbands' support:

There is no active participation from the husband in doing domestic tasks but his emotional, psychological, and moral support and his valuable advice are available, which are the most important things that have helped me overcome several difficult challenges throughout my long career. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

5.4.2.4 Babysitter/Nanny

Participants with children, especially those under school-going age, experience noticeable issues related to their responsibility of ensuring that their children are cared for when they are away at work. The use of a nanny is reported by almost all married female participants, senior and non-senior; given the scarcity of professional nurseries, they consider it the best available solution, as shown by the comments below:

Since we do not have qualified and professional nurseries belonging to the university or an independent service provider, a nanny is an alternative solution that Saudi women can rely on; this is certainly true in my case, as my two children are still young and do not go to school yet. However, I should point out that having a nanny for children is considered to be part of Saudi culture. (UAFNP1 pers. comm., November 27, 2015)

5.4.2.5 Smart Security Cameras

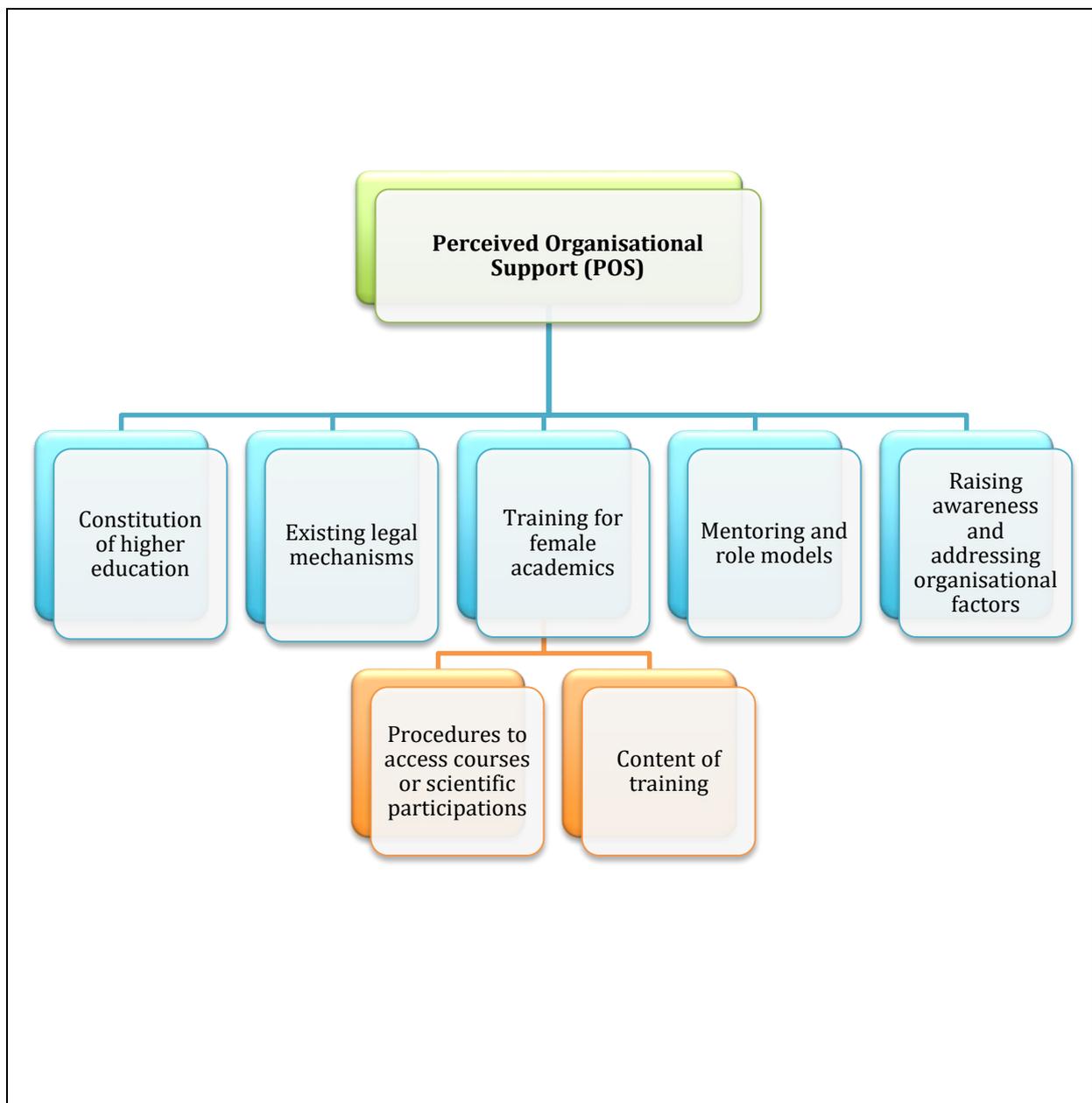
The female participants with children face a great deal of pressure during work hours, which prevents them, in many cases, from devoting full concentration to their work tasks, and this sometimes leads them to reject certain roles that may require longer hours at work. Thus, some have found that smart security cameras at home help them be more at ease at work, even if they have a nanny. This sentiment is aptly explained by a female participant below:

[I]t is well known that working women in Saudi Arabia rely considerably on nannies who assist them in taking care of the children and doing some household chores, but this solution has some disadvantages, specifically in the light of the crimes and abuse that we have heard about in the media; this has put a great amount of pressure on me. Therefore, the presence of hidden surveillance cameras in the house is a beneficial solution in reducing my worry and stress. I downloaded the app that is connected to the cameras onto my smart phone. This invention has enabled me to observe my children during my break or my spare time. (UCFNP1 pers. comm., December 1, 2015)

5.4.3 Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

Perceived organisational support is the extent to which employees think that the values and contributions of their institutions support their socio-emotional well-being; it is based on the theory of organisational support, where the development is directed according to the desirable characteristics of employees for recruitment (Kawai & Strange, 2014). Based on the participants' responses, the findings of this research establish some recommendations on organisational support for professional success, as summarised in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 Perceived Organisational Support



Source: Researcher's own construction

5.4.3.1 Constitution of Higher Education

The constitution of higher education in Saudi Arabia was criticised by all female participants from both groups but justified by male participants; an example of the latter follows:

It is stated clearly in the Constitution of Higher Education that all legislations, rules, policies, and allocated budgets are aimed towards the professional development of the faculty members, particularly in terms of gaining leadership skills, regardless of whether they occupy this leadership position or not. However, the implications would be that the activation and implementation might vary from one university to another according to the university's philosophy and vision. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

5.4.3.2 Existing Legal Mechanisms

The definition, roles, and functions of 'institutional support' vary across studies; however, there is a shared notion of 'support' among various studies (Kawai & Strange, 2014). When my participants were asked about how existing legal mechanisms could help counteract discriminatory practices, some male academics were self-conscious about answering this question. Examples of their responses are presented below:

There is no difference in the staffing requirements of academics, whether for administrative roles or leading positions in relation to their gender; however, there are some conditions and requirements related to qualifications and experiences. After that, there is a trade-off between them regardless of their gender. (UAK1 pers. comm., May 29, 2015)

Another important comment, this time from a female participant, recognised the importance of fairness and avoiding bias:

The most important personal characteristic is objectivity, that is, the state of being objective and impartial in all the matters at work. In addition, do not treat some individuals or groups differently because of preference or friendship. For example, for staff recruitment, women should consider and look for the most capable and efficient person based on merit rather than relationship or gender. (UBFNP1 pers. comm., December 5, 2016)

The comment below, which is by the same male participant cited above, seems to contradict his comment above with regard to the appointment mechanism and the consideration of gender:

In our universities, where I work, and also other universities, all vice-chancellors, pro-vice-chancellors, deans, and heads of department posts are occupied by male academic members who are highly qualified. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

Promotion to the senior positions is generally only available for male academics, as confirmed by all the participants when they were asked about who typically occupies senior positions. However, one of the male informants responded as follows:

It is well known that in Saudi universities, there are particular positions occupied by male academics; however, this does not mean that women are not given leadership roles. There are female academics with leadership positions, such as vice-dean or deputy head of department. (UCK4 pers. comm., August 15, 2015)

5.4.3.3 Training for Female Academics

Undoubtedly, offering programmes and strategies to provide professional development training for female leaders would promote their skills and assist them in coping with the above-mentioned challenges. Based on the interviews and document analysis, this study affirms that some female participants were keen to develop their skills on their own despite constraints and difficulties and lack of any support from their institutions:

I have developed myself in leadership by attending local and international training, workshops, and conferences. I conduct research on my own for any available and affordable training. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Procedures to Access Courses or Scientific Participation

Specific procedures are needed to access courses and scientific participation, which can play such a significant role in developing female academics' skills and knowledge and also prepare them to play leading roles.

If you wish to apply for participation in conferences or training courses that are relevant to the field of the faculty members, this can be done in many ways, either facilitated by oneself or by invitation from local, regional, or

international universities or organisations. Then, you have to follow the official procedures, first, by providing all the documents to the department to which you belong; subsequently, their request will go through an administrative process until it reaches the final stage, which is the scientific council's approval. (UAK1 pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

Each group of participants had its own perspective on this question, some of which were as follows:

The conditions of the *Mharram* system do not allow female academics to travel abroad to attend training, workshops, or conferences, whether as observers or as participants. Financial provision ('wildcard') and travel tickets are applicable for the faculty members and their *Mharrams* but not for their children. (UBFP3 pers. comm., July 8, 2015)

The university does not offer professional development to the female faculty members to help them become leaders in the future. However, there are individual efforts from the faculty members, who perform self-searches for the appropriate course or training. In addition to that, some organisations send invitations to the university to nominate their staff for such training. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

The treatment of our requests [for funding for training] by the decision-makers at the university is very complicated; they often delay the processing or reject the request. There is no professional behaviour, as everything is dependent on the relationship with the decision-makers (*wasta*); therefore, such practices have contributed to [a rise in] individual effort rather than collective group efforts at the university. (UAFP1 pers. comm., July 1, 2015)

Content of Training

Regarding training course content, the following is a response by a female participant who shared her experience about her attempt to improve her English language skills:

I sought to obtain English language courses in Saudi Arabia, which was important to me as a prospective study abroad student, but there were

delays and no responses to my application. Therefore, I had to pay for my English course in order to catch up with its start date. Even though those courses are available, their availability is only for people with a good relationship with the decision-makers. (UCFPN1 pers. comm., December 1, 2015)

Even though there are many different courses, their outcomes are limited, not significant or effective, as the organisers often pay attention to appearances and quantity rather than the quality of the course content, which requires a lot of preparation time. (UDFP1 pers. comm., August 22, 2015)

5.4.3.4 Mentoring and Role Models

Mentoring is considered a natural interaction and process that involves the transfer of knowledge from highly skilled experts to those who are less skilled; the expert becomes a model tutor, providing beneficial counsel (Geber, 2010). All the female participants stressed the importance of mentoring at both individual and organisational levels. Two examples from their responses are as follows:

I strongly believe coaching and mentoring have considerable influences on the mentee via the mentor's informal sharing of experience, aspirations, and awareness with the new staff regarding all the institutional aspects, such as cultures or issues. (UBFP1 pers. comm., July 10, 2015)

In my case, there were no role models or mentors, and I missed the basic support for professional development; I struggled at the beginning of my career for some time. I think I would not have faced such struggles if there had been mentors or role models. (UAFNP2 pers. comm., December 4, 2015)

5.4.3.5 Raising Awareness and Addressing Organisational Factors

Raising female academics' awareness of their legal rights and the role of policy-makers is an essential step in addressing the under-representation (Abdalla, 2015) of Saudi women in senior positions. My findings confirm the lack of awareness among female participants about their rights and duties, as illustrated by the following responses:

Providing a comprehensive reference to the rules and regulations, including their rights and obligations, is an essential component in enhancing women's awareness [that will affect] their professional development and success. (UDK5 pers. comm., June 25, 2015)

Can you imagine how ignorant I am of all my rights and responsibilities? I have often relied on my colleagues or my sister, [who works] in another university, to gather information for me, so I usually stay informed via 'word of mouth'. I did not find anything written clearly or related directly to my issues. For instance, about five years ago, I had a problem related to my salary, and because of communication problems between the male and female sections of the department, which resulted in loss of documents and a delayed response to my request, I could not find any solution to my problem, as I was not aware of the right way to solve it. (UAFNP1 pers. comm., November 27, 2015)

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented and analysed the data and gained key research findings, which have contributed to answering the three research questions and have yielded its main themes and sub-themes. In the next chapter, we will consider the findings in more depth in the light of the research questions and previous literature.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The study set out to critically examine the issues faced by Saudi female academics in relation to their access to upper senior level positions in the hierarchies of higher education institutions. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an in-depth discussion of the research findings presented in Chapter Five, which were framed around the broad issue of the under-representation of Saudi female academics in senior leadership positions in higher education. This discussion is divided into three sections based on the three research questions originally set out in the introductory chapter, which provide a framework for reviewing and discussing the findings of this study. Those findings cover the following main research questions:

1. What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?
2. To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?
3. What factors can promote women's advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

6.2 Major Constraints Saudi Female Academics Face in Advancement to Senior Management Positions: Individual, Structural or Institutional, and Cultural

The findings of this study establish that Saudi female academics have difficulty accessing positions at the upper levels of the educational institutional hierarchy, such as the dean level and above (Vice-Chancellors, Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, and Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellors) as a consequence of the accumulated effects of varied barriers at different stages of their career path. The study used the 'gender–organisation–system approach' developed by Fagenson (1990), which identifies three core factors—namely, individual, structural or institutional, and cultural—that may give rise to obstacles in women's access to high positions and that tend to relegate them to roles like coordinators and internal supervisors at best.

6.2.1 Barriers to Progress Linked to Individual Experiences of Female Academics

The findings show that Saudi women are socialised to have ‘feminine traits’; that is, they are often considered and expected to be kind, irrational, submissive, and passive. These are perceived as substantial obstacles at the individual level, which hinder Saudi female academics from holding senior positions. The findings of this study strongly indicate that lack of self-reliance and confidence are vital issues affecting female Saudi academics’ progress as leaders. However, these women believe that the issue is not the result of their personality or something they were born with. Rather, they believe that it is constructed through norms and values related to the nature of Saudi culture, which does not encourage women to compete with men for roles that are perceived as being male-dominated, as was discussed fully in the findings regarding the answers to the first research question.

The participants blamed Saudi customs and traditions and policies and even wrongly interpreted Islamic teachings as major obstacles; moreover, the findings emphasise the variation in these attitudes across regions due to differences in local cultures, traditions, and norms. For instance, in western Saudi Arabia, female faculty do not encounter the same degree of restriction as women in the rural interior regions or in the capital, Riyadh. These norms frown on women speaking loudly or mixing with men, which is viewed as immoral; therefore, when they are lessened, women are more likely to be comfortable expressing their own voices.

Such barriers are also reflected in previous studies by Kauser and Tlaiss (2011) and Metcalfe and Mutlag (2011), who contrast them with valued psychological/socialisation factors such as self-confidence, ‘strength’, independence, decisiveness, competitiveness, rationality, forcefulness, and aggression (Smith, 2011). They are also contrasted with professional traits or skills such as career planning; professional assertiveness, as found in a study by Abdalla (2015); unprofessional attitudes; unawareness of legal rights; and a low or negative public profile (Marris, 2010; Sandman et al., 2009). In addition, a study by Al-Manasra (2013) argues that the gender gap is a matter of biological differences that prevent women from achieving leadership posts, even though gender gap is a matter of biological difference that prevents women from achieving leadership posts. However, he also argues that ‘feminine’ traits should not be regarded as drawbacks but should be perceived as the most essential

characteristics of a new style of leadership, that is, transactional leadership. This is also in line with findings by Ng (2016), Wang et al. (2011), and Alsaeedi and Male (2013).

Furthermore, the findings indicated that, in relation to self-reliance, in particular, the case of Saudi women is different from that of other women around the world. This is owing to elements such as the guardianship system (*wali*), which has furthered the patriarchal exclusion of women from engagement in public life. Saudi women have to be accompanied by male relatives when they go to government agencies or banks; in some cases, their relatives even perform tasks on the women's behalf, without their presence. Certainly, women are not allowed to travel internationally alone without male relatives' permission. As explained in 5.2, the clash between Saudi culture and Islam, both of which are fundamental elements of society, broadens the gender gap. This finding is in agreement with what was discussed in relation to the guardianship system and law in the Global Gender Gap report in Saudi Arabia (WEF, 2017; Elamin, & Omair, 2010).

As far as assertiveness is concerned, the findings demonstrate that it is an essential trait and a prerequisite for playing leading roles. The participants did not perceive the average working woman in a stereotypical way. However, although many Saudi female academics are highly professionally qualified and have their own valuable perspective on their work and the challenges facing their institutions, unfortunately, some of them may keep silent instead of risking generating any clash that might lead to strife and enmity between them and their male counterparts. A possible explanation of women's attitudes is that the high positions that are often held by men equip them with the unlimited power and authority to make decisions affecting their career progress. This finding is in accordance with those of studies by Gartzia and Van Engen (2012) and Metcalfe and Mutlaq (2011).

