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The Experience of Female academics in Saudi Arabian Universities

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By

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ABSTRACT

This PhD thesis explores the lived experiences of women professionals as represented by female academics and how they negotiate their working lives/careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia. My study is motivated by a desire for self-reflection, as I seek to comprehend who I am and how I see myself, as I tell the stories of my research subjects as well as mine, through stories – biographical/autobiographical narratives. I consider myself a voice of my subjects since they cannot get their stories out to the world. I have adopted a qualitative approach, using unstructured interviews as my data collection tool. I engage 20 women in a university in Saudi Arabia in a conversation in which they tell me their life stories by way of narratives, which I analyse using thematic analysis underpinned by reflection and reflexivity.

Findings show that societal structures and systems serve a dual effect by aiding some organisational restrictions on women but paradoxically also acted as a mitigant, a relief from those same restrictions. While women are denied certain basic privileges, class, family name, hierarchy, social connectedness, tribal affiliation and even marriage meant that some women were more privileged than others. Also, certain groups of women of specific social identities were more likely to face discriminations of a deeper level than others. In all cases, however, ultimately a woman needed to depend on a male figure to achieve anything; what was considered successful and the limits thereof were subject to male authentication.

This thesis extends knowledge in area of organisation studies/gender in organisation by first revealing how gender relations, female subjugation and patriarchy might be experienced in different cultures and why and second, putting forward propositions for applicable culture and context specific considerations which can enhance the cross-cultural applicability of gender theories in a country like Saudi Arabia.

Acknowledgements

As a female academic from Saudi Arabia, I am so thankful for this chance to study for my PhD in the United Kingdom. Through this opportunity I have learnt so much but, perhaps most importantly, I learnt to see the world, myself and others differently, and I have also learnt to understand how other people see the world. In all this has been achieved through listening to other women talk about their experiences and also sharing mine. Thinking through and recounting my experiences and thoughts in this thesis was not easy for me at the beginning. But in all, I had help from many people on this amazing journey.

Special thanks to my supervisors Dr. Patrick Reedy for his encouragement, his rigour, and his persistence and for standing with me throughout- without his patient support this thesis will not be completed. I am also thankful to my second supervisorfor Dr. Joanne Cook very useful comments in very fundamental areas of the thesis.

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I remain grateful to my mother, for her kindness, and her financial and material support - although there is was so much distance between us, you remained close to me. You were always there whenever I needed you and you always prayed for me and encouraged me. Your belief that one day, I will reach the pinnacle of my profession remained precious to me and was a great motivation throughout my study. I also want to thank my father and all my sisters and brothers; I look forward to coming back home and sharing with you again all those beautiful moments that I must have missed.

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation for my family - to my beautiful angel, my little girl Juwan, and my two heroes, my boys Ali and Hassan for being so patient, and so understanding during my studies. A special thanks to my wonderful husband for

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Dedication

To my Source of Support, Motivation and Inspiration to my mum the most beautiful women in this whole world, who believed on me and who loved me from her deepest heart.

God bless you and protect you forever.

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Chapter One

1 Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This thesis is inspired by my effort as a female academic to tell my story, specifically regarding the difficulties I have faced regarding my life and work in Saudi Arabia, and to show how my experiences are similar to the experiences of other female academics like myself in that country. I was born and raised in Saudi Arabia, and when the time came, I got married and secured a job in academia. I went on to study for my masters in the United States and eventually came to the United Kingdom for my PhD. Like every other female in Saudi Arabia, how I have turned out and what I have become is based on decisions made by male figures in my family, my organisation and my broader social sphere, rather than by my personal choices. After all, I am a Saudi woman, not a man, and faced with all the constraints of being one. The more I travelled and interacted with people from other walks of life and consequently with other women, the more I began to feel the need to speak up and speak out about my life, and more specifically, my experiences of work in the academia in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, I also felt the need to hear other women narrate their experiences. I believe that listening to other women talk and comparing their experiences with mine gave me a sense that I was not alone; the experiences of others like me also validated my opinion and views, and I admit that this gave me a sense of fulfilment. Because in talking about myself and relating my experiences to the experiences of other women, I have sought to understand myself better. The starting point for my thesis, therefore, was a desire for self-discovery and the need to learn the experiences of others in a position similar to mine. This yearning then led me on to the exploration of the complexities of women's experiences of work in Saudi Arabia, which I also present and analyse in my thesis.

In this chapter, I present an outline of my research by focusing my attention on the motivation behind, and the significance of my study. I also illustrate that most studies (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990; Patil, 2013; Riley and Evans, 2017; Lee and Hudson, 2017) tend to look at issues of gender and organisational studies, and particularly challenges regarding equal opportunities and

discrimination against women at the level of institutions and policy rather than from the point of view of the women themselves. My contribution is to rigorously examine the experiences of these women based on their narratives. I do this based on my participation in, and experiences of social and organisational life in Saudi Arabia as well as my access to other women in a similar position. Specifically, relating to my contributions, my research proceeds from the standpoint of the women themselves and how they see their struggles in a restrictive society. I will argue that it is only possible to understand the processes by which women are excluded and subordinated within academic life in Saudi Arabia if one engages, in detail, with the experiences, everyday lives and strategies for coping employed by women themselves and this is my aim in this research. To tell their stories as well as mine, I adopt a narrative approach (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), to understand how the pursuit of careers by women in academia in Saudi Arabia has become a demonstration of the life desires of women professionals including myself (Alwedinani, 2016). I wish to provide a voice for these women since they cannot get their stories out to the world.

It follows, therefore that the stories of my participants and myself are at the core of this thesis. Specifically, I present these stories as life histories – or biographical/autobiographical narratives (Reedy, 2009). These narratives will enable a greater understanding of the experience of discrimination in Saudi Arabia and how women variously adapt themselves to it or attempt to transcend it, from the inside. I hope that this will contribute to an improvement in their lives in the future. In the remainder of this chapter, therefore, I expand upon my own relationship to the research before going on to provide some general context on the position of women in Saudi Arabia. I then provide explain what I believe is the significance of my study significance of my study and its theoretical contribution to the field of gender in the organisation, particularly as it relates to women professionals. I then present an initial overview of my methodological approach. Finally, I outline the structure of my study, explaining how each chapter contributes to the development of the wider thesis and the achievement of my research aims.

1.2. Research Motivation

In this section, I present my motivation for undertaking this study and explain how this derives from my experiences growing up in Saudi Arabia and then working as a lecturer in a university. My journey from girlhood to womanhood and from attending schools through to my venture into the world of work have all driven my interest to understand the constraints that Saudi Arabian women face, particularly those working in higher educational institutions. Specifically, and based on my career aspirations, I am interested in knowing how social and organisational constraints prevent women from progressing to higher managerial positions. I must admit that this aspiration on my part is indicative of the aspirations of many other Saudi academics that I have spoken to. Indeed, this point is corroborated by some Western scholarly work on gender (Walby, 1990; Riley and Evans, 2017; Lee and Hudson, 2017). That is. it is assumed that all women need and want emancipation from discrimination and the freedom to pursue individual competitive success in the same way that men habitually do. It has been argued that, in spite of their aspirations, women are generally prevented from career progression by a lack of education, aspiration and networks (Fagenson, 1990a, 1990b; Ford, 2006; Acker, 1992, 2006, 2009; Davidson & Burke, 2011).

However, Saudi Arabia may present a paradoxical twist: Women could also be an obstruction in the wheels of anti-discrimination efforts because the barriers which others perceive as limiting may be socially sanctioned and culturally legitimised by a considerable number of these women themselves (see Acker, 1992; 2006). Based on my professional experience and my knowledge of social life in Saudi Arabia this desire for career progress and the removal of what might be seen as barriers to it, is also not shared by all women in Saudi Arabia as there are those who believe in accepting a position of submission. In essence, some women may not see these restrictions and constraints as limiting, but protective (in the sense that they see themselves as endangered and that these societal and organisational barriers are meant to guide and honour them). Butler (1988) and Lorde (2000) have pointed out that such dispositions illustrate that women may at times be complicit in their domination by the patriarchy. It is the need to explore these paradoxes and conflicts that have additionally aroused my research interest.

I acknowledge that the first factor that influenced my interest is the culture of my country – which is male-dominated; the other is my educational background. These two imperatives also influenced my experience in my workplace. My original idea for this research came as I experienced career and workplace limitations, frustration and constraints that were socio-culturally induced because I am female. My gender was the primary qualifying consideration for any career-related decision including grants, seminars, professional development events, job role/description and promotion in my workplace. I discussed the matter with other fellow female lecturers. From these discussions, I learned that though female lecturers teach and take more workload at the departmental level, they do not get the chance to climb the career ladder to decision-making positions as quickly as their male counterparts. Also, one of the most discriminating acts I noticed in my workplace was that, even with the same qualifications and, in some instances, more experience compared to her male colleagues, a female lecturer cannot lead any event or activity without the approval from the 'male department' led by the Dean. Just like other organisations and schools in Saudi Arabia, the male and female departments are segregated in my university. There is very limited interaction between female academics and their male colleagues or the dean. Every communication from the female academics meant for the Dean was passed onto a female coordinator (or the head of the female section) who transmitted this to the dean. Feedback from the dean to the female academic was also through this same route (the female coordinator).

However, some other events of a personal nature also informed my motivation to undertake my study. For instance, a most peculiar experience I had concerning getting my sick leave approved. Even with advancement in communication technology leading to faster communication systems, I had to write a letter, and send it through my husband to the male department, as there was no easier way to track to see if and when my application was approved if at all. These manual structures, systems and work processes which support a segregated organisation appeared to me to sustain male dominance and power over women's actions. Another incident, which was most demotivating, was when I was denied an opportunity to attend a training course and my place was given to a male lecturer who was younger and much less experienced than me. Later, I discovered that my other female colleagues had experienced a

similar fate due to the gender-based discrimination within the university system. Analysing this situation as presented based on Adams's (1965) equity theory (the idea that individuals are motivated by fairness and may resort to adjusting their input or output to address inequity and thereby achieve equity), I admit that this type of discriminatory treatment has led to much dissatisfaction and frustration among the female lecturers in higher educational institutions.

Furthermore, from my experience, male lecturers in my country actively exert power over the female lecturers regarding any decision-making process and thereby blocking freedom of expression that directly affects their enthusiasm for teaching. These constraints, in turn, affect the efficiency of the educational programs and the development and level of scholarly achievements of the students. Thus, University education is effectively reproducing the social structures by transmitting them from one generation to the next not just based on the content of the teaching itself but also how the university is organised.

Being born and growing up in Saudi Arabia, I received my education in gender-segregated schools and colleges. However, I have also witnessed incredible economic, political and social changes in the last few decades. Unlike what was experienced by the older generation, the Saudi government has actively ensured equal access to education for both male and female students. I am thankful for that system that I could become a university lecturer and receive a government scholarship to pursue my doctorate in the United Kingdom. Like me, there are a huge number of women who have pursued and earned doctorate degrees either from local or western universities reflecting a very high level of education in the female population (World Economic Forum, 2014). For instance, the Saudi education ministry released statistics in 2015 showing that women constitute almost 52 per cent of university graduates inside the kingdom, while more than 35,000 female Saudis studied abroad in 2014 (Al Arabiya, 2015). Though there have been examples of women rising to a leading position in Saudi Arabia (World Bank, 2009), they remain few compared to the male counterparts in similar positions, as women face more difficulties with career progression in educational institutions.

I must add that while Saudi Arabia is often characterised in the West- and in many parts of the Arab world- as one of the world's most repressive countries toward women, there are contradictions that suggest that matters are more complex than they appear. For instance, this nation that sponsors women to obtain degrees abroad never allowed women to drive cars before June 2018, and up till the time of this research, women activists who campaigned for that freedom for women remain in jail (BBC, 2018). One explanation for the education of women in Saudi Arabia as a bright light in an otherwise gloomy human rights record is its traditionally high value in both Islamic and Arab culture (CCAS, 2014). Despite its firm religious foundations, educating women in Saudi Arabia is a relatively new phenomenon. In 1970, literacy rates for women stood at just two per cent (Al-Rasheed, 2013). The motivation to expand women's education came in the mid-1970s after the oil boom, with anxieties that the rising numbers of Saudi men studying abroad would marry foreigners to avoid having uneducated wives (Al-Rasheed, 2013). Four decades later, Saudi Arabia now boasts a female literacy rate of 91 per cent (compared to 97 per cent for men) (World Economic Forum, 2014) and Saudi officials claim to have almost completely eradicated illiteracy among younger generations of women (CCAS, 2014).

I acknowledge in my study, therefore, that these already stated factors fundamentally influenced my motivation for my research focussed on women in higher educational institutions in the context of Saudi Arabia. However, I admit that the most influencing factor is my personal and professional experience in teaching and 'being managed' instead of being able to participate in management roles. My inclination was also influenced by my desire for gender equality in the workplace and my belief that female lecturers in Saudi Arabia, being hardworking, dedicated, compassionate and highly inspired, are very much capable of holding a leading position and contributing to organisational success. Through this study, I hope to contribute to the establishment of a social change in Saudi Arabia through bringing to the fore the underlying socio-cultural problems and how it affects women in academia. I am aware that being a woman from such a conservative society as Saudi Arabia, I will face many challenges while uncovering the buried truth about social constraints to women's career

progression in higher educational institutions in that part of the world. While I undertake to address and overcome these challenges through different strategies, I am motivated by my desire to improve the situation for these women through my study with the aim of facilitating equal opportunity, progression and success in their career as well as mine.

In the next section, I will engage in an articulation of women and careers in a Saudi Arabian context.

1.3. Women and Careers in Saudi Arabia

In this section, I provide some introductory background regarding the Saudi Arabian context and the position of women working within it. Consistent with the aim of my thesis, I consider this fundamental to provide the reader with a basis for understanding the processes by which women are excluded and subordinated within academic life in Saudi Arabia and strategies for coping employed by the women themselves. Female participation in work has increased due to changing attitudes, the expansion of employment more generally and subsequent equal opportunities legislation in many countries (Catalyst, 2007; Davidson and Burke, 2011; Broadbridge, 2009; Mathe et al., 2011; Wilson, 2011).

Despite this increase in women's participation globally (World Economic Forum, 2014) some gender-related studies focussed on women in Saudi Arabia (e.g. Alwedinani, 2016) have evidenced women's employment rate as much lower than men. Further, some other studies suggest that women within Saudi organisations are under-represented in both managerial and administrative positions, even in the jobs referred to as 'traditionally female jobs' such as teaching and nursing (Powell, 2010; Davidson and Burke, 2011). Thus, some studies acknowledge that Saudi Arabia has lagged despite much scholarly evidence of the improved position of women globally in last few decades, especially in the middle management (Broadbridge, 2010; Vinnicombe et al., 2014). For instance, recent statistics by the Central Department of Statistics and Information (2014) shows that the unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia is 42%, of which 58% are female. The Saudi government has attempted to lessen the unemployment of its populace with the concept of 'Saudisation' (a nationalisation scheme whereby

Saudi companies and enterprises are required to fill up their workforce with Saudi nationals up to certain levels - Fakeeh, 2009). Saudisation has resulted in a socio-cultural transformation over the last few decades, such as increased opportunities for female education and employment (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). However, while approximately 57% of Saudi women are university graduates/post-graduates, 78% of these are economically inactive - do not take part in paid work (Locke, 2013). These figures suggest that saudisation may have been influenced (if not overrun) by socio-cultural factors such as patriarchy, and female subjugation embedded in religious values, resulting in the filling up of available jobs with more male Saudis than female (Fakeeh, 2009). The point I seek to make here is that regarding work, the participation rate of women in SA is generally low and many women do not work at all.

The education sector in Saudi Arabia is the largest employer of women with 85 per cent of all working women in education in both teaching and administrative positions (SAMA, Forty-Fourth Annual Report, 2008; Almunajjed, 2010: 5). However, few women rise to leadership positions, suggesting that there are powerful constraints to their career progression (Burke & Mattis, 2005). Even with saudisation, there are less available jobs and less likelihood of career progression for women (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Without jobs for and career progression of women, the increasing numbers of female graduates will threaten the viability of the efforts undertaken by the Saudi government. In essence, unless the socio-cultural angle to saudisation is addressed, investment in women education will result in a waste of human resources and higher unemployment (Syed et al., 2009; Al-Rasheed, 2013). Although there is some evidence that women are entering the workforce in a higher proportion, in the case of Saudi Arabian educational institutions, they still fall short of achieving the higher managerial positions because of sociocultural barriers (Linehan and Scullion, 2001). The point I wish to make here, therefore, is that in Saudi Arabia, available jobs are concentrated into sectors deemed suitable to women. These include education. Where women do make into one of these areas they don't seem to progress up the career ladder very far. In the western literature, some factors evidenced as contributing to the limited power of women in the labour market are rigid persistence of gender stereotypes (Powell, 2000), unfair recruitment and selection processes (Davidson and Burke, 2004), shortage of role model for women and inadequate training facilities (Wirth, 2001).

However, in the case of organisations in Saudi Arabia, but more specifically higher educational institutions, men dominate decision-making roles, and the management system preserves the status quo thereby constraining women from gaining access to managerial positions.

Also, the socio-cultural principles of the country inhibit professional choices for women compared to men. Consequently, in Saudi Arabia, career opportunities and progression are strongly gendered (Gallant and Pounder, 2008). This is facilitated in mainly two ways: First, by limiting women's entrance into a set of study areas and excluding them from others (e.g. engineering, journalism), as these are considered suitable only for men. Rather, women are made to undergo training for educational or other clerical jobs that limit their access to opportunities in the labour market (Cordesman, 2003). When women do get into these sectors, however, the second strategy is to restrain the ease of women's career and professional development, by discriminating against them regarding opportunities in the workplace (Budhwar and Yaw, 2001; Omair, 2008). Specifically, within the academia, the reaction of these women to these constraints in the workplace is seen as passive due to a socialisation process of the girl child from childhood, which, based on the tenet of the state-sponsored dominant religion, teaches acceptance and subservience as forms of piety. It is therefore expected that the women see these constraints positively. Yet, the possibility that rebellion or discontentment may be masked and that women may find ways around these constraints presents an area for more research in gender studies. Consequently, in my thesis, I want to explain the processes by which even those determined enough to obtain a professional post in Saudi Arabia, like me, find themselves blocked from career progression. However, I want to do this from the point of view of these women themselves so that the complexity and contradictions of this position are more fully explained, and this informs my research question: ***How does discrimination and subordination operate in the everyday lives of women in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how do they respond to these***?.

In the next section, I lay out the significance of my research in the context of the challenges that I seek to contribute towards resolving.

1.4. The significance of my Research

Thinking about my career path makes me feel disheartened when I realise how many barriers and uncertainties that exist in my job as an academic in Saudi Arabia. I worry about where my job will lead me and whether it is for me a career or just a job. I am concerned for instance that I might not be allowed to hold a senior management position nor participate in academic events and activities unless approved, by the male section, of course. I realise that I am not the only one in this situation, but the vast majority of women in Arab countries and specifically in Saudi Arabia. I understand how my experience must resonate with the experiences of other women generally, but more specifically with women that are in my direct sphere of contact in the broader Saudi society and within my profession. I can relate with their constraints because I am subject to the same constraints and I feel their frustrations because I go through the same. The challenge is that I can only assume this and cannot know for sure because women do not openly talk about these constraints. And so I have this feeling that women – like me- may project piety, acceptance, assurance and humility through the veil but that behind that same veil lies their frustrations and their anxiety. I feel that this situation is true in the broader religious Saudi society as well as in the formal-looking workplace – women are as constrained, the cover of organisational formality notwithstanding. However, I am curious to know the stories of women whom I am in contact with and how they navigate the constraints they face in the workplace.

Thus, I aim to understand the lived experiences of women professionals as represented by female academics and how they negotiate their working lives/careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia. To achieve this aim, I explain the barriers that women face in their career advancement to senior management in higher educational institutions and the extent institutional settings can endorse organisational change to promote women's equality in higher educational institutions. These stated considerations have led me to the central research question that I wish to address in this study: ***How does discrimination and subordination operate in the everyday lives of women in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how do they respond to these***?.

I move beyond the view that social exchanges between men and women, which underprivileged women can only be understood as subjective, because they are based

on changing societal expectations and choices of social beings, Fagenson, 1990; Morrison, 1992; Tharenou et al., 1994; Powell, 1999) but that individuals also assign objectivity to these subjective exchanges. For instance, because Islamic religion and its tenets thereof guide social exchanges and expectations in the wider Saudi society, how individuals view themselves and others are rigidly defined and bounded by the koran. One of the paradoxes I seek to unravel then is how subjective exchanges are objectively defined, how this reinforces constraints and the experiences of women regarding these imperatives. I call this objectification and discuss how it reinforces stereotypes and distributes privileges and disadvantages in more detail in chapter six and chapter two.

Also, I do not just look at the manifestations of and justifications for discriminations against women in the workplace but how the sociocultural, religious and institutional instruments which enable and sustain the constraints women face is societally sanctioned (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990; Giddens, 2006) because it is consistent with Arabic tradition or religion. I am also interested in how individuals – men and women – use these instruments. For instance, I focus on how elements of social relationships like trust and mistrust are manipulated (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Acker, 2006) by both oppressed and oppressor to achieve certain ends. Thus, my study reveals instrumentality of trust and mistrust, and Indeed, my study uncouples the complex relationships between men and women in Saudi Arabia, which enable the instrumentality of trust and mistrust, the relationship between social actors and primarily men and women and how these relations play out.

Further, my focus on the Middle East addresses a narrowed down context of higher educational institutions in Saudi Arabia through an in-depth understanding of women's career development in that country which, because of its religious constraints remain under-researched. More specifically, I explore not just existing societal and organisational constraints that women in the academia, face in the pursuit of careers in Saudi Arabia but also the dynamics of how these women negotiate (overcome, attempt to bypass or transcend) these challenges. Also, I bring in my personal experience of discrimination in the workplace which allows me to engage in more

thorough comprehension of the experiences of female lecturers in Saudi Arabia and provide a theoretical contribution (Metz, 2003) as I discuss in chapter six. In the next section, I present an overview of feminist perspectives regarding gendered organisational systems. I intend this to lead into a more detailed articulation of scholarly views on the challenge of discrimination against women in Saudi Arabia, which I present in chapter two.

1.5. Feminist Perspectives on Gendered Systems

In this section, I briefly attempt an overview of the perspectives of feminist scholars regarding organisational gendering (I discuss these points in more detail in Chapter Two). Specifically, I use these perspectives to explain how social and organisational systems are gendered and how this is reinforced through male hegemony in Saudi Arabia. I go on to show how this constrains women in academia in Saudi Arabia. I discuss these perspectives in more detail in chapter two. I will argue that even though these studies are mainly conceived in western contexts, their main assertions also influence women in countries like Saudi Arabia. Feminist scholars contend that a system of exclusion and discrimination sustains the subordination of women through male hegemony (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990). This view is presented as reinforced through social institutions which sustain the marginalisation of women from everything from social inclusion to organisational participation, involvement and consequently progression (Smith, 1987). Some argue that male dominance eliminates women from the dominant positions of power in organisations as well (Broadbridge, 2008) and that within an Arab context, male hegemony makes women career advancement challenging (Mostafa, 2005).