In addition, the findings by a majority of the participants from both genders also indicated that Saudi female academics have distinctive abilities compared to men as well as high levels of skills and qualifications in absolute terms and that they are, in many cases, superior to their male colleagues. However, the flip side of this, as those findings also suggest, is that, although these Saudi female academics have extensive family responsibilities and domestic obligations, they have a high capacity to work long hours and handle the most difficult tasks at a high level of function and are able to handle many competing demands and complicated tasks effectively; the male participants, nonetheless, criticised the abilities of Saudi female

leaders, pigeonholing them as having limited capacities and qualifications, which prevents them from conducting particular professional tasks.

For example, based on views of what is appropriate for women rather than on perceptions of their actual abilities, women are not allowed to conduct university campus inspections or monitor the construction of new buildings. This finding is similar to previous research (Northouse, 2015; Powel, 2011; Rhee & Sigler, 2015) that strongly argues that the modern style of transactional leadership may fit the skills that these women's life experiences have given them very well. Even so, implicit barriers to advancement remain in the external world (for instance, the fact that many posts are awarded by royal decree and are customarily given to men only), even if women can overcome internal obstacles like lack of confidence. Perhaps the explanation of this finding is that it overlaps not with personal traits but rather with social factors such as the norms and traditions of certain contexts. For example, Saudi Arabian society does not allow women to do these kinds of jobs; therefore, it seems unfair to judge women based on something they have not yet experienced.

The results of the study acknowledge that, based on the perspectives of female participants from two categories in five different sites, Saudi professional women consider themselves not only to be high-potential employees with leadership qualities (such as assertiveness and competitiveness) that are equal to those of their male colleagues but also to be more cooperative, competitive, assertive, and career-oriented than working men in general. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Mathis (2010), Broadbridge (2011), Metcalfe (2011), and Metcalfe and Mutlag (2011), who emphasise that female leaders often tend to score better than male leaders in relation to the styles and characteristics of leadership; moreover, Broadbridge and Simpson (2011) and Metcalfe and Mutlag (2011) propose that, even though both male and female leaders can effectively utilise the 'facilitating skills' needed by transformational leaders, these skills are more often exhibited naturally and spontaneously by female leaders owing to previous socialisation patterns.

The strong tendencies in the current research findings suggest gendered differences in leadership styles, as evidenced by the fact that male academic staff in administrative roles tend to focus more on results and are very flexible in applying regulations and policies in order to facilitate workflow, while female academics tend to be interested in the work process and are also very strict and tough in adhering to the regulations. Some female academics who

had not been promoted to leadership and some male participants felt that women tended to be slower, which negatively affected accomplishments.

However, findings from other female academics who had experienced middle leadership roles presented several solid reasons for their focus on work processes: university and departmental culture and structures, the desire to stick to defined roles, and the desire to protect themselves from male leaders who might apply unearned negative consequences of their actions or decisions. This finding is consistent with those of Rhee and Sigler (2015), Saiti (2012), and Sidani, Konrad, and Karam (2015). The justification is that the work delay is caused by people who do not respect and follow the hierarchy of the work, particularly some male academics who have the authority to make maverick decisions with no fear, unlike women.

In addition, female leaders felt it necessary to stress that they were not aiming to reduce the flow of the work or prevent the work target from being achieved; instead, they perceived conducting the work slowly as contributing to better outcomes. They also expressed more sympathy and compassion with female staff and students than with male staff, since they perceived them as having more in common with themselves and encountered them in person, unlike male staff whom they only dealt with indirectly (reflecting the segregated Saudi context). This could be understood by looking at the findings of a study by Busher and Harris (1999), who pointed out that departmental cultures and structures can involve the perspectives, beliefs, and values of senior staff and faculty of both genders regarding the way of operating and conducting work within institutions but do not necessarily reflect any mutual sympathy. There could be considerable subtle influence of departmental culture and structures on leadership styles and departmental functions as well as work methods and outcomes.

Moreover, participants from both genders established that the awareness of legal rights and duties, which empowers individuals regarding legal matters, improves their consciousness of legality as well as institutional regulations and policies. Female faculty who are up to date in all these aspects are better equipped not only to achieve leadership posts but also to protect themselves, and both these facts will have knock-on effects on their confidence, as indicated by the findings. However, on the other hand, some female academics have also found that their understanding of regulations and policy contributed to their exclusion from major

leadership posts due to some clashes between male and female academic staff, since male academics sometimes felt that female academics were challenging them or showing off. Those findings agree with findings of studies by Ksuser and Tlaiss (2011a) and Metcalfe and Mutlaq (2011).

The findings demonstrate that, in Saudi academia, unprofessional attitudes are exhibited by both female and male academics, and these attitudes include envy and ‘clannishness’. Some Saudi female academics were envious, afraid, and/or anxious in relation to female colleagues, particularly those with nearly the same qualifications or experience as them or close to them in age. Sometimes, this kind of dynamic led respondents to avoid seeking help or looking for policy information or solutions to certain matters in order to avoid conflict. This has vital implications for these women’s professional development, opportunities to access senior positions, timely completion of work tasks, and interpersonal relationships and work environment. Ultimately, one of the main requirements for senior posts is full awareness of relevant legal policies and administrative frameworks.

This finding is in line with other findings—including studies by Gentry, Booysen, Hannum, and Weber (2010), Richards, Percival, Ssali, and Theobald (2015), Abdul Ghani (2011), Kauser and Tlaiss (2011b), Budworth and Mann (2010), Abdalla (2004), Smith (2011), Al-Fassi (2010), and Timmers, Willemsen, and Tjidsens (2010)—that emphasised the importance of professionalism in work settings and criticised inappropriate behaviour or attitudes. Several times, the participants pointed to how one type of unprofessional attitude, clannishness, brings negative influences to the work environment in academia, including situations where people show a lack of consideration for the public good due to a politicised work setting that promotes nepotism and undermines meritocracy. This has been confirmed by the research of Gaglio (2014), Kauser and Tlaiss (2011a), and Ford and McLaughlin (1986).

This phenomenon can be explained according to the third dimension of Hofstede’s social capital theory (1980, p. 45), which puts individualism in opposition to collectivism—the former involving a loosely knit social framework where people should look after only themselves and their direct family and the latter involving a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in- and out-groups and expect their in-group—clan, relatives, or organisation—to look after them. Saudi society is strongly collectivistic. Bourdieu (1986)

defines social capital as resources dependent on group membership, relationships with others, and the influence and support of one's network.

Furthermore, based on the subjective responses of participants, the main element that gives female academics opportunities to achieve senior status is maintaining a strong and successful research profile and publication record. Married female faculty expressed deep anxiety and concern regarding their unexceptional research profiles; in comparison to male colleagues, they had low research productivity compared to their overall academic experience. Their predicament is the result of their family obligations and responsibilities as wives and mothers, which can hold back their careers. This finding matches those observed in previous research (Teelken & Deem, 2013).

6.2.2 Obstacles to Progress Linked to the Wider Social Roles of Women

The findings of this research suggested that the factors 'linked with the wider social roles of Saudi women' seem to reflect conditions that apply across the Arab world in general and the Arab nations of the Gulf in particular but differ greatly from factors documented in the Western context. Expectations attached to traditional gender roles in Saudi Arabia are regarded as one of the core obstacles that hold women faculty members back from progressing to senior positions. The majority of the female respondents in this project emphasised that, when they have to choose between advancement in their career path or looking after their children, they choose their children without hesitation; moreover, the research evidence demonstrates that, in some cases, female academics resigned from their jobs in order to look after their children and family even if they had achieved high positions.

The results of this study are in keeping with previous observational studies (for example, Kelan, 2014), which stress the negative effects of traditional gender role expectations on women; these expectations place all responsibilities related to home and family on their shoulders, hindering their career progress. This finding is also consistent with Abdulla (2014, p. 227), who emphasised the 'lack of culture fit at the executive suite' as a core obstacle in the career progress of women in the Gulf region but not so much in the West. Another study, by Karam and Afioni (2013), found that the most salient obstacles to women's progress during their professional journey included gender stereotyping, gender discrimination (overt and subtle), human resource politics, 'clubbishness, cliquishness', and related challenges in

accessing cross-gender networks, especially in cases of poor governance and legal protections based on gender within the conservative Saudi context.

As noted, the present findings indicate that Saudi female academics face pressure to balance domestic duties and work responsibilities, leading to role conflict and guilt. This is similar to situations of dual-career parent-care in the West and elsewhere but not to the same extent; nor have previous studies reported it to the same extent in other Arab countries. These competing demands may also leave Saudi female academics with very little spare time for socialisation, personal care, rest, relaxation, and, as noted above, pursuing their research.

These findings corroborate the ideas of Al-Manasra (2013), who showed that, in Jordan, the career advancement of women is influenced greatly by family and social commitments, and there are similar findings from Kauser and Tlaiss (2011), Metcalfe and Mutlag (2011), and Smith (2011). Further, Jogulu and Wood (2011) acknowledged that both Malaysian and Australian women perceived family and personal responsibilities and obligations as key inhibitors to gaining senior leadership posts. However, the unexpected outcome of the current research findings is that Saudi women do not perceive this as such a serious barrier for their career progress. This result may be explained by a noticeable shift in recent years: an increase in the percentage of Saudi women who are able to join the labour market due to the advent of personnel like nannies and housekeepers and conveniences like smart security cameras to monitor their young children.

However, these proposed solutions, according to the interviewees, have some drawbacks. Although male and female faculty members have the same pay scale in higher education, employing outside assistance increases the financial burden for women, while male counterparts do not face the same burden. This result concurs with Abdulla (2014), who reflected on why women in other Gulf states did not encounter that barrier. However, on the other hand, another vital social factor hindering Saudi women is pressure from their husbands, since they are often the family decision-makers owing to the patriarchal Saudi culture and overt discrimination regarding women's work in the Saudi community—a finding not noted in previous work.

A Saudi man can progress and succeed in his career path even after marriage, since his spouse will tend to be understanding and offer him support and assistance, whereas women struggle after marriage, even if they have a supportive husband, since customs and traditions in Saudi Arabia do not really support the notion of women working. Even women whose husbands support their careers have to carry an excessive burden of gratitude, or expected gratitude, which, of course, wears on them professionally. Married women also face the restriction of being under their husband's guardianship and the need to get their husband's permission to make certain career choices; single, divorced, or widowed women without children or those whose children are grown may have some advantages in this regard, as per Omair (2010) and Abalkhail (2017). Finally, family commitments are a burden on professional Saudi women, who often face social pressure from relatives, friends, and colleagues asking for *wasta* or preferment. That supports the findings of studies by Casper, Harris, Taylor-Bianco, and Wayne (2011) and Fuller (2013).

6.2.3 Obstacles to Progress Linked to Factors within Institutions

The analysis revealed that organisational obstacles have major influences on the advancement of women faculty members. These include a) role stereotyping, including restrictions on leadership roles for female academics and disregard of women's leadership style; (b) governmental and institutional, structural, and process factors; (c) a male-dominated structure in the higher education sector; (d) lack of a supportive environment for professional learning; (e) policy for appointment to senior positions; (f) the formal powerlessness of women; (g) excessive workload and hours and related stress; (h) limited resources; (i) the strain of being expected to give *wasta*; (j) lack of network support; (k) the *Mharram* and guardian systems and law, and (l) women's mobility, including career breaks. Most of these elements also reflect previous studies, such as those by Abdul Ghani (2011) and Kauser and Tlaiss (2011); Budworth and Mann (2010), in contrast, place the blame more directly on *urf*, while Abdalla (2105) and Smith (2011) argue that the prime hindrance is formal and informal gender discrimination.

The findings suggested that the expectations placed on Saudi women fundamentally involve subordination and dependency on men and that this is a key feature that promotes the dominance of Saudi men through gendered institutions, thus producing stereotypical thinking, a gendered leadership hierarchy, and the production of male senior executives in

universities; this is accompanied by the exclusion of female academics from decision-making processes and networking. Similarly, the evidence presented thus far supports the idea that women's progress in their careers has been greatly affected by institutional practices and male-dominated culture, as Al-Manasra (2013) demonstrated in Jordan. Unfortunately, according to the current findings, even though the overall national number of female staff and students is higher than that of men in some Saudi universities, there is no female representation on the scientific council.

Similar findings have been explored by Abdul Ghani (2011), Kauser and Tlaiss (2011), Metcalfe and Mutlag (2011), and Hofstede (1980), who have found that, in some contexts, women managers encounter both social and institutional obstacles in work environments due to gendered organisations, patriarchy, overt or legalised segregation, and cultural practice. Furthermore, a study by Abdulla (2014) in the contexts of Kuwait, Tunisia, and Sudan shows that women managers suffer from a work atmosphere that seems hostile and aggressive due to role stereotyping, gender segregation, and social exclusion; furthermore, the study adds that female managers who succeed in practising their role in leadership posts have endured bad experiences, bad feelings, and lack of sympathy.

Based on this study's analysis of interviews and documents, the absence of female academics in upper-ranking posts occurs despite the fact the higher education system enables university Vice-Chancellors to choose three members from the academic staff regardless of their gender; these members are invited to join the official university council or the scientific councils, even if they do not hold any headship posts. In reality, even when female academics are able to be involved in university councils or scientific councils, they often stay silent during meetings in order to avoid clashes with male academics, who can expel them from committees or posts, which is a major black mark on a CV and a blow to their influence and ability to advocate for their students.

This finding is in line with the findings of Metcalfe (2011) and Broadbridge (2011), showing that institutions, policies, and practices are considered to be essential components in terms of the creation or prevention of power imbalance in the organisation. Women are in the majority in institutions or industries such as education despite discriminatory managerial practices that stem from male-dominated cultures that often favour men. This takes place, in particular, by preventing professional women from gaining the opportunities and experiences that can help

them match the qualifications of their male competitors for senior posts. Another issue is gender stereotypes, even though the findings indicated that Saudi female faculty members have been more distinguished and cooperative leaders than their male colleagues. Indeed, female academic staff are sometimes barred from dealing with any financial matters except annual salary increment. Often, professional women have to put in much more time and effort than their male counterparts to prove that they are just as qualified, causing a great deal of stress and influencing their health and outlook. Thus, many of them refuse to be involved in any senior leadership role and limit their priorities to completing their work. In addition, these women may even face restrictions on borrowing from their own university libraries and may need their guardians to do it for them.

These findings could be explained by the findings of a study by Schein (2017), who explains the fundamental role of organisational culture in the career progress of women; this includes expectations of role stereotyping, which involves restrictions on the roles of female leaders and disregards women's leadership styles (Powell, 2011; Elamin & Omair, 2010). The policy and mechanisms for selection and appointment to the upper echelons of the leadership hierarchy are often male-dominated; this can explain some related issues, for instance, the formal powerlessness of women. The results of this study found that networking is also complex but crucial for Saudi professional women due to the fact that they are so often excluded from male-dominated networking channels, which, in turn, creates more obstacles for them in accessing information relevant to their jobs. As a result, aside from not progressing as far as their male colleagues on average, individual women tend to lag behind their male colleagues in their own career arcs.

This again is a phenomenon common to other Gulf and Arab countries. Relationships, even innocuous professional network relationships, between male and female staff are generally unacceptable, and if such a relationship is required, women especially should be cautious about it and keep contact formal, minimal, and carefully controlled. In the same way, this study supports the findings of many other studies, such as Metcalf and Mutlaq (2011) and Abdulla (2015), which consider the clubbism of 'old boys' networks' to be a key instrument of the discrimination against professional women and the preferment of men in work settings. On the other hand, a Malaysian study by Man and Dimovski (2009) demonstrates that women middle managers encounter a glass ceiling in work settings largely due to the lack of sufficient organisational support such as networking, mentoring, and family-friendly

initiatives. The inadequacy of women's networks and mentoring resources is matched by a lack of childcare and other family-friendly initiatives. The development of stronger networks could greatly boost the career advancement of women (Abdulla, 2015) and offer emotional and instrumental support through counselling and mentoring (Coleman, 2011). In Jordan, Al-Manasra (2013) identifies obstacles such as lack of arrangements for childcare, lack of mentors and networks, and domestic obstacles.

Further, this study established that the issue of networks overlaps with other factors, including nepotism (*wasta*), that is, using one's position and authority to make things happen and favouring one's friends and relatives. *Wasta* is mostly sought from decision-makers, who are always male academic staff in Saudi universities. *Wasta* is repeatedly referred to in research responses as the biggest factor affecting employment and promotion, which, under *wasta*, are based on social connections instead of qualifications or experience. This causes women's cases to worsen, as exposes them to male domination and the lack of supportive environments for their professional learning.

This is in line with the findings of a study by Quick, Holtzman, and Chaney (2009), which indicated the primary aim of professional development is to enable the smooth progress of one's career by offering one the opportunity to build one's skills and knowledge to make them academically first rate. Al-Manasra (2013) found *wasta* to be a massive hindrance for the career advancement of Middle Eastern professional women in the public sector, as did this study. Tlias (2010) argued that the practice of nepotism in the Gulf contributed to a culture that utilises men for recruiting purposes and gives preference to (male) friends and relatives. This is also in accordance with Budworth and Mann (2010), who perceived the exclusion of women from networks as a huge barrier to women's career progress. Women may struggle to get involved in informal as well as formal networks, particularly when they are in the minority and live in conservative communities. Budworth and Mann add that, owing to the heavy load of work and family life, women are prevented from applying sufficient time and effort to networking, especially outside immediate work settings. The findings of Eagly and Carli (2007) illustrate that, when Arab women engage in a situation involving the opposite sex, it is likely to affect their reputation and tarnish it; this also limits their networking ability.