In this thesis, I draw on Acker (1990, 1992, 2006), Alvesson and Billing (1997), Ashcraft and Mumby (2004), who provides some insight into the theory of organisational gendering. Based on these perspectives, I argue that power relations within organisations in countries like Saudi Arabia are entrenched in a sociocultural system which, according to Acker (1990) defines meaning and identity within organisations based on the divisions between male and female. I argue, therefore, that gender differences are constantly shaped through organisational practices such

as the pattern of jobs, job roles, organisational hierarchies, remunerations in Saudi Arabia. In a later scholarly work. I also draw on a later work by Acker (2006) and argue that organisational imperatives ultimately institutionalise gender hierarchies within the organisation and effectively justify and legitimise power relations between genders in organisations. In Saudi Arabia, as suggested by Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) within organisations such as the academia, interpersonal relationship of domination and submission between male and females is sanctioned and individuals, men and women, constantly construct their identity to fit the existing structure. These structures within formal organisational systems manifest as organisational processes, policies, practices and procedures, and so do not appear gendered on the face of it. For instance, members of the organisation, including women, begin to accept and become even positively disposed to these conditions. Acker's (1990; 1992; 2006) gender theory is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two but is used in this study as a conceptual tool to understand how gender is entrenched in organisational structures in a country like Saudi Arabia.

These scholarly perspectives reveal an obvious need to understand the experiences of women in management positions specifically in academia in a conservative country like Saudi Arabia while recognising the socio-cultural, institutional and organisational imperatives. Therefore, my study explores the lived experiences of female academics and how they negotiate their working lives and careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia through their words, their narratives and their stories. Also, my study makes a methodological contribution to gender studies because these already stated socio-cultural, institutional and organisational considerations have not fully been explored in the context of Saudi Arabia. Further, based on my search, to date, ethnographic-based research, which offers a unique insider perspective on gender research in the academia within a Saudi Arabia context are sparse. Based on these submissions, my study will recommend different strategies on how to address these problems. By doing so, I hope to contribute to filling the gap in the gender research literature regarding women in higher management in academia in Saudi Arabia. I now discuss the methods I adopt and employ in this research in the next section.

1.6. Overview of Methods

1.6.1. An introduction of the use of narratives and biography

Having outlined my motivation, the context, and theoretical framework I now explain how I developed a set of methods to enable me to understand the working lives of female academics in Saudi Arabia from the inside (I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Three. To do this, I chose a narrative approach based on life history auto-biography. In the remainder of this section, I explain how this approach enables me to achieve the aims stated in section 1.0 above.

My study aims to understand the lived experience of women professionals as represented by female academics and how they negotiate their working lives/careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia. I adopt a narrative approach, to present my participant's lived experiences by representing my subjects' accounts as life histories (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). I will argue that my study reveals several aspects of feminist/gendered perspectives, focused on both the real-life experiences of women within organisational and wider social contexts regarding jobs, societal roles and expectations in Saudi society, as well as my own story and experiences in that country. As a Saudi woman and academic myself, I have also experienced the limitations of patriarchy like these women. Therefore, my research also has a political dimension (Reedy, 2009; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) as I am lending my voice to the emancipation of women from discrimination, subjugation, and suppression in Saudi Arabia. I am motivated by the possibility that my research will bring about social change. I adopted a qualitative approach, using unstructured interviews as my data collection tool. I engaged 20 women in two universities in Saudi Arabia in a conversation in which they told me their life stories by way of narratives. I have transcribed these conversations, which I have analysed and discussed in chapters five and six using thematic analysis.

Based on my aim in this research (to understand the lived experiences of women professionals as represented by female academics and how they negotiate their working lives/careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia), my participant's lived experiences are fundamental to my study. Hence, I adopted a narrative approach to articulate and comprehend the accounts of my participants as

life histories (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). I acknowledge an empathetic inclination to my research (Gray, 2008; Reedy, 2009) because I share certain experiences with my respondents having also experienced social, religious and professional constraints due to my female gender. I, therefore, acknowledge that by lending a voice to revealing these constraints, my research also has a political and emancipatory dimension (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Indeed, it has been pointed out that specifically within feminist research a strong case has been made for using autobiography by way of stories/narratives for rediscovering and unearthing marginalised voices (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Griffiths, 1995), and in this case, the voices of my participants in Saudi Arabia. I also draw on the argument by Reedy (2009) that using stories/narratives as I do in my research also serves to counter what may be perceived as the dominance of patriarchal interpretations of the world.

I, therefore, use stories/narratives within my research because of its potential to challenge the status quo in recognition of the historical tendency to marginalise if not Ignore women's experiences and accounts of their experiences (Anderson et al., 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2008). I will argue that my whole research is anchored on how my participants, all women in academia, interpret their lives, and how they can relay this through their stories/narratives. The stories of these women, then, as told by them helped me to make meaning of their experiences and mine. Because I sought a similarity between my experiences and that of my participants, using storytelling/narratives in this research also aided me in collecting data through the stories of my participants, through which I aimed to craft a collectively contextual and coherent account. I admit that based on this last point, some will argue that as a method of data collection, storytelling/narratives also moved me towards a preferred story about myself. However, I acknowledge that a narrative approach is based on social constructionist principles (Norton & Siliep, 2018) that in my case suggests an understanding of the cultural heritage and context in which female subjugation and discrimination takes place as fundamental to how these imperatives shaped the experiences of my participants and their reactions to their experiences also. I do not take for granted that just because there is a possibility that my experience and that of my participants are similar, explaining these experiences will be simple and straightforward though.

Rather, I recognise that there may be inherent contradictions in the narratives of my participants rooted in the implicit subjectivity of their socially constructed stories. The task for me, then, is to uncouple the multiple interpretations as well as any inherent paradoxes (Tamboukou, Andrews & Squires 2013). Therefore, in this research, I treat the narratives of my participants politically, because I engage with them based on the notion that like me, they also strive to overcome repression and seek emancipation suggestive of rebellion against patriarchal organisational and power structures (Tamboukou, Andrews & Squires 2013). As I discuss in detail in Chapter Three, through the stories of my participants, things directly linked to them or micro aspects and other broader social/institutional imperatives cultural, social, political and economic context or macro aspects was revealed in my research.

As I listened to these twenty female academics narrate their stories through unstructured interviews, I came to this understanding that despite our similarities and common social and organisational contexts, we all had unique realities and interpretation of events. I would argue therefore that using reflexivity with narratives enriched my data through my participant's stories (Norton & Siliep, 2018). In telling my participants stories, I was challenged with the realities of some of my frequently hidden biases and values which I was compelled to confront. Narrative feminist research may be concerned with a single event, an experience, or an entire life, just as analysis may focus on plots, characters, roles, themes, structures, props, functions and linguistic turns, as well as the interplay between the story and the storytelling (Chase, 2005; Fraser, 2004; Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Riessman, 2013). While some storytellers focus more on the plots, characters, settings and themes, others will concentrate more on the structure, function and form of language used in the storytelling process (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Riessman, 2008). I will argue that narratives in my research are a reflection of these perspectives in some ways, but specifically, I pay attention to how the stories of my participants are told (Andrews, 2013) as well as the content of stories. I articulate these insights through the lens of the social exchange theory (SET), which I describe next.

1.7. Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) is rooted in sociology and social psychology and has also been used to articulate relations of oppression in feminist research (Molm & Hedley, 1992; Maccoby, 2002). SET articulates social behaviour in specific contexts such as within organisations by proposing that parties' involvement is rooted in perceptions that the exchange will provide some benefits and is contingent on reciprocal rewards (Emerson, 1962; 1976). That is individual behaviour in different contexts such as the organisation, is exclusively based on social interaction in which exchanges or exchange activity involves the tangible and the intangible, and more specifically (perceptions of) cost and rewards (Homan & Behaviour, 1961).

This idea emphasises that interactions between women as members of groups such as family, academia, their managers, or exchanges in a social or organisational context are transactional – based on perceptions of cost and benefit rooted in trust. In essence, SET presents an analysis of how perceptions of cost and rewards in the relationship between women as individuals and groups determine the interaction pattern rooted in trust (Molm, 1991). Therefore, SET focuses on how women, as members of different groups involved in the exchange relationship, depend on each other to derive the highest socially endorsed and recognised value from outcomes. Behaviours of women in the relationship are structured by socially (or organisationally) determined patterns or expectations that improve the outcome's value.

This suggests that in Saudi Arabia and specifically in academia, decisions of women to engage or not to engage in an exchange process are mainly dependent on the implementation of a subjective cost-benefit analysis of alternatives. Within more specific contexts like academia, women will, therefore, decline outcomes perceived negatively. The costs surpass the expected (positive) value to be obtained from the exchange. Based on the SET, women are likely to be involved in repeated exchanges over time when trust and the perceived value of outcome and expectations remain positive and sustained over time (Benson & Irving, 2016).

In chapter three I discuss in more detail the framework for my research, the significance of my close involvement with my research, including autobiography and

a form of ‘self-ethnography’ as approaches to reflection and reflexivity within my study based on the works of some notable scholars (Reedy, 2009; Robson, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Cunliffe, 2003, 2008, 201; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Reedy & King, 2017).

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In my introductory chapter, I stated that this thesis aims to address the research question: ***How does discrimination and subordination operate in the everyday lives of women in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how do they respond to these***?

In this chapter, I begin to address this research question by critically examining feminist perspectives on gender and equal opportunities, particularly as they are utilised within management and organisation studies. In particular, I concentrate on work that locates the disadvantaged position of women within organisations as resulting from patriarchy and male hegemony (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990). Riley and Evans (2017) have described patriarchy as a system of society or government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it and male hegemony as ideas about how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women, and other gender identities, which are perceived as feminine in a given society.

The chapter is structured as follows: First, I explain the emergence of different perspectives on feminism or gender perspectives (also called waves). Lee and Hudson (2017) refer to these perspectives as a range of political, ideological, and social movements that share a common goal, which is to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. I include an outline of these different stages of the historical development of feminist thought and acknowledge that the fundamental ideas of these periods sometimes overlapped. I give an account of and draw on the different perspectives of feminism because the patriarchal, discriminatory and unequal social situation and conditions women find themselves in Saudi Arabia (Almunajjed, 2010) are reminiscent and reflective of some key elements of the different waves in the context of 19th century US and Europe (Gill and Walker, 1992; Springer, 2002; Graff, 2003; Snyder; 2008) specifically regarding how women are often characterised. For instance, Saudi Arabia offers some unique resemblance to these aforementioned western contexts of that time because it combines a highly conservative cultural and social environment with a modern technical economy (Moghadam, 2004; Sidani, 2005; Metcalfe, 2011) and so the need

for a highly educated labour force (Sadi and Al-Ghazali, 2010; Elamin and Omair, 2010). Thus the waves provide a useful way of giving an overview of these contexts in which the different perspectives of feminism advanced, which I draw on to analyse the Saudi context and the experiences of women academics in that context.

My analysis of the development of feminist thought reveals how equal opportunities approaches began as part of the feminist movement by focussing on employment practices and on "providing equality between persons of different groups to achieve full, productive and freely chosen employment" (Lean Lim, 1996: 34). I also reveal how by focussing on the negative outcomes of discrimination against employees, equal opportunities eventually became a mainstream managerial approach (Patil, 2013) giving way to more critical perspectives including but not limited to the theory of performativity and intersectionality (Maxwell et al. 2001). I explain this link in later sections of this chapter by examining the views of scholars such as Fagenson (1990a), Ford (2006), Acker (2009), Davidson and Burke (2011) who argue that organisational and institutional structures tend to privilege men overwhelmingly, while women lag in key positions. However, I also scrutinise critiques of this assertion (e.g. Lorde, 2000; Knowles, 2019) who offer the view that women are complicit in their domination by men through what some scholars see as concludes is the internalisation of external forms of oppression which consequently influences how women see themselves – their self-identity (Breines, 2002; Gines, 2014; Golob, 2014). Consequently, one of the most sustained critiques of the subordinate position of women in society generally and organisations, in particular, can be found in feminist theory.

Based on this, throughout this chapter, I critically evaluate feminist perspectives by considering the main elements of feminist thought and their usefulness as a way of understanding the position of female academics in Saudi Arabia. I would argue that this approach will provide the foundation and background against which the research focus can be comprehended, which is the experiences of female professionals, and specifically female academics in Saudi Arabia regarding how they comprehend and negotiate discrimination and subordination in academia in Saudi Arabia. This approach also sets the tone for discussions in Chapter three, where I undertake an evaluation of feminist literature specific to middle-eastern/Arabian/Saudi Arabian contexts which I attempt to compare to Western perspectives throughout the chapter. Subsequently, I conclude this chapter by outlining a number of key issues that I will

examine further in relation to my empirical data in chapter four such as more recent perspectives (connected to third wave feminist thought) such as multicultural or global feminism and the link to the equal opportunities debate - or the right of persons to be treated without discrimination, especially on the grounds of sex, race, age (Nentwich, 2006). The overall aim of this chapter, then, is to provide that framework through which I can make sense of the perspectives, personal lives and career stories of female academics in higher educational institutions in Saudi Arabia in my empirical analysis and discussion chapters. I open this discussion by undertaking an overview of perspectives on feminism.

2.2. Perspectives on Feminism

In this section, I undertake an analysis of the historical development of feminist thought the articulation of these views is fundamental to my study because, while these perspectives developed in the West in the main, it provides that context against which female subjugation within organisations and in the wider society in Saudi Arabia can be comprehended. Furthermore, these perspectives are central to my study because it provides a systematic structure for seeing how certain key ideas regarding women's position in society emerged and what the historical/sociocultural contexts for them were. I will argue that this approach of articulating these perspectives and linking this up with the situation of women in Saudi Arabia will then enable me to make comparisons with the current contexts of Western and Arabic societies.

Although some locate the origins of feminism in ancient Greece and the medieval world (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2006) as well as with 18th-century writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, it is more usual to trace the development of feminist thinking as having occurred in three 'waves' (Gill and Walker, 1992; Springer, 2002; Graff, 2003; Snyder, 2008). I shall adopt this idea of 'waves' here to begin my consideration of feminist theory before going on to problematise it and locate it in the specifics of the experience of women in Saudi Arabia. One could argue that this term erroneously implies that each "wave" stood alone and that its main ideas faded as another "wave" emerged. On the contrary, as Mann and Huffman (2005) point out, the focus of these periods sometimes overlapped, with one being continuations or extensions of the ideas of the last. The difference was in the context within which each wave subsisted.

To begin, first wave feminism was chiefly concerned with a struggle for equal opportunities.

First wave feminism is usually identified as predominantly taking place from the late nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century in the United States and Europe, evolving against the background of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics (Snyder, 2008). Campbell (1999), for example, argues that this era was aimed at opening up opportunities for women, with a focus on voting rights (suffrage) and ownership of property. Before this time, women were denied voting rights, the main reason being perceived lower mental capacity and consequently, the notion that women were more suited for just domestic work and incapable of assuming public offices. However, as Campbell (1999) points out, this notion was challenged by feminists in this period because it essentially restricted women's lives purely to the domestic sphere. Movements such as suffragism reflect the primary concerns of first wave feminists, particularly the emphasis on voting rights (Snyder 2008).

In the United States, based on the 19th amendment in 1920, the focus of the movement began to shift to other areas of gender inequality. Indeed, as Gill and Walker (1992) argue, during the first wave, specifically in the United States the issue of equal opportunities between the genders in the workplace, that is the right of women to be treated without discrimination, especially on the grounds of their sex or race (Patil, 2013), emerged as women began to enter the workplace in larger numbers. Increasingly, questions regarding the family, child-bearing, a woman's right not to bear children (which included controversial issues such as abortion and birth control), and a woman's right to refuse to have sex became more significant (Snyder 2008).

In the main, therefore, first wave feminism opened up discussions about women's suffrage, which led to an examination of the differences between men and women as they were then viewed. Whelehan (2000) writes that the outcome of this struggle was the assertion by some that women were (on the contrary), morally superior to men, and so their presence in the public domain would improve civic behaviour and consequently the political process (Whelehan, 2000). However, Springer (2002) and Graff (2003) contend that the first wave feminist movement became increasingly

controversial for its focus on the experiences of white, middle- and upper-class Western women and this led to the rise of second-wave feminism.

2.2.1. Critiques of the First Wave and Rise of Second Wave Feminism

Before the full emergence of the second wave of feminist thought, there were some important events which laid the groundwork for it. First wave feminism took place in the late nineteenth and into the mid-twentieth century in the United States and Europe, evolving against the background of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. Campbell (1999) argues. Campbell (1999) also points out, this notion - perceived lower mental capacity and consequently, the notion that women were more suited for just domestic work and incapable of assuming public offices - was challenged by feminists in this period because it essentially sentenced women to a cult of domesticity. Snyder (2008) points out that many of the aims identified with first wave feminism are linked to ideas of that era such as suffragism (ideas around gender equality especially around suffrage for women) and suffragist (campaigners for gender equality particularly voting rights). Gill and Walker (1992) also argue that during this period, as women gained the right to vote (at first on an unequal basis with men with regards to age and class), other inequalities took centre stage in the campaign. For instance, this movement also began to address the family within the terms of child-bearing, a woman's right not to bear children (which included controversial issues such as abortion and birth control), a woman's right to refuse to have sex.

Some first wave feminist supporters/members, however, became increasingly critical of its exclusiveness by arguing that it focused on the experiences of white, middle- and upper-class Western women and this led to the rise of second-wave feminism (Springer, 2002; Graff, 2003). Also, towards the end of the 1st wave period, there were a number of critical voices regarding its central concerns and assumptions which can be loosely grouped around the development of the concept of patriarchy. Simone de Beauvoir, a French writer, had in the 1940s examined the notion of women being perceived as *other* in the patriarchal society (de Beauvoir and Simons, 2005). First wave feminist thought was seen as incapable of addressing what authors like De Beauvoir concluded were patriarchal representations of women - that is a male inspired ideology accepted as a norm and enforced by the ongoing development of

myths, where certain features of being a woman (for instance ability to get pregnant) were used to qualify women as the second/lower sex (Bailey and Stallings, 2017).

Thus, as Mann and Huffman (2005) argue, against this background, the second movement of feminism was thought to have begun in the 1960s and continued into the 90s. This period spread against the background of the anti-war and civil rights movements and increasing self-consciousness of several minority groups around the world. Snyder (2008) offers the view that second wave feminism also arose as a reaction to the post second world war propaganda which sought to revert to the traditional pre-war status of women after the return of soldiers from fighting and that second wave feminists view the traditional roles of women as a basis to depict women as a lesser gender. In line with this argument, Mann and Huffman (2005) point to legal battles which helped create legal statutes of equality during this wave such as equal pay acts, anti-discrimination acts and access to education acts, sexuality and the woman's right to equality of free expression.

Springer (2002) also notes that as well as rigorous debates as regards the advent of the (birth control) pill and rights of access to abortion (being discussions which started during the first wave) were also core arguments around anti-pornography and sex work, which was viewed as derogatory and exploitative of women. Thus, Snyder (2008) argues that the second wave was progressively radical because sexuality and reproductive rights were central issues, and much of the effort here was focused on guaranteeing social equality regardless of sex (an extension and reinforcement of the equal opportunities debate inspired by the first wave). The author further notes that in this era, feminists ridiculed the idea that women could be reduced to items of beauty controlled by the patriarchy that sought to keep them in the home or dull, low-paying jobs.

Philosophically, this second era was increasingly theoretical, embedded in an ideological mix rooted in a fusion of neo-Marxism and psycho-analytical theory (e.g. Lacan, 1966; Harvey, 1984) which increasingly linked the subjugation of women with wider criticisms of patriarchy, capitalism, the woman's role as wife and mother as well as normative heterosexuality (or hetero-normativity (expectations, demands, and constraints produced when heterosexuality is taken as normative within a society -

Krolokke, & Sorensen, 2006). In essence, within this movement, sex and gender were separated, with the former being biological, and the latter a social construct that varies across cultures over time. Bailey and Stallings (2017) argue that in comparison while the first movement campaigners of feminism were middle class and Western, white women, the second wave, (at its later stage though) began to attract women of colour and notably underdeveloped nations in South America, Asia, Africa and to a lesser extent the Middle East. As Campbell (1999) suggests, this was an indication that women of different social and economic orientations and circumstances in these nations were looking for camaraderie. Therefore, within the second wave, the idea developed that women's struggle is a class struggle. Further, the view that women are a social class and that race, class, and gender oppression are all related/intersected emerged. However, this view (an assertion of intersectionality theory, which I discuss in later parts of this chapter) took root more strongly within third wave feminism.

Thus, scholars (e.g. Gill and Walker, 1992; Springer, 2002; Graff, 2003; Snyder, 2008; Mann and Huffman, 2005) broadly agree that while first-wave feminism focused mainly on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality (such as voting rights, property rights), second-wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities. Springer (2002) notes that ordinary women made job gains in professions such as the military, the media, and sports because of second-wave feminist advocacy. According to the author, second-wave feminism also focused on a battle against violence with proposals for marital rape laws, the establishment of rape crisis and battered women's shelters, and changes in custody and divorce law. Furthermore, an offshoot of this period was the emergence of the notion that women working together create a special and dynamic relationship that is not possible in mixed-groups, which would ultimately work for the betterment of the entire planet. Women were seen as more humane, collaborative, inclusive, peaceful, nurturing, democratic, and holistic in their approach to problem-solving than men (Mann & Huffman, 2005). This movement linked this outcome to both the long subjugation of women and their biology and inspired the coinage of the term "ecofeminism" (a philosophical and political theory and movement which combines ecological concerns with feminist ones, regarding both as resulting from male domination of society -

Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). Therefore, women, more than men, were seen as natural advocates of environmentalism.

Nevertheless, under this wave, a contention emerged. Graff (2003) notes that features such as nurturing seen as qualifying women for public/civic roles (because it implied that women would be more attentive to public demands than men), was also regarded, paradoxically, as a validation of the view that women were tailor-made for domestic roles (such as taking care of children). Also, as agues, the views of proponents of this wave were criticised for being intellectually-based, ignoring the experiences of non-white, working-class women. Consequently, although it is still a part of current feminist thought and action, Snyder (2008) argues that it has evolved into the third wave since the late 1980s as argued below.

2.2.2. Third Wave Feminism

In this section, I discuss how third wave feminism, with its focus on language, identity and the intersection of various forms of identities provides me with a number of key theoretical ideas. One of the main aspects of third wave feminism is its focus on identity, particularly self-identity (rather than seeing women as some homogenous collective category). The concept of identity is central to my own research and so, in the subsequent sections of this chapter, I develop a set of theoretical ideas regarding female identity in more detail, beginning with how third wave feminist ideas emerged and thrived.