According to this study's research findings, all the aspects mentioned above contribute to women's leadership styles and indirectly reduce the female staff's functions and obligations and power within the organisation; Budworth and Mann (2010) pointed out important issues similar to those in this study in that men in conservative communities often tend to resist overt dominance by women, especially if they are characterised as forceful or assertive. This also agrees with a study by Lumby and Foskett (2011), which attempts to explain the strong correlation between culture and power in such contexts and describes the indiscriminate use of power that leads to inequalities. In addition, the findings of this study show that the justification of restrictions on women as a way of maintaining spatial separation of male and female faculty may be accompanied by formal differentiations. For example, a man can be appointed as the head of a department, but a woman doing the same job is called a deputy head or supervisor, which proposes lower status for women compared to that of men; holding the deputy head of department post does not enable female academics to join scientific or administrative contexts in most cases and requires them to get unusual permissions and approvals from the head.

On the other hand, it should be made clear again that the prevalent and common practice of restricting female academics' rights in Saudi universities is not based on written policies and regulations in the higher education sector (see section 1.5 in the introductory chapter), which have indeed helped counteract situations like those described above and, in principle, offer them the freedom to practise their role freely, without restrictions. However, in fact, these policies and regulations have not been enforced appropriately by male leaders. Other issues that emerge from this situation include an unclear chain of command and lack of open competition for positions, which are often not announced and, instead, awarded to men privately. However, this result has not previously been described, even in similar cases or in contexts that segregated between genders.

However, formally speaking, based on the evidence of the current study, even though the organisational process promotes masculine leadership in this way, there is no variation between male and female academic staff in Saudi state universities in terms of salary scale, working hours, or promotion requirements. Nevertheless, the barriers are meaningful, as shown by the findings of Dah and El-Kassar (2009) regarding the banking sector in Lebanon, which assert that women's chance of acceding to top leadership positions seems far away at best; Abdul Ghani (2011) proposes that (leaders within) institutions have supported

masculine leadership subconsciously.

Some of the female academic participants in this study believed that their subordination empowered men and enabled men to be tyrants in some cases. Therefore, some women prefer working in single-gender rather than mixed-gender universities because they wish to have colleagues who will treat them equally and respectfully, with no segregation. They may also have the ambition to progress to senior posts or may have had bad experiences with male colleagues. In contrast, other female academics may prefer working in mixed-gender universities for several reasons; they may believe it will enable them to exchange experiences and knowledge across genders, they may have peaceful, quiet personalities and may not wish to challenge their male colleagues, feeling they can get by for that reason. Furthermore, they may have no ambition to hold top leadership positions.

The actual reason underlying this case has been suggested in a study by Al-Malki, Kaufer, Ishizaki, and Dreher (2012); they argue that differences can be attributed to *urf* (societal norms), particularly the patterns of patriarchal kinship, social subordination, and ingrained male dominance. One novel contribution of this study is its attention to the role of the *Mharram* and the guardian system that affects the prospects of female academics. Even though decision-makers in Saudi Arabia are energetically promoting women's education within the Kingdom and applying financial resources to it, domestic rules, regulations, and policies are simultaneously pushing Saudi women to gain academic qualifications from international institutions instead. The higher education policy offers both the main student and their *Mharram* equal opportunities in education as well as health insurance and a monthly allowance to both female students abroad and their guardians.

Such policies and roles are in accordance with Saudi culture and are clearly preferred by decision-makers, who have added restrictions on women's mobility; these include not allowing them to study or work without the *Mharram's* permission, or travel without his company. This is a clear obstacle to women's professional development and progress to top positions—one that the majority of interested women fail to deal with. If, after the female student has established herself abroad, the family situation or the *Mharram's* work situation changes or necessitates the *Mharram's* exit from the study country urgently, such a situation could lead to the suspension of the female student's scholarship allowance.

The research evidence also illustrates that career breaks are detrimental to the advancement of female faculty members to top positions. Breaks can be taken for several reasons, including maternity leave, childcare, or going abroad for work or study (with one's *Mharram*). After their return from the break, in order to maintain professional competitiveness, female faculty have to put in extra effort and time at work. This reflects the observation of McIntosh, Dabir-Alai, Mcquaid, and Munro (2012) that career breaks can hinder the career progress of Saudi academic women.

6.3 The Influence of Wider Social Discourses, Religion, Culture, and Tradition on the Roles of Saudi Women Professionals

Earlier, I mentioned that I used the conceptual framework of Brock et al. (2004) for analysis and discussion about the research question in order to determine the core factors that affect women's career progress. The findings taught me about the issues in the progress of Saudi female academics to upper senior level positions in the hierarchy of Saudi universities, and I gained insight into several important facts. The discussion for the first question will include all of the above-mentioned aspects in terms of the influence of social discourse, culture, tradition, and religion on the role of Saudi women professionals.

First of all, the findings established that women from all five sites in the current study experienced the phenomena of gender segregation and the glass ceiling; such phenomena are global issues that hinder women from achieving their career goals and advancing to desirable positions. These findings are compatible with the large and growing body of literature on the situation of professional women in both Muslim contexts (see, for example, Abdulla, 2014 & Al-Manasra, 2013) and non-Muslim contexts (Brown, 2010; Smith, 2011; Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012; Teelken & Deem, 2013).

A possible explanation for this result may be due to the existence of some shared set of beliefs or laws that factor into all contexts, regardless of religion, which gave rise to issues such as gender stereotypes, patriarchal ideologies, and social role expectations. The structure and mechanism of selecting an appointment for upper senior positions and the lack of supportive environments (although there was some regional variation) show that the cultures of the educational institutions reflect the communities and cultures where they are located. The identified influences of culture in the present finding can be understood in the light of the

definition of culture by Hofstede (1980, p. 43): ‘When we speak of the culture of a group, a tribe, a geographical region, a national minority, or a nation, culture refers to the collective mental programming that those people have in common, the programming, that is different from that of other groups, tribes, regions, minorities or majorities or nations.’ Thus, culture is not a characteristic of individuals; it encompasses groups of people conditioned by the same education and life experience.

As the findings show, many female academics in Saudi Arabia do not wish or aspire to hold top-ranking senior posts or any leadership posts at all, either due to lack of motivation and ambition under the patriarchal assumptions within which they grew up and live or due to the competing demands of home and work life. The best example that parallels these research findings was an investigation by Rwafa (2016) regarding some well-known social systems, including programming as a part of the patriarchal ideology and gender roles, in a Christian African context.

Therefore, it appears that, more than Christianity, Islam, or any other religion, culture and traditions play a considerable negative role regarding gender inequality. However, most religious societies use religion as a tool to shape society, culture, and traditions, directing culture and justifying attitudes, as in Saudi society. Because the dominant ideology considers the man to be the head of the family, Christian women from Africa as well as Muslim women from the Arab Gulf, the Middle East, and Pakistan are trained to be respectful and obedient to their husbands. Furthermore, when such women manage to access education, some express their great desire to pursue rewarding careers; however, these ambitious women are considered to be a critical problem by their societies because the patriarchy dictates that women should be restricted and bound to a position that is culturally acceptable to their husbands. This is another indicator that gender inequality is associated with culture rather than with any particular religion. This finding mirrors those of previous studies that have examined gender issues in different contexts including Shah and Baporikar (2013), Abdalla (1996), Abdalla (2014), Freedom House (2010), Karam and Afiouni (2014), and Mathis (2010).

By considering other Muslim nations, the current study offers strong evidence to suggest that there are enormous variations in the situation of women in Muslim countries. A possible explanation for these results may be a lack of adequate and comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings. In addition, the existence of bias during the interpretation of gendered power leads to different interpretations of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Regardless of the accuracy of these interpretations, they can lead to substantive differences across nations in terms of the implementation of specific religiously based laws related to women's human rights, mobility, opportunities for work, and restrictions on certain jobs. For example, some people consider the idea of women working in mixed-gender settings to be disrespectful and inappropriate, thus leading women to be excluded from certain jobs. This situation does not reflect the religiously accurate role of Muslim women, who have historically enjoyed relatively more rights and freedoms. A great number of Muslim women, including the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, have been active since the age of the Prophet in fields such as trade, education, and medicine, as well as in teaching and nursing.

The demonstrated findings support a study by Abou-Bakr (2010), who emphasises that Muslim women were allowed to participate in intellectual and cultural life and not required to be silent and passive—and that many spaces existed for women's voices, including in the realm of literature. Arab Muslim women have long had an active presence in the public sphere, practising a variety of occupations, enjoying legal rights, doing charitable work, owning property, and pursuing commercial and investment activities. In addition, there has always been an awareness of gender that imposed a 'discourse of resistance, of gender equality, or of discrimination' (p. 128). Another study by Abdalla (2014) supported the current findings, observing that this kind of gender inequality exists in some Gulf nations, including Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, due to patriarchal and gender-biased legal/official practices.

Even though the findings of the current study acknowledge that the issues of gender inequality faced by women in the workplace happen worldwide, it appears that some barriers are particular to women in Muslim and Arab countries in general (and to Saudi Arabia in particular) as a result of a variety of factors including the foundational roles of a patriarchal society, the '*Sahwa* movement', and the conservative '*Ulama* preachers'. In fact, in many cases, such groups deliberately misinterpreted Islamic teachings in order to serve their own purposes and agendas. These agendas were often based on the priorities of foreign countries

such as Iran or on the desire of the Saudi government and were substantively reinforced by the operation of power under the Saudi legal system and *Sharia* law. Such attitudes were strengthened through longstanding alliances between the Saudi government and the *Wahhabist* or *Salafi* strain of Islam, leading to the prescription of quite extreme views of what is mandated by religion.

As the current findings have established, this system leads to the imposition of a great deal of restrictions such as those regarding the main roles, rights, and duties of Muslim men and women in society. Therefore, such groups found it easy to deny the rights of Saudi women and silence their voices in the name of Islam. The respondents of this study reported that the situation of Saudi women had been better before the existence of those groups, whose main duties as part of the Saudi religious police are enhancing virtue, preventing vice, and monitoring and assiduously enforcing gender segregation across the entire public sphere. In addition, they discourage women from seeking paid work and restrict their core role in society to completing domestic tasks, looking after their children, and playing a supportive role for men.

They have destroyed the accurate image of Islam; this has had a major influence on Saudi society, scaring many people away from such things as watching TV, using the Internet, or taking photos. This finding is in line with studies by Rajkhan (2014), Al-Fassi (2010), Alsaleh (2012), Al-Rasheed (2010), and Al-Heis (2011), who all stressed that Islam should not be blamed for patriarchy. Thus, the impact of the interference of such actors cannot be understated, since it could explain the fundamental factors that impose certain roles, duties, and rights on Saudi citizens of both genders, mainly discouraging women from involvement in public life and excluding them from social capital development.

A further interesting finding is that the some of the attitudes and actions of such actors in Saudi society are mistakenly justified through references to religion; this can critically influence the misconceptions regarding Islam held by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Such misperceptions by non-Muslims can be aggravated, spreading a distorted image of Islam and its principles regarding women to non-Muslim societies with less knowledge of Islam, who may be more prone to misunderstanding it. This is especially true because of the influence of mass media, which sometimes has racist tendencies or political and economic ulterior motives regarding the Muslim world. For example, regarding the socially conservative

society of Saudi Arabia, some media companies have represented Islam as the main actor in discrimination against women. This idea is inconsistent with research, including a study by Rajkhan (2014), which covers Saudi women's roles and rights and the misconceptions surrounding the issue. Shah (2010) refers to the positive influence of Islam on many aspects of women's lives (for example, on their education and professions) and the issue of misunderstanding of Islamic teachings due to misinterpretations that have become 'historically situated' (Pascale, 2010, p. 154).

Within Muslim populations, the finding suggests that some practices and policy systems have enormous implications on individuals' beliefs and attitudes in the country of Saudi Arabia; this has generated heated cultural dialogue and discourse among conservative and reformist groups in terms of morality, modesty, and good reputation and *sharf* (honor) as well as their strong correlation with compliance with Islamic rituals. This has positioned ordinary Saudi people in a state of unlimited confusion. This long-standing trend of firm and tough discourse has thus resulted in the implementation and inculcation of such attitudes in Saudi customs, traditions and values, and *urf* (societal norms); daily practices are regarded as means to measure the perfection of faith, based on these perspectives. The current results are in accordance with recent studies describing the clash between conservative and reformist groups (Al-Heis, 2011; Al-Munajjed, 2010).

Thus, the findings argue that *urf* and many other practices did not arise from the Islamic religion but from traditional customs and tribal norms, with many of them being derived from pre-Islamic religion. These practices have resulted in huge conflicts between cultural and gender equality imperatives; these conflicts have, in turn, negatively influenced and directed the impacts of wider social discourses, cultures, and traditions towards the evolving role of Saudi women, manifesting through the ways in which society constructs gender. For example, Saudi societal norms, especially patterns of patriarchal kinship where the father is viewed as the 'head of the family' and controls the entire household regardless of the mother's involvement, support inherent male dominance.

This result supports previous research into the idea that, in Saudi Arabia today, many of the accepted gendered cultural practices have no basis in Islamic teachings. For example, Kauser and Tlaiss (2011) argue that the common systematic inequalities between genders in the Arab world are both linked to the teachings of Islam and deep-rooted in *urf*; this is also supported by Metcalfe and Mutlag (2011) and Metcalfe (2011). In addition, Elamin and Omair (2010),

reflecting previous perspectives, stress that Islam is not opposed to the economic participation of women but, in fact, stimulates it.

Similarly, Abdul Ghani (2011) has firmly argued that the conservative, male-dominated bases of politico-religious power foster the idea that women's place is in the home, utilising *urf* as a key basis for the interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah and the establishment of Islamic law (*Sharia*). Although the majority of scholars believe that *urf* has a considerable impact on the economic and political participation of women, this does not reflect on the role of Islam (Lumby & Foskett, 2011; Emmerik et al. 2010; Shah, 2012). As discussed above, the disadvantaged status of Muslim women in their society is not derived from Islamic teachings, and we should not credit attempts to silence their voices to the name of Islam.

The findings also indicate that, over time, a revision of Saudi history and ideology has occurred and become part of the culture and traditions of Saudi society, shaping its identity. This aspect of Saudi society has become one of its defining characteristics because the manifestation of such issues is complicated, in Saudi communities, by the gendered segregation of physical spaces in school and work settings. It has been derived from the conflict between conservatives and reformist groups in terms of tribal cultural practices and gender equality under Islam and has led to women being marginalised from public life; it has also negatively influenced their status both economically and politically. However, social norms in Saudi Arabia have changed over time in a way that has undermined the stability of traditional roles in this Islamic society. These results agree with the findings of other studies (Meijer, 2010; Rajkhan, 2014). Since the 1980s, Saudi society has been caught in the balance between enjoying social and economic progress and preserving the religious character of the Saudi state and social traditions. Gender segregation exists in all public spaces, including government offices, schools, universities, charitable organisations, restaurants, and just about everywhere except hospitals.

On the other hand, the finding suggests that several factors have been reinforced since 9/11, as *ikhtilat* demarcates the status of women. The result has been an increase in the gap between conservatives and reformists because the former group sees any efforts at reform as a threat to its hold on power and an attack on Islam itself. This result is in line with a study by Meijer (2010) regarding the Saudi Arabia reform in relation to the debate of gender segregation.

What is surprising is that, as the present findings show, although the Saudi government imposes gender segregation through the current legal system, and official practices lead to gender inequality in Saudi Arabia, those practices clash with Article 8 of the Saudi constitution. While Article 8 is based on *Sharia* law, the actual policy is not discriminatory when evaluated in terms of its values and mission, which are based on the equality that rose from Islamic law. Genuine *Sharia* law calls for justice, emphasising equality among individuals in Saudi society irrespective of their gender and asserting the value of non-discriminatory policies. These results confirm the findings of studies carried out by Abalkhail and Allan (2015), Al-Rasheed (2010), and Rajkhan (2014) regarding Saudi Arabian women and their status, rights, and education (see also section 1.4 and 1.5 in the introductory chapter, p. 5-8).

The reason for this is not clear, but it may have something to do with the societal structure of Saudi Arabia, which was reflected by the majority of the responses in two categories from female participants in the five sites of the present study. The issue is hidden gender segregation that is not discussed by multiple actors with different agendas, including the Saudi community, religious groups, and those who exemplified revivalist and extreme religious tendencies during the ‘*Sahwa* period’ of the 1980s and 1990s, as was mentioned in the context of the current study (see chapter two). Because of such misunderstandings, some aspects of *Sharia* law have been implemented inaccurately because they are influenced by political actors, social biases, and so on. All of this impacts the process of policy-making. Saudi Arabia may be especially prone to these inconsistencies due to the lack of a clear line of demarcation between religion and state. This, in turn, leads to the blaming of Islam for women’s segregation and—of particular interest to us here—their low levels of representation in the upper ranks of senior positions.