Third-wave feminism is linked to poststructural and postmodern feminist thought (Bolatito, 2003). Poststructural feminism while in large part a tool for literary analysis, also deals in psychoanalysis and socio-cultural critique and seeks to explore relationships between language, sociology, subjectivity and power-relations as they impact upon gender in particular (Prasad, 2005). In essence, it engages with what Randall (2010) calls "the contingent and discursive nature of all identities, and in particular the social construction of gendered subjectivities (Prasad, 2005). A contribution of poststructuralist views is that there is no universal single female or male identity. Butler (2004) for instance explored the constricting nature of social norms in constructing 'normal' men and women and argued for feminism without a feminist

subject (a core focus of the theory of performativity) revealing the constraining influence implicit in overt identity politics (Guting, 2003).

However, postmodern feminism is a mix of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and French feminism (Sands & Nuccio, 1992) with a goal: to destabilise the patriarchal norms entrenched in society that have led to gender inequality (Elbert, 1991). Postmodern feminists seek to accomplish this goal through rejecting essentialism, philosophy, and universal truths in favour of embracing the differences that exist amongst women to demonstrate that not all women are the same (Tong, 1989). Postmodern feminists reject these ideas because they argue that if a universal truth is applied to all woman, it minimises individual experiences, and suggest, therefore that ideas displayed as the female norm in society stem from masculine notions of how women should be portrayed (Tong, 1989). Postmodern feminists are credited with drawing attention to dichotomies in identities (a thrust of theories like intersectionality) and demonstrating how language influences the difference in treatment of genders (Wallin, 2001). The inclusion of postmodern theory into feminist theory is not readily accepted by all feminists, though. Some believe postmodern thought undermines the distinction between postmodern theory and feminist theory, while other feminists are in favour of the union between the two (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). While similarities, therefore, exist between the two ideologies, so do differences. Nevertheless, both ideas formed the core thrust of third wave feminist perspectives (Bolatito, 2003).

Third-wave feminism is linked to diverse strains of feminist activity and study, and while its boundaries are a subject of debate, Rampton (2008) suggests it began in the early 1990s and continues to the present. The movement arose as a response to the perceived failures of and backlash against initiatives and activities created by second-wave feminism during the 1960s to 1980s, and the realisation that women are of many colours, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds. In the view of Baumgardner and Richards (2000), the third period started in the mid-'90s informed by post-colonial and post-modern philosophy. In this phase, many theories were destabilised, including ideas of universal womanhood, body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

In comparison to the second wave, Yuval-Davis (1997) writes, third-wave feminism is linked to diverse strains of feminist activity and study, and while its boundaries are a subject of debate, Rampton (2008) suggests it began in the early 1990s continuing to the present. The movement arose as a response to the perceived failures of and backlash against initiatives and activities created by second-wave feminism during the 1960s to 1980s, and the realisation that women are of many colours, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds. In the view of Baumgardner and Richards (2000), the third period started in the mid-'90s informed by post-colonial and post-modern philosophy. This phase was marked by changes in ideas regarding universal womanhood, body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

For instance, lesbian political activism was defined under third wave feminism (Faderman, 1981) as this era was more inclusive of intersecting oppressions such as racism and homophobia. Proponents of this wave (e.g. Rebecca Walker) sought to avoid what they considered the second wave essentialist definition of femininity (Walker, 1992) – an assumed universal female identity (Yuval-Davis 1997; Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Rampton, 2008). Third-wave feminists advocated for further changes in the power of women and the portrayal of men as superiors (Rampton, 2008). Indeed, the central focus of the third wave was race, class and sexuality and this wave tended to evoke a feminist ideology of inclusion, focussed on individual issues within sub-fields rather than being one homogeneous ideology (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Third wave feminism looks at the advances made by earlier waves and addresses the problems within these other initiatives which in the main is ignoring, disregarding or discounting the intersecting nature of oppression and oppressed groups.

It also addressed the issue of feminism defining what is and isn't good for women and specifically redefined the concepts of empowerment and oppression by changing the original meaning as defined by second-wave feminists (Rampton, 2008). Thus, third-wave feminism seeks to avoid what it deems the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which often assumed a universal female identity. Also, this era evoked

changes in the portrayals of men as superiors as well as in the language that had been used to define women. Scholars like King (1988) have therefore argued that rather than stifle the postulations of the second wave, third wave feminist movement challenged, and reclaimed words, ideas and removed sexist definitions, and challenged the assumption that institutions are not sexist. Third wave feminists also asserted that it is the systems, which carry the sexism and the institutions, and that these systems can be remade and redefined to remove the inherent sexism. In all, in the third wave, what constitutes a woman's identity, the elements which the woman's identity embodied and the dynamics of how that identity was formed was a key focus. In the next section, I analyse the concept of identity before examining female identity within feminist theory to show the broader relevance of the concept for my study.

2.3. Understanding Identity

There are several scholarly views of identity. Identity is been presented as ascribed and socially and geographically determined (Barth, 1994) although this view is associated with self-identification of women in the context of social groups like family and kin and is therefore accused of introducing rigid identity boundaries and so essentializing female identity (Yuval-Davis 1997; Rampton, 2008). The other perspective, however, treats identity as subjective by emphasising the relevance of the individual in the 'crafting' or 'constructing' of a self-identity (Cohen, 2013). Consequently, the focus of this perspective is on the individual, and so, regarding gender identity, the role of the woman is seen as fundamental in maintaining a female identity (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). However, critics also argue that based on this perspective, identity is reduced to individual/individualised perceptions of identity. That is, other factors (such as social, cultural, geographical, professional) that inform how an individual constructs a self-identity are neglected (Bader, 2001).

Reedy (2009) presents the view that "the term 'Identity' is been described using numerous terms such as 'individual', 'agency', 'subjectivity', 'self', 'authenticity', 'autonomy', 'role', 'person', 'actor', 'personal identity' and so on…" (p. 87). Thus, identity is as it is an inward consciousness of ourselves. However, the idea that we are also a product of several (group and other) identities (Craib, 1998) suggests that

identity is also the outcome of external social membership. Theories of identity have been rigorously debated in the fields of the sociology of work and organisations (Giddens 1991; Brown 2001; 2017). While a common focus of these studies is how individuals identify and define themselves based on familiar collective categories such as race, gender, class, nationality, occupation, profession, age, amongst others, this definition of identity has been antagonised by other perspectives (Cerulo 1997). For instance, there are some consensus regarding how individuals self-identify. That is how they fashion self through (free) choices which suggests that identity is individualised and driven by rapid changes in a progressively globalising world. Identity is, therefore, the fashioning of ourselves through lifestyle choices (Giddens 1991). That is, while the relevance of the group remains, it does to the degree that individuals still cling unto group *labels* although it is also the case that how they see self is frequently antithetical to group requirements or identity (Woodin, 2005). Castells (2004) therefore argues that this wipe-out of the more traditional perspectives of identity (focussed on group dynamics) and the rise of individualism in the crafting of a sense of self is based on the changing landscape of identity construction rooted in globalisation.

Elliot (2001) has presented identity-based on two perspectives. One where identity is given, determined, imposed, and reactive, where the individual has no free choice over the constituents of identity. The other perspective sees identity as an outcome of the interplay between the individual as agents, discourses or social structures. This issue of determinism versus choice is one that differentiates more psychologically driven perspectives such as behaviourism (which disputes that identities are a product of choice because individuals do not have control over their identities - Schwartz, 1986/7) and sociological perspectives such as symbolic interactionism (which advocates that identities are embedded in group membership, social norms, meaning and the interpretation of mean as well as the evocation of symbols (Blumer,1969). Studies, therefore, reveal a tension regarding the relevance of the group in articulating identity processes by which individuals strive to construct a sense of self by selecting, rejecting or accepting various aspects of the self-definitions on offer.

In this study, though, I draw on aspects of these various perspectives by focusing on my participants as individuals in their own right but also their social world (membership of family, social groups, organisations and professions). Consequently, I accept that the boundaries between individual, organisational, institutional and social settings remain fluid and sometimes indistinguishable because identity is constantly constructed and reconstructed by women based on symbols and meanings generated through language and culture, as we shall see in the subjects' narratives (see participant narratives in Chapter Five). In the next section, I explicate on perspectives of identity, specifically in the context of specific feminist theories.

2.4. Feminist theory and identity

In the last section, I presented an overview of the third wave feminist perspectives whereas, in this section, I move on to consider the issue of identity within feminist theory. The concept of identity is central to my study because the way women self-identify and how they are seen by others, particularly the patriarchy (including men and their proxies), has been noted as fundamental in uncoupling the nuances of discrimination against women (Lorde, 2000; Breines, 2002) and consequently female subjugation in countries like Saudi Arabia. Consequently, I attempt to analyse the web of perspectives within third wave feminism specifically as regards how women craft their identity or what De Beauvoir (1952) calls the self. The point of De Beauvoir (1952) is that how women see themselves, that is a woman's self-concept and in essence gender and sexuality may influence how they internalise other people's interpretation of whom or what they are. Identity is fundamental in articulating gender discrimination because a woman's gender embodies the intersection of individual, sociohistorical, ethnocultural, and organisational structures and processes with multiple identities relayed through real/material experiences in context (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007; Healy, Bradley & Forson, 2011).

Identity has been a fundamental discussion through all the waves of feminism but gained momentum in the later stages of the second wave and through the third wave. Thus, the third wave ideology focuses on a more post-structuralist and postmodernist interpretation of gender and sexuality. Spelman (1988) argues that the initial challenges to second-wave feminism by third wave advocates revealed a focus on

difference based on identity but resulted in two opposing political camps: one that embraced identity as the key to liberation; and a second that saw freedom in resistance to identity. The former is best illustrated by feminists of colour and ethnicity, whose identity politics and intersectionality theory critiqued the second wave for its alleged essentialism, white-centeredness - or what Spelman (1988) terms white solipsism - and failure to adequately address the simultaneous and multiple oppressions they experienced. The latter, however, is typified by postmodernist and post-structuralist feminists who critically questioned the notion of clear identities and viewed freedom as the struggle against categorisation/identity. Hence, while the essentialist inspired "we" or "sisterhood" of the second wave was presumably meant to unify the women's movement. Instead, it fragmented it. Spelman (1988, p. x) calls this division the "Trojan horse of feminist ethnocentrism".

Smith (1983) raises a related critique mainly by feminists of colour around the issue of how the second wave dealt with multiple identities and oppression. Here two trends within the second wave were most frequently critiqued. The first treated multiple oppressions as separate and distinct. The second saw oppressions in terms of hierarchies and so treated one form of oppression as more significant than another. However, King (1988) notes that neither of these approaches adequately conceptualised multiple oppressions or the separate identity of the oppressed as simultaneous, inseparable, and interlocked. Some of the earliest authors to articulate the simultaneous and non- hierarchical nature of oppressions such as Hull, Bell-Scott and Smith (1982); Moraga and Anzaldua (1983); Smith (1983); Bell (1984) viewed themselves as outsiders within the feminist movement and, as pioneers of the third wave, created a feminism of their own (Lorde, 2000). Importantly, their new feminism highlighted the need for feminists not only to confront external forms of oppression but also to scrutinise forms of oppression and discrimination that they had internalised. This required an examination of how individuals can be connected by difference, and how the politics of the past enabled what Breines (2002, p. 112) terms "the loss of each other" – or the re-emphasis of differences.

However, Vogel (1991) has challenged the idea that second-wave feminists were not acutely aware of issues of race, class and imperialism because these were an integral part of the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. Breines (2002, p. 1122) however offers that an “abstract anti-racism characterised much of the theorising and politics of white feminism”. In essence, while many white, second-wave feminists wrote about and analysed differences by race and class, they rarely interacted with women of colour. This abstract theoretical/analytical comprehension of racism proved insufficient to accommodate and address the intersecting nature of oppression and discrimination. Breines (2002, p. 1123) writes: “Without knowing one another, they could not make a movement together”. However, since identities placed special boundaries on group membership, this comprehension embodied the negative potential to revert to fragmentation or “tribalism” (Touraine, 1998, p. 131). Thus, identity politics not only affected the political force of feminism; it also affected the way feminist theoretical perspectives came to be defined or distinguished. In the next few sections, I articulate the concept of identity in Saudi Arabia, as used in my study as well as two theories that help me articulate the complexities and interconnectivity of female identity: performativity (Butler, 1988; 1993) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990; 1998).

2.5. Theories of Performativity and Intersectionality

Butler (1993, p. xii) describes performativity as “that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constraints”. This description places emphasis on the manners by which female identity is passed or brought to life through discourse. Performative acts are types of authoritative speech that can happen and be enforced through the law or norms of the society which, when communicated, induce conformity and power. Furthermore, Butler’s (1988) definition of gender as an act, that people come to perform which has been rehearsed much like a script suggests that people make reality through repetition (just as actors who make a script). Butler (1988) therefore sees gender identity not as an expression of what one is, rather as something that one does, a mode of self-making [or self-identity] through which [female] subjects become socially intelligible.

The concept of performativity, as developed by Butler (1989) argues that gender, and effectively being a woman with a female identity, is a performance, but not voluntary or based on individual rational choices but rather a socioculturally required, scripted, and compulsory performance that must be repeated infinitely. Therefore, the act of performing gender or gender identity and effectively, attached gendered roles and tasks is a necessary condition of retaining legitimised membership of and identity in the society. Refraining from performing a socially acceptable gender role can bring ridicule, marginalisation, and ostracism, a prison sentence or even death. Butler (1989) though, admits that while there is still some element of independent choice and free will in how a woman self-fashions (sees and crafts a sense of self), choices are limited by gender codes and scripts that precede each woman born into society.

This suggests that a woman does not begin to exist, and her identity is not recognised to exist by others (her identity) until she is subjected to societies constraining ideological norms. Being subjected to discriminations and constraints through socially rooted gender ideologies then allows a woman to emerge as a social subject with a legitimate identity. Consequently, according to Butler, the operation of a system of performativity produces and regulates gender identity, dividing social beings into the categories of “male” and “female”, which effectively limit a woman’s choices in organisations as in the broader society.

However, while performativity in its original conception focusses on the subjection of the female identity as a single identity category, the theory of intersectionality focuses on the interconnected nature of social categorisations including gender, race, and class as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping, interlocking and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. The theory of intersectionality is used to describe the ways in which gender discrimination exists within a matrix of other identity categories such as race, ethnicity, nationality, class, disability, and sexual orientation, which interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to complex forms of oppression and inequality (Crenshaw, 1989). The theory arose based on Crenshaw’s (1989) view that until then, the dominant approach to discrimination tends to be focussed on exclusions occurring along a single identity category such as gender or race (a reference to theories like performativity). Consequently, such approaches were critiqued based on the view that merely adding race/racism and gender/sexism together does not spontaneously reveal or address

how women are relegated. Based on earlier works which articulate the experiences of discrimination by black women, Crenshaw (1989, p. 140) argues that this approach 'erases Black women in the conceptualisation, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences […] of the group'. Subsequent applications of intersectionality have been varied across scholars. As Hopkins (2017) argues, the theory has been used as an analytical framework (Cho et al., 2013) specifically for social justice (Hancock, 2016) as well as a political positioning, epistemological practice, and ontological framework (May 2015).

However, significant to my study is the use of intersectionality as a way of framing interactions of multiple identities, including gender, at intersections (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Therefore, in this study, I apply intersectionality as an analytical technique (Collins, 2013; McCall, 2005), and as a theoretical lens (Davis, 2008) for exploring the experiences of female academics in Saudi Arabia. Crenshaw (1991) is frequently recognised as the author who introduced intersectionality into work generally but more specifically in academia (Hopkins, 2017). However, although her views were developed in a western context and her research focussed on black women's employment experiences, she differentiated between structural intersectionality or how black women have to deal with 'multi-layered and routinised forms of domination' (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). She also presented political intersectionality, which focusses on how women may be marginalised based on their association with different political agendas related to marginalised groups such as gender and race. Representational intersectionality focuses on how women of colour specifically may symbolise or represent images of the woman as a relegated group generally, with a focus on the intersectional interests of women generally. When applied in the study of identities of discrimination, intersectionality then is a useful way of intervening and articulating the tensions between assertions of multiple identities, the interlocking oppressions of these identities, and the internal dynamics and workings of groups such as gender including interactions, relationships, discourses, paradoxes and lived experiences (Carbado, 2013; May, 2014, 2015; Hancock, 2016).

However, the theory has faced some criticisms, such as the view that there is no specific method or methodology associated with intersectionality (Nash, 2008),

although one could argue that this capacity to accommodate a wide variety of methods makes intersectionality flexible (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Researchers have variously used survey data, content analysis, autobiographical and biographical approaches, in-depth interviews, narratives, as well as discourse analysis (Lewis, 2009). Besides, a challenge regarding the place of social class, the balance between stability and fluidity of inequalities and focus on marginalised intersections while keeping the role of the powerful in view has been pointed out (Hancock, 2007). A further challenge is often presented around what is meant by interlocking based on the idea that intersectionality reveals interlocking forms of oppression with it not always being clear what this means in different contexts and why (Puar, 2012). Hopkins (2017) also points to intersectionality becoming mainstreamed by questioning whether it now enables white liberal feminists to maintain their central position. This position, if true, contradicts the driving force of first wave feminist thought. It also suggests an important concern regarding the applicability of intersectionality in a wide variety of contexts and disciplines including the tendency to focus on one/several identities to the neglect of others to the degree that while gender becomes relevant, age and disability may not be as regarded (Bilge, 2013). Despite these criticisms, intersectionality is referred to regularly and is familiar to many feminist theorists.

2.5.1. Gender identity, intersectionality and performativity

During the 1990s, the theory of intersecting, simultaneous and multiple oppressions/discrimination and identities were further rearticulated, largely because of the writings of Collins (1990). Also, the theory of performativity arose based on the writings of Butler (1993) who defined the performative as “that discursive practise that enacts or produces that which it names” (p. 13) or that which enacts its own referent (Gregoriou, 2013). According to Butler (1993), at the heart of becoming a subject is the female embodiment of the inconsistency between mastery and submission which, paradoxically, take place simultaneously – not in separate acts, but together in the same moment. A woman’s mastery of her identity is embodied in her submissiveness to patriarchal subjection and vice versa. As Butler (1995) argues:

> *Where one might expect submission to consist in a yielding to an externally imposed dominant order, and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, it is paradoxically marked by mastery itself … the lived simultaneity of submission as mastery, and mastery as submission, is the condition of possibility for the subject itself (pp. 45–46).*

One common notable element between these theories, which further highlights the intersecting nature of their main ideas (identity) is a reference (implicit or explicit) to the equal opportunity debate. This debate started with agitations for suffrage campaigns which, while presented as agitating for the rights of individuals irrespective of sex, focused on women's voting rights (Campbell, 1999) and became a rallying call again by second era feminists regarding anti-discrimination regulation (Whelehan, 2000). Both periods had one thing in common, though – emphasis on the need to rearticulate female identity(ies) (Horowitz, 2000). That is, first-wave feminism sought equal contract and property rights for women, challenged the 'ownership' of married women by their husbands and advocated for women's right to vote (Snyder, 2008). Second-wave feminism focused on issues of equality and discrimination and expounded on women's cultural and political identities and inequalities they faced as inextricably linked (Bowlby, 1987). Activists of this era encouraged women to change their 'socialised' self-concept by understanding how their personal lives reflected sexist and patriarchal power structures.

Regarding female identities in both eras, Friedan (2010), critiqued the idea that the identity of a woman (a means to her fulfilment) was embedded in childrearing, homemaking, husbands, children and family. Indeed, a core argument of the theory of performativity is that a woman's identity is predetermined and defined by the patriarchy (through imperatives like childrearing, homemaking, dependence on husbands, children and family) and performed through patriarchal coercion precipitating a learned performance of gender identity (Butler, 1988; 1990; 1993). In essence, the concept of learned identities (a core argument of the theory of performativity) and interlinked identities and inequalities (a core thrust of the theory of intersectionality) and the

implications for equal opportunities for women were implicit in both eras but more so in the second wave.

However, while intersectionality re-echoed the equal opportunity debate, its emergence was also seen as a rebuke to some of the limits of the equal opportunities discussion regarding female identity. For instance, radical feminists and intersectionality theorists have argued that proponents of equal opportunities do not address the causes of patriarchy and its fundamental links to female identity (Bailey and Stallings, 2017). Thus, they imply that liberal feminists and their equal opportunity narrative do not include an analysis of class or sexuality (the sex/gender system) and its identity implications for female subjugation, which translates to not celebrating womanhood (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006). However, the idea that radical feminists are focussed on what has already been defined as feminine by the patriarchy and that this fundamentally obscures differences among women has been noted by Heywood (2017). Indeed, more current feminists perspectives such as postmodern feminism, influenced by the works of Foucault (1977), Derrida (1978), Lacan (1958, 1982), espouse key concepts such as difference and diversity (race, culture, class) and the idea that the woman is different and must refuse attempts to cement their separate thoughts and identity into a unified truth too inflexible to change. Thus, postmodern feminists resist patriarchal dogma.

Further, multicultural and global feminism uses the lens of sex/gender, class, race, imperialism, colonialism and examine how class, race, gender, and sexuality operate as an interacting system of subordination. Consequently, global feminists address the social forces that divide women and focus on how to value cultural diversity. They examine the connections between gender issues and national liberation, military dictatorship, democracy, and colonialism. They also examine the role of women in the global economy. These views have some significance for the aim of my research, which is to understand the lived experiences of women professionals as represented by female academics and how they negotiate their working lives/careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia. The idea that being a woman in Saudi Arabia may be synonymous with conforming to an acceptable singular identity (Al-Khateeb, 2007) may ignore the intersecting nature of female oppression in that part of the world

because such a view does not comprehend the multiple identities of women, and more specifically, how women may use these multiple identities to negotiate constraints in their social and professional domains in countries like Saudi Arabia.

The nature of female identity or the way it is crafted in Saudi Arabia reinforces the idea of one identity (as against multiple identities) for the woman, an indication that women are expected to display a natural and consistent pattern of behaviour indicative of this acceptable identity at all times whatever the context (social, institutional or organisational). My study, therefore, questions and challenges these beliefs regarding female identity in Saudi Arabia - that certain gendered behaviours (or the identity commonly associated with femininity or masculinity) are linear and natural rather than multiconnected and learned. In essence, I argue that being a woman in countries like Saudi Arabia is not a natural endowment (as women are taught to believe from childhood to adulthood) but a learned performance of gender. By questioning the extent to which we can assume that a woman can be said to constitute herself and the degree to which acts are determined for women by language/culture and convention, I argue that performance is imposed upon the woman in Saudi Arabia to fit into what Lacan (1958, 1966, 1982) terms the symbolic order (the system of signs and conventions that determines the perception of what the woman sees as reality). I argue, therefore, that analysing or challenging female subjugation in Saudi Arabia, as my research aims to, may require the need to treat female identities as imposed, coerced, performed and interconnected, not separate (as critiques of second-wave feminism argue – Smith, 1983).