One example of the invisible gender segregation in Saudi Arabia is seen in royal decrees, which are not written in any constitution or ordinance but are declared to be the custom of Saudi society; this leads to bias from the people in power, who have the authority to make decisions. In addition, mass media has led to the expansion of gender inequality and related issues that were promoted by the Saudi legal system and *Sharia* law, thus affecting those that have the power to make decisions. The present results support previous studies such as those by Meijer (2010), Rajkhan (2014), Le Renard (2008), and Abdul Ghani (2011) along with a study about Saudi women and cultural dialogue perspectives by Profanter et al. (2014).

The justification of such a phenomenon could be carried out through Giddens' structuration theory (1984), which identified social structures as abstract thoughts that direct and rule human attitudes and behaviours in certain social settings. Specifically, they re-indicate resources and rules (or collections of transformation relationships) that allow for the time and space binding of social systems. Therefore, structural social systems are attributed to the reproduced relationships among individuals, which are organised as regular social practices. Interaction between agents lies at the base of the structural process where social systems are produced and reproduced across different spaces and spans of time. Therefore, individuals' agency and the structure's constitution do not seem to be two independently offered collections of phenomena; however, a duality is revealed.

The participants attempted to explain the different implementations of Islamic instruction in Saudi Arabia, attributing it perhaps to the interchange among various Arab and non-Arab groups who settled in certain parts of Saudi Arabia as a result of the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca or for trade. In contrast, people from the interior of Saudi Arabia are often very extremist and resistant to change, as the participants in the A, C, and E university emphasised. Similar trends can be observed in other Muslim countries such as Egypt and Jordan; in the light of Giddens's remarks above, these differences and their effects on daily choices regarding eating, attire, socialising, and so on contribute to the construction of specific kinds of people: 'The more post-traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking' (1991, p. 81).

In addition, a likely explanation could be the discussion by Giddens (1984, p. 85) regarding the overlapping factors that position people in their society 'within a widening range of zones, in home, workplace, neighbourhood, city, nation-state, and a worldwide system, all displaying features of system integration, which increasingly relates the minor details of daily life to social phenomena of massive time-space extension'. Accordingly, this can explain why the culture, discourses, traditions, and norms of some regions of Saudi Arabia are compatible and coexist comfortably with the attitudes of the extreme conservative groups, as mentioned by participants in this study from sites B and D. Such discussion about the structure of Saudi society illustrates the cause of the massive differences in the implementation of Islamic instructions from region to region; some regions, like those in western Saudi Arabia, are not extremist in their cultures and traditions and are more open-minded towards other cultures.

Therefore, based on the aspects of Saudi culture discussed above, it seems clear why the context of Saudi Arabia is complicated and distinct from the Western context and even different from the rest of the Arab world. The cultural differences are considered to be a main factor in exacerbating the gender gap there; these differences are often associated with both Islamic values (inaccurately) and the patriarchal structures (legitimately) of Saudi society. Saudi Arabia is one of the most conservative societies globally, in which formal segregation is enforced between genders and men, who are empowered over women in every stage of life (starting from birth), are allowed to make decisions on behalf of all household members on matters that affect them. This fits with what Weiner (2010) argues regarding the nature of gender difference as a cultural phenomenon that has originated from the dominant notions of a particular culture or era.

The findings of this study stress that the variation in power, which is associated with traditional roles of gender and minority status, propagates systematic oppression that limits the status and power of women and minorities. They also describe the overlapping factors that lead to the internal construction of gender and influence traditional Saudi patriarchal culture. The life cycle in Saudi Arabia is deeply gendered and hence unequal from birth; to illustrate, having a baby girl is not generally a happy occasion, although parents or family members may not admit to that. Traditionally, most members of Saudi families, including mothers, hope for a boy; moreover, the common belief in Saudi Arabia is that women are responsible for the ‘problem’ of having a girl, which is not a favourable outcome in their community, even if the logic of such a response runs against scientific fact.

This finding supports that of a study by Rwafa (2016), which indicates that the same phenomenon can be found in some African cultures, especially among Christians, who prefer boys to girls and blame the woman for having health problems that prevented her from having the ‘right’ baby. This result could be justified by the findings of Giddens and Pierson (1998), which show that the actions of individuals in their daily life often promote and reproduce collections of expectations that contribute to building ‘social forces’ and ‘social structures’. This can be better understood in the light of Giddens’s theory of ‘structuration’, which posits that social life is more than just the random actions of people and that it is also not strictly specified and determined via social forces. That is, micro and macro levels are not complete in themselves and, only in terms of interaction via the individual, does society as such emerge.

This suggests the importance of factors affecting the individual, including social structures—traditions, institutions, moral codes, and acknowledged ways of doing and conducting things; however, the meaning and effects of these factors may shift if individuals begin, through their actions, to reject or neglect them and, thereafter, exchange or replace them or even reform them intentionally (Giddens, 1984). In terms of Giddens’s framework, the guardianship system in Saudi Arabia has been a major element that perpetuates gender inequality and leads to the limitation and restriction of women’s rights in the name of Islam. In the traditions of Saudi Arabia, guardians are often male relatives who have the power to make all decisions for their female relatives; for instance, women and girls require the consent of their guardians to study or work in the non-domestic sphere.

Besides the ‘guardian and *wali*’, the third actor here is the Saudi government, which imposed the policy that promotes segregation and increases the gender gap, thus subordinating women to men. A Saudi boy who turns 15 years old can be issued a national ID, which means he is an adult, while Saudi women in 2008 were officially prevented from possessing their own ID at any age; that is, their ID was dependent on a male relative—they were placed on the *Mharram*’s ID as dependents and were prevented from appearing in public without their *Mharram*. However, in 2013, it became mandatory for women to have national IDs.

The *Mharram* system obviously offered Saudi men wide control over women. For example, a Saudi woman must ask a male relative—a father, brother, husband, or even a teenage son—for permission to study, work, or even travel abroad for any purpose, since these men are seen as their guardians. The findings of the present study are in agreement with the findings of the WEF (2017), as well as with the findings of Rwafa (2016, p. 45), which similarly describes the case of unofficial or informal guardianship by Christian African fathers, whose mantle within the family is often assumed by youths in the absence of older men, while women are controlled by them in order to ‘appease angry ancestral spirits’. The findings attempt to explain the existence of such structures in the Saudi community as well as the attitudes in Saudi families, which are reinforced by legal structures such as government policies that restrict women’s mobility.

Even when, in many cases, the men are less educated and less qualified than their female relatives, they wield authority over the women just because they can. The social norms of guardianship have contributed to limiting access to resources and materials such as those in

public and university libraries, which are needed to make academic and professional progress but which are often not accessible to women due to the gendered division of space (Rajkhan, 2014). Statistics show that the percentage of bachelor's degree graduates in 2015 who were women was 56.7%; at the master's level, it was 39.4%, and at the doctoral level, it was only 21.5%. There is also a massive difference in the proportion of Saudi men and women who have gained postgraduate qualifications from international universities with good reputations or from national universities.

The findings of this study emphasise that the attitudes supporting biases and restrictions regarding the roles of women (and those of men) in Saudi culture are perpetuated through the education system. Education for women and girls is directed and controlled by the General Presidency for Girls' Education, whose foremost concern regarding women is to ensure that they are educated in accordance with the principles of Islam, as interpreted in Saudi Arabia (*Wahhabism*); the main objective is teaching girls how to be 'perfect' mothers and obedient wives and how to meet the perceived needs of Saudi families. This dictates which occupational roles can be considered gender-appropriate—the ones that include motherhood, housewifery, teaching, or nursing (with some reservations about nursing jobs in gender-mixed healthcare settings) (Rajkhan, 2014). In contrast, male education falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Higher Education.

The present findings suggest that the negative influence of education on gender inequality has continued in education at the tertiary level partly because advanced education is perceived as being more relevant to men, which implies that women's education is less of a priority for occupations in general and for technical and medical fields in particular, which could justify perpetuated gender segregation. This is compatible with Al-Munajjed's (2010) notes that the disciplines of study available to women are limited compared to those offered to men; Abu-Tineh (2013) expands on that theme, noting that science and math are viewed as 'masculine subjects', while girls are directed towards more 'feminine' subjects such as teaching and nursing.

From the present findings, another reason for the low proportion of women in senior positions in higher education compared to men is the lack of proper understanding among women of the importance of higher qualifications for making professional progress. However, the situation seems to have changed somewhat in some places, as liberalising

women's education at home was seen as preferable to letting them go abroad and be subject to pernicious influences. This finding is in accordance with Maber (2014), who considers education to be a key component that determines gender roles, which, in turn, lead to the construction of gender inequality. As Al Fassi (2010) confirms, this philosophy regarding appropriate gender roles in society has dictated government regulations and the shape of the education system, including the curriculum, and, thus, women's career opportunities. As Abu-Tineh (2013) mentions, the construct of daily life is disseminated first through education and curriculum and then through work, all of which are segregated contexts.

Furthermore, women are not only separate from men but unequal to them, and policies and rules for women are developed in terms of their relation to men. Rajkhan (2014) stated that Saudi educational materials on gender roles, such as school textbooks, promote gender stereotypes. These textbooks show girls and women in the domestic sphere, surrounded by family, in the traditional roles of mothers, wives, and daughters. Thus, as Rwafa (2016) also discussed in the Christian African context, there has been little investment in girls' education compared with that for boys. Abdalla (2015) criticises the traditional education culture in the Arab nations of the Gulf from a different angle, arguing that, although girls are stimulated by education, women are often prevented from demonstrating their intelligence, and they often lack professional mentors. Gender segregation at home, the way of raising children, and education institutions all perpetuate gender imbalances in professional settings and bolster traditional gender roles throughout society.

More than half of the female participants in this study reported that they had faced bullying or conflict from their male counterparts and had felt too powerless to take any legal action in the face of these challenges. Even when Saudi women managed to overcome all of the barriers to education they faced at home, such as gaining their guardian's consent for work or study, they often encountered further restrictions that made them powerless in higher educational settings. My findings also reveal that the autonomy of Saudi women regarding decision-making and the availability of good professional opportunities is still restricted compared to that of their male counterparts. This, in turn, has led Saudi women to be marginalised and often excluded from the work sphere as a result of the complexly intertwined aspects of patriarchy that contribute to the disproportionate production of male leaders. That is consistent with the results of a study by Al-Fassi (2010) regarding Saudi women's modernity and changing status and the similar findings in a different context in

Africa by Rwafa (2016). Both argue that the common stereotype about men is that they are seen as stronger and better leaders than women. Thus, they are raised to become leaders at home and then encouraged to obtain greater power to rule and lead. Women all over the world often have to work harder and longer than men to be respected or gain a distinguished status.

Another critical stage in the lifecycle of Saudi women is the 'marriage system'. The findings of the study illustrate that Saudi women who are in the early stage of their life manage to resist exclusion from patriarchal society and the imposition of orientalist stereotypes and discourses because they grew up with supportive families and parents; however, in many cases, they encounter problems when they enter the marriage system, a central source of women's segregation. The concept of working women is not accepted by a large section of Saudi society and is rejected, in particular, by husbands, who believe that allowing their wives to work might contribute to their financial independence and damage the husband's authority, control, and prestige over their property.

Thus, because of the selfishness of many Saudi men, some Saudi women are prevented from taking on any work outside the home, especially in fields perceived as unfeminine. Women are relegated to performing domestic responsibilities and childcare, and this work, too, is thereby devalued as being less important than wage labour. Therefore, career women are hampered by the Saudi (*Wahhabi*) interpretation of Islam, which posits that the roles of mothers, wives, teachers, and nurses are the most appropriate for Saudi women. Such control over Saudi women would not be possible if they were not kept in the home and were instead allowed economic opportunities that would enable them to reject patriarchal social structures. Accordingly, the current research findings show that, based on the previous discussion regarding the overall influence of the Islamic religion, the real instructions and rules of Islam (without misinterpretations) have had no negative influence on women in the workplace. Since Islam prescribes specific duties and obligations of men towards women (among other things, Muslim men are responsible for offering security, comfort, and a decent life for women in their families including wives, mothers, sisters, and so on), discrimination on the grounds of gender is prohibited.

Therefore, Islam seems to support the professional development and personal achievements of women, and the research responses firmly identified that the issues stem from the influences of the norms, traditions, and cultures of society, which have been promoted by societal structures and patriarchal ideology regarding gender equality and have nothing to do with religion; this confirms studies by Seedat (2013), Rasool et al. (2012), Sidani (2005), and Abdul Ghani (2011). The issues faced by women are mainly related to the cultural, political, and economic aspects of life that considerably influence their status. For instance, currently, due to the influence of globalisation and Western media discourse, Saudi women and other Muslim women who resist exclusion from patriarchal society and reject orientalist stereotypes and traditional discourses that have been mistakenly associated with Islamic teaching are increasingly asserting that their attitude of women's equality is compatible with the teachings of Islam.

6.4 Perceived Supporting Factors for Career Success of Saudi Female Academics

Based on the above-mentioned challenges that Saudi female academics have faced during their career journey and their advancement to senior positions, at the personal, social, and organisational levels, the current results suggest that urgent investment and intervention in these women's human capital are needed to enable them to cope with these barriers. The notion of human capital was first introduced by Adam Smith, who saw it as constituting a good both for the individual and for the community (Smith 1776). Similarly, Mincer (1984) argued that human capital plays a crucial role in economic growth and that variations between individuals in this realm are related mainly to two components: inherited and acquired capacities.

6.4.1 Perceived Personal Support (PPS)

The findings of this research proposed that the key techniques for the career advancement of professional women, regardless of their institutional level, are linked with individual factors (such as individual merit and the effort exerted to maintain a strong portfolio and cope with gender segregation and negative role stereotyping) more than with institutional factors. Proposed key career enablers at a personal level include particular personal and professional traits female academics are said to possess, including being a capable and efficient person, having the self-confidence to let their voice be heard while attending official meetings and defending their perspectives, resilience, determination, ambition, honesty, hard work, the

capacity to multitask, objectivity, and impartiality. In the same vein, research by Broadbridge and Simpson (2011), Al-Sada, Al-Esmael, and Faisal (2017), and Powell (2011) confirm the research findings of this study.

6.4.2 Perceived Social Support (PSS)

The findings of this research reflect the importance of accessible social capital. For instance, it is important for Saudi women to maintain good relationships with their colleagues of both genders and also with relatives who support them, especially husbands, parents, in-laws, and family in general; it is also important for them to have access to babysitters because of the lack of professional, appropriate nurseries and to smart security cameras, which enable them to monitor their children. Some of these findings reflect those of Omair (2010), who established that social support from male relatives plays a key role in promoting motivation and confidence in Arab women.

Turner and Avison (1985, p. 882) defined social support as the interactions and exchanges of people that focus on human relationships. The current findings show the varied forms of social support that can be offered for female academics in order to help them overcome the barriers: emotional (e.g. caring, listening, love, psychological support, moral support, trust, and interest), instrumental (time or assistance), informational (advice or information), and appraisal (feedback) support. House (1981) classifies support similarly. As noted above, the most novel finding of this research is with regard to the *Mharram* system and the law. *Mharram* approval of a female relative's career is essential to meet the conditions of professional advancement, although work and study are also sometimes viewed as basic rights by research participants. However, *Mharram* support often comes at a cost, such as delaying the *Mharram*'s own advancement or costing him in lost salary.

6.4.3 Perceived Organisational Support

One interesting finding of this study was a significant connection between low self-confidence and low professional development. Therefore, professional development is a key requirement for achieving leadership posts; women with low self-confidence certainly face more barriers than those with high self-confidence. This finding is supported by the studies of Abou-Bakr (2010) and Jogulu and Wood (2011), who attribute the career gap to the attitudes of the male decision-makers in institutions that should be supportive to women and function without biases.

The responses of female faculty show that they either aimed for leadership posts or did not rate the support that they received from their institutions in terms of power balance, controls, involvement in decision-making, facilities, childcare, or research support. The Saudi Constitution (rooted in *Sharia* law) sets rules and policies that ensure equality for faculty and staff regardless of gender, for instance, through recruitment, promotion, and the allocation of budgets for professional development in order to help professionals obtain the needed skills, including leadership skills. However, existing legal mechanisms often do not counteract discriminatory practices due to bias in the activation and implementation of such legislations. This result parallels those of a study by Metcalfe (2011, p. 144), who revealed ‘four’ substantive principles, which contribute to empowerment agendas that underpin the tripartite approach and those ‘that involve promoting their participation in the labour market: legal, political, socio-cultural, and psychological dimensions that encompass both economic and social development outcomes’.

Based on the current research findings, the implementation of policy tends to differ from one university to another, depending on their philosophy and vision; moreover, where institutional support is absent, female academics have found their own ways to help each other, for example, by conducting collective work with informal groups in order to develop a feminist agenda or by experiencing informal mentoring and role modelling. The mentor’s informal sharing of experiences, aspirations, and awareness with the mentee regarding institutional matters, cultures, or issues constitutes an important source of professional development and a useful tool in professional struggles. This finding supports the evidence of a study about organisational cultures by Schein (2017).

The findings of the study suggest certain essential actions that can support and empower female academics in overcoming challenges during their career and accessing leadership posts. They include the following: increasing the ratio of female academics’ participation and involvement in decision-making and empowering them to lead this process; facilitating procedures to access professional development courses or increase research productivity and scientific participation (for instance, making information held by institutions available to female academics without depending on colleagues or guardians); and ensuring fair and equal opportunities for professional development to all academic staff without preferential treatment (*wasta*).