Such forced and intersected identities include, but may not be limited to, gender, social class, profession, pay, marital status, age, disability, organisational tasks/role or position, but also culture. Culture represents the wider context within which these identity dynamics and manifestations exist (Heywood, 2017). In essence, the ‘gap’ in the literature that I address in this thesis concerns the notion that female identity is rooted in a broader cultural context, but culture (which is a tool for coercing and imposing gender identity) is a negotiated phenomenon (Romani, Sackmann, & Primecz, 2011). Culture can also emerge through mutual understanding and

adjustment, congruence, and conflict. Consistent with the aim of my study, understanding how female academics negotiate patriarchal limitations (e.g., cultural norms, religious controls, institutional constraints, traditional/familial restrictions) may require a need to assess the imposed and overlapping nature of women's societal position/status, career/professional possibilities/alternatives, and pay. I am hopeful that the narratives of everyday lived experiences of female academics will reveal these imperatives.

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the period or perspectives (waves) through which current feminist thinking developed and used applicable ideas and related theories as advanced by various scholars to explain the situation for women professionals in Saudi Arabia. Also, in this Chapter, I have presented feminist views on gender by mainly western scholars and the implications of these submissions for my research. Some high points of these perspectives include the suggestion that through the internalisation of external forms of oppression which consequently influences how women see themselves – their self-identity (Breines, 2002) - women become complicit in their domination by men and that the only way out is for the Woman to become a "self" or a subject, which transcends definitions, labels, and essences tagged by men (De Beauvoir, 1952).

I reveal, therefore, a crucial aspect of all the waves of feminism – identity. I recognise how the identity debate emerged and how this debate produced a perspective that embraced identity as the key to liberation, a second view that saw freedom in resistance to identity, and the implications of these camps for the intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990). I also articulate intersectionality theory, which I apply in explaining how women see themselves, how this has implications for their identity or their sense of self and the multiple and interlocked nature of gender identities and oppressive regimes. I also connect these arguments to Butler's (1988) performativity theory, which questions the belief that certain gendered behaviours are natural rather than learned and imposed – or performed - retrospectively. In the next chapter, I begin to link these perspectives, ideas and views to social and organisational contexts in Saudi Arabia, specifically regarding the equal opportunity's discussion and its link to the feminist ideology.

Chapter Three

3.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I articulated the concept of gender identity as fundamental to understanding the complexities of female identity. I also linked that discussion to the theories of intersectionality and performativity. While the former explains the interconnectedness of female identity with other social identity categories and interlinkages of oppressive regimes against these identities, the latter suggests that female identity is synonymous with the socially rooted/compelled performance of gender. I then briefly connected these discussions to how female identity is crafted in Saudi Arabia and the implications thereof. In this chapter, I begin by discussing gender and identity in organisations based on insights from the management and organisational studies literature. I then discuss middle-Eastern perspectives on gender before analysing female identity in Saudi Arabia to reveal real influences in the constructing of female identity in that context and its relevance for my study. Then I go on to use these perspectives as a lens in places to examine equal opportunities as a thrust of feminist thought and how it applies to women in Saudi Arabia in practice.

3.2. Identity in Management and Organisational Studies (MOS)

In chapter two (see section 2.2.2), I discussed how identity had become a central concern in third-wave feminism. Likewise, identity has become an important area of enquiry in management and organisation studies (MOS), including within work on gender and organisation. In this section, I identify and evaluate the main strands of work within MOS on gender and identity before going on to contrast this with work specifically on gender within Saudi Arabia in the next section.

Scholarly discussions of identities in management and organisational studies (MOS) typically focus on terms such as ‘self’, ‘identity’ and ‘person’. Here, identity is frequently theorised as ‘a dynamic, multi-layered set of meaningful elements deployed to orientate and position one’s being-in-the-world’ (Karreman & Alvesson, 2001, p.64) with questions such as who am I/who am I not? How should I relate to others/how should others relate to me? And how should I lead my life? All relating to past, possible, provisional, desired, feared, aspired to, and alternative selves (Obodaru, 2012). Identity in this regard is not always entirely conscious or premeditated creations but a

fundamentally complex set of social interactions with others who may seek to negotiate or contest preferred versions of who one is (Goffman, 1967). Much of the identity literature is underpinned by the key idea that people desire to be unique and yet the same as others with whom they identify simultaneously. This suggests that while individuals desire a steady, clear and coherent identity, such constructions are an illusion because, identities are frequently fluid, and sometimes only situationally or circumstantially held (Brown, 2018). The point is while people often assume that they can construct their selves, as they deem appropriate, both their desire for an independent self and the identities they work on are constrained or enhanced by several dynamics. Including practices of power; contentions regarding a singular, unitary identity or many distinct identities, weather identity is relational, personal internal or external.

Also, much attention in MOS literature has been paid to processes of identity construction by scholars who see identities as unfinished work-in-progress, continually being constructed by individuals in response to the dynamic external environment, and personal preferences and circumstances. Here, processes of identity construction are frequently linked to the notion of identity work or 'the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept' (Snow & Anderson, 1987, p.1348). Approaches in broad terms have been discursive - where identities is seen as constituted through situated practices which evoke the use of language; dramaturgical – where emphasis is placed on identities as a product of actions (and inactions); symbolic – where identities are articulated through the manipulation of symbolic objects; socio-cognitive, with identities treated as fabricated through cognitive mechanisms/sense-making; and psychodynamic/psychoanalytic approaches in which identities are seen as outcomes of unconscious processes (Brown, 2017). Indeed, various approaches to explicating the concept of identity, have frequently evoked several theoretical approaches. For instance, Driver (2013, p.410) employ's Lacan's theory of lack in human subjectivity to explore how: 'a sense that something is fundamentally missing in us and from our lives' leads to necessarily doomed attempts to turn the individual into a definable object 'that knows who it is and what it wants'. Predicated on the assumption that identity deserves to be studied 'as a topic' (p.336).

The point is that considerable scholarly attention that has been devoted by scholars to how identities are constructed through identity work, and the categories of identities that individuals fabricate. However, while most attention has focused on identity rather than the similar concept of self, in problematizing either scholars have tended to draw on broader debates in the field of management to suggest that the self 'is more existentially significant' (Alvesson & Robertson, 2016, p.10), most usually an experiencing self-consciousness (Giddens, 1991). In contrast, identity is context-specific, frequently more consciously created and 'reflexively understood version of one's self' (Alvesson & Robertson, 2016, p.10). Much research on identities proceeds from this common point of origin - that is identity as certainties of categories interlinked with class, family, economy and society (Giddens, 1991) or what Brown (2017) calls 'reflexive modernisation' of identities (Kuhn, 2006). More infrequently, though attention has also been paid to identities as non-verbal constructions, such as bodily performances involving other symbolic properties (Patriotta & Spedale, 2009). A notable alternative to approaches to studying identities, which complements the use of Lacan theory as earlier stated (Driver, 2013), is one which espouses a psychodynamic perspective drawing on Freud and his cohorts.

This approach assumes that identities embody conflicting elements, which coexist within the self and scrutinises aspects of identities related to ego-defences such as fantasy and projection (Petriglieri and Stein, 2012). Often studies though seek to identify various forms of mostly contextually definite identity work (Petriglieri and Stein, 2012; Huber & Brown, 2017). Essers and Benschop, 2007), for instance, explore strategies employed by female entrepreneurs to follow conventional descriptions of femininity variously; to denounce femininity, or resist the masculine connotation of entrepreneurship by disconnecting it from masculinity, and how the women sometimes shifted their identities across intersections between gender, ethnic and entrepreneurial identities (Essers & Benschop, 2007, p.49, p.65). Indeed, a major stream of MOS studies on identity focuses on the articulation of gender identity, which I discuss in the next section.

3.2.1. Gender Identity in MOS

A major stream of theorising in MOS literature focusses on how identities are rooted in relations of power, the politics of identity construction, and questions of structure and agency. Thomas and Davies (2005) for instance examine managerial identities by drawing on Foucault, particularly Foucauldian feminist theorists including Weedon (1987) and Butler (1990) to argue that resistance has been explicated focused on explicit actions and antagonisms, whereas it occurs subtly also at the level of individual subjectivities. Of interest is the work of Trethewey (1999), who again using a Foucauldian feminist lens, explains 'how organisational and gendered discourses are…written upon women's bodies in ways that…constrain women's professional identities' (p.423). A common position of these studies regarding gender identity in organisations is how identities and identity work are implicated in 'political processes and power constellations' (Koveshnikov et al., p.1354), the degree to which individuals are able to evoke agency, the limitations implicit in constructed identities, and how organisations serve as instruments for identity regulation.

This thinking resonates with some of the main views of third-wave feminist perspectives (which I discuss in chapter two) such as the idea that women were perceived as *other* in the patriarchal society (de Beauvoir and Simons, 2005), which influenced how they were perceived in organisations by males and their proxies; that patriarchal representations of women – in organisations and in the broader society - through a male-inspired ideology led to enforcement of myths used to qualify women as the second/lower sex (Bailey and Stallings, 2017); that female identity was a product of the social construction of gendered subjectivities (Prasad, 2005; Randall (2010); that there is no universal female identity and that institutions are sexist, because institution, organisations and society carry sexism.

Within the MOS literature, also explicated is the extent to which female identities are outcomes of relations of power, which operate variously to compel, indicate, assert, confine or even coerce female identity options and their choices (e.g., Brocklehurst, 2001; Huber & Brown, 2017). Trethewey (1999) for instance shows how women's professional identities are on the one hand controlled (made compliant) but on the other sometimes empowered by professional and gendered discourses which enact 'disciplinary regimes of femininity' (p.424). This suggests that while women in organisational settings may maintain a professional identity, they must actively

navigate normative requirements (for instance, she must not appear excessively sexual, too feeble or aggressive). This idea – gendered professional and normative requirements for women - was a point of contention by second-wave feminists (see chapter two for a more detailed discussion) who argued that sex and gender were separate with the latter a social construct that varied from one individual to the other across cultures over time suggesting individualised not universal female identities (Krolokke, & Sorensen, 2006).

Thus, Trethewey (1999) argues that 'the female body [or female identity] is always a potential professional liability' (p.445). Based on this view, female identities in organisational settings is neither simply chosen nor allocated but complexly interwoven within frameworks of power (Clegg, 1989). Implicit in this view, however, are two broad scholarly perspectives. The first is advanced by scholars who link organisational actors with a degree of agency that is emphasis is on the extent to which female identity is an outcome of discourses and organisational processes (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). For instance, Essers and Benschop (2007), capture the agentic imposition on feminine identity in countries like Saudi Arabia by arguing that women's agency is imposed upon them by patriarchal systems, religious structures, moral principles, and cultural prototypes, which frequently produce women who construct a conformist identity. Within professions, this view is fundamental because it suggests that female employees feel obligated to reconstruct their identities in ways that show willing embrace of the demands of the job in organisational settings. Under such discourses, Vallas and Cummins (2015) argue that it is 'difficult for prospective [female] employees to escape' (p.313)

The second perspective, however, emphasises both a woman's scope for the agency and the structures which impose upon such activities (Boussebaa & Brown, 2017). Kuhn's (2006), for instance, suggests that while some contexts provide discursive properties that tend towards structure, others lend themselves to the agency. Regarding female identities, then, Luckmann (2008) concludes that '…personal identities are actively constructed"' (p.286), suggesting that women can exercise some

control over how they draw on a ‘historical social structure’ and its associated stock of knowledge.

Of interest to this research, though, is a view, which antagonises the Foucauldian feminist lens, regarding gender identity. Thomas and Davies (2005) contend that female workers ‘understandings of their self-identities provides an arena for resistance’ (p.686) [because] they offer ‘a more fluid and generative understanding of power and agency’ (p.687) in which people are able to exploit gaps, looseness’s and contradictions in discourses in a continuous ‘simultaneous process of resistance, reproduction and re-inscription’ (p.699). Regarding societal, historical, and organisational constraints women in Saudi Arabia face, this view suggests that they are able to take advantage of these same limiting structures and processes - paradoxically - to negotiate the same constraints. This is what Sawicki (1994) terms ‘tactical polyvalence of discourses’ used by women in these contexts to ‘negotiate the complexity of being’ (p.700).

3.3. Middle-Eastern/Arabian/Saudi Arabian Scholarly Perspectives on Gender

In this section, I start by reviewing how gender in Saudi Arabia has been predominantly considered. This accords generally with a first wave, equal-opportunities approach. Before this, however, it will be useful for the reader to understand the particular context of Saudi Arabian society and the place of women within it.

In Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, even with female literacy rate of 91 per cent (compared to 97 per cent for men) (World Economic Forum, 2014) which has precipitated more awareness among the womenfolk, job roles and career progression of women are predetermined typically by a male-dominated hierarchical structure (Hamdan, 2005; Al-Khateeb, 2007; Fakeeh, 2009). However, based on some studies (Fagenson, 1990b; Morrison, 1992; Tharenou et al., 1994; Powell, 1999) there is scholarly evidence that a patriarchal, hierarchical structure within organisations is also present in developed (and secular) countries. While I acknowledge these views, I also recognise that the difference lies in the argument that in Saudi Arabia, such male domination is official, institutionalised and legitimated by both state and the dominant religious institutions (Almunajjed, 2010). Thus, Alwedinani (2016) argues, while this form of domination against women happens in the developed West subtly, it happens

more openly in Saudi Arabia. Further, in Arab countries, some studies have shown that women managers complained about negative attitudes and stereotyping, which they face in their organisations (see Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011).

Research by Jamali et al. (2005) on 52 women employed in different geographical areas and professions in Lebanon discovered that women are perceived by male managers as submissive, emotional and less reliable, whereas men are perceived as assertive, aggressive and autonomous, and therefore, more suited to management roles. This narrow definition of the genders is a point of reference by third-wave feminists (see chapter two). Scholars of that era critiqued the portrayals of men as superiors and the second wave's essentialist definition of femininity or female identity as universal (King, 1988). Indeed, these abovementioned negative predispositions towards women in much of the Middle East are exactly the stereotypes that were used to rationalise disallowing female suffrage in an earlier period in Western societies, specifically under first wave feminism (see chapter two for a detailed discussion). However, while discrimination against women persists globally, manifestations and intensity of labels of discrimination against women may differ between the West and Arab countries. Differences in nuances of oppression, sociocultural and sociohistorical considerations as well as a need to combine and expand on ideas are some of the reasons why a purely equal opportunities approach has failed to redress gender inequality globally but more specifically in countries like Saudi Arabia.

Fakeeh (2009), therefore argues that the socialisation of male and female and the influence of cultural norms and values in that process justify this discriminatory treatment within the organisation. Thus, women get excluded from top positions, a situation which Sadi and Al-Ghazali (2010) have linked to lower commitment and motivation amongst women in these societies. This situation has led to scholarly endeavour by Elamin and Omair (2010) to answer the question as regards whether it would be possible for women in conservative, male-dominated countries like Saudi Arabia to become managers if they were to act feminine. Sadi and Al-Ghazali (2010) attempt to answer this question by suggesting that in the social context of these countries (such as those in much of the Middle East), a woman’s actions geared

towards career progression may seem irrelevant when (as is typical) management which decides if and when she progresses is male-dominated.

Relating these points to the aim of this study, it becomes clear how even within organisations like the academia in Saudi Arabia, women's progression may be contingent on how they manage constraints that they face, constraints rooted in traditions through which they were socialised and to which they unquestionably owe allegiance. More specifically, however, this submission reveals that even in countries like Saudi Arabia, organisational leadership and decision-making roles are gendered (Jamali et al., 2005). In essence, there is some evidence in the literature (Moghadam, 2004, Sidani, 2005; Sadi and Al-Ghazali, 2010; Elamin and Omair, 2010) that in general, gender stereotyping does affect women's professional career advancement and this includes the academia. In the context of countries in the Middle-East like Saudi Arabia, the situation is similar or even more critical, as presented in a study in Oman by Al-Lamki (1999) who explored influential factors in women's career progress in a Middle Eastern context, thereby painting a picture of female under-representation. In a separate study focused on Kuwait by Metle (2002) the author argues that women are not treated equally, particularly regarding promotion to top positions.

Hence, as Al-Lamki (1999) and Metle (2002) argue, men can establish their authority and dominance within organisations like academia in Arab countries. While there are studies that point to initiatives which, at least in principle, indicates intentions aimed at promoting gender equality and improving the employability of women mainly through education in some countries in the Middle East (e.g. Almunajjed, 2010), some authors (e.g. Metcalfe, 2011, Moghadam, 2004, Sidani, 2005) have argued that many countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia, continue to foster patriarchal values by reinforcing the "feminine" nature of women as against the "guardianship" and "economic responsibilities/relevance" of men. Further, studies like those of Sidani (2005) specifically point to the existence of discrimination against women within organisations even before they enter those organisations. However, these studies seem to present Middle Eastern women and specifically Saudi women as passive and all accepting of their condition. Some other studies focussed on Arab countries though

are more specific. For instance, research on ten Omani women managers revealed that in the light of traditional cultural and social values, women are considered as "tailor-made" for raising children and performing household tasks (Al-Lamky, 2007). However, these responsibilities do not diminish when women are employed outside the home, even though they may get some support either in the form of paid housemaids or from relatives. Metcalfe (2006) suggests that the reason behind such a scenario might be because the responsibilities of children and the household are assumed to be the natural role of women. This issue was a preoccupation of feminists in the second era and a challenge that third wave feminists sought to address. Thus, the family-career dilemma presents the realities of the Saudi Arabian social and organisational context in the sense that women become under-represented in organisational settings due to certain socio-cultural values.

What can be drawn from these above mentioned studies on the middle east though is that they mostly fail to explore several other angles to this discussion and specifically if and how women manage these constraints and whether some social instruments which in itself informs a woman's social identity are fundamental in this regard. For instance, the influence of a woman's social class and if this has implications for how she may be perceived or treated within and outside the organisation may shed some light regarding how women manage gender discrimination and patriarchal constraints in organisations and the wider society. Frequently, also, these studies adopt a more general approach and do not reveal in the main if stereotypical attitudes towards women professional career progression and definition of job roles, for instance, is unique to certain professions.

What these studies do reveal, however, is that the challenges women face in their quest for career progression towards management positions is partly due to the process of socialisation, but also includes gender stereotyping from childhood to adulthood, resistance of femininity, negative attitudes towards women in organisations and discriminatory practices and tendencies which contribute to the devaluing of women in the corporate world. The point is female subjugation in Saudi Arabia and the crafting of the identity of the woman as well as interpretations as regards that identity is achieved through socialisation. As Almunajjed (2010) argues, a history of the socialisation of females from childhood to adulthood through religious dogma, indigenous Arab culture and traditional family values produce subservient, compliant

and even indifferent females in Saudi Arabia. One way this is achieved is through education. The curriculum in schools is structured to instil in female students the idea that social restrictions are not applicable to males and are meant to protect the women from harassment and abuse and therefore good for them (see Alhazemi et al., 2013).

In essence, not every woman in Saudi organisations sees these career restrictions and constraints as limiting. As I will explain in greater detail in Chapters four and Chapter five, some women perceive organisational constraints positively (in the sense that they see themselves as endangered and that these societal and organisational barriers are meant to guide and honour them). Thus, in Saudi Arabia, how women see themselves or their self-perception - a mental process - influences what they do (action) or don't do (inaction) and essentially sustains male dominance. Therefore, the notion of complicity of women in their domination by men by second and third wave feminists suggests that proponents seemed aware of the idea that there was a cognitive side to female subjugation, which translates into some level of responsibility on the part of women, and so, therefore, the need to raise consciousness as suggested by de Beauvoir (1952). Still, there are studies of mainly Western orientation, which present these constraints as affecting women adversely and are therefore perceived negatively by all women (Acker, 1992; 2006). In any case, these perspectives help paint that comprehensive picture of the multiple perspectives, which inform those factors hindering women's career advancement within organisations in countries like Saudi Arabia and inform the thrust of my study. These perspectives also provide the base against which I articulate the aim of this research and specifically how women negotiate career-related constraints in academia in Saudi Arabia. In the next section, I examine the significance of a woman's identity regarding how it is crafted and how this reinforces stereotyping and discriminations against women in Saudi Arabia.

3.4. Female Identity in Saudi Arabia

Mustapha and Troudi (2019) have argued that with most research in the Middle East focused primarily on history, politics, oils and Islamism, the extant literature on gender identity in Saudi Arabia is frequently essentialised and non-critical, including many scholarly works written by Saudis themselves. Al-Rasheed (2013) has termed this a

reflection of “limited historical knowledge about current research on Saudi women [identities]” (p. 33) just as Al-Sudairy (2017) argues that gender identity in the middle east “tend to be written by people who lived abroad all their lives or by Westerners who are unaware of the culture and customs known to Saudis” (p. 6). Mustapha and Troudi (2019) though argue that regarding Saudi women a general picture of an oppressive regime that engenders an oppressed gender identity perpetuate the image, and that many researchers - westerners and Saudis alike - exploit certain literature to obscure what they call ‘*the other side of the coin’* (p. 133). That is an understanding of the identities of women in Saudi society through their lived experiences of discrimination based on their own voice, rather than stereotypical scholarly presumptions.

In my study, however, I focus on female identities as an embodiment of both *sides of the coin* as relayed in the narratives of experiences of discrimination by women in academia in Saudi Arabia. I see female identity through the fundamental place of Islam in the Saudi society but rather than proceed by assuming Islamised identities, I seek to account for and challenge this association regarding how women see themselves including the interlinkages, tensions, and paradoxes implicit. Saudi Arabia is a conservative and orthodox Muslim society and remains the only Arab theocratic country where Islam is greatly intertwined with the government and where that government determines gender roles and identities (Mustapha and Troudi, 2019). For women in Saudi Arabia, Islam remains a dominant factor in public life (Ochsenwald, 1981) and as Denman and Hilal (2011) argue, the Islamic religion is considered as much a part of the Saudi female identity as the country’s longstanding history is considered part of the greater Arab Peninsula (p. 304). Specifically, Wahhabism remains the doctrine of Islam in Saudi Arabia although, regarding female identity the term has been used in usually derogatory manner, often intended to demean women by emphasising their lower place in gender hierarchies, defined by intolerance for other Islamic traditions on female identity as well as aspects of that identity that have any semblance with modernity. This perspective perpetuates the predominant literature on Saudi Arabia being essentialist represented mostly by governmental and masculine positions that see female identity as purely based on biology (being born a woman) and social structure (defined by a women’s status and role). For instance, Bucholtz (2003) writes that:

> *"…the attributes and behaviour of socially defined groups [such as women] can be determined and explained by reference to cultural and/or biological characteristics to be inherent to the group… [based] on two assumptions: (1) that groups can be clearly delimited, and (2) that group members are more or less alike." (p. 400).*

Using this perspective to define or articulate female identity in Saudi Arabia reveals how a prescribed female identity is forced upon women in Saudi Arabia by virtue of the Wahabi interpretation of sharia laws that dictate all aspects of life, and which have remained unchanged, and by the prescribed roles and assumptions dictated by a society that focuses on the identity of Saudi women as synonymous with their role as mothers and wives (Miller-Rosser, Chapman, & Francis, 2006). Yamani (2000) points out that "although interpretations of 'correct' Islamic behaviour influence all sections of society, local customs, norms, and tribal traditions dictate women's roles and are enforced through familial structure" (p. 96). According to Doumato (2010), "…gender inequality is built into Saudi Arabia's governmental and social structures and is integral to the country's state-supported interpretation of Islam, which is derived from a literal reading of the Koran and Sunna" (p. 425).

In this study, therefore, I draw on Cooke (2007) to argue that gender identity for the Saudi woman, including those in the academia, maybe an "imposed identification" (p. 140) that is, the individual may or may not choose for herself. I, therefore, explore these experiences from the point of view that the Muslim woman's self-concept or identity is an ascription, a label that reduces all embodied and interlinked identities and implicit inequalities into a single image. To investigate aspects of the interlinkages that reveal other implicit identities, I discuss gender and identity more broadly within the context of equal opportunities in Saudi Arabia.

3.5. Equal Opportunities in Saudi Arabia

There is some argument by scholars of mainly Middle Eastern extraction (e.g. Hamdan, 2005; Al-Khateeb, 2007) as regards whether equal opportunities in practice is feasible in countries like Saudi Arabia. This argument is linked to constraints of ethnic/national/religious practices and beliefs and is evidence, at least in part, that in practice, the effort towards equal opportunities in Saudi Arabia requires a

multidimensional approach. Wheeler (2002) points out that equal opportunities work rests on a diverse theoretical foundation that also includes organisational theory, didactics, sociology and psychology and this has implications for pursuing equal opportunities work from a gender perspective in countries like Saudi Arabia. For example, as is the thrust of this research, the perspectives of gender research may be used to examine how power is unfairly distributed to the advantage of men in Arab countries, how women's reality (sense of self or identity) is perceived and interpreted (by women as well as men) as an exception to the male norm, as well as how the relationship between males and females is embedded in social, structural and institutional means rooted in religious dogma and traditional Arab culture. Based on this latter point, Almassi (2015) argues that the position of women in Saudi Arabia is defined by religious/cultural imperatives which are relatively stable rather than in flux as evidenced in other parts of the world.

This submission has some implications for the main ideas of the different waves of feminism in unravelling or comprehending the issue of women underrepresentation in professions across Saudi Arabia but more specifically in higher educational institutions in that part of the world. It implies for instance that constraints on the woman imposed through structural, legal, institutional and organisational means founded on Islam may be difficult to change because of the tenets of the Islamic religion, which is neither democratically derived nor popularly sustained. Therefore, societal and religious obligations and expectations on which traditional Arab culture is rooted are more stable and enduring than the more dynamic structures against which the waves of feminism developed in Western democracies. Further, the idea by Lorde (2000) of women being complicit in their own domination by the patriarchy may explain some insights into female oppression generally but not may adequately explain the nuances of the more complex state of affairs in Saudi Arabia.

Neither does De Beauvoir’s (1952) notion of how women can be free from male domination by recrafting their identity or sense of self through refusal to internalise male shaped identity labels properly articulate the more intricate issues like institutionalisation of religion, criminalisation of other identities grounded in Islam in

countries like Saudi Arabia. Religious socialisation is woven into the very fabric of everyday life in Saudi Arabia and compels the internalisation of the expectations of a patriarchal society by Saudi women. The idea right from the birth of a female child is to produce subservient, submissive and passive women whose progress/success or interpretations of same (as defined by the patriarchy) is dependent on the real-life portrayal of an approved identity – one which keeps them dominated. Therefore, Saudi Arabia combines the social context of 1st wave feminism (institutionalised subordination of women - Al-Khateeb, 2007) with the demands of modern global capitalism for highly skilled educated labour (Hamdan, 2005); and so various elements and tensions between women's identities can be highlighted through these perspectives. However, the dominant approach to the emancipation of women in Saudi Arabia seems to be equal opportunities (Kalliny and Benmamoun, 2014; Le Renard, 2014) that is one that is associated with late 19th century/early 20th century societies rather than contemporary ones (Lages, Pfajfar and Shoham, 2015).

Further, through the theory of performativity, Butler (1988) reveals gender identity formation and subjugation in Saudi Arabia. Butler (1988) argues that the act of performing gender constitutes who the woman is or her identity. Thus, gender identity of the Saudi woman is retroactively created by her performances (acts of coerced compliance) compelled by social, institutional, religious and organisational controls by the patriarchy or by what Butler (1988) calls social sanction and taboo. Consequently, the identities which inform a woman's behaviour in Saudi Arabia are the result of two imperatives: subtle and blatant coercion. These coerced performances of gender behaviour are consistent with what Breines (2002) calls external forms of oppression although the author further argues that this oppression may also be seen as structures of approval by women in countries like Saudi Arabia (an argument I present in more detail in later sections of this chapter).

Within this context (the academia in Saudi Arabia), the difference between equal opportunities with and without a gender perspective becomes even more apparent. Almassi (2015) cites an explanatory model known as the male as normative in explaining this difference. According to the author, equal opportunities work without a gender perspective can, for instance, mean not taking account of the male norm. The

practical consequence is often that the inadequacies of women or girls are highlighted in such an approach: their lack of interest in technology and the natural sciences, their inability to be self-sufficient or independent, their disinterest in holding top management positions. These “liabilities” are used to define how (un) equal opportunities in Saudi Arabia thrive. Also, working with equal opportunities based on a gender perspective would mean considering the problem surrounding the male norm (e.g. patriarchy, cultural/male hegemony, female subjugation, sex discrimination), and would cast an entirely different light on the matter.

The problem would no longer be regarded as a problem of Saudi women as individuals, but rather as a problem in Saudi organisations and the wider Saudi society. Thus, I seek to reveal in my research the general structural (socio-historical, sociocultural, socio-religious, institutional and organisational) discrimination of women through women's lived experiences within the academia in Saudi Arabia. Further, a strong point of my study is that while research in mainly western contexts tends to look at the issues from the viewpoint of aggregated statistics on the numbers of women in different occupations and different levels of organisations (Jayaratne,1983; Reinharz, 1983 Painter and Farrington,1998), I pay attention to an area that they ignore: the individual lived experiences of these women within their organisations as extensions of the broader society. Consequently, I will argue that equal conventional opportunities approaches are inadequate as a way of understanding or remedying the domination of women in Saudi Arabia and that what is needed is to adopt a substantial degree of more radical feminist perspectives I have defined earlier in this chapter. In the next section, I provide a more nuanced argument regarding these perspectives.

3.6. Feminism and Equal opportunities in Saudi Arabia

There is some contention by proponents of equal opportunities influenced by first-wave feminism that within organisations, equal opportunity for career progression for women should be the most important measure of equality for women (see Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990; Giddens, 2006). However, although some largely think that pursuing equal opportunities policies is enough, others argue that it is insufficient because of various structural and cultural aspects of patriarchy.

Specifically, Walby (1990) presents the process that creates the structure for and sustains the ascription of job roles and determination of career progression for members of an organisation as fundamentally patriarchal (male-dominated) because it presents men with more opportunities than women. Giddens (2006) also argues that even when women are availed opportunities and take up job roles, therefore, they are forced into role competition with male colleagues by trying to fit into role attributes adapted for males by males or their proxies.

Feminist scholars, therefore, argue that the social and organisational subordination of women is the outcome of systemic exclusion and discrimination through male hegemony (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990) and is reinforced through social institutions which limit female social inclusion, organisational participation and involvement and consequently career progression. Mostafa (2005) validates this submission by arguing that, within an Arab context, male hegemony makes women professional career advancement challenging.

Consequently, some feminist scholars of mostly Arabian extraction have raised some issues starting with a debate about the extent to which women within Arab societies consciously or inadvertently sustain male dominance in the larger society and within organisations. Specifically, some authors have tried to describe the acceptance or passiveness of much of the female population in Middle Eastern countries to male domination as rooted in female identity embedded in religious dogma and sustained from childhood through socialisation and religious education (Almunajjed, 2010;). Female identity in that part of the world is also an outcome of socially defined perceptions regarding what is a cost or benefit in relations between men and women and how these are symbolically represented based on socially defined values and norms (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). In essence, the crafting of female identity in Saudi Arabia is a product of several intersecting/overlapping imperatives. Using the theory of intersectionality, Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) describe overlapping or intersecting social identities as well as related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination originally which, as Touraine (1998) argues, was a thrust of Third wave feminists. This is the idea that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that

is different from the component identities. Based on this theory, individuals are seen to think of each element or trait as inextricably linked with all the other elements for one to fully understand one's identity (Collins, 2015).

In chapter two, I discussed how the theory of intersectionality suggests that seemingly discrete forms and expressions of oppression are shaped by one another or are mutually co-constitutive. In applying these ideas to analyse the ways in which women's position in the Saudi Arabian workplace is characterised, I recognise the importance of these more fundamental influences on women's position in the workplace and so on my study, which goes beyond simply examining equal opportunity policies and practices to attempting to access the experiences of how these various imperatives play out in the lives of the women concerned – female academics in Saudi Arabia.

This theory has some resonance with multicultural and global feminism: which is the more recent/current perspective of feminism within the third wave. Here, proponents use the lenses of sex/gender, class, race, imperialism, colonialism the post-colonial movement, multiculturalism to analyse male domination of women (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). Multicultural feminism examines how class, race, gender, and sexuality operate as an interacting system of subordination. These are intertwining (overlapping or intersecting) systems and transformative - not simply additive. Global feminists address the social forces that divide women and focus on how to value cultural diversity. To fully understand male domination of women as an oppressed group in Saudi Arabia, I investigate how female identity is shaped by social structures, social processes and social representations (or ideas claiming representation of groups and group members) as well as by gender, class, and sexuality, amongst others specifically within organisations such as higher educational institutions. In essence, within organisations, Al-Ahmadi (2011) points out, the relationship of domination-submission between male and females respectively is social, religiously and (for most women) personally sanctioned and determines how women, in general, see themselves (or their sense of self-identity - Al-Ahmadi, 2011).

This position determines how women constantly construct their identity to fit the existing social, religious and organisational structure. Thus, feminist idea of male dominance, gender equality and patriarchy to many of these women may be non-

existent or even offensive. This submission may explain in part why efforts towards female emancipation in much of the Middle East have suffered one setback after another (Almunajjed, 2010). Further, while female identity in Arab countries plays a part in sustaining male domination and patriarchy, much of feminist studies on gender equality ignore the influence of social structures within formal organisational systems on how women view organisational processes, policies, practices and procedures (Al-Rasheed, 2013). These organisational imperatives may be viewed by women in Middle Eastern countries, for instance, as an extension of the larger society and so will not appear to them as gender inequality (Syed et al., 2009).

In summary, therefore, unless the insights of second and third wave feminism are taken account of, particularly intersectionality, then moves towards equal opportunities are likely to fail. Thus, gender analysis in my study is focussed on promoting equal opportunities and gives rise to questions such as: Why is there (still) inequality in Saudi Arabia today? Should things not change? What would the consequences/outcome of such changes be? Throughout my study, I impose a feminist perspective on equal opportunities work to offer changes to altering the structure of the organisation and throwing its established norms and aims into question within the context of Saudi Arabia. This is a deeper approach, in which the equal opportunities perspective is based on an understanding of both the lack of equality in the Saudi society and of the mechanisms (e.g. cultural socialisation and religious indoctrination) that pose obstacles to equality and that upholds unfair relationships between the sexes (Altorki, 2000). I would argue that this understanding is vital to achieving sustainable equality of opportunity and real change in academia in Saudi Arabia. I will argue that feminist perspectives including the equal opportunity narrative suggest that members of organisations in a country like Saudi Arabia, and specifically women, may see organisational structures, processes and practices as an extension of the sociocultural system complete with same expectations and deserving of the same level of subservience and obedience. Over time these conditions determine and define female identity and interpretation of that identity to the extent that women may begin to accept and even become positively disposed to male-female inequality, gendered conditions, male domination and patriarchy. Efforts at “liberation” for these women as put forward by much of feminist scholars may be tantamount to crying more than the bereaved.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that in Saudi Arabia, a woman's identity is determined by language/culture and convention and is the result of subtle and blatant coercion. Consistent with the aim of this study, these perspectives underscore the idea that women in Saudi Arabia may be less likely to climb up the professional career ladder compared to their male counterparts. This is because they are expected to act feminine (submissive, obedient, subservient) in roles that are tailor-made for men (Oakley, 2000) and based on social, familial and institutional expectations rooted in religious dogma and traditional Arabian culture. These expectations determine the woman's sense of self or identity and how she interprets and therefore acts out this identity. Throughout this chapter, I acknowledge that the scholarly evidence already stated buttresses the view that women face problems in professional/career progression all around the world. However, in some countries like Saudi Arabia, this phenomenon is even more pronounced, and women face sets of barriers in their career advancement towards higher positions, specifically in the academia (Al-Ahmadi, 2011).

However, I also acknowledge in this chapter that these views do not capture all the social, cultural and institutional dynamics that affect women in Arab Countries nor do they reveal influences on organisational imperatives in Saudi Arabia specifically. Therefore, in this chapter, I also undertake an analysis of perspectives of Middle Eastern scholars who focus on factors which constrain women in that context, including the structure of inequality and discrimination within organisations. These authors also view social and organisational limitations as products of a history of the socialisation of females, the tenets of the Islamic religion, indigenous Arab culture and traditional family values (Almunajjed, 2010). The radical feminist idea suggesting that all women in countries like Saudi Arabia desire and therefore should attain equality with men (Fagenson,1990a; Lorde, 2000; Breines, 2002; Ford, 2006; Acker, 2009; Davidson and Burke, 2011), therefore, has been challenged because (as argued by second and third wave feminists), societal structures produce, from childhood, subservient, compliant and all-accepting females who tend not to challenge or question the status quo and may even be favourably disposed towards it.

I have explained this view using the intersectionality theory to show how overlapping aspects of women's lives in Saudi Arabia influence their sense of self-identity and consequently, how they conform to social, institutional and organisational expectations. In essence, in Saudi Arabia, women may oppose gender equality within organisations or even discriminate against other women (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004) based on how they see themselves and how they view organisational structures, processes and practices. These may be indications of disinterest in supporting their rise and that of other women to higher professional career roles. I have also explained how this situation is sustained by social routines and rules that outline institutional processes grounded in the logic of what is socially (and so organisationally) appropriate; a suggestion that women in Arab countries may be motivated not necessarily by self-interest but social expectations, obligations and responsibilities (March & Olsen, 1989). Following this discussion, I attempt in the next few chapters to analyse the possible influence of social and institutional structures on organisational imperatives and how this feed into the equal opportunity discussion and the feminist thought. Through the narratives of my participant's, I use these already highlighted theoretical perspectives as a thrust to analyse the lived experiences of female academics in Saudi Arabia in the next few Chapters.

Chapter Four

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on justifying my distinctive methodological position as well as presenting a set of methods that have enabled me to say something new about the issue of women's careers and their working lives. My research is born out of a desire to understand how women in Saudi Arabia see and understand themselves and how this is related to who I am and how I look at myself. Specifically, I aim to understand the lived experience of women professionals as represented by female academics and how they negotiate their working lives/careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia. I adopt a narrative approach, to present my participant's lived experiences. I represent these female accounts of these women professionals in my research as life histories (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), as I seek to understand how pursuing academic careers by women has become a manifestation of the aspirations and hopes of a generation of women in Saudi Arabia (Alwedinani, 2016).

My study reveals several aspects such as feminist/gendered perspectives, focused on both the experiences of women, organisational and wider socio-cultural imperatives as they affect women regarding jobs, societal roles and expectations in Saudi society. I acknowledge I have an emotional or empathetic inclination to my research as postulated by Gray (2008) and Reedy (2009) because I share certain experiences with my respondents. As a Saudi woman and academic, I have experienced the repressiveness of male domination and control. My research also has a political dimension, as also argued by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009), as I am lending a voice to the emancipation of women from discrimination, subjugation, and suppression in Saudi Arabia. I am motivated by the possibility that my research will bring about social change as well as an increase in the number of women who are going into academia. For the framework of this research, I have adopted views on reflection and reflexivity within qualitative research as argued by Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009) as well as views from other scholars such as Reedy (2009), Robson (2011), Denzin and Lincoln, (2011), Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) and Farquhar (2012). I begin to discuss this

approach in section 1.5 but go on to articulate this further in section 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 before putting this to practice through the narration of my story and that of my participants in chapter four.

As I am closely involved in this research which is thus partially auto-biographical and a form of 'self-ethnography', I have forged a particular approach to reflexivity following the example of a number of scholars including Cunliffe (2003, 2008, 2011) and Reedy and King (2017, p. 3) who argue that this approach is practical and applicable in management research because it suggests 'engagement with activism [which] might make critical organisational scholarship more relevant to practitioners'. I have also utilised the methodology above in my research, but I do admit that I experienced some difficulties: It was challenging to engage with my (female) participants mainly because men occupied key positions in most of the universities. These male administrators would not give me access to the women section in the Universities. I would, therefore, argue that researchers might need to engage in a maze of relationships outside the organisation of interest with subjects such as groups (Willmott, 2008), including trade union and women's groups (Fournier & Grey, 2000), or variously defined "marginalised" groups (Adler, 2002; Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007), including sweatshop workers (Boje, 1998) and students (Grey, 2007). So, the data I collected was also through participatory observation and second parties' involvement as I could not approach the universities directly because women cannot engage with male-dominated universities without approval of the same.

I have organised the rest of this chapter as follows: First of all, I outline my overall methodological position, explaining why it is appropriate for my research aims. I argue that a narrative approach that explores in detail the lived experience of women professionals in Saudi Arabia can yield new and vital insights concerning careers and equal opportunities that have been neglected in previous research. I go on to explain how I use reflexivity and storytelling/narratives in the study as well as how I have implemented my methodology through a combination of interviews, informal conversations, observations and autobiographical insights. I also evaluate the strengths and limitations of my chosen method and finally, I discuss the ethical issues raised by my research and how these were resolved.

4.2. My stories and my storytellers

My research seeks to understand the experiences of female academics in Saudi Arabia specifically and to promote the interest of women generally as argued by Ridgeway & Correll, (2000). This focus is based on the notion that in Saudi society, gender is a dominating and organising principle where women are discriminated against and disadvantaged in public and private life as also observed by Tonnessen (2016). Thus, I use gender as a theme for understanding the social realities of my respondents such as conditions of inequality, dominance, and stress within their organisations and in society at large as posited by Merrill and West (2009). I view knowledge as a creation of social constructions built on perceptions, opinions, experiences, and views of women academics in Saudi Arabian Universities and as a result, peculiar to them. Based on this, I adopt a subjective ontology and social constructionism, as my philosophical stance. This method relays an understanding of the realities subjectively created by individuals in their interaction with their social environments. I construe this position because my research embraces the idea of generating knowledge subjectively and contextually, through multiple meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially by my respondents (Farquhar, 2012). My perspective above depicts a feminist epistemology consistent with two major theories, that is, gendered institutions and gendered organisation systems according to Acker, (1990) and Fagensen (1990). I argue that my research has political and practical relevance because it seeks social change and the emancipation of women in Saudi Arabia.

To highlight this relevance, I use the autobiographical approach in my research (Merton, 1988) by telling of my personal experiences in the academia, specifically in the University where I teach as well as my other experiences in the Saudi society as well as in my as well as my life story. I consider this important as this will support reflexive accounts within my Research and allow the reader to make judgments from the story. This is because most of my participants and I are within the same age range. Further, we are all academics and all Muslims. Like me, most have also been educated abroad. However, the difficulty is in the lack of freedom to participate due to the sensitivity of issues and the fear of losing their jobs. So, my story could not be separated from the story of my participants as this research is a portrayal of shared

experiences embedded in an understanding of the role of women academics in the Muslim world. That is why I have written this thesis in the first person as the issues at the centre of my research affect me as well. That is, I seek to link how my understanding/interpretation of my experiences influence and is influenced by my interpretations of my participants experiences based on certain commonalities we share including, but not limited to, our shared values, context, professions, gender and identity

Consequently, my story makes an essential contribution to the understanding of my participants' experiences. I acknowledge that this has some influence on my interpretations of my participant's responses and experiences to a certain degree (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) and this is significant to this study because it reveals that, like my participants, even my experiences, views and preconceptions have also been explored in my research. My experience as a female academic in Saudi Arabia helped me see things differently when I began my research. Looking back, I ask myself 'would these women participants have given me a chance and let me into their world had I not been Saudi?' What would have happened if I did not have a network of people who helped me by encouraging the participants to share their experiences?' I can allude to the fact that looking like them and speaking the same language increased the prospect of acceptance which I got from my participants. I consider this important because it captures my stance both personally and professionally and this has implications for my research as also argued by Alvesson and Skoldberg, (2009). I, therefore, argue that my role and participation has been methodically exploited in producing a solid account of my research as was found by Fife (2005) and Hammersley (2007).

Specifically, my identity as the researcher and as a female from Saudi Arabia as well as my prior professional identity as a lecturer at a university in Saudi Arabia has helped me in shaping this process as I have included my personal experience with that of other female academics. Thus, I recognise that I have become a part of the research in such a way that the knowledge produced doesn't become self-absorption but remains an instrument for knowing in a way that will inform and change social

knowledge as it stands today (Davies, 2012). I would argue that this process resonates with not just how my identity developed throughout the process of this research but also how I was awakened to the consciousness of my identity.

My sense of self was developed during my studies in the United States as it made me more aware and independent by observing other western females undertaking their studies. Coming from a conservative country of Saudi Arabia, my present research here in the United Kingdom focused on Saudi Arabia underscored socio-cultural tensions that had risk implications for me and my respondents (I discuss these risks in another section). In both cases, my exposure overseas opened up my eyes as to how women from other countries have a lot more freedom than myself. I returned home to Saudi Arabia after getting my master's degree and began to teach at the University which helped to enrich my experiences. However, I could not use my acquired knowledge because of the cultural and religious constraints placed on women. So, when I spoke to my participants, I could see myself in their experiences. Nevertheless, there are some changes in the conservative system as women are now allowed to hold the position of Dean at a university from 2017, but they still have to consult a male dean for any decisions they make.

My research adopts a reflexive narrative approach to exploring how women navigate barriers in the academia in Saudi Arabia. Using these women's life stories, I attempt to bridge the gaps between gendered organisations and feminist theories (which I discuss in detail in chapter two - e.g. Butler,1988; Aker,1992) and subjective experiences of social beings, in this case, my participants, in Saudi Arabia. Also, through this method, I connect my participants lived experiences and their social and historical context. I do this using their life stories to provide that link between personal discourses (their narratives) to dominant societal discourses (or the dominant narrative, views and values in Saudi Arabia). My aim then is to understand the interplay and the location of power among actors, but more specifically the oppressed (women) and the oppressor (men and their proxies), the multidimensionality of social and institutional influences on the actors in that performance of gender relations in the broader Saudi society and more specifically, within professional-leaning organisations

like the academia in Saudi Arabia. Telling and deconstructing the stories of my participants (see chapter four) will lead me to a better understanding of how they position or situate themselves in society specifically regarding their values and identity. I discuss perspectives of identity construction and the theory of intersectionality in chapter two.