The current findings stress that equality between male and female is not always justice. To illustrate, travel support for women should also include attention to their children (for example, covering nursery tuition fees). Second, ensuring professional development course contents for female academics can equip them with desirable skills that are necessary for future leaders as well as needed materials and facilities. Promoting awareness among female faculty members regarding their legal rights, duties, and the role of policymakers in supporting them will be a step forward in increasing their representation at higher levels. A comprehensive reference to all relevant rules and regulations, including rights and obligations, should be provided to female academics rather than forcing them to gather information through 'word of mouth'. Longwe's Women Empowerment Framework (WEF) presents five perceived support factors for women in terms of the five levels of equality in the following order: welfare, access, conscientisation, participation, and control (Wallace & March, 1991, p. 151); these have been discussed in depth in the literature review chapter and can help to empower and support women in their work environment.

6.5 Conclusion

The present chapter has analysed and discussed the findings that were gathered with regard to Saudi female faculty members' access to the upper ranks of senior positions. The findings include obstacles that negatively influenced female faculty members as well as suggested strategies that could enable them to cope with the above-mentioned challenges at individual, societal, and institutional levels in the higher educational sector in Saudi Arabia, thus improving their capacity for progress. Analysing the findings serves to answer the three primary research questions.

The following final chapter will draw together the various findings that were obtained through conducting the existing research project. It will also provide a final summary of the study, including the implications of this study for policy and practice and an overview of the limitations of this research. This chapter will also include recommendations for future research and policies based on these findings in order to promote the status of Saudi female academics, thus empowering them to be equal to their male counterparts. The thesis concludes with a personal reflection on the process of conducting the research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Very few published studies look at gender inequality and leadership in Arab region (Al-Heis, 2011; Taleb, 2010; Alamri, 2011), although in recent years the phenomenon has become fashionable and well funded in the wider world and particularly the West (Teelken & Deem, 2013). Many of those studies utilised surveys to track the ratio of female leaders in varied nations (Elamin & Omair, 2010).

In contrast, as noted previously, far too little attention has been paid to gender inequality in Muslim nations in general and gender-segregated academic institutions in particular (Taleb, 2010). Moreover, analysing educational leadership through the lens of culture and tradition in general has garnered much attention, but less attention has been paid to religious faith in particular (Monroe et al., 2008). Al-Fassi (2010) and Teelken and Deem (2013) also stress the lack of studies on how men and women view gender differences in Muslim academic contexts. The prime goal of this study has been to start to bridge this knowledge gap by obtaining the perspectives of Saudi female academics on the main factors that prevent them from accessing and help them to access upper positions in the university hierarchy; the study examines these factors against the context of several decades that have seen considerable progress in this regard, although their current situation remains very unequal.

Most research on female academics in both developed and developing countries focuses on female leaders in senior leadership positions (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010a; Alsaedi & Male, 2013; Blackmore & Sachs, 2012; Braun et al., 2012). The experiences of Arab female leaders in this regard are totally different from that of female leaders in Western nations (Alimo-Metcalfe, 2010a). Arab society—particularly Saudi Arabia—has witnessed considerable social, economic, and political development in the last few years, which has brought about substantial development in women’s lives. Thus, it seems important to explore how female leaders in these contexts have managed to construct their personal and professional identities and overcome challenges (Elamin & Omair, 2010).

In this concluding chapter, I commence with an overall summary of the research and what has been achieved. Second, I illustrate and critically discuss the major findings and explain how they answer the research questions. Third, I discuss the study's contributions to current knowledge. Fourth, I attempt to identify and address research limitations. Finally, I suggest some recommendations for future research and policy.

7.2 Summary of This Study

In the first chapter of this thesis, I gave an overview of the study, stating the problem, rationale, and motivation behind the research; discussed the scope and purpose of the research; presented the research questions; briefly described the research methodology; and finally explained the structure of the thesis. In the second chapter, I elaborated the background and context and the history of women's education and educational leadership in Saudi Arabia. In the third chapter, I explored literature relevant to female academics in the upper echelons of leadership in Saudi higher education. In the fourth chapter, I described the method in detail; the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research paradigm; the theoretical approach, which was substantially influenced by my personal feminist philosophy; the qualitative approach to the data and the semi-structured interviews and the integrated documentary analysis used in this paper; the potential ethical issues; and the analysis procedures.

The fifth chapter presented the findings and focused on key themes and sub-themes that answered the research questions. The first section explored the major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints that Saudi female faculty members face in advancing to senior management positions. The second section of this chapter investigated the fundamental actors and causes of the challenges encountered by Saudi female academics, examining the influence of religion, culture, social discourses, and traditions. The third and final section addressed perceived supportive factors for this advancement at the individual, cultural, structural, and institutional levels. In the sixth chapter, I analysed the findings in the light of the research questions and the literature. The present chapter offers a final summary and then concludes with a personal reflection on the process of conducting the research. The next section recaps the research findings and how they address the research questions.

7.3 The Outcomes of the Current Research

The key theme of the present research project is the career advancement of Saudi female academics to top posts in the leadership hierarchy, and this paper's investigation of the issue is based on the women's own narratives in order to magnify the voice of this marginalised group. The interviewees expressed their feelings and experiences through responses concerning stereotypes and expectations of professional and domestic roles; these factors have can vitally influence women's chances of holding top leadership posts in higher education, regardless of differences among institutional cultures at each site or their prior employment experiences. The varied responses revealed the differences in experiences, and the most important of these are reviewed below.

7.3.1 RQ1: What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?

Evidence suggests that Saudi female academics face different conditions from those of other professional women in the Gulf and the Middle Eastern countries due to traditional, stereotypical perspectives that perceive men as good leaders who have been empowered by the national Saudi policy, such as '*guardianship and Mhrram* system' that enables men to make the decisions on behalf of women for their personal life. Female academics, on the other hand, are believed to not possess the necessary leadership characteristics and qualities because gender stereotypes represent them as being dependent, conforming, and submissive, thus intensifying a one-dimensional concept of them as nurturing mothers or career-oriented women with feminist traits. Most Saudi female academics neither lack the ambition for senior positions nor care about the negative perception of them as lacking fundamental educational and experiential qualifications, merit, leadership skills, and talent.

Instead, women are more concerned about the glass ceiling generated by policy-makers at the national and institutional level, which often coincides with Saudi cultural values and norms and prevents them from accessing senior positions and improving their leadership skills. Some policies (such as the *Mharram* laws) restrict their mobility and disallow them from travelling, thus reducing their opportunities to study abroad, gain training, or participate in conferences. The lack of sufficient opportunities and support for their professional development has forced them to raise complaints. Additionally, they have criticised certain

features of the work environment (for example, unprofessional attitudes such as envy and ‘clannishness’ among both female and male academicians). Consequently, they do not aspire to obtain leadership positions or consider holding such positions an important step in their career and allow their gender to take precedence over their potential capacity while deciding their future. Thus, these women often lack confidence in their leadership abilities due to the lack of overlapping perceptions between leadership and feminine roles. These expectations are, of course, closely associated with gender socialisation.

Regardless of the above-mentioned barriers, Saudi female academics have made important contributions, and they have also exhibited valuable leadership behaviours that differ from the traditional controlling, aggressive, and competitive behaviours of Saudi male leaders. Most scholars argue that modern organisations need female leaders (Abu-Tineh, 2013) because they can multitask and prioritise better than men (for instance, overseeing household obligations, nurturing children, and handling work tasks) (Sidani et al. 2015). Nevertheless, women in Saudi educational institutions have been limited to teaching and, at times, administrative and coordinating roles associated with the processes and policies of selection and recruitment in Saudi educational institutions; these processes often correspond to Saudi values and culture.

7.3.2 RQ2: To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?

The findings established that linking the obstacles faced by Saudi women to Islam was reductive and inaccurate; Islam per se does not impose any restriction or have any negative influence on the role of Saudi women in society. However, when Islam is often blamed that is linked with two reasons, first, because the Saudi state constitution is based on Islamic (*Sharia*) law, secondly, this constitution is according to the extremist interpretation of Wahhabism, which is represented, for example, in gender segregation. However, the actual Saudi policy and system are not discriminatory when evaluated in the context of the values and mission, which are in accordance with the equality that arose from Islamic law. This law (*Sharia* law) lays the foundation for justice by emphasising equality between males and females in Saudi society irrespective of their gender, and it asserts the value of non-discriminatory policies (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Al-Rasheed, 2010; Rajkhan, 2014). The

past decade has witnessed several Saudi government decrees that were intended to stimulate national development.

However, now with global opportunities and social, economic, and political development, the situation has reversed, with the government justifying decisions by associating them with religion in order to convince conservative groups, particularly those who disseminate Islamic teaching regarding the rights and obligations of women, thus hindering their rights in the name of Islam. This has pervaded the practice and discourse of individuals' daily lives in Saudi society. Examining the history and ideology of Saudi Arabia over the past few decades indicates that attitudes and beliefs that promote gender discrimination have become a fundamental aspect of Saudi culture, traditions, and norms. Furthermore, most accepted gendered cultural practices, such as preventing women from driving, negative attitudes towards women's education, forbidding the study of certain subjects, and the guardianship system, have no basis in Islamic teachings.

However, the concepts of ird, shame and honour play critical roles in reinforcing perceived barriers associated with traditional, patriarchal Saudi culture, which includes extremist interpretations of certain scriptural passages by male religious scholars (Rajkan, 2014). These views and the related gender constructs have restricted the role of women in society, thus excluding them from public life, limiting their role to domestic activities, and promoting gender segregation. With regard to the state of women's education, this has resulted in a massive contradiction between Islamic teaching, which emphasises women's right to be educated equally with men, and the negative norms and attitudes of Saudi culture.

The education of Saudi girls and women over the past few decades has affected supply and demand in the labour market, and Saudi universities are no exception; senior posts regularly require candidates who have skills and experience that have been unavailable to Saudi women thus far. Saudi women have also thus been excluded from playing an active role in the formulation of national values. Their disadvantaged position is reinforced both directly and indirectly, and their voices are silenced when traditional values are imposed, as these values support the continuation of existing power hierarchies that overwhelmingly favour Saudi men. Such cultural stereotypes are both a result and a driver of gender inequality, and have helped to increase the gender gap (David, 2015; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Al-Sabah,

2013). However, an individual's attitudes will differ based on their background and the region of Saudi Arabia they hail from.

Furthermore, gender issues and conflicts between religion and culture are not exclusive to Saudi Arabia or to the Muslim world; a perspective that blames 'Islam' also ignores the significant differences between individual Muslim countries. In short, it can be said that any cultural construct or behaviour in Saudi Arabia is not a problem created by Islam, but one created by the society in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, not Islam, prevents women from driving, for instance. Certain main actors, such as policy makers and religious or community leaders, have the capacity to transform the professional role of Saudi women in general and their leadership role in Saudi higher education in particular (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), and they thus have the power to counter vested interests and international stereotypes. Patriarchal practices, guardianship laws, and social roles in Saudi Arabia remain the primary obstacle preventing Saudi women from progressing to senior positions in various contexts (Kirai & Margaret, 2012); this situation is further complicated by the gender segregation in education and work settings—a division of space that stems from the conflict between cultural autonomy and gender equality in Islam. In short, being marginalised from public life has negatively influenced the status of Saudi women both economically and politically.

7.3.3 RQ3: What factors can promote women's advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

To address the barriers mentioned above, this study's findings emphasise the need for urgent investment and intervention to improve women's human capital, which plays a crucial role in promoting women leaders (Mincer, 1984). For instance, women should be provided with sufficient space to progress in their careers without any boundaries that may hold them back. They should receive opportunities to access and hold high-ranking leadership positions, engage with financial and decision-making processes, and receive appropriate training and professional development opportunities that are equivalent to those offered to their male counterparts. Additional ethical professional practices need to be developed in Saudi society on the whole and in academia, particularly those that can help to limit unprofessional attitudes.

7.4 Contributions of This Study

I hope the findings of the current research will promote the status of Saudi female faculty members and female academic leaders. In this section, I break down the contributions of this study as follows: contribution to policy and practice (including some recommendations and implications for senior administrators at Saudi state universities); recommendations for the Saudi Cultural Bureaus abroad; recommendations for intercultural education, curriculum, and media in Saudi Arabia; and theoretical contributions (knowledge).

7.4.1 Contribution to Policy and Practice

This study can contribute to social and educational transformation and development by drawing the attention of policy-makers and stakeholders to current issues faced by Saudi female academics. This should be achieved through appropriate mechanisms within the present Saudi context and acceptable social norms in order to ensure that it will be effective and enduring. Human resources personnel need to address gender discrimination at the macro (institutional) and micro (employee) levels; the perspectives of actual women employees, which have been collected by this study, can contribute towards this task. Examples include the reform of nationalisation programmes and the reform of local and national policies for the entry of Saudi women into the labour market and the provision of leadership roles with real decision-making power. However, on the other hand, those actors should take into consideration the strong influence of social and cultural norms and discourses on the career progress of women, as highlighted by UAK1 (September 14, 2015).

The prime barriers are legal and cultural; however, cultural transformation is not instantaneous, and determination required in order to persist through the initial stages. For instance, policy-makers could take great steps to stimulate public discourse that will help to promote the economic participation of Saudi women; this can be achieved by initiating awareness and education campaigns for Saudi citizens from all generations and enlisting media support for such activities, as pointed out by UDK5 (June 27 & 28, 2015).

In addition, as noted previously, female academics' access to high-ranking leadership positions and financial decision-making will be critical; this is in contrast to the current situation, where they are often excluded by institutional regulations (Al Fassi 2010). The issue reappears when we consider women's freedom to study abroad, since this conservative society considers women's education (both local and international) to be against their culture

and religion. In recent years, reforming the higher education sector has become a key objective of the Saudi government. A significant increase in the number of state and private colleges and universities has led to the establishment of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment. Even Saudi women have benefitted such affirmative action, which often involves the staffing of these bodies with female personnel. However, in terms of studying abroad, government decision-makers can do more to promote women's education and professional advancement in order to help them access top leadership positions in higher education. For example, women should be treated as independent and mature individuals, allowed to travel and study regardless of *Mharram* authorisation, and be provided with access to top leadership positions in the higher education sector in general and in universities in particular, as expressed by UAFP1 (July 12, 2015).

Currently, female faculty in academic institutions have been offered access to more important, higher posts than those in the universities (for example, in the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia [the Shura Council]), proving to Saudi society that women have the capacity to contribute as equally as their male counterparts when they are provided with such opportunities. See (UCFNP1, December 1, 2015, in her discussion of policy for selection and appointment of senior positions). Promoting women's status is a moral imperative and a powerful method to facilitate progress, equality, and tolerance in Saudi society. Therefore, a Saudi national plan of action and a policy formulation favouring female academics should be developed collectively by politicians, representatives of the Saudi government, religious scholars, educators, active members of Saudi institutions, and legislators; this will help to formulate policies, notions, and strategies for Saudi female leaders and raise awareness among Saudi individuals, which, in turn, will contribute towards the smooth transformation of the current culture.

7.4.1.1 Recommendations for Heads at Saudi State Universities

The current research results point to the need for the reformation of training practices in order to provide a more supportive environment and to facilitate the development of leading roles for female leaders, which can help them to become effective leaders (UEFNP1, December 6, 2015; UDFP1, August 22, 2015). In addition, the role of female faculty members as mothers should be supported by institutions and the system and be not considered as a private matter. Adequate nursery facilities at each university will considerably improve their work conditions and outcomes and reduce their financial burden.

In addition (UAFP1, July 1, 2015; UBFP3, July 8, 2015), other helpful approaches will include establishing new course content in order to equip female academics with desirable skills as future leaders, establishing materials and facilities that meet the needs of female academics who are looking for leadership positions, facilitating formal and informal mentorships, creating networks during conferences, and offering women the opportunity to join such courses without being dependent on others. Moreover, reinforcing women's awareness of their legal rights and duties by providing a comprehensive reference to relevant rules and regulations rather than forcing them to gather information via word of mouth will also be helpful.

7.4.1.2 Recommendations for Saudi Cultural Bureaus Abroad

Although the Saudi government has made a significant effort to promote the education of girls and women by, for example, providing equal opportunities to study abroad, the current findings stress that equality is in fact not yet a reality (UAFP1, July 12, 2015; UCFP3, July 17, 2015). This is particularly true with regard to the implications of the *Mharram* and guardian system. For instance, Saudi women studying abroad receive extensive government support due to the existence of the *Mharram*. Thus, Saudi women struggle to balance their education and life while studying abroad because they must often tailor their activities and schedules to the *Mharram's* availability.

Those who have a *Mharram* face financial issues during the entire period of study. Since the average duration of a graduate programme is between 5 and 10 years (depending on the degree and country), the Saudi Cultural Bureau's action of discontinuing the *Mharram* allowance adversely affects students financially, as they are unable to manage without the entire allowance. In many cases, the allocated monthly allowance for the whole family is insufficient, since it is often spent on paying rent, bills, and nursery fees. The government should consider the adequate amount required on average by a family and not reduce allowances. At the same time, many Saudi women have been unable to study abroad due to the lack of a suitable *Mharram* (father, brother, husband, or even son who is 18 years old). Therefore, this rule should be removed.

7.4.1.3 Recommendations for Intercultural Education, Curricula, and Media in Saudi Arabia

A novel implication was provided by UBFP2 (July 12, 2015), UDFNP1 (December 2, 2015), and UDFP1 (August 22, 2015), who argued that there was a strong correlation between constructions of gender in Saudi Arabia and education, curricula, and media. The stereotypical view of Saudi women is bolstered by educational institutions and their concept of female education, which is embedded into the curriculum through textbooks. Rather than serving as an instrument for social development and change, they are a tool for conservative groups, promoting traditional, stereotypical concepts and gender structures. In addition, the media also reinforce stereotypical gender roles in society right from childhood (e.g. through animation programmes). Instead, work can be done in all these areas to raise awareness about the effective and essential role women can play in the community—while simultaneously emphasising their legal rights and duties—in order to transform traditional gender roles. Therefore, all educational institutions and media companies should consider the most effective method to confront these issues.

7.4.2 Theoretical and Contextual Contributions

This research informs the literature particularly with respect to the status of Saudi female academic staff, the barriers in their way, and the attitudes of Saudi men towards Saudi women who work. Theoretical perspectives (see section 3.8 in Chapter)—especially holistic frameworks that encompass all the factors affecting the advancement of female academics to senior positions—have been lacking.

The model that this study employs (see section 3.8.2) is the gender–organisation–system model by Fagenson (1990, p. 30), which merges three core dimensions: personal, social, and organisational. My novel contribution is certain factors and sub-factors that offer sufficient detail to understand the variables that influence women leaders in the higher education sector within a segregated setting. Saudi Arabia has been identified as one of the most conservative and segregated societies, and this study seeks to fill the existing knowledge gap in that regard; it is based on the personal dimension, and the analysis is carried out in terms of psychological traits and social background. Furthermore, it acknowledges that self-reliance is not something women are born with but, rather, something constructed in social contexts; this approach differentiates it from other issues.

The massive influences of the guardianship system and *Mharram* have furthered the patriarchal exclusion of women from public life and made them more dependent. Furthermore, obstacles to progress are linked with the wider social roles of women, such as subjugation to husbands, who traditionally have the power to allow or forbid women to work. Additionally, regarding the third dimension, the study included original findings regarding employee jealousy and envy, clannishness, and *wasta* and nepotism; this dimension includes obstacles to progress that are linked with factors within educational institutions and, particularly, unprofessional attitudes.

The most original finding of this research is associated with the third dimension, which involves policy-creation for selection and appointment to senior positions within educational institutions, which, again, involves *Mharram* and guardian laws. Le Renard (2008) and Maijer (2010) highlighted *Mharram* and guardianship, though they did not examine these factors in terms of influence over women's career advancement. Moreover, as Giddens (1991) indicated, the media can disseminate knowledge on social change, perhaps even perpetuate it, but may also propagate inaccuracies that do not reflect the social reality. This study attempted to highlight the negative impact of the media on both Muslim and non-Muslim people with regard to the representation of Islam and also the lack of sufficient literature in relation to gender and leadership in the region (Kattan et al. 2016; Mathis, 2010).

In addition, as noted, most gender studies have been conducted in the Western context. Although there have been a few similar studies in the Middle East and in the Gulf nations specifically, they primarily concentrate on women leaders in the banking, health, and business sectors. This study is unique in that no other study conducted in Saudi Arabia has focused on gender inequality and women's lack of access to senior positions in academia thus far.

7.5 Limitations and Strengths of the Study

This research possesses some limitations, which must be acknowledged, and these can lead to significant suggestions for areas of further research in future. Some of these are also related to the overall qualitative research approach, in particular the data-gathering approach.

The first limitation is related to sample size. Given time and space constraints, since this is my doctoral thesis, I conducted the study only in five state universities out of 34 in Saudi

Arabia. Therefore, this study can be considered as a small-scale exploratory research, which is not necessarily representative. However, I attempted to gather a purposive sample that included both male and female academics and, among the latter, those who have been successfully appointed to leadership positions and those who have not; I took this approach in order to provide a holistic image from different perspectives. I hope this will address the representativeness and generalisability issues. In particular, what Yin (2017) calls ‘analytic’ generalisation as opposed to statistical generalisation should be possible for this case study, which ‘represents itself’; it will be furthered by my own background as an insider-researcher and the logical connections this status has allowed me to draw.

Another potential limitation, however, which stems from my own status, was researcher bias; such biases are often a concern in qualitative research. As I discussed in the methodology chapter, my method of addressing this was using ‘member checks’, where the interviewees checked my interpretations of their responses (Horrocks & King, 2010). Separately, there was a potential issue regarding trust, given that I am an insider-researcher with the potential power to dissemble data or responses regarding sensitive questions and thus affect reliability. Ensuring truthfulness is no easy task and does indeed lie beyond the feasible scope of my role as a researcher, since it could lead to many ethical issues, as interviewees probably do not wish to share their own individual experiences and stories (Cohen et al. 2013) and the potentially confidential information of others. This may be especially true with respect to the barriers that female academic staff encounter because of their gender, even though the study assured confidentiality and anonymity. It may have affected the findings; for example, one male academician (UAK1, May 29, 2016) did not tell the truth or responded with only nominal answers, especially regarding policies and women rights.

In terms of data analysis, I chose a manual approach. In the initial stage of data analysis, I trained myself to use ATLAS.ti software, which, however was unable to identify the codes and pseudonyms, since the interview transcripts were not in official Arabic. Therefore, I eventually employed manual coding, which seemed less prone to problems. Although the findings should be interpreted with caution, this study has several strengths. First, it represents a comprehensive examination of the issue of gender inequality faced by female academics in the Saudi higher education sector. Second, while most studies that investigate gender issues utilise a quantitative survey approach, this project employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews in order to gather copious descriptions including

interviewees' perspectives, thoughts, and experiences.

Moreover, this study gathered data from male as well as female Saudi academics, whereas most studies thus far have considered communicating and interacting with Saudi men a difficult and demanding task (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013). Although I thus assumed it would be difficult to identify Saudi men willing to participate in my study, I found them very cordial and cooperative when I approached them. Evidently, not all Saudi men fit the stereotype of being domineering, unapproachable, and uncommunicative. My position as a Saudi researcher (lecturer at a state university) enabled me to make contact with them.

7.6 Directions for Future Study

Even though the current findings address several gaps in the literature, many questions remain unanswered with respect to the gender imbalance between male and female leaders in academia. Therefore, I will now sketch some directions for future research.

1. There are strong cultural commonalities across the Arab world and a high possibility of generalisability for certain phenomena across different Arab nations. However, recently, Arab societies have witnessed sharp changes that have stemmed from globalisation, westernisation, modernisation, and other factors and—perhaps—divergence; thus, in it seems important to explore cross-cultural studies within the Arab region.
2. In my study, especially the second research question, I investigated the construction of gender in Saudi Arabia; I recommend that future studies should focus on how global trends and the media can assist in and contribute towards reconstructing gender terminology and concepts in Saudi Arabia.
3. The findings established the complexity of the varied factors that have influenced and shaped gender constructions at national, regional, and international levels. Further research can usefully focus on the factors that influence the construction of gender at the regional level.
4. The findings indicated that the departmental structure (in an academic institution) and culture was one of the most harmful factors for women's leadership and leadership style. I suggest that future research studies should conduct further qualitative and quantitative investigation of this effect.

5. Having determined that the core problem Saudi women face is patriarchy, (particularly, unequal gender roles), this study now recommends that stereotypical assumptions regarding the effectiveness of men and women as leaders in Saudi universities should be empirically explored.
6. Additionally, given the lack of adequate, specific training courses that meet the requirements of Saudi women in terms of work and society, I suggest investigating what such courses would look like and how educational institutions can create an academic environment within a segregated culture while simultaneously fostering relationships and academic networks for women (which should also be observed). The considerable role of the social identity theory in the development of leadership roles should be considered here.

7.7 Conclusion

A doctoral dissertation is the outcome of a protracted and challenging personal and scholarly journey. As a researcher, I have had the opportunity to explore diverse opinions related to the career advancement of Saudi female academics, thus exposing the manner in which the gender construction of Saudi women in academia shapes higher education and perpetuates gender inequality. At a personal level, conducting this project has enabled me to explore and study the personal lives, narratives, and experiences of the interviewees, understand their powerlessness in both the work and family contexts, and examine how they balance both. Even though gender issues in academia are a global phenomenon, the Saudi context is different because it involves not only under-representation but also a complete lack of representation for women in senior positions. My argument is that the notions and practices of educational leadership in the Saudi context have been radically informed and influenced by Islamic discourse and that the understandings and definitions of educational leadership are shaped by Islam's traditional cultures and belief systems. This results in various practices that are biased against women, and these are encouraged and defended in the name of culture and religion.

Stereotypes or labels applied to female academics, which deem them to be irrational and incomplete beings and followers of men, originate from a conservative culture and tradition that implies that they do not deserve or are unworthy to lead. However, gender stereotypes can also be used effectively to effect change by positioning leaders based on their leadership styles and character and understanding how each individual fits the organisation—perhaps

with the inclusion of gendered leadership characteristics. Saudi women must be empowered by reconstructing their gender identity in conjunction with global trends and the mass media. Since policies, practices, and work hierarchies in academia are reflections of social structures, we must strenuously attempt to change these in order to address the issue of inequality between male and female academics.

Today, in a context of continuous political, economic, and educational development in Saudi Arabia, even as I write this on May 5, 2017 (Islamic calendar: 31/7/1438), Saudi decision-makers have announced Royal Decree Number 33322, which empowers women to work in all governmental agencies without requiring a guardian. The primary reason behind this alteration to the law is social media, which has produced a historical change; however, the change is only a partial one, as it does not include the issuance of passports for travelling or studying abroad without male permission. Nevertheless, it is an important step forward for women in the labour force. Even religious scholars have been using media outlets to explain and endorse the government's decision, thus affirming that the decree does not contradict Islamic law and that there is no written or oral text mandating that women should have guardians.

In addition, confusion regarding the term *qawamah* has worsened the situation, and religious scholars are attempting to provide clarifications to those unhappy with the new law; chiefly, they affirm that men's responsibility for financially supporting women and providing basic necessities to the family which is based on Islamic teaching, whereas *qawama* system with its extreme interpretation that reinforces gender segregation and treats women as immature emerged from Saudi culture, customs, and traditions. The Saudi government has largely failed to eliminate gender discrimination owing to the difficulty of implementing new rules and policies and the conservative mindset of the Saudi people, who strictly adhere to customs, culture, and traditions and resist any cultural transformation.

Female academics anticipate governmental efforts for holistic transformation, which could enable them to overcome various challenges and barriers and foster collaborative interactions, networking, promotion, and work progress; this will help to create a new academic environment. What is now required is the transformation of both legal and policy systems and traditional culture through the improvement of the educational system and training infrastructure. This will lead to effective investment in female human capital, which,

in turn, will lead to the harnessing of new talents and, consequently, new perspectives for planning a better future for the Saudi nation.

APPENDICES

Appendix (I): Ethical Approval

To: Hanan Alenazy

Subject: Ethical Application Ref: hma23-736e

(Please quote this ref on all correspondence)

Project Title: The Equality between Males and Females in the Higher Education Sector in Saudi Arabia

Thank you for submitting your application which has been considered. This study has been given ethical approval, which is subject to any conditions quoted in the attached notes.

Any significant departure from the programme of research, as outlined in the application for research ethics approval (such as changes in methodological approach, large delays in commencement of research, additional forms of data collection, or major expansions in sample size), must be reported to your Departmental Research Ethics Officer.

Approval is given on the understanding that the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and other research ethics guidelines and protocols will be complied with^[1]_[SEP]

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>^[1]_[SEP]

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/institut>. The following is a record of correspondence notes from your application hma23-736e. Please ensure that any proviso notes have been adhered to:-

Sep 30, 2014 5:36PM

Dear Hanan,

Thank you for your application. It is clear that you have given good thought to important ethical dimensions of your research.

However, in Section 5. Research Ethics Checklist you have responded 'yes' to Item 9 - Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing? Your application, based as it is on semi-structured interviews, does not indicate use of prolonged or repetitive testing, so the appropriate response to the item is 'no'. Please explain if such testing is, in fact, involved in your planned study, or, if this is not the case, please change the response you have given to this item to a 'no'.

Best wishes,
Jim Askham

Sep 30, 2014 6:35PM

Dear Jim,
By responding with 'yes', I meant to imply that I would be conducting the interviews more than once due to the amount of time that was required for answering each main research question.

--- END OF NOTES ---

Appendix (II): Informed Consent in English

Study Title: Investigating the Progress of Female Academics to Upper Leadership Positions in the Saudi Higher Education Sector

Many thanks for verbally agreeing to participate in my doctoral studies research. I would like to send you this formal Informed Consent Form and provide you with more details regarding my research. I would like to invite you to participate in this doctoral research, which I am conducting as a part of my doctoral study at the University of Leicester's School of Education.

In my current research, I am exploring the impact of individual, cultural, structural, or institutional factors on female academics' career progression, specifically in the higher education sector in a country like Saudi Arabia. The aim of this research is to answer three core research questions:

1. What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?
2. To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?
3. What factors can promote women's advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

This project uses a qualitative approach and involves multiple case studies that are drawn from five universities. The perceptions of women's advancement will be examined through face-to-face or telephonic interviews. It is likely that each interview will take between one and a half and two hours. This study aims to understand the obstacles that women may encounter in the advancement of their career to senior level positions and thus gain full insight into the moderating role played by perceived organisational and family support in this regard. My target group for this project consists of female academics in university management positions who are either single or married and who may or may not have children. This comprises the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Deans, the Vice Dean, the Heads of Department (HOD), the Deputy Heads of the Department (DHOD), and the representatives of other management units of higher education. I understand and appreciate the significance of confidentiality. I assure you that all responses will be kept

confidential. Your interview responses will only be shared with my supervisors. The information gathered through the interview will only be used for academic purposes. I will ensure that any information included in my data will not identify you as the respondent. Please be assured that you do not have to talk about anything you do not want to and that you may end the interview at any time. I will be analysing the information in the coming months, and I will be happy to send you a copy to review at that time if you are interested.

Therefore, I am asking for your permission to include you in this project; your cooperation will provide valuable insight that will help me answer the above-mentioned three research questions. Ultimately, I would like to request you to consent to one questioning session; therefore, can you please inform me as to what time would be most convenient for you to answer some interview questions by phone or email (work). To give you an idea of what the interview questions are like, I am pleased to attach a copy of the interview guide for your information and reference.

Should you require additional information, you can contact me by phone or email. Alternatively, you may need to contact my supervisor, Dr Hugh Busher, through his personal email.

I shall be sincerely grateful for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Hanan Muhaya Alenazy

Email: hanan-alenazy@hotmail.com

Contact: 004483828250 / 00966550303177

Supervisor: Dr Hugh Busher

Email: hcb5@leicester.ac.uk

I have read the letter of informed consent to participate in this research project.

The participant's name _____

[]
[SEP]

Signature of approval _____

Appendix (III): Informed Consent in Arabic

أنا حنان مهياء العنزي، طالبة دكتوراه في جامعة ليستر في بريطانيا ...
أرغب في مشاركتك القيمة في بحثي للدكتوراه الذي أقوم به حالياً بعنوان:

Investigating the Progress of Female Academics to Upper Leadership Positions in the Saudi
Higher Education Sector

دراسة التدرج الوظيفي لعضوات هيئة التدريس إلى المناصب القيادية والمهام الإدارية في قطاع التعليم العالي

ويتلخص موضوع بحثي في التعرف على أهم الأدوار والمهام الأكاديمية والإدارية لأعضاء هيئة التدريس في التعليم
العالي بوجه عام والجامعات بوجه خاص.

هذا بالإضافة إلى التعرف على أهم العوامل والأسباب الشخصية والاجتماعية والإستراتيجية في المؤسسات التعليمية
كالجامعات والوزارات التي تلعب دوراً مهماً وإيجابياً في تطور وتقدم عضوات هيئة التدريس؛ ليتسنى لهن القيام بتلك
الواجبات والمهام على أكمل وجه، وتقديم الدعم المطلوب؛ لتسهيل وصولهن للمناصب القيادية.

هذا بالإضافة إلى محاولة التعرف على العقبات التي تعيق التدرُّج والتقدم الوظيفي لهؤلاء العضوات، مما يؤدي إلى
حرمانهن أو تقليل فرصة وصولهن للمناصب القيادية والمهام الإدارية المهمة.

وذلك من خلال إجراء مقابلة قد تستغرق من الوقت ما يقارب ساعة ونصف إلى ساعتين؛ للإجابة عن أسئلة البحث.