However, using this method also had some implications for me: It facilitated a process of reflexivity that enabled me to (during and after the data collection) question my own positioning within the social and organisational contexts of my participants. This led me into articulating responses based on the contexts-agency-action imperative (Norton & Siliep, 2018) or the idea that I can deeply articulate my subject of interest and my research focus by situating my self in the contexts of my research subjects. By doing this, I, therefore, evoke agency in the construction of my participant's experiences as a way of reporting their experiences in their social and organisational contexts reflexively. Firstly, my participants and I share some things in common. We are professional women, academics, Arabs, resident in Saudi Arabia and subjected to the same constraints from childhood based on the strict religious and institutional statutes in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, my interest was not just to hear the story of my participants, but I was motivated to listen to this based on my own need for self-reflection regarding my own life, my anxieties, and my frustration through my experience of being stifled professionally by the male leadership in my university (see my narrative in section 4.1). I was also born into the same society, socialised and went to school based on the same principles, norms and curriculum. Like my respondents, I have been limited regarding career options and have been subjected to the restrictions of getting a job with and without a male guardian. I, therefore, can articulate the social and organisational contexts of my respondents, which then bestows on me agency – I have become their voice as they tell their story while I reflexively construct their story based on my own experiences too.

Therefore, the stories of my participants led me to a better understanding of the relational ties that bind us together because we share specific experiences in common, and their experiences in many instances resonate with mine which has led me into telling my story and their stories in Chapter four. Consequently, based on this method, what has been termed collective agency and social performativity (Norton & Siliep, 2018) are activated in my research. Using life histories as I do in this study has created

in me, and my participants the development of more in-depth insights into our own social processes and values, and fundamentally exposed my role, and their role in shaping their own contexts in which they live and work (Sliep, 2010). My overall approach then is to explore the stories of my participants through the voices of female academics who have been involved in teaching or non-teaching roles in higher educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. I discuss the demographic details of my participants (See Table 1) as well as considerations regarding the choice of the subject institutions before also addressing issues regarding access to these institutions/participants in the section later in this chapter. In all what I set out to go through this method is to join my participants to collectively construct and deconstruct their social and organisational worlds through the sharing of life stories with me (see Chapter Four).

4.2.1. Reflexivity

In this section as well as the next, I go on to discuss reflexivity, and how I have used this together with storytelling/narratives.

The terms “reflective” and “reflexive” are used sometimes interchangeably in various ways throughout the literature and across multiple disciplines (Fook, White and Gardner 2006). Reflectivity has been viewed as a process in which a researcher pays attention to the self as a constructed object, considering their social context and their effect on their research (Gilbert & Sliep 2009). Reflexivity, however, goes further than reflectivity because it is both an approach to research and a way in which one can learn too (Fook et al. 2006, 18). While reflection in itself aids recognition and awareness, this is not viewed as sufficient because it typically does not take into account embodied transactions. For instance, do our beliefs match our actions and our actions our beliefs? (Door 2014). If I were to rely on just being reflective, I may end up being aware of my contextual positioning but still be unable (as being reflexive will allow me) to move beyond my philosophical positioning and becomes open to multiple standpoints (Gergen 1999). This is notable because it was sometimes the case that my respondents presented a different perspective from what I thought was the case. For instance, the idea that some women suppress other women because it is rewarding personally to do so was strange to me. The idea that some women felt that

the oppressor was at their beck and call because they still got what they wanted based on their connection was also something I have never thought of. The multidimensionality of views from respondents, therefore, presents a base against which I articulate my own stance and position reflexively. Still, I am under obligation to remain focused on the meanings of my respondents, not just whether it agrees with my meaning my experiences or not. In essence, implicit in reflexivity is the issue of ethics.

Door (2014) argues for instance that my actions and responses to others should be in alignment ethical principles. Reflexivity then in my research extends reflection and incorporates my embodied self-relationships to my participants (Gilbert & Sliep 2009). For me, this means that I am saddled with understanding how I must position myself and how my positioning is affected by dominant discourses of the social and organisational context of my participants. In acknowledging reflexivity as a relational process, it is viewed as occurring in context, as dynamic and iterative, influenced by our past and present social interaction with others and how we position ourselves in relationships (Gilbert & Sliep 2009). In this study, I understand how the discourses influence me in the lives of my participants and that their lives are not linear but complex because individual, collective and social action all involve a complex network of interlinking relationships that need to be understood in context and regarding space and time. In essence, I am conscious that I am who I am, and my participants are who they are because of our social interactions over time with others in our past and present. Understanding who we are, I and my participants, and how we view our world and are shaped by the world around us is part of a reflexive process in my research. Such a process demands an examination of my own and my participants historical, political and cultural assumptions and intentions so that we may better understand both ourselves and each other (Gilbert and Sliep 2009; Sliep and Norton 2016) and this we have done in my study through storytelling or narratives.

4.2.2. Story telling/Narratives and Reflexivity

How we interpret our lives is, and so narratives helped me to find meaning in my life and the lives of my participants because this method moved us not only towards a

preferred story about our self but towards a collectively contextual and coherent story. A narrative approach based on social constructionist principles helps us understand our cultural heritage and our context, how they shape us and how we know ourselves and others (Norton & Siliep, 2018). Recognising that knowledge is constructed communally or socially opened an avenue in this research for me to understand my life and those of my participants mainly by examining our shared lived experiences and connecting these to the complexities of the broader society in Saudi Arabia. I recognise that contradictions and divisions in narrative inquiry or the debate between the idea of a singular subject learning from experience through their stories, and those stories as socially constructed and open to multiple interpretations has been highlighted (Tamboukou, Andrews & Squires 2013). However, I have resolved to work with the inconsistencies, the paradoxes and the contradictions also and bring them together in the research. Therefore, I treat the narratives of my participants politically. I see them strive to bypass, negotiate or overcome repression as emancipatory or a kind of rebellion against prevailing male-dominated power structures (Tamboukou, Andrews & Squires 2013).

Consequently, in this research, narrative approach to reflexivity involved using stories of my participants in the hope that this will help them to change their social situations (Tamboukou, Andrews & Squires 2013). In this sense, therefore, I view my participants' narratives as stories and them, and indeed I, storytellers. I consider them as actors and so my focus is on what their stories do, rather than just using stories to attempt to understand the mind of the storyteller (Frank 2010). I view their experiences here as not something that is taken for granted truth reflecting participants past alone but also rather a political event I don't just focus on the content of my participants' stories, but through reflexivity, I can look at the content of the story, the experience, or event in different ways. I do not just construct the narratives or stories though, witnessing those stories us enable me to look more widely, to see and experience multiple viewpoints of my participants. Deconstructing their stories helps me to understand the lens through which they view their social and organisational worlds and opens me up to a better understanding of how other viewpoints are constructed through different storylines. The characteristics and benefits of a life-history/narrative investigation have been summed up by Suarez-Ortega (2013) and include: prioritising

participants' subjective consciousness (meaning is constructed so can be re-authored); a focus on culture and context highlights the collective nature of story-telling; and both micro aspects which are directly a part of the storytellers' lives, and macro aspects involving the broader cultural, social, political and economic context come into play.

In my case, in listening to my participants' stories, I understand that sometimes we operate from different realities but that it is still possible to shape new stories collectively by creating shared meaning together and that this can lead to positive social outcomes. When the reflexivity is used in conjunction with narratives the richness of data is enhanced through the telling and witnessing of life stories (Norton & Siliep, 2018). In telling and deconstructing my story and that of my respondents I was enabled to recognise and articulate the influence of dominant discourses in my own life. Examining my values and identity through my own story allowed me to then position myself in my participants' story which, in turn, moved me to a place of agency and responsibility.

4.3. Collecting and authoring the narratives:

In this section, I will cover how I went about selecting, collecting and editing/interpreting the narratives that form the core of my research. I must emphasise, however, that throughout my account, I try to maintain critical reflexivity (or embracing a subjective understanding of reality as a basis for thinking more critically about the impact of my assumptions, values, and actions on research subjects as argued by Alvesson and Skoldberg, (2009). I adopt this position so that claims in my statements may contribute to wider knowledge which is devoid of bias or skewness as also argued by Alvesson and Deetz (1999). This approach aims to pay attention to the accounts professional women have given of their lives as well as reflecting on my life story as argued by Reedy (2009). I acknowledge the place of reflexivity in my research as posited by Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009) and how this positions me in the research and the social world of my respondents. A significant aspect of reflexivity in my research is the inclusion of my narrative amongst others as it concerns the inseparability of biography with authorial autobiography as argued by Stanley (1992).

Here, to be critically reflexive, I embrace my subjective understandings of reality based on my experiences as a Saudi woman and a female academic as a foundation for thinking more critically about the impact of my assumptions, values, and actions on my respondents and vice versa (Cunliffe, 2004). Such a practice is important to my study because it helps me understand how we – my participants and I - constitute our realities and identities in relational ways. Critical reflexivity also helps me unravel and uncouple the multidimensionality of participant responses in my study.

As already stated, my starting point has been the centrality of the experiences of female academics as they are fundamental to understanding how and why the pursuance of academic careers has become an important aspect of life aspirations of a generation of women in Saudi Arabia. I seek to answer the research question:

"How does discrimination and subordination operate in the everyday lives of women in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how do they respond to these?"

To address this research question, I will seek to explain the barriers that women face in their career advancement to senior management in higher educational institutions and to explore ways of promoting women's equality. I ensure that there is a predominant emphasis on the experiences of my respondents in my research and the context in which those events that have produced these experiences have occurred. I consider this appropriate because the emphasis of my research is in understanding the career experiences of women professionals as typified by female academics in Saudi Arabia through their narratives as I engage them in conversations that follow an inductive logic as posited by Denzin & Lincoln (2011).

4.4. Representativeness of my storytellers

I begin this section by discussing considerations around representativeness in my research which involves the choice of a procedure to show that my interviewees are typical in some way of the larger group of female professionals in Saudi Arabia cultures (Tonnessen, 2016). I believe that comprehending the experiences of women in these contexts is fundamental to understanding how and why the pursuit of careers has become an important aspect in the lives of my participants. With these considerations

in mind, I have treated my respondents' accounts as more than independent narratives but rather as stories about their lives specifically but as a product of the world in which they live – their professional and social milieu. This does not mean that I have assumed that the narratives I present are accurate representations of an independently existing set of my respondent's experiences as recounted by myself. Rather, I present these accounts in my research as developing and sometimes conflicting narratives by which individuals actively construct their sense of distinctiveness using the language available to them in a given historical and cultural setting (Cunliffe 2001).

Due to restrictions on what women can do or talk about in Saudi Arabia, I had to use interpersonal means such as befriending the women first and earning their trust before tackling the issues they faced as university employees. This more relational style is quite common in feminist approaches to research (Thompson, Rickett & Day, 2018) unlike most business and management research which are relatively realist and positivistic and which tends towards more formalised and structured data collection methods (Farquhar, 2012). The risks faced by my participants and I required that interviews had to be carried out in the strictest confidentiality to preserve their anonymity. Thus, using this method kept my respondents and me safe and secure and provided some assurance for my participants so they could discuss with me freely and without premonition or inhibition. assurance to them regarding Even though it was a necessity to adopt this approach, what benefits did it confer on the quality of the research

My research underscores the view that what we learn about interviewees (female academics in Saudi Arabia in this case) can tell us something about a much wider group (women professionals in Saudi Arabia specifically and more broadly in the Middle East). Representativeness in my research is, therefore, linked to the social and cultural context within which I have carried out my research and involves some consideration of the number of participants identified based on certain pre-determined conditions. For instance, the women who took part in my research can be described

as being diverse regarding age, nationality, family background and their academic disciplines as evidenced in Table 3.1 below.

Based on Table 3.1 my participants can be seen as broadly representative of female professionals in Saudi Arabia, but of course not all women in that country. My focus was specifically on participants workplace experiences and broadly on social imperatives that underpinned these experiences. This means that my respondents told me stories of their experiences in the workplace and in the wider Saudi Arabian society (This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). All stories are a journey from childhood to adulthood and revealed the implications and influence of traditional values, socio-cultural value systems and constraints, religious dogma, organisational value systems, practices, procedures and policies and the inner workings of the higher education system in Saudi Arabia. My research participants included 20 female academics from both the public and private universities in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, considerations are homogeneous in the sense that all universities in Saudi Arabia, including the selected universities for this research, are directly supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia and are all subject to the same legal and cultural constraints.

The homogeneity and heterogeneity considerations were not important because all universities, whether public or private, abide by the same code of conduct, operational guidelines, and curriculum as laid down by the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). While not all participants were born in Saudi Arabia, the same socio-cultural constraints that existed in the Middle East (Alwedinani, 2016) was something they could relate with having been influenced by the social-cultural and religious requirements of being a woman in the broader Arabian/Middle Eastern society. Based on the information in Table 3.1, not all of my respondents were born in Saudi Arabia. However, all had lived and worked in that part of the world for about three years. Thus, although these women were from different nationalities, they had worked in the institutions in Saudi Arabia for a period and had both organisational and socio-cultural experiences which my research sought to understand.

Name	Nationality	Age	Marital Status	Children	Higher Educational Level	Specialisation	Place of Higher Education	Years of Employment	Position	Type of University
Amal	Saudi	30 -40	Married	3	Master/ PhD Stedent	Child Care	UK	6	Lecturer	Private
Samar	Saudi	40- 45	Married	3	Post Doctoral	Medicine	USA	10	Vice Dean	Public
Nada	Saudi	30-45	Married	1	Master	English	USA	8	Head of Department	Public
Tysneem	Sudan	50-55	Single	0	PhD	Economics	Sudan	9	Coordinator	Public
Abeer	Egypt	50-55	Married	4	Associate Professor	Accounting	Egypt	15	Head of Department	Public
Nadeen	Saudi	40-45	Single	0	PhD	Management	UK	7	Coordinator	Public
Gadah	Sudan	40-45	Married	3	Master	Marketing	UK	8	Coordinator	Public
Aminh	Sudan	40-45	Married	3	Master	Accountant	UK	9	Lecturer	Private
Afnan	Lebanon	40-45	Married	2	Master	English	UK	15	Lecturer	Private
Safar	Egypt	45-50	Married	4	Prof	Medicine	UK	22	Lecturer	Public
Noha	Saudi	45-50	Married	4	PhD	Designing	KSA	6	Lecturer	Private
Najwa	Egypt	50-55	Married	4	PhD	Finance	Egypt	12	Coordinator	Private
Manal	Egypt	45-50	Married	3	PhD	MIS	USA	17	Lecturer	Public
Jeyda	Saudi	30 -40	Single	0	Master/ PhD Student	Sociology	UK	4	Lecturer	Public
Khadeja	Saudi	40-45	Married	2	Master	Finance	KSA	10	Lecturer	Private
Fatemah	Saudi	30-40	Married	1	Master	Management	UK	4	Lecturer	Private
Dalal	Saudi	40-45	Married	0	PhD	English	UK	15	Lecturer	Public
Wadha	Saudi	30-40	Married	3	Master	English	KSA	3	Lecturer	Public
Jwan	Pakistan	40-45	Single	0	PhD	Finance	UK	5	Lecturer	Private
Dana	Jorden	30-40	Married	3	Master	Accounting	Jorden	6	Lecturer	Public

Table 4.1: Demographic Information of Participants

Due to the difficulties of getting people to participate in my research, the amount of data available from individual participants varied. I acknowledge that my selection of respondents took into consideration certain cultural and logistical issues which I encountered in the course of the research. The women who took part in my research agreed to share their experiences of working in academia. I argue, therefore, that although my respondents are representative of the population of women professionals in Saudi Arabia. Some women had different career backgrounds having taken different routes into working in academia. It was essential for me to maintain the same uniformity in the characteristics of the participants to provide focus, consistency, and context to my Research. For instance, all my interviewees were women employed by a university in Saudi Arabia, and they covered varied roles. As already stated (see Table 3.1), my participants are aged between 30 and 55 years, 14 participants are aged between 30 and 45, and 6 aged between 45 and 55.

The respondents in my research have certain common contextual experiences, i.e., socio-cultural, socio-historical, and organisational, which was significant in my research because it enabled my understanding and comprehension of the meanings that came from their experiences. I can acknowledge that class, ethnicity and religion are essential as this reflects the decisions that are made by authorities. Therefore, most of them come from predominantly high social status or class in order to have gained access to graduate degrees and professional careers and are therefore not entirely representative of all or perhaps even most SA women even though they might be seen as pioneers or role models. I conducted my interviews in Arabic after which I transcribed and analysed the interview transcription in Arabic to check if there were distortions in the meanings generated. In transcribing and translating the transcripts into English, I have paid attention to ensuring that the original meaning of the spoken words is not lost during the process of translation.

One of the ways I ensured this was by carrying out the translations myself and by re-reading the interview notes and listening over and over again to the interview recordings and then going over the transcripts again and again. This was done to ensure consistency, integrity, and actual meanings of words were not lost in the

process of translating from Arabic to English and is evidenced in research adopting narratives such as the one conducted by Reedy (2009). Since I am concerned with the experiences of my participants as expressed by them through narratives, I have used verbatim transcription to support the Analysis of what my respondents said which were originally in Arabic. I have also broken down into simpler forms the narratives that are context-related using thematic analysis, which is a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) across data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). I base the evaluation of the relevance of thematic analysis as a method of data analysis for my Research on the suggestion that is how I carry out the analysis of my data. If the assumptions that inform my analysis is unfamiliar, then it will be challenging to evaluate my research and to compare it with other related studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thus, the methods of data collection and analysis I have adopted align with what I want to understand. This epistemological position recognises that all researchers should present accounts from their own social location and there is no way I can make "objective" knowledge claims from outside of my position in the social world. All research, therefore, involves issues of representation, as discussed by scholars including Silverman (1987), Derrida (1976; 1987), Alcoff (1991), Gilroy (1997), Hall (1997) and Hertz (1997). All choices of method have epistemological consequences. This is the position I adopt in my research. As a native Arab speaker, I have played a critical role in ensuring that this is achieved by being privy to participant's experiences which is crucial in the interpretation of meanings of the respondents' stories (Temple, 2005; Cunliffe, 2011).

4.5. Getting access: My narrative

In this section, I discuss certain considerations regarding my access to participants in my Research. I acknowledge that negotiating and sustaining high-quality access was vital to the success of my research as it involved data collection in and around organisations and required in-depth conversations with university employees and considerable time for me was invested in the field as also argued by Cunliffe & Alcadipani (2016). I also acknowledge that access considerations and concerns for

my research are indicative of the political and ethical choices that both my respondents and I encountered before, during, and after fieldwork (Freeman, 2000; Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016). I found myself facing stipulations, obstacles, and even contradictory requirements when trying to obtain and maintain access, for my research to proceed as argued by Anteby (2013). Access considerations have been of concern in my research because they entailed specific difficulties in the context of a conservative male-dominated Saudi Arabia. I admit that my research was ‘‘unconventional’’ to say the least even as argued by Bamberger and Pratt (2010). It was unconventional in that most of the research in Saudi Arabia is conducted by males as they have access to all strata of society instead of women who have limited access to men traditionally.

I had to adopt several approaches of following up my phone calls and emails to selected universities for access by writing their contact information in my notes and keeping in touch with them, by sending my documents through email, fax and via phone calls, text and, at one point, even going informal by sending one of my siblings as also expounded by Gill and Johnson (2002) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007). When I did make contact with them, they would promise to call back but never did till I initiated another call and going over the process again and again. In one instance, the university representative wanted to know why I was using interviews instead of surveys and when I told him that my research doesn’t require me to use surveys he got offended during the conversation because he felt I did not recognise how busy he was. He eventually cut the phone off after saying some unprintable words. Although I kept sending one of my siblings to that same university to make contact, they informed him that they already had my details and will make contact when they were ready. However, they never did.

Gaining access to my research subjects and participants was, therefore, fraught with difficulties as also experienced by Hammersley (2007) and Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016). The reason is not because of the questions I was asking it was due to the religious and cultural barriers that do not allow a woman much latitude to do most things that other countries consider normal. I started thinking of using another approach to reach those female academics directly by via the scientific society for

Saudi students in the UK, which is a part of The Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in London (my sponsors). So, I used them to help me to access six female academics, who were students studying in the UK doing their PhDs and post-doctoral degrees and they agreed to participate in the research. Unfortunately, the three of them were unwilling to take part and the reasons given often seemed to me to indicate that they were anxious about the potential impact on themselves.

As a female academic studying for my PhD in the UK, I also faced delays during the process of approving my ethical agreement for conducting my research from the institution that I worked with back in Saudi Arabia (I discuss this under the research ethics section). Due to these delays, I felt let down by the system that is geared to support men over women. I had to use one of my relatives, an employee of a university in Saudi Arabia to reach out to the authorities to provide me with the letter of access and I got the required approval letter within 24 hours. This, however, hindered my travel arrangements as there was a three-month delay.

Another approach I used to gain access to my research subjects and participants was through the ethnographic technique of hanging around as argued by Ashforth and Reingen (2014) and Davies (2012). I then ingratiated myself to three of the several "clusters" of women academics that hung around in groups socialising and chatting during their breaks. However, it was not easy for me to find the right "cluster" as I had to identify those academics that were a bit liberal and who felt comfortable with me. I pushed myself to join three groups, but I wasn't successful as they had the fear that I was a representative of top management. The group that I joined eventually felt more welcoming as I joined them by gaining the trust of one group of the female academics. I attended the activities that were organised by their students (e.g., the final celebration day for the activities in their college), and this gave me a chance to meet all the lecturers. To further win their trust, I prepared Arabic coffee with dates for the group. I also started talking to them about my own experiences, my work, and my personal life.

It was slightly difficult to ask them to participate in the research directly, as they were aware of my identity as a researcher. Since I did not have a desk to desk to work from

or a place to sit, I improvised by sitting between them. I had to use the feminist methodology that utilises a selection of methods, approaches, and research strategies that adopt a more relational and communitarian approach to research and removing the barriers/power differentials that often exist between my participants and I. Utilising the feminist methodological approach allowed me to gain my participant's trust as they accepted me as an "insider" in their "world" as postulated by Hamdan (2009).

Some of these issues which this methodological posture helped overcome included socio-cultural constraints on women such as limited engagement with male colleagues, organisational checks on women job roles and job functions, and access problems for a researcher trying to get the views and experiences of these women. These access related constraints are not just reflective of these socio-cultural and organisational considerations, but also reveals my position as the researcher, since I am also a female and a Saudi citizen. I was also able to observe my research subjects (Hamdan, 2009), and found what Hamdan (2005, p. 60), called the "control mechanisms", used in a male-dominated society for isolating women generally and female academics in particular. Women were isolated even from each other to prevent them from sharing their experiences or ideas with each another. However, one of the ways that these women managed these control mechanisms was to form agencies (Smith, 1987) which are a collection of individuals whose relationship is a symbiotic one based on support for each other and sometimes including relatives. For instance, 'agencies' aided women who needed to pass a message to the male section to get their message 'received' and acted on faster than the normal route. I acknowledge that in Saudi society women learn to 'relate to one another and treat each other as sources of knowledge" (Smith, 1987, p. 35). The logic behind this sort of 'control mechanism' is that it is easy and much better to control women as individuals than as a unified group.