مع خالص التقدير والود لتعاونكم ،،،

والله ولي التوفيق

حنان العنزي

Appendix (IV): Interview questions in English

Investigating the Progress of Female Academics to Upper Leadership Positions in the Saudi Higher Education Sector: Perspectives of Saudi Female Academics

Research Questions	Initial Interview Questions	Probes
To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?	<p>1. What are the main causes of gender imbalance that often tend to favour the recruitment and promotion of male academics over female academics?</p> <p>2. Could you tell me about your experience growing up as Saudi women please?</p> <p>3. From the female academics' perspective, what are the reasons for the existence of obstacles, such as the overt and covert gender segregations, that substantially affect their career progress?</p>	<p>1. What do you understand by gender discrimination? Could you give examples of your personal experience?</p> <p>2. In what ways do you take part in the academic staff association? What proportion of men and women take part in the association?</p> <p>3. What was the nature of the interview panel that selected you as a faculty member? Approximately, how many were men and how many were women?</p> <p>4. If you were asked to select a women-only university or a mixed-gender university, which would you prefer to work at and why? Any other?</p>

What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?

4. What are the differences and similarities in the working conditions of male and female academics in the higher education sector with regard to pay, working hours, job descriptions, and responsibilities?

5. How do existing legal mechanisms help to counteract discriminatory practices?

5 What are the responsibilities of Saudi Arabian women in leadership roles? Are these roles meeting a need of the Saudi Arabian community as whole?

6. Are you aware of gender stereotyping in any responsibilities assigned to you during your progress to a leadership role?

7. How do work responsibilities affect you and your family and vice versa?

7. How do work-family conflict barriers affect women's career progression in Saudi Arabia?

8. To what extent do you and your husband/family members share domestic responsibilities, such as housework, cooking, shopping, and washing, amongst others?

9. Have you ever had to carry out other domestic responsibilities (for example, the care of elderly relatives)?

10. Do you have children? What are their ages?

11. If they are young children, what methods of childcare do you employ? A nanny, childminder,

	<p>nursery, or relative?</p> <p>12. Who takes care of your child/children when they are ill?</p> <p>13. What are some of the issues you have encountered when you leave your children to go to work? Please describe them.</p> <p>14. Do you feel guilty or blame yourself for working if your children have any problems? Please explain.</p>
<p>7. What kind of personal constraints have you experienced while aiming to get this job?</p>	<p>15. Was there a point in your career when you thought you would not be able to achieve a senior management post?</p> <p>16. Have you ever had to move to follow your husband? If so, please state where?</p> <p>17. How do you react to criticism?</p>
	<p>8 Who or what has had a great impact on your career path? (e.g. Parents, friends, husband, teachers, or domestic circumstances)</p>

What factors can promote women's advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?

9. Are Saudi women restricted in their leadership roles? If so, what are the factors that have influenced the leadership roles held by women?

18. Do you experience any difficulties while managing?

19. Have you ever felt that you have been disbarred from promotion or responsibilities because you are a woman?

20. Have you ever had a 'speculative' application for a post? If so, please explain.

10. To what extent have the universities contributed towards women's career development or towards facilitating their dual responsibilities?

21. Could you please tell me about the support and guidance you receive/received from your Vice-Chancellor, Deans, and Heads of Department to perform both your job- and home-related duties adequately?

22. How much can you rely on peers/colleagues when things get tough at work?

23. Have you had a mentor or role model who encouraged or inspired you?

11. How satisfied are you with the opportunities for advancement and

24. How satisfied are you with the progress you have made in this organisation until now?

promotions that are available at this university? Why?

12. Were you encouraged at any time to apply for promotion? If so, by whom? Anyone else?

25. What kind of personal/professional qualities do you feel have helped you in your career journey?

13. If you were to encounter any difficulties at work, how helpful do you think your husband/other family members would be?

26. Does your husband play an active part in your career (e.g. by engaging in your university activities)?

27. With regard to caring for you and providing you with emotional support in individual matters, mention the extent to which you think each person you mentioned in the previous question would go in order to help you with your work and family life.

Appendix (V): Interview questions in Arabic

دراسة التدرج الوظيفي لعضوات هيئة التدريس إلى المناصب القيادية العليا والمهام الإدارية في قطاع التعليم العالي

أسئلة الفرعية للمقابلة	الأسئلة الأولية للمقابلة	أسئلة البحث الرئيسية
ما آلية القوانين والسياسات الحالية في التعيينات والترقيات التي قد تؤدي إلى ظهور تلك الممارسات العنصرية الجنسية؟	تشير الإحصائيات إلى أنه لا يوجد توازن بين أعداد ونسب أعضاء وعضوات هيئة التدريس من ناحية التعيين والترقية لصالح الذكور، فبرأيك ما الأسباب الرئيسة لهذه الفجوة؟ ممكن تخبريني عن تجربتك الشخصية، ونشأتك كفتاة سعودية؟	إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن المعوقات التي تواجهها عضوات هيئة التدريس في الجامعة هو انعكاس لتأثير حديث المجتمع والدين، والعادات والتقاليد، على دور المرأة السعودية في مجال العمل؟
ما طبيعة وشكل الدور الذي تقومين به في لجان أعضاء هيئة التدريس أو الاجتماعات؟ وما نسبة الأعضاء من الرجال والنساء في هذه اللجان؟	ما أوجه الشبه والاختلاف في طبيعة عمل أعضاء هيئة التدريس من الجنسين على حد سواء في الجامعات السعودية الحكومية، من النواحي التالية: الراتب، ساعات العمل، المسمى الوظيفي، المسؤوليات، المهام؟	
ما طبيعة اختبار لجنة المقابلات التي قامت باختيارك كعضو هيئة تدريس؟ وكم كان عدد الأعضاء من النساء والرجال في تلك اللجنة؟		

<p>لو كان بيدك حرية اختيار العمل في جامعة نسائية فقط أو جامعة مختلطة، فبأي منهما تفضلين العمل؟ ولماذا؟ هل من إضافة؟</p>		
<p>من وجهة نظرك كامرأة أكاديمية: ما الأسباب والعوامل المؤدية لظهور هذه المعوقات (العنصرية الجنسية) سواء المبطنة منها أو الظاهرة، والتي لها تأثير سلبي على تقدّمك الوظيفي وحصولك على المناصب القيادية؟</p>	<p>ما مفهومك للعنصرية الجنسية؟ وهل من الممكن إعطاء أمثلة من خلال تجربتك الشخصية؟</p>	
<p>من وجهة نظرك: هل هنالك صورة نمطية لطبيعة المهام التي يقوم بها كل من المرأة والرجل الأكاديميين عند توليها المناصب القيادية التربوية؟</p> <p>ما نوع المؤهلات والصفات الشخصية والمهنية التي تعتقد بأن عضوة هيئة التدريس ربما تفتقدها، مما أثر على مسار</p>	<p>ما طبيعة مهام ومسؤوليات عضوة هيئة التدريس في حال توليها لمنصب قيادي؟ وهل هذه الأدوار والمهام تتماشى مع احتياجات ومتطلبات المجتمع السعودي بشكل عام؟</p>	

<p>رحلتها المهنية؟</p>		
<p>ما صورة التعارض بين المهام والمسؤوليات لعضوة هيئة التدريس في المنزل والعمل؟ وهل هذا التعارض يشكّل عائقاً لتقدّمها الوظيفي، ووصولها للمناصب القيادية؟</p> <p>هل هناك مشاركة من قبل الزوج أو أفراد الأسرة في المهام المنزلية، كالطبخ، والتسوق، ورعاية الأطفال؟</p> <p>هل لديك مهام والتزامات إضافية كإدارة أقارب من كبار السن؟</p> <p>هل لديك أطفال؟ ما أعمارهم؟</p> <p>ما نوع الرعاية التي تقدمينها لأطفالك كمرربة، وحاضنة، وخادمة؟</p> <p>من يعتني بطفلك/ بأطفالك في حال مرضهم لا سمح الله؟</p> <p>هل هناك مشاكل تواجهك عند تركك لطفلك في المنزل أثناء</p>	<p>من وجهة نظرك: ما تأثير مسؤوليات ومتطلبات العمل على عضوة هيئة التدريس، وعلى أسرتها؟ والعكس صحيح.</p>	<p>ما أعظم العقبات التي تواجهها عضوات هيئة التدريس، مما يؤدي إلى إعاقة تدرجها وتقدّمها الوظيفي للمناصب القيادية سواء على المستوى الشخصي أو الاجتماعي أو المؤسسات التعليمية والحكومية؟</p>

<p>ساعات دوامك الرسمي؟ مع الإيضاح.</p> <p>هل تشعرين بتأنيب الضمير حين تذهبين للعمل وطفلك مريض؟ مع الإيضاح.</p>		
<p>هل مررت خلال رحلتك العملية بمنعطف أشعرك بأنك لن تصلي إلى منصب إداري أو قيادي؟</p> <p>في حال كان عندك تطمح لمنصب من القيادات العليا ووجهت رغبتك للنقد في تقلد منصب اعتيد على أن يكون ذكورياً، فما ردة فعلك؟</p>	<p>ما نوع المعوقات والصعوبات الشخصية التي قد تمر بها عضوة هيئة التدريس عندما تطمح إلى شغل منصب معين؟</p>	
	<p>من المؤثر سلباً أو إيجاباً على تقدّم مسيرتك الوظيفية: (الزوج، الدين، الإخوة، الصديقات، المعلمات، الظروف الأسرية)؟ مع الإيضاح .</p>	
<p>هل واجهتك صعوبات خلال شغلك لمنصب إداري؟ وما طبيعة هذه الصعوبات؟</p>	<p>هل المرأة السعودية مقيدة في دورها القيادي أو الإداري؟ وما العوامل التي شكّلت طبيعة الأدوار القيادية والإدارية التي تترأسها المرأة؟</p> <p>هل شعرت يوماً بأن المرأة الأكاديمية بمعزل عن الترقيات،</p>	

<p>هل من الممكن أن تحدّثنا عن الدعم الذي تتلقاه عضوات هيئة التدريس من مدير الجامعة، الوكلاء، العمداء، رؤساء ووكلاء الأقسام؛ ليتمكن من تأدية دورهن على أكمل وجه سواء في العمل أو المنزل؟</p> <p>إلى أي مدى يمكن لك أن تعتمد على الزملاء والزميلات عندما تواجه بعض الأمور الصعبة أو المشاكل أثناء العمل؟ هل كان لك مستشار معلم أو قدوة يحفزك، ويرشدك، ويلهمك الطموح؟</p>	<p>أو بعض المناصب والمهام والمسؤوليات؛ كونها امرأة؟</p> <p>إلى أي مدى ساهمت الجامعات في تقديم التسهيلات والدعم لعضوات هيئة التدريس؛ ليتمكن من القيام بأدوارهن وواجباتهن المنزلية والعملية على أكمل وجه؟</p>	<p>ما العوامل الشخصية والاجتماعية، وكذلك العوامل من قبل المؤسسات التعليمية والوزارات التي تدعم التدرج الوظيفي لعضوات هيئة التدريس، وتسهل وصولهن وشغلهن للمناصب القيادية والقيام بالمهام الإدارية المهمة؟</p>
<p>ما مدى رضاك عن تقدّمك الوظيفي الذي أنجزته، والفرص التي أتاحت لك من الجامعة حتى الآن؟</p>	<p>ما مدى رضاك عن الفرص المتاحة في الجامعة لتقدّم وتطوير عضوات هيئة التدريس وترقيتهن؟ ولماذا؟</p>	
<p>ما نوع المؤهلات والصفات الشخصية والمهنية التي تشعرين بأنها ساعدتك ودعمتك خلال رحلتك المهنية؟</p>	<p>هل شجعت أو حوّزت للتقدّم للترقية أو شغل منصب معين؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بـ نعم) فبواسطة من؟ هل من إضافة تفاصيل؟</p>	
<p>هل يلعب زوجك دوراً نشطاً في مجال عملك، كاتخاذه ومشاركته ببعض أنشطة الجامعة؟</p> <p>عند الأخذ بعين الاعتبار الاهتمام والرعاية لدعمك عاطفياً وحل مشاكلك ومسائلك الشخصية، كيف يكون تدخل الآخرين من ذويك ودورهم في تسهيل حياتك العملية والأسرية؟</p>	<p>عندما تواجه أي صعوبة في العمل، فإلى أي مدى تعتقدين أن زوجك أو أحد أفراد أسرتك يكون لهم دور مساعد ومساهم في تحطّي هذه الصعوبات؟</p>	

Appendix (VI): The Final Sample Frame for the First Site in University A and Its Participants

University Name	Male Key Informants	Date and Interview Methods	Female Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods	Female Not Yet Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods
Shagra University Rural area & New University Mixed gender university UA	██████████ ██████████ Professor, Pro-Vice- Chancellor UAK1	September, 2015 Telephonic interview	██████████ Assistant professor, Vice Dean UAFP1	July, 2015 Face-to-face interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UAFNP1	November, 2015 Face-to-face interview
	██████████ Assistant professor, Dean UAK2	August, 2015 Telephonic interview	██████████ Assistant professor, Dean UAFP2	July, 2015 Telephonic interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UAFNP2	December, 2015 Face-to-face interview
			██████████ Associate professor, Vice Dean UAFP3	August, 2015 Telephonic interview		

Appendix (VII): The Final Sample Frame for the Second Site in University B and Its Participants

University Name	Key Informants – Male	Date and Interview Methods	Female Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods	Female Not Yet Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods
King Abdulaziz University Western ancient University & Mixed gender university UB	██████████ Professor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor UBK2	July, 2015 Face-to-face interview	██████████ Professor, Deputy Head of the Department UBFP1	August, 2015 Face-to-face Telephonic interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UBFNP1	December, 2105 Face-to-face interview
			██████████ Associate professor, Vice Dean UBFP2	July, 2015 Face-to-face Interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UBFNP2	November, 2015 Face-to-face interview
			██████████ Professor, Vice Dean UBFP3	July, 2015 Telephonic interview		

Appendix (VIII): The Final Sample Frame for the Third Site in University C and Its Participants

University Name	Key Informants – Male	Date and Interview Methods	Female Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods	Female Not Yet Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods
King Saud University Central Saudi Arabia & ancient Mixed gender University UC	██████████ Professor, Dean UCK3	August, 2015 Telephonic Interview	██████████ Associate Professor, Vice Dean UCFP1	July, 2015 Face-to- face interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UCFNP1	December, 2015 Telephonic Interviews
			██████████ Assistant Professor, Vice Dean UCFP2	July, 2015 Face-to- face interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UCFNP2	December, 2015 Face-to- face interview
			██████████ Associate Professor, Vice Dean UCFP3	July, 2015 Face-to- face interview		

Appendix (IX): The Final Sample Frame for the Fourth Site in University D and Its Participants

University Name	Key Informants – Male	Date and Interview Methods	Female Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods	Female Not Yet Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods
Taibah University Western Saudi Arabia & New Mixed gender university UD	██████████ Associate professor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor UDK5	June, 2015 Telephonic Interview	██████████ Assistant professor, Vice Dean UDFP1	August, 2015 Telephonic interview	██████████ Demonstrator UDFNP1	December, 2015 Face-to-face interview
			██████████ Assistant professor, Deputy Head of the Department UDFP2	August, 2015 Face-to-face interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UDFNP2	November, 2015 Face-to-face interview
			██████████ Assistant professor, Deputy Head of the Department UDFP3	July, 2015 Face-to-face interview		

Appendix (X): The Final Sample Frame for the Fifth Site in University E and Its Participants

University Name	Key Informants – Male	Date and Interview Methods	Female Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods	Female Not Yet Promoted to Academic Leaders	Date and Interview Methods
Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University Single gender university for women only UE	None	None	██████████ Dean UEFP1	July, 2015 Telephonic interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UEFNP1	December, 2015 Face-to-face interview
			██████████ Associate professor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors UEFP2	July, 2015 Face-to-face interview	██████████ Assistant Lecturer UEFNP2	December, 2015 Face-to-face interview
			██████████ Associate professor, Head of department UEFP3	July, 2015 Face-to-face interview		

Appendix (XI): The Research Questions and Their Respective Identified Emerging Main Issues

Research Question (RQ)	Domains/ Categories
1. What major individual-, cultural-, structural-, or institutional-level constraints do female faculty encounter regarding their advancement to upper senior leadership positions?	The probable major constraints in: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issues and challenges at the individual level 2. Issues and challenges at the cultural level in Saudi Arabia 3. Issues and challenges at the structural or institutional level
2. To what extent are the obstacles that Saudi female academics face within the university a reflection of the influence of wider social discourses, religion, and/or traditions on the role of Saudi female academics in work settings?	The probable influence of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Religion 2. Wider social discourses 3. Cultures
3 What factors can promote women’s advancement to upper leadership positions in academia, at the individual, cultural, structural, or institutional levels?	The probable support factors at: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual level 2. Cultural level in Saudi Arabia 3. Structural or institutional level

Appendix (XII): Thematic Coding of the Domains Based on Colour Codes

Colour	Domains
Blue	The influence of religion, wider social discourses, and cultures
Red	Major constraints
Green	Support factors

Appendix (XIII): The interview transcript in Arabic

UAK1, Professor,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor
September 2015

الباحث: بناء على الإحصائيات يتضح انه مافيه توازن بين أعضاء هيئة التدريس من الذكور والإناث من ناحية الترقيات والتعيينات طبعاً لصالح الذكور، برأيك ماهي الاسباب المؤدية لهذه الفجوة؟

المشارك: قد لانعتبرها فجوة بقدر مانعتبرها عرض وطلب وبالتالي. وبالتالي مسائلة تفوق جنس على آخر يرجع إلى أمور كثيرة، يعني اهمها الإراده في مسائلة الاستمرار في المراحل التعليميه من عدمها. وفي نفس الوقت التوجه ايجابي. خلينا نقول عرض وطلب في الموضوع هذا،، لا أكثر ولا أقل بدليل ان كثير من الوظائف متاحه ويتقدم لها العنصر النسائي مما يؤكد ان العمليه ليس لها علاقه بتفضيل جنس على آخر.

الباحث: انت تقول ان الموضوع عرض وطلب، طيب ماهي الآليات والقوانين والسياسه المتبعه حالياً من ناحية التعيينات والترقيات؟ بمعنى على اي اساس نحدد الاعداد المطلوبه في الكليات في شتى المجالات مع أخذ بعين الاعتبار الجنس وهل نفس الآليه المتخذة لعرض المناصب الادارية على الاعضاء من الذكور هي نفسها الآليه المتخذة مع اعضاء هيئة التدريس من النساء في حال انه عرضت؟

المشارك: بنتكلم من ناحية منهجنا في الوظائف هذي من ناحية الرجال والنساء يعني بمسائلة الوظائف هذي ليس هناك اي فارق في متطلبات التوظيف او المنصب هذا بين رجل او إمراه من حيث الشروط ومن ومن حيث متطلبات التعيين في المناصب سواء اكاديميه او إداريه، بالنسبه للعرض واحد والشروط واحده والمتطلبات واحده، باقي المفاضله فلو تقدم أكثر من شخص او مرأة او رجل لمنصب معين ينظر إلى امور المفاضلات المتعارف عليها، من حيث الخبره نوعية الشهادة او الاحتياج من حيث التأهيل.

الباحث: طيب يادكتور، جامعة [REDACTED] من الجامعات الناشئة، وفيها المناصب والقيادات العليا كالوكالات والعمادات، جميع من يشغلها من الذكور هل هذا يعني انه لا يوجد كفاءة من اعضاء هيئة التدريس من النساء او هل لم تتاح لهم الفرصه للتقدم للوظائف

المشارك: لا متاحه للجميع، المناصب النسائية مشغوله بالنساء والمناصب الرجاليه مشغوله بالرجال. ومناصب الوكالات، خلينا نسميها عميدة الكليه او كيلة الكليه مشغوله او رئيسة القسم هذي كلها مشغوله بنساء وليس برجال.

الباحث: وماذا عن الوكالات: كوكالة الجامعه للتطوير والجوده، وكالة الجامعه للشؤون التعليميه، وكالة الجامعه للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي على سبيل المثال، ليست مشغوله ب اعضاء من الذكور ؟

المشارك: هذي القيادات العليا مشغوله برجال، ليس لانه هناك من لا يستحقها من النساء ولكن لأنه مثل هذه الوظائف، خلينا نفترض لو اعطيت المرأه فرصه لشغل هذه المناصب، هناك صفات ومتطلبات تعيقها عن شغل المنصب، تعود لها وليس لتعاليم معينه..

اعطيك مثال، انه في إحدى الجامعات كان هناك إجتماع لوكلاء الجامعات، وان المرأة قد تعتذر بإرادتها لأي سبب من الاسباب التي تخصها كاسباب اجتماعيه او ارتباطات عائليه من الحضور وبالتالي هذا الجانب، ينقصها كمتطلب من متطلبات المنصب وممكن يكون هناك اجتماع في جهه او مصلحة حكوميه اخرى فقد تعتذر عن مثل هذا الاجتماع الذي قد لايناسب ان تذهب اليه، باعتبار انه عندها اسباب خاصه لنفسها سواء انها ماترغب تكون في مكان موقع المسؤوليه فيما يتعلق بالمعلومات او بوجهات النظر، او ربما الحضور نفسه كحضور مثل هذه الاجتماعات فهي نفس المرأه لم تكتسب الخبره الكافيه التي ربما تكون فاعله لشغل مثل هذه المناصب.

الباحث: فبرأيك من المسؤول انه يوفر الخبره للمرأه بحيث تكون مؤهله لشغل مثل تلك المناصب؟

المشارك: المسؤوليه الاولى تقع عليها هي، وإذا تأهلت بما يفي لهذا المنصب فهي بهذه الحاله وجودها قد يتوفر مثل هذا الامر، هنا نأتي للحكم إلى جوانب أخرى في عدم وجود من هو او من هي مؤهل لهذا المنصب ،،، اضرب لك مثال، مديرة إحدى الجامعات إمراه وفي أكثر من مناسبه يكون هناك إجتماعات او يكون هناك لقاءت بين مدراء ووكلاء الجامعات، فنجدها كثيراً من تعتذر عن الحضور ل اسباب خاصه فيها وليس لأسباب تتعلق بانه والله لايسمح لها تروح او بأنه لايسمح لها تحضر، قد يكون اصدق مثال قائم الان هو انه فيه اسباب شخصيه.

ومن اللي يفرض عليها الاسباب الشخصيه راجع لكل حال على حده في تفسير مثل شخصيه هذه المرأه او حتى الرجل قد احيانا مايحضر لان شخصيته ليست فعاله ليس متحدث ،،،، لذلك يحاول عدم الحضور في مثل هذه المناسبات.

الباحث: جميل، لكن هل تعتقد ان الجامعه لها دور في تدريب اعضاء هيئة التدريس من النساء كتوفير تدريب او تأهيل بحيث يكون مؤهلات؟ على وجه الخصوص من قبل مدير الجامعه، ووكلاء الجامعات، رؤساء الاقسام بحيث عندما تتاح لها الفرصه تكون مؤهله.

كل اللي قلتيه قبل شوي مابغى اعينه موجود. وفي نظام التعليم العالي الذي عليه تقوم عليه الجامعات، ومتوفر في الدستور العالي للجامعات.

فمثلا نسبة التفعيل هذا تختلف من جامعه إلى أخرى، والإختلاف هذا نابع إلى فلسفة او توجه او شخصية إدارة الجامعه، بمعنى انه قد تختلف فلسفة ورؤية جامعه شقراء عن فلسفة ورؤية جامعه الملك سعود او عن جامعه الامام او جامعه الشمال او الجنوب او حائل، وغيرها من الجامعات ال سبع وعشرون جامعه او الثمان والعشرون جامعه. الفروقات هذه يمكن ان ينظر لها فيما بعد في مسألة البحث في الفروقات بين الجامعات في مجال من المجالات هذا اعتقد انه لاتعلق في البحث الذي نتناوله الان، ولكن كدستور موجود هذا الشيء ومرصود له ميزانيه ماليه كافيه مخصصه لهذا الشيء.

الباحث: هذا الاعدادات التي تحدثت عنها لعضوات هيئة التدريس يبحث تكون مؤهله لشغل منصب إداري؟

المشارك: نعم هذا التأهيل قد يكون لشغل المنصب او قد يكون للتأهيل بحد ذاته، بمعنى ان التأهيل لايعنى به انها ستشغل منصب، واحيانا مسميات ادورات او البرامج المطروحه، لاتحدد توجه معين للوصول اليه، بمعنى ماقدر اقولك والله انه نسبة الدورات التي تحت مسمى كيف التأهيل القيادي، او كيف تقود المنشأه، او القيادات العليا في المؤسسات، فيه كثير من الدورات والدورات مفتوحه، كدعم مادي الدعم موجود، لكن كتوظيف توظيف المسميات راجع لكل جامعه على حده.

الباحث: ماهي آلية تقدم اعضاء هيئة التدريس من النساء لتلك هذه الدورات؟ هل تكون بشكل شخصي او قد يكون عن طريق التنسيق مع الجامعه، او الجهات المنظمه للدورات؟

Appendix (XIV): Thematic Analysis

constraints factors →

support's factors

REASONS

general issues

U1M1

استاذ الدراسات العليا العربية بكلية الاداب بجامعة الملك عبدالعزيز ووكيل الدراسات العليا والبحوث العلمي سابقا ومدير ومؤسس مركز البحوث سابقا، كاتب وصحفي واعلامي خبرته الاكاديمية تصل الي 40 سنة.

حضان: بناء على الاحصائيات التي تشير الي انه لا يوجد توازن بين اعضاء وعضوات هيئة التدريس برئيك ماهي الاسباب المؤدية لهذه الفجوة، مع انه جامعة الملك بشكل استثنائي عدد الاعضاء من النساء اكثر نظيرهم من الرجال؟

الدكتور: نجد هذا التفاوت في النسبة مابين الاعضاء يتفاوت مابين جامعه وجامعه اخرى فقط تكون الاعداد لصالح النساء في بعض الجامعات. وهذا قد يعود الي اسباب كثيرة فمنها اسباب قد تكون اجتماعية، لان بعض المناطق في المملكة تختلف في درجة تشجيعها لتعليم النساء علي الرجال. هذا بالإضافة في حال انه الحاله الاجتماعية قد تعيقها فالحالنا يكون الزوج والاسره والابناء من اهم المعوقات كالظروف الاجتماعية. وانا اعلم حق العلم في جامعة الملك عبدالعزيز ان عدد النساء في جامعة عبدالعزيز اكثر من الرجال كما اثرتي، لذلك لانستطيع ان نحكم بشكل عام ونقول ان عدد النساء اقل من الرجال. وهذه المشكله ليست فقط في محليه او اقليميه بل دوليه علي سبيل المثال الولايات المتحده الامريكه عند النساء اقل من الرجال بحكم انني طالب سابق فالتساينات في الجامعات الامريكه فهذه المشكله ظاهريه وعلميه في الدول المتقدمه والدول الناميه علي حد سواء.

coding frames

social reason

2 Social trends

3 No Preference + women's job

4 women are not encouraged to education

5 international phenomenon not local or regional

5 Requirement of married life

memo

1 it depends on geographical area for example, the case of Saudi Arabia support considerably women's education and the grandmothers of the families on this area sent their daughters to study abroad.

2 social status: Married women but it is difficult because of their responsibilities towards husbands, children care.

It is an international phenomenon or rather than local or regional, the best example is in (UK & US) from the developed countries who call for women's liberation.

نسبة من يشغلن مناصب مهمة وقيادات عليا اقل من الرجال بكثير؟

الدكتور: نعم هناك بعض المناصب لا يمكن تشغل الا برجال كمدير جامعه او وكيل جامعه ل احدى الوكالات

التاليه، كوكالات الجامعه، ووكالة التطوير ووكالة الدراسات العليا هذه كلها مشغوله برجال وهذا الحال والنظام

في جميع الجامعات السعوديه. وهذا لايعني ان النساء لايعطين مناصب قياده. ففي جامعه عبدالعزيز هناك

مدير جامعه وهناك عميدة شطر الطالبات ولها من الصلاحيات ما يوازي صلاحيات مدير الجامعه في القسم

النسوي، فهي رئيسه للعميدات المستقلات كعمادة شؤون الطلاب، وعمادة الشؤون التعليميه، فلها نفس

الصلاحيات مع اختلاف المسميات، ولكن يجب ان نقر ان رئيسها مدير الجامعه. فهي تتخذ بعض القرارات

ولكن بعض القرارات الاخرى لا بد من ارجاعها لمدير الجامعه ليوافق عليها وتصبح نافذه.

وبالنسبه للوكالات كوكيل الجوده ووكيل الدراسات العليا له من يمثله في قسم الطالبات ولكن لا تسمى وكيله،

وانما تسمى عميده او وكيله لشيء ما.

فنعم اتفق معك جميع المناصب والقيادات العليا محصوره بالرجال. مع انه لا يوجد نظام مكتوب او في اللانحه

بهذا الشأن ينص على ان المدير او الوكيل لا بد ان يكون رجلاً لكن هذا الواقع وهذا الحاصل.

حنان: طيب برأيك يادكتور ماهي الاسباب المؤديه لهذه العنصريه؟

الدكتور: المملكه تنطلق من منطلقات اسلاميه وهي ان الرجال قوامون على النساء. وهذا مبدأ مطبق. ففي

ثقافتنا ليس مقبولاً ان ترأس الرجل مرأه.

organisational factors

1 Stereotypes

2 Perception about management Job

3 Patriarchal Society

1 Political will
nothing in regulation of the Ministry of Higher Education
but custom, traditions, accepted by our society
it is culture

Senior positions confined to men only.

- the differences in the name of the same post and position according to their gender, int. of functionals & powers & tasks

Appendix (XV) Saudi Labour Law (4.1)

Saudi Labour Law

Royal Decree No. M/51, 23 Sha'ban 1426 / 27 September 2005

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Appendix (XV) Saudi Labour Law (4.2)

14. **Basic Wage:** All that is given to the worker for his work by virtue of a written or unwritten work contract regardless of the kind of wage or its method of payment, in addition to periodic increments.
15. **Actual Wage:** The basic wage plus all other due increments decided for the worker for the effort he exerts at work or for risks he encounters in performing his work, or those decided for the worker for the work under the work contract or work organization regulation. This includes:
 - The commission or percentage from sales or profits paid against what the worker markets, produces, collects or realizes from increased or enhanced production.
 - Allowances the worker is entitled to for exerted effort, or risks he encounters while performing his job.
 - Increments that may be granted in accordance with the standard of living or to meet family expenses.
 - Grant or reward: What the employer grants to the worker and what is paid to him for honesty or efficiency and the like, if such grant or reward is stipulated in the work contract or the work organization regulation of the firm or if customarily granted to the extent that the workers consider it part of the wage rather than a donation.
 - In rem privileges: what the employer commits himself to provide to the worker for his work by stating it in the work contract or the work organization regulation and it's estimated at a maximum of two months basic wage per annum, unless it is otherwise determined to exceed that in the work contract or the work organization regulation.
16. **Wage:** actual wage.
17. **Firm:** Any enterprise run by a natural or corporate person who employs one or more workers for a wage of any kind.
18. **Month:** Thirty days, unless it is otherwise specified in the work contract or the work organization regulation.
19. **Regulations:** The Implementing Regulations of this Law.

Section Two: General Provisions

Article 3

Work is the right of every citizen. No one else may exercise such right unless the conditions provided for in this Law are fulfilled. All citizens are equal in the right to work.

Article 4

When implementing the provisions of this Law, the employer and the worker shall adhere to the provisions of Shari'ah.

Article 5

The provisions of this Law shall apply to:

1. Any contract whereby a person commits himself to work for an employer and under his management or supervision for a wage.
2. Workers of the government and public organizations and institutions including those who work in pastures or agriculture.

Chapter IX: Employment of Women

Article 149

Taking into consideration the provisions of Article (4) of this Law, women shall work in all fields suitable to their nature. It is prohibited to employ women in hazardous jobs or industries. The Minister pursuant to a decision by him shall determine the professions and jobs that are deemed detrimental to health and are likely to expose women to specific risks; in which cases, women's employment shall be prohibited or restricted under certain terms.

Article 150

Women may not work during a period of night the duration of which is not less than eleven consecutive hours, except in cases determined pursuant to a decision by the Minister.

Article 151

A female worker shall be entitled to a maternity leave for the four weeks immediately preceding the expected date of delivery and the subsequent six weeks. The probable date of delivery shall be determined by the physician of the firm or pursuant to a medical report certified by a health authority. A woman may not work during the six weeks immediately following delivery.

Article 152

During the maternity leave, an employer shall pay the female worker half her wage if she has been in his service for one year or more, and a full wage if she has served for three years or more as of the date of commencement of such leave. A female worker shall not be paid any wages during her regular annual leave if she has enjoyed in the same year a maternity leave with full wage. She shall be paid half her wage during the annual leave if she has enjoyed in the same year a maternity leave at half wage.

Article 153

An employer shall provide medical care for female workers during pregnancy and delivery.

Article 154

When a female worker returns to work following a maternity leave, she shall be entitled, in addition to the rest periods granted to all workers, to a rest period or periods not exceeding in aggregate one hour a day for nursing her infant. Such period or periods shall be calculated as part of the actual working hours and shall not entail any reduction in wages.

Article 155

An employer may not terminate the employment of a female worker or give her a warning of the same while on maternity leave.

Article 156

An employer may not terminate the employment of a female worker during illness resulting from pregnancy or delivery, and such illness shall be established by a certified medical report, provided that the period of her absence does not exceed one hundred and eighty days. The employment of such female worker may not be terminated during the one hundred and eighty days preceding the expected date of delivery in the absence of one of the legitimate causes provided for in this Law.

Appendix (XV) Saudi Labour Law (4.4)

Article 157

A female worker shall forfeit her entitlements under the provisions of this Chapter if she works for another employer during her authorized leave. In such event, the original employer may deprive her of her wage for the duration of the leave or recover any payments made to her.

Article 158

In all occupations and places where women are employed, the employer shall provide them with seats for resting.

1. An employer who employs fifty female workers and more shall provide them with a suitable place with adequate number of babysitters to look after the children under the age of six years, if the number of children reaches ten and more.
2. The Minister may require the employer who employs a hundred women and more in a single city to set up a nursery, either on his own or in conjunction with other employers in the same city, or alternatively to contract with an existing nursery to care for the children of the female workers who are under six years of age during the work periods. In such case, the Minister shall set forth the terms and conditions regulating such facility as well as the charges imposed on the female workers benefiting from service.

Article 160

A female worker whose husband passes away shall be entitled to a fully paid leave for a minimum period of fifteen days as of the date of death.

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