Thus, this isolation is a way of preventing the type of interaction between women that facilitates their being able to share their common experiences. Our conversations enabled them to see that all women in Saudi Arabia had the same issues, challenges, constraints, and limitations. Having seen that the researcher and the participants

endured the same problems through common experiences helped these women to form a sort of solidarity with me, which helped me gain their mutual support and trust. I had to keep my emotions in check as this could affect and/or influence the way I understood and interpreted my respondents' accounts (Markussen, 2006). While some may argue that my emotional journey with my respondents should be avoided in the final account (Lutz, 1988), I will argue that emotional reactions are part of human life and are, therefore, never absent from the research situation as argued by Gray, (2008). Also, the attention to my emotions in the course of my studies, such as the shame, fear, guilt, and joy revealed important aspects of my research experience and the experience of my respondents (Brannan, 2011; Gilmore & Kenny, 2015).

4.6. Engaging with participants

I achieved a positive outcome by building trust and solidarity with my respondents (Tonnessen, 2016). Some may object to the degree of empathy on my part which may prevent an objective critique in my research because, one might argue, my story-tellers will understandably seek to present themselves in what they perceived as their best light. Why should I assume good intent or candour on their part? However, I would argue that the idea that empathy and solidarity with others bars argument, challenge, critique or even refutation is debatable (Reedy, 2009). I, therefore, maintain that an attempt to build greater shared understandings of myself and my respondents has only strengthened the power of my critique in my research. Since I did not know my respondents before embarking on this research, I tried to establish some form of relationship with them to facilitate access to them. This was somewhat "opportunistic" (Reedy, 2009, p. 10), as it meant that I consciously developed a relationship through a process of familiarisation with my potential respondents (Agar, 1996; Borgatti, 1999; Russell, 2002).

This process of familiarisation took me two weeks because these female academics needed time to be acquainted with and accustomed to me and to recognise me as a part of their typical every-day lives. I argue, therefore, that my idea of forming a relationship of trust with the respondents was aimed at making them feel more relaxed and easier for me to relate to. This relationship made it easier for me to talk to various

female academics in Saudi Arabia from different social backgrounds, different stages of their careers, different experiences and different ethnicities and nationalities. I also used Twitter as a tool to contact some participants as it is a straightforward, fast, direct and cost-effective way of making contact. Some academic acquaintances (professional colleagues back in Saudi Arabia) had earlier on given me the names of a few potential respondents. However, none of them participated from my Twitter enquiry.

I contacted six women on social networks such as Twitter and Skype while I was yet in the UK, but only three took part, and of the three that agreed to participate, each insisted that they did not want a face to face interview, nor did they want to be recorded. They also requested that I interview by Skype voice and not video. They were afraid of retribution from the management of their universities, and my assurances of anonymity and confidentiality fell on deaf ears. This approach presented me with certain limitations. For instance, it restricted my use of the observation technique to determine the respondents' disposition and physical expressions. However, these interviews still yielded data significant for the research and which have been included among the nine successful interviews that I conducted. My face to face interviews included eight female academics from a private university and twelve from a public university. However, I was only able to use three interviews from the private universities and seven from the public universities for several reasons, including incomplete answers, incomplete interviews and outright refusal to answer some questions. I did use the 20 interviews to inform the findings and analysis. While my research group made it clear that they wanted to be involved in the interviews, they limited their level of participation by selectively answering questions, stopping the interviews midway and giving close-ended responses. In all cases, I asked participants to provide consent for their data to be used in the research and they all responded in the affirmative.

The ten narratives including mine provided a more comprehensive picture of issues and consisted of various diverse characteristics. It was essential for me to maintain a healthy relationship on an academic and professional level with respondents even

after returning to the UK. I conducted my interviews in two places that is, in a university setting and using Skype. The interviews were held at pre-arranged and agreed locations to ensure confidentiality and privacy for 17 participants. The Skype interviews (3) were held at prearranged times. As I suggest in later sections, narratives in my research are illustrative of a collective generational experience having its roots in the specific political, social and economic circumstances of my participants and indeed mine.

I asked participants to tell me about their life histories via questions and prompts individually, and I encouraged them to express themselves freely. By telling me about their Curriculum Vitae (CV) for instance, I intended to encourage respondents to present themselves in a broader context to capture socio-cultural and organisational influences and imperatives. Most of my interviewees were shocked when they heard the kind of questions I put to them such as, “Tell me about yourself.” Some wondered what I was going to do after collecting their life histories and their self-narrated stories. I also explained to participants that under a survey method subjects might not be fully aware of their reasons for any given answer and survey questions could lead to unclear data because certain answer options may be interpreted differently by respondents (Farquhar, 2012). Nine of the twenty interviews I conducted were taped, and I took notes in the case of two respondents as they insisted they did not want to be recorded. This was a technique I had to use to ensure confidentiality, to abide by the wishes of my respondents and still have a detailed account from them. I had to address certain considerations while taking notes though. For instance, there was the possibility that I could distract participants while taking notes and therefore negatively affect the robustness of their responses. I could also miss out on certain aspects of their responses while taking notes. To address these challenges, I considered delaying note-taking until the end of the interview or after my respondents had left. However, there was a risk that I may forget important details (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). Therefore, I classified information into appropriate response categories such as social class, organisation role and impact, socio-cultural value systems, and organisational value systems amongst others (Gall et al. 1996).

This way, I was able to capture responses by simply writing under each category thereby creating my own bespoke note-taking. All interviews were transcribed for data analysis. The audio recordings and the notes which will be destroyed afterwards enabled me to present the words of respondents verbatim, allowing me to listen to the tape recording several times and to present the final version of the respondents' narrative which is as close as possible to the original. I complimented this process by making mental notes, written notes and by employing a degree of observation, to aid my conversation with the respondents while capturing in their narrative the broader socio-cultural and organisational implications of their responses.

4.7. Our stories

In the last section, I gave an account of how I gained access to my participants and how I gained their trust and established solidarity based on their understanding that we share common professional, organisational, historical and socio-cultural experiences. In this section, I will focus on how I give an account of the stories of these women using narratives in the form of life experiences. This approach enables my research to contribute something worthwhile to an understanding of the experiences of my respondents and thus provide some answers to the main question of how and why being a female career academic has become so significant in Saudi Arabia. I do not just theorise about their stories, rather the stories themselves form the core of my research so that the narrators themselves and their stories become the focus (Reedy, 2009).

In essence, my research stands as a testimony of my respondents' experiences, their aspirations, expectations, pain, frustrations and achievements. Furthermore, this allowed the complexities experienced in the lives of these women to be brought to the fore in a way that I could relate to and understand even as posited by Miller (2000), who argues that the use of narrative interviews to bring out life stories ensures that the perspective of the participant is evident when they tell stories of their lives and experiences. It also helped them to put their lives into perspective as they narrated their stories, bringing home the fact that they are still discriminated against by the religious and cultural systems.

I acknowledge that I am involved in the construction of the stories of my research participants. I use life histories as a methodological approach that preserves and reflects the experiences of these women. The works of Bulmer (1986) and Reedy (2009) to mention a few evidence the most influential applications of this approach, which has been described as systematically collected sociological life history. In collecting the stories of my research participants, it is obvious that I cannot separate some of their experiences from mine. It means that their experiences were not just similar but resonated with my experiences and this helped me to understand their stories. My participants talked to me about their views, perspectives and experiences and what they shared and remembered. However, my conversation with them was an opportunity for them to reflect on their current roles (Davies, 2012). It has been argued that the most common way in which life histories are collected is through unstructured interviews (Reedy, 2009).

In employing narrative interviews, I was guided by the view that story-telling can be used as a presentational and interpretive strategy (Jovchelovitch et al. 2000). In essence, by telling, individuals recall what has happened, position or structure experience, find possible meaning for it and, consequently, engage actively with the events that influence individual and social life (Bauer, 1996). By adopting story-telling, then, I uncouple participants responses that relieve, or at least make familiar, their unique circumstances and feelings that confront ordinary everyday life. I began by using a 'generative narrative question' (Riemann & Schutz, 1987, p. 353), to stimulate interviewee's main account which set the tone for the storytelling. These stories stood as an indication of everyday lived experiences. I argue therefore that in my study, I have used life histories as a way of unearthing 'marginalised voices' (Reedy, 2009, p. 5). This is because I present an understanding of how stories connect to the lives of my respondents and how a common and shared understanding of these experiences between my respondents and I creates an opportunity for me to comprehend these experiences as they recount their stories using their words. To understand their stories, therefore, I also tell my story using the autobiographical approach (Stanley, 1993).

4.8. Research ethics

I acknowledge there are some ethical issues in my research, which were based on restrictions faced by women in voicing their views and concerns about their work in Saudi Universities. A major ethical concern in my research was the wellbeing of both my respondents and me in the course of and after my research. In Saudi Arabia, it is not always considered acceptable to question the heavily gendered segregated workplace within universities and the society at large (Tonnessen, 2016). Women, despite their higher education qualifications and knowledge, are only able to play very limited and restricted roles at Saudi universities. These considerations have implications for my participants and I. The biggest challenge was getting potential participants to talk to me but being a Saudi national and a fellow female academic helped me to convince them of my noble intentions.

In essence, even when there was hardly any reason to be cautious, women approached to participate were still cautious. Indeed, my intention in my research is to reveal these difficulties experienced by female academics trying to build careers in Saudi Arabia in the hope that this will contribute to positive change (Tonnessen, 2016). Thus, my general ethical posture is informed by a feminist stance that sees an ethical imperative in bearing witness to the personal experiences of women through their stories. However, I accept that this approach entailed some additional risks that required strategies to minimise. I, therefore, adopted the following measures over and above the usual requirements for confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent (Carey, 1998).

I acknowledge that gender was imperative while negotiating access to the women participants in a male-dominated organisational setting (Hammersley, 2007). The purpose of making contact with them was to provide them with all my details aimed at eliciting their permission to conduct my research in their university. Having obtained general consent from the selected universities to carry out interview-based research with female participants, I conducted my research in as low key and discreet a manner as was possible in order not to draw undue attention to my presence and activities.

This is, in any case, a desirable approach, and supports the ethnographic nature of the research methodology as advanced by Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009).

All arrangements for interviews took place directly with participants and communication was through personal rather than institutional forms, for example, personal phones rather than work email). Preliminary discussions with potential participants were informal and designed to establish a relationship of trust as argued by Reedy (1990), where the potential risks of taking part in the research can be explored so that participation is fully informed and any vulnerable or unwilling participants could withdraw before the formal collection of any data that was undertaken. All the interviews were conducted outside the universities in convenient places to safeguard the privacy of the participants and myself, as well as the confidentiality of the research. Time spent with participants within the universities was minimal. This is because I was interested in the wider lives of my participants, not just their professional/organisational experiences and more informal settings for conversation facilitated and enabled a more equal and trust-based relationship between my respondents and me. The names of the participants and the universities and all other details which might lead to personal identification were carefully anonymised. The recording was strictly used for academic purposes and was stored safely and will be destroyed at the completion of my research as argued by Carey (1998).

Participants were offered the option of not recording the interviews. I took particular pains in ensuring that all notes, transcripts, and documents were always kept securely. Participants received a high level of reassurance regarding the ethical conduct of the research and were frequently reminded of their option to withdraw at any time. All details and data connected with any participant who wished to withdraw were destroyed immediately. I propose that the thesis is embargoed for a minimum period of three years to protect the participants and the researcher further after the research is completed.

4.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have showcased how I conducted my research. My purpose is to assist the reader in making interpretative judgements about my research in some ways. For instance, I have included my narratives reflexively (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), including my purpose and convictions for undertaking my research as a female academic from Saudi Arabia. The aim is to assist my reader in understanding socio-cultural and organisational influences that informed my writing. These influences are the outcome of a male-dominated society, where societal restrictions on women tend to constrain their organisational, professional and career development (Hamdan, 2005; Alwedinani, 2016). Being a female academic myself, my research presented certain inherent risks for me and my participants. For instance, having these women share their experiences revealed that they all had something in common, and so represented a voice – one that seemed to reveal a sense of frustration, blatant discrimination, and dissatisfaction. This 'voice' appeared to question the established socio-cultural and religious order. Any challenge to this status quo brings in retribution and is a risk to my participants and me, which I acknowledge in my research. However, I am motivated by the possibility that my research is important because it gives otherwise marginalised women a voice, and it describes and interprets social realities on the basis of their experiences (Acker et al. 1991).

I have also attempted to take into account the context in which my research took place and the social and organisational implications for my respondents and me. The constraints which I faced placed demands on me as a researcher, for instance, accessing participants (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016) and getting them to talk to me. I had to establish and build trust slowly, consciously and carefully between my participants and I. Therefore, trust became a product of relationship building, solidarity, bonding, and empathy. This was the only way that I could 'be inside' my participant's circles to relay their shared experiences and yet 'be outside' them to observe them at the same time (Hamdan, 2009).

Furthermore, I have attempted through conversations, to represent and relay the attempts of my respondents to give an account of themselves through their stories as

contained in their narratives. In doing this, I have endeavoured to reveal the socio-cultural constraints that inform the background against which my respondents participated in my research. I mention this here because it is extremely relevant to point out dominant manifested emotions (Gray, 2008) that informed my disposition and the disposition of the female academics that participated in my research and how their anxiety and fear made it hard for them to talk to me.

However, the theoretical lens used in the study and the methodological location were fundamental for exploring these dynamics. Specifically, the theoretical framework of the thesis, the social exchange theory (see section 7.1), together with the methodological approach adopted for this study, is premised on the view that culture is subjectively apprehended rather than 'given'. Therefore, the overall research design draws on the view that the cultural meanings of women in Saudi Arabia will manifest their subjective views, which may be fluid, transient, and intersecting/multidimensional, nonetheless rooted in cultural norms and values that inherently dictate their emotions, dispositions and behaviour.

This chapter also captures my motivations for undertaking this research which is my desire to bring about positive change (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) through representing and relaying these shared experiences of professional women in general but more specifically female academics as relates to their work lives and careers in a male-dominated Saudi Arabian education system (Tonnessen, 2016). I acknowledge that my research motivation suggests a political appeal, the desire to give voice to the women in academia and thereby inspire social change. My research is, therefore, guided by my willingness to listen to the account of other women and reflect upon my feelings and emotions (Gray, 2008).

Chapter Five

5. Presenting the Stories

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present the life histories of my study participants through their narratives. I offer first-hand accounts of the lived experiences of women academics, who have faced social, organisational and institutional barriers to their career advancement in higher educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. My use of narratives and particularly life histories provide my respondents with a platform on which to share their life and work experiences (Gill, 2014). I have divided this chapter into two sections: In the first section, I present my story. Adopting this approach by starting with the presentation of my story finds some support with the submission of Humphreys (2005), who argues that the presentation of my life history ensures reflexivity in my research as I reference my lived experience in the stories of my respondents. Haynes (2011) has also validated this assertion by Humphreys (2005) by pointing out that my ability to examine myself helps my understanding of a social phenomenon more deeply and contextually through the examination of the self.

Thus, I try to ensure that I have included a self-portrait of myself first, which includes my convictions, my experiences and my motivations amongst others and engage with my participants in a conversation in which our experiences (mine and theirs) mingle, interact and relate in producing a coherent story. I admit, though, that in writing about myself, I have gone through a process of self-examination and self-discovery and have learned that a lot has changed about me since I went to the field and made contact with my respondents. For instance, my self-confidence and self-motivation have increased as I now able to situate myself in the experiences of my interviewees. This is because I have embraced a subjective understanding of reality based on my culture and professional experiences, which has afforded me the foundation for thinking more critically about how my assumptions, values, and actions resonate with that of my respondents (Cunliffe, 2004).

In the second section, I present my participant's life histories in my capacity as a female academic. Thus, I recognise that I am tasked with presenting the stories of people whom I see as colleagues. I use pseudonyms to represent my respondents as well as maintain their anonymity as part of the ethical requirements of my research. As indicated in the works of scholars like Alvesson and Deetz (1999); Cunliffe (2001); Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009), I give an account of my respondent's stories in a way that portrays the richness of their lived experiences. I agree with Reedy (2009) and others (Mishler, 1995; Chase, 2005; Georgakopoulou, 2006) that I need to preserve their stories in a way that is faithful to the way they were told me which, in the context of this study, will unearth these voices that are marginalised. I submit that my selection of these voices is based on the evocative motivation that their stories need to be told and their voices need to be heard. In presenting the stories, I will argue that the reader can make independent judgements because each respondent is unique, and the extracts from their stories satisfy a significant requirement when using narratives, which is allowing respondents to speak for themselves. Thus, in both sections, I take the neutral reader on a journey to enable an understanding of who I am and how my respondent's accounts are reflected in my look into my respondent's experiences, hopes, disappointments, and triumphs. However, I acknowledge that some told me their stories with passion and openness, others with suspicion and discretion; all respondents, however, were cautious. Every question and response seemed to pass through a sieve of cultural alertness and expectations, a reflection of how the researcher and participants see themselves and how this affects their story.

5.2. My Story

I was born over three decades ago to a working-class family in the east of Saudi Arabia. I am the eldest in the family, with five brothers and three sisters. My father was an officer in King Abed Al-Aziz Navy Base in Al-Jubail. He completed high school and graduated from the Naval College. My father lost his father early in his life, so he had to work at an early age, to support his mother since he was the eldest of two children (he had a younger brother). I grew up in a house granted to us by the government. Hence, we never worried about the rent or bills, since everything was free. My mother's family also belonged to the working class, but the living standard was better than that of my father's. This is because of my grandfather, from my mother's side, worked at a

petrol company. This gave him many privileges, such as free health treatment for his children.

However, my mother always encouraged her children to learn, especially the girls, telling them that only their degrees would benefit them, not the husbands or children. She constantly said that education is the woman's weapon in this life. She had a very strong personality. I stayed with her for nearly seven years, during part of my high school and while I was doing my university degree. My mother completed her bachelor degree in Geography. She taught at secondary schools. She was in her high school when I was born. She left us for one year and a half when I was eight years old at the primary school since she was asked to choose an area far away from home to teach. She chose then to teach where her parents lived, to stay with them. Her father used to take her to work since women are not allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia. She was forced to leave us to earn money to cater for the family. My father did his best in the meantime to help her to teach closer home but was told she had to find someone to replace her, which she did in the end. She still teaches to this day. Both of my parents were caring, affectionate, understanding, but the upbringing was at the same time disciplined. My family was always moderately religious, open-minded, with many liberal views. They provided us with everything we needed. My childhood could be described as being healthy. Although I was the eldest, I was treated the same way as others – there was no special treatment, irrespective of gender. They were fair to all of us. I went on to a private nursery school at the age of five and paid nothing because it was free being funded by the government.

We lived in a Navy Base. I attended high school outside this Navy Base, to a school in a coastal area. The government provided us with a free bus to this school, which was fifteen minutes far from the Base. This area was as well very secure, not accessible to anyone. I did not like this school. The advantages were far less than those at the schools I went to inside the Base. I did not like people in this school and the way they treated us. They were very strict. They imposed many rules regarding what colours to wear, the design of our clothes, the kind of shoes we wear, etc. We also had to cover our hands, our faces, even the eyes. They used to stop me every

day in the queue because of the way I was dressed, saying, for instance, that I should not wear high heels, commenting on the way I wore my hair or the colour of my socks since they should be only black. They did not allow us to go home if we did not cover our eyes. The teachers always spoke about religion, but I did not like their approach to religion since it was very strict. The school principal used to wear gloves and cover her face. I could not tolerate it at this school. I just studied for one semester. I complained to my parents about the situation there, explaining everything I was going through. I told them that I was worried my score will not be good since they used always to stop me in the queue. In Saudi Arabia, every student should be granted a Certificate of Good Reputation and Conduct. If the student doesn't get this certificate, it means they are not good, and might not be accepted at the university.

My parents were very understanding in that my mother reassured me that what matters most is feeling comfortable at the place I am studying. Consequently, I was moved to a distant school, where my grandparents, from my mother's side, lived. It was hard for me to live away from my family, but I really enjoyed my time with my grandparents, who treated me very well, to the extent of spoiling me. I finished with high grades and studied at the university there. I graduated in 2004. When I graduated from university, I got married. My husband was my mother's cousin. It was a pre-arranged marriage. I received marriage proposals from outside the family, but being the eldest in the family, my parents preferred that I marry from within the family. They had some fear of getting married to a stranger, although, by Saudi traditional standards, my family could still be regarded as open-minded. The family was very big, in that it included cousins and cousins' cousins. In the Saudi society, there are very strong family ties, and the family tree is very big. That is why people marry from their family, and marriage from outside the family was not favoured. However, this mentality changed gradually, in that it became normal to marry from outside the family. That is why all of my brothers and sisters married from outside the family.

During the first year of my marriage, I got pregnant. I had a boy, and I stayed at home. My husband graduated with a marketing degree and worked for a car company. His salary was not that much, so our house was rented. My husband was a good

hardworking man. I stayed at home, not working at all, for two years. At the time, I could not find any job in the private or public sectors. However, in 2005, the External Academic Scholarships for postgraduate studies in Saudi Arabia was introduced by the Saudi government. Applying for this program was like a dream that I had waited for to improve my financial and educational conditions. My application was successful as I was one of those accepted for this program since I met all the requirements. My husband helped with processing and documentation since women are not allowed to enter the sections at which men work. My family also encouraged and supported me.

I did my master's degree in administration in the United States. I spent three years there. I spent the first year learning the English language. This was the first time for me to go abroad. It was an exciting and rich experience for me since it was an opportunity to open up to the world, see how other people live and think, know about the world, and learn about other cultures. My husband accompanied me as a guardian since this is a condition in Saudi Arabia. This was an opportunity for my husband to learn English too and study for a masters degree as well. I left my son with my mother in Saudi Arabia to be able to study. My mother was very supportive. She wanted me to study and set a good example for the rest of my siblings. My son was then six months old. However, I was shocked to learn after I arrived the united states that I was pregnant. I did not tell my mother about this for eight months since I promised her not to get pregnant and just focus on my studies. I spoke to my aunt about it and asked her to tell my mother about it, because of my embarrassment. My pregnancy did not stop me from focusing on my studies, mainly because my husband was so supportive. I had a boy. My mother also looked after my baby as well. My study was not that hard, because my children were not with me. In 2009, I graduated and went back to Saudi Arabia. After my return, I stayed at my in-laws' house. I stayed with my husband and children in one room only, since my husband was unemployed. I was the only one working. I worked as a secretary at an oil producing company. The salary was not sufficient, and there was no gender equality regarding pay. Women with higher qualifications were earning less than men with lower qualifications. The reasoning behind this state of affairs was that the man was the one responsible for supporting the family, not the woman, and so needed all the resources. The environment was mixed there.

This was the first time for me to work in a mixed environment in Saudi Arabia. While I was working there, I got pregnant with my daughter. Working hours were very long for me there. I had to leave at five in the morning and return at five in the evening. This badly affected my health, so I could not continue to work for that company. I quit the job, and I began to look for work in a University. Eventually, I got this job with the help of my husband. The University selected me, but they did not contact me until my husband made enquiries. I do not know why I was not contacted even though they had my contact details. I was appointed as a lecturer in 2011. I had to move with my family to a city in the north of Saudi Arabia, to work at the university. My husband managed to get a job, which was managerial, at the Ministry of Education. I taught several subjects related to Business Administration. I also worked as a supervisor of the Department of Cultural Activities in the female student's section on the order of the Dean of the male students' faculty.

In 2013, I came to the United Kingdom on a scholarship from my workplace to do my PhD (which is still ongoing at the time of this write-up). Getting there was not easy; I found getting the funding to pursue the PhD challenging as I faced several constraints. For instance, my application to the Department of Graduate Studies and Research was ignored because the previous Dean, who was supposed to approve was very uncooperative. However, one day I received some communication from the new Dean saying that he would talk to the University President directly on my behalf, but he never did. My attempt to reach the president of the University was also unsuccessful: his secretary would answer, take my details and message, promise to call back but never will.

However, I was determined to keep pursuing this, and I never gave up. I started thinking of other avenues such as sending my husband directly to the President to make a presentation on my behalf. However, I did not want to involve my husband because of the possibility that he will be rejected subsisted and this may affect his ego and cause me marital problems at home. One day my application came through although the University President informed me that I had to write a pledge that if I did

not do well in my studies, the University in the UK had the right to send me back to Saudi Arabia within six months. There was, of course, a lot of bureaucracy and documentation which dragged on and on, but eventually, my PhD journey began in September 2014.

Looking back, I cannot separate myself from the experiences I had at work especially as a female academic as regards training and promotions at my University in Saudi Arabia. For instance, I remember receiving a communication from the Dean that there was an international training program for me to attend, and he asked me to fill the form to apply for it if I am interested; I did. The application was tossed back and forth by male clerks and administrators, and even when I reported this to the Dean, he said that I have to follow the procedure in place and continue to chase it up to find out what happened to the document. However, he also advised that I should apply directly using my funds and the university will reimburse me for my expenses after I had attended the event. After fully preparing myself for travelling to Malaysia for the workshop, I was informed that I would not go because my documents were not approved. I was to discover later that my position was taken by another female staff, who had close ties to the University management. This experience reveals that the selection of female staff in the University for training was subject to external interference or internal bias based on interpersonal relationships which undermine merit. This demonstrates that some female staff are not seen as equal to others.

Also, I had the feeling that I worked under stress and this was worsened when sometimes I received calls during holidays and after work hours. For instance, I received a call during my holiday from my previous Dean asking about some students' reports. The pressure and stress are not limited to what happens after work hours. Even my evaluation/appraisal comes with added stress because the channels of communication are not so clear and even when they are the final authorisations are dependent on male administrators whom I cannot interface with directly. Getting feedback on an evaluation is difficult which keeps one so worried about the final grade or outcome. This gave me a feeling of inequality/inequity in my workplace which further

adds to the stress I experienced at and about work. I felt the frustration of having something to say yet no one to talk to.

I remember a day I wrote an article regarding the activities that were organised by me in the female section. I emailed this to the administrator at the male section in charge for publication in the University magazine. I was shocked later when I found the article was signed by the man whom I sent it to originally. When I made a call and asked him about this, he rudely responded that he did it and had always done so and will do so again and that there is nothing I can do about it! In effect, he stole my idea because he knew that there was no channel for me to have such grievance addressed. But inequality is not limited to male and females but even between members of the same sex and in these case females. Even with the same qualification, you will see the differences. For instance, you see some of the females given less workload to teach and extra time for rest and vacations mostly because of family connections, relatives in certain roles and personal relationships facilitated by male proxies who determine what happens and who gets selected for departmental projects.

My attempt to participate in a personal development project in one instance was refused because I was told that the University could not pay for me as this project was only designed for just three male academic staff. I finally offered to participate voluntarily without pay, and so only had a chance to have my name on the project while I was denied the full financial benefits of being part of the project all because of my gender. I would have wished that my relationship with the female Vice Dean was more cordial; maybe then some things will be easier for me, but this was not so because she treated her subordinates like competitors especially when they showed passion, creativity, initiative or promise. Her behaviour towards me was laughable because her academic position was much higher than mine although I suspect that she was jittery because she was Egyptian and I Saudi but then she was also a woman and had her constraints.

I recall my discussions with my fellow female lecturers which affirmed my understanding that though female lecturers teach and take more workload in departmental level, they do not get the chance to climb the career ladder to decision-making positions as quickly as males do. The most discriminating fact I noticed was that even with more qualifications and more experience than a male colleague, a female academic could not lead any event or activity without the approval from a male even when not as qualified. This was a constraint reinforced by a most peculiar experience I had getting my sick leave approved.

Even with advancement in technology and faster communication systems, I had to write a letter and send it through my husband to my Faculty for approval. There was no way to track if my request was approved or not. These manual systems are implemented by a largely male hierarchy just to control and to subdue women. Further, I also experienced a most demotivating incident when I was denied an opportunity to attend a training course, and my position availed a male lecturer who was younger and much less experienced than me. Later, I discovered that my other female colleagues had experienced a similar fate due to institutionalised and systemic discrimination. Furthermore, in my experience, male lecturers in Saudi Arabia actively exert power over female lecturers regarding decision-making thereby blocking freedom of expression that directly affects the enthusiasm for teaching. These experiences were some of the motivations that drove me into undertaking this study.

5.3. The Human Resource DR. (Nadeen)

Nadeen decided to pursue a career in the academia as she believed she followed her passion. She recalls how she undertook her postgraduate studies and how a window of opportunity opened up in the Middle East. She told me how she finally got a job in the Kingdom. She went on to explain what the university policies for female expatriates were. She explained the choice she faced to bring her brother as her guardian in Saudi Arabia. She noted some of the challenges her brother faced then which put some strain on her. She was quite pleased to talk about her academic career. She explained that this sudden change in the programme structure negatively impacted on her financially. She was thankful that her line manager did not relieve her from the teaching responsibilities. She recounted the troubled waters she ran into when the

Head of the department was changed. She was thankful at having overcome the financial difficulties she faced during her studies. Nadeen went on to talk about her current role at the university. She admits that there is a problem if one takes on a job in the Kingdom without understanding the details of the initial contract that is given and this she noted has not changed since she had her PhD. She revealed what her frustrations have looked like over the years regarding progress on the job. She told me that she is a coordinator in the department and also lectures at the University. She recounted some of the challenges that she encountered in the course of her career without making much headway. I could figure out that these influenced her desire to rise above her current position. She demonstrated how her level of experience and academic qualifications could not be ignored having come this far. She's committed to making the best of her academic qualification is further revealed. She shared with me what her plans for the future are which she believes is built on broadening her career options. (Source: Field Notes).

We are six, three girls and three brothers, the three girls are the oldest, I am the second girl, and I am responsible for supporting my family partly. My father works for the government; his salary is not enough to support schooling and living expenses. We support him as much as we can because he has to support each person who is a graduate. My sisters and I take the big part of assistance and help, because, you know, girls are better than boys in supporting the family. Boys, when they get married, just take care of their wife and their immediate families. I love teaching and acquiring knowledge. I want to change people's way of thinking and also help them in developing their skills. I want to feel I did something or added something that is worthwhile. I want to feel that the people I am dealing with have benefited from a piece of information which I have made available and that I have changed a wrong way of thinking, improved people's academic performance, and helped people acquire new skills. When I studied science and did research, I found out about a social problem and came up with solutions. I have felt for so long that this is my natural direction and that I can achieve fulfilment if I follow this direction. Since I was a student, I have wanted to become an academic and teach at a university, particularly that we had many role models at the University then. I wanted to become like them regarding how they motivated us, made us enthusiastic and changed our way of thinking and skills.

I did my undergraduate study in Egypt and proceeded to the UK to study for a Master's Degree after which I returned to Egypt. I took a job at a local University, and it was a chance discussion with my friend that brought the idea of working in the Gulf. He suggested that since I had a UK degree and a good command of English, there could be opportunities in the Gulf. He provided me with information, and we began the search for Universities that have a good ranking in Saudi Arabia as well as a good reputation. Then I applied from the Saudi embassy website, and I got the opportunity to teach there. I received a phone call from someone who was responsible for university recruitment. He interviewed me over the phone. As part of the requirements, I had to do a medical. The medical report was good, and I had to apply for the visa. It was the University of "…" that gave me the first opportunity in this Kingdom. The University of "…" have strict rules for female staff joining them. I was single, and I faced a different type of dilemma regarding who will be going with me as a male guardian. They contact person explained to me then that as part of my contract, there is a place where my guardian has to sign as women in the Kingdom are not allowed to go on the street on their own or even do their shopping alone.

He explained that the Kingdom would not accept a woman walking by herself in the streets. He told me that if I do not have a guardian that would be an exceptional case because it will mean that I would have to depend on a driver, who will be paid to help me out. I would have to pay him to take me around, help me buy things as I was not allowed to do that on my own. It was not difficult for me to convince my brother to come to Saudi Arabia with me then as he had a temporary job. That made it an easy decision for him to move with me. He just finished from the University and was weighing a lot of options then. My brother could not stay at home all day when I was at the University. It was quite difficult for him as he was busy at home though it was a temporary job. It was so difficult for him, and you know the feeling of an Arabic man when he doesn't have a job. I was always concerned. It was difficult for him to get a job when he first came. When he got his first job, he was working in a company which paid him a small amount of money (about 2,000 Riyals). Time flies. He has finally settled here. In the year 2007, my brother got married and brought his wife to join him in Saudi Arabia. He

is still here with me along with his children. My circumstances have not changed; he is still my guardian.

I got my Masters in 2006 and applied for PhD in 2008 and graduated in 2015. I applied for the PhD as a part-time while teaching at the university in Saudi Arabia. Then UK immigration law permitted part-time studies which meant that I could visit the UK once or twice a year to meet my supervisors or prepare for my annual review. In the course of my study, the immigration rules changed, and the UK did not permit international students on a part-time basis. I had to change to full time, and I became a regular flier between Saudi and Britain. You know my work was an ethnographic study. I worked and supported myself financially. This state of affairs cost me a lot of money. I did not find anyone who could give me a sponsorship. I had to take a decision which meant suspending my studies in the UK for a year and a half as I did not have enough finances to carry on. I got support from my supervisor in the UK when I had to face this decision. The previous head of the department gave me a lot of support. It was very difficult to do a doctorate in the UK and still work. I could not afford to lose my job.

My head of department said that he knows that I wanted to study and he understood my plight. I still remember those words; ‘we are with you and supporting you.’ I said to him; ‘I promise this programme will not affect my teaching,’ to which he replied; ‘sure, we will help you. The new head of department called me one day and said that ‘we brought you here to teach our students and not to study.' After that day, I encountered more difficulties. I had to travel to visit the UK for compulsory meetings or even annual reviews. For instance, when I had to travel to the UK for my oral examination, the University refused to grant me leave, and I could not get an exit visa. It was a disaster. I am happy that it is finally over. I paid over £10,000 for my tuition fees which are a problem when you are on a low salary. You know I got the job on the basis of my UK master’s degree. I took three bank loans to cover the total cost of my studies. I have been able to repay them. For my degree, it was all worth it. You might not get upgraded to the level that suits your academic degree. There is no clear management ladder for you, especially for the expatriates. The Saudi citizens have a clear ladder, especially if they are incumbents. If you are non-Saudi, the problem is greater or more ambiguous

‘non-specific.’ This is because you could have a contract for a certain job with a particular description. However, this job description would change if you leave and return with a new contract, or if those in charge want to modify the jobs, in which case we have to wait to see what would happen.

It is a secretarial job rather than a management one because this situation does not in the first place suit my academic level. I have a PhD in a particular specialisation and yet am working as a secretary. I cannot, God willing, proceed like that. I can see that this role does not suit me. I did not have a Ph.D., on which I spent a lot of money and exerted a lot of effort, to become a secretary. This role is not worth all the academic or work experience. I teach in 2 public universities and one private in Saudi Arabia. The idea of my project for the PhD came from my work experiences living in Al-Qassim Region. I also teach at the local university. It is very conservative. There are a lot of restrictions for women, and I took an interest in studies around women. I wanted to know more. Egypt is moderate. At first, I was shocked by the Saudi Culture. I thought the Egyptian culture was the same as Saudi. I thought we had similar values and culture, but as I settled in here, I knew that they are very strict with women and this gave birth to my ideas. Do not get me wrong; I am Muslim. Egypt is not as strict as what you have here in Saudi Arabia. Here in Saudi Arabia, for any word you utter or for any movement you make, you are judged.

Honestly, this was different for me, and I saw the difficulties women faced. You need to be very patient as a woman in Saudi Arabia. It is hard at the university here to communicate with the male department. We use different means of communication as opposed to face-to-face communication. You can use the phone and email only. The problem with the phone is that males will not call you at specific times. They could call when you are at home and when it is not convenient. This would bother some people, especially women. It would put a woman in an awkward position when a male stranger calls her at home. This is well-known. Most problems result from communication by the phone. Of course, communication by email is quite preferable because you can be so formal, do what is requested from you only (that is what is specifically needed), and that is it.

I taught once on a part-time basis at a private university for around three to four years. This university did not have a problem with communication but with discipline. Communication there is more open. I can even meet the male person in charge of organising and reporting for instance; I can even have an interview with him because they are more open-minded. This is quite hard at State Universities. I did not have an administrative role at private universities. I was in charge of other non-administrative issues, such as preparing the syllabus, lectures, exams, i.e. routine work as an academic, not administrator. They did all the administrative work. They did not charge academic members with any administrative work. I have never taught boys, but it is said that boys are more careless, and have a wider variety of other interests than girls. In other words, they don't take education seriously. They are not as enthusiastic as girls, who are always keen to study and more disciplined than boys. You can see that there is a great different regarding the level of boys and girls concerning exams in that the male doctor would normally say that none of his students has an (A) or (+A), whereas I do have a high percentage of girls with this grade. We face a gap in the same educational process between the performance of male and female students.

Besides, when the performance of the male student is below expectation, we will be forced to change the same syllabus to meet this level of performance. Whereas in the case of female students, we raise the level and hence deliver to them a harder material and richer information to reach a higher level still. That is why the educational process is different with female students. We exert more effort for them, give them more exercises, and more information. We enrich the educational process inside and outside of class with them. Male students, by contrast, are indifferent to education since they have other activities to do in life. That is why there is a huge gap between girls and boys concerning the educational process. As a matter of fact, there is a big problem because of face-to-face communication. Eye contact and body language play a great role in communicating a given piece of information. In other words, for someone to understand something, they should use as many senses as possible. Besides, it is possible to get the feedback by looking at the recipients. I believe that the most important part of the educational process is missing because listening to a

tape recorder is not the same as seeing the person in question and communicating with them. Since there will be questions and answers, the teacher will be able to notice the reaction and know whether students are understanding or not from their body language, facial expressions, and through eye contact. In class, you can modify your explanation style and repeat information. You don't necessarily have to ask students whether they understand or not because they might say they do to get it over with the lecture. However, when there is face-to-face communication with them, you are more capable of reaching them, know about the knowledge gaps, and fill these gaps. You could give them an example or an exercise and make them energetic.

By contrast, communication through the screen lacks a great part of the effective educational process. As a result, female students suffer from the problem of communicating with the male lecturers. They don't like the lecture in which the teacher is male since there will be the screen isolating them from the teacher. The male teacher himself suffers from this problem. He usually says that he is unable to let them participate in class and wouldn't know who is interacting with him. He is unable in the first place to know who is speaking to him so that he would consider this student as participating, hardworking, or lazy. He complains that he can't interact with them or have any control over the class. Although there is always a female supervisor, this supervisor is not academic.

As a result, she will not be able to decide whether the student understands or not. There is a big failure in the educational process or in how effective it is when there is a screen. It is just like an online course. A face-to-face course is more effective than an online course. That is why the credit of the former is much higher than the latter. This is well-known since a great part of the educational process effectiveness is missing. First of all, I always have a feeling that meetings are one-sided. We are about three female academic staff; the rest are men. However, the biggest problem is respecting the point of view of the female staff. Very often, the male members hold meetings and provide us with just the outcome of these meetings. They unusually say something like 'We agreed on so and so.' Who are you, and when did you have a meeting? Don't we have an opinion? They would then say 'We did not want to bother

you. Why do you claim not wanting to bother us all the time? Are we not teachers too? Rather we teach and sort the problems that you create for us as a result of your decisions. You only take decisions from men's point of view. These things happen a lot, particularly at important meetings, when discussing, for example, the finals, distributing marks, the form of questions, and so forth. With regards to the final exams, they always have meetings by themselves and just notify us of the outcome. They would then say something like 'We agreed that the finals would be so and so, this is not allowed, etc.'

This is a big problem. I previously objected to that, in the last semester. They then had a meeting before the finals and notified us of the outcome. I asked them about when they made these decisions. They said they made them at a meeting. I said then 'As long as you had a meeting and made your decisions by yourselves, I am not going to apply them. You made the decisions from one part. Where is the second part?' They answered by saying 'We did not mean any disrespect or anything like that. We just wanted you to rest. Does that bother you?' I said 'You made your decisions from one side only. Where is the second one? For every female staff here, this is a big problem in this respect. With regards to our female students, we have more female classes than they do. We teach the greatest part of the female students. They usually have one or two classes, while we have three or four. As a result, this often affects us as well as the effectiveness of the educational process.

Meetings are run by one side only so that they will not be bothered with organising a meeting between the female and male departments. They would normally say something like 'Women will give us a headache, so don't bother with them and just give them orders.' This is the problem of meetings'. I will not hold this position again; I will let someone else do this job. I will not, of course, accept it for myself. I hope the female department will be independent. What I mean is that in a situation where two departments are needed as a result of culture and religion, then we have all due respect for that. We have no problem with that. But in this case, let us have our decisions and communicate with each other. Consider this; we are qualified staffs who teach female students in a university with all the students, director and members being

female. In case you want to have a female department, then don't control us, because we have problems that are different from those of men. There is a huge gap between the needs of female students in contrast to male students.

Besides, if you have a complete management staff that is incapable of making decisions, either remove them completely or give them higher authorities and responsibilities that would enable them to take decisions and solves problems. So that, for instance, when I ask a female employee for something, she will not tell me to wait until she asks the male employee for that. Either merge us, hence, making us one management or separate the two managements completely. This is what could bring about change. This would, from my point of view, solve so many problems, and lead to independence and more effectiveness in the educational processes. 'There are no positions for women in general. The head of the department and dean are male. Women can only hold a few management positions, in that there is only a female vice-dean. Women, of course, come second concerning taking decisions here. As for training courses, men do not consider women qualified, simply because they are women. This makes some of my colleagues feel that they are less influential because they are women.

They use us here to fill the gaps. We are not given any attention. Sometimes they offer us training courses that are not relevant in any way, for instance, how to use PowerPoint? Would a lecturer with a master or PhD not know how to use PowerPoint, the blackboard, and search the internet through Google? Such topics will not be given to children at primary school. You get the feeling that they underestimate you. What is worse is that these courses are compulsory. I don't attend training courses at the University. I go outside the university to develop myself. We cannot be seen as equals, when the proportion of women to progress is limited, unlike men. I mean when there is an opportunity to participate in conferences, seminars, and external labour workshops…etc., women are pushed aside.

‘To be fair, men, including those in the management, are very respectful. For instance, if there is an error with regards to the salary, or if I ask for a holiday or a visa, I will be granted what I request. The priority is given to women. They take into consideration that women don’t have a car as we are not allowed to drive. They show a great understanding of these aspects. Apart from that, I can see that a woman who has a husband gets the priority in that her courses and timetable are sorted out, and has extra hours’. ‘Now I can be more focused on my teaching and have time to focus on research. This was my decision, but that is the reality we live. I am pleased that I was able to complete my study while teaching at the University’. (Source: Interview Transcript).

5.4. The Accounting Professor (Abeer)

Abeer is an Egyptian Associate Professor with fifteen years’ experience in the Academia. Her specialisation is in accounting. She had a good command of English which was a result of her previous studies in an International School in Egypt. She had worked at an Egyptian University before her current position and was an Arbitrator to the committee of human and material potential. When I interviewed Abeer, She spoke with enthusiasm and was quick to highlight her previous roles as well as her current role. During my conversation with her, she showed some understanding of the situation in Saudi Universities which as she has observed and experienced over the years. I never hesitated to ask her any question as I was always thinking to myself after the interview she has done a lot to get here. I felt her strong character and personality. This reflects her age in the field of education for a long time, and she has lived through recent changes in her workplace. She looked burdened as if she wanted to know if the interview would make a difference and she began by asking me the role of her university in this. She was concerned about whether the university will listen to these views. I reassured her that the future generations might benefit from our experiences. I began the interview and asked her to tell me about herself.

Abeer recalled that attending school was one of the things she enjoyed doing as it was an opportunity for her to do learn maths and she confirmed that this was where her interest in education started. Abeer was persuaded by her parents to take advantage of her talent and go for an education in Cairo where the future could only be brighter. Here it is important to say

that Abeer's parents' educational background and history could have influenced them to support her towards pursuing a degree. Abeer noted that there were challenges with being a female who was studying in Egypt back then. She recalled. Abeer moved on to talk about how she began her post-graduate studies, and it all began when she asked her undergraduate supervisor for suggestions for a job. Abeer talked about how she began working and how the job paid for her Master's. Abeer moved on to talk about how she left for a University after completing her master's degree. Abeer worked at the University for another five years, and in that period she always gave thought to have a family which she believed will crown her career as an academic. (Source: Field Notes).

I was born on the outskirts of Beni Suef, a town which is the capital of Beni Suef Governorate, one of the 20 governorates of Egypt. I had six siblings, of which I am the last child of my parents. My father was a farmer who joined the trend at the time which was farming and my mother who was quite good with sewing and was a seamstress who made clothing for the women in our village. Growing up, we were all involved in the family business. For my mum, when she was not sewing, she helped my father with packing the eggs or helped with milking the goats with which we made cheese and sold to keep the family going. My brothers were involved in the business as they joined my father to sell his produce in the local market. My father grew Potatoes, tomatoes, aubergines, peppers, sesame, cucumbers and courgette and we never went hungry as there was always something left for us to eat all year round. My mother was the first to observe that I was good at maths. I can recall playing with the number of eggs that we sold or the number of chickens that were left after the eggs hatched. As I grew older, my mother told me that she was able to convince my father that the best thing was to let us join other children, who were attending the local school. Although it was not a Muslim school, it was run by Christians. My father was not very keen about this and reluctantly let us all go as long as there was no financial commitment on his part. I joined the Franciscan school for girls in Beni Suef on the same day with my two sisters.

My mother believed that this would help us keep an eye on one another and the burden of feeding us will be a lighter burden on my father. Things are no longer the same in

Egypt since the Arab Spring, though. The Franciscan school for girls in Beni Suef is an old Christian school for girls that have been there since the beginning of the 19th century. I learned my English there. The school provided me what I recall was a good education. We were mixed regarding our faith in the school. Students were thought both Christians and Muslims values. We were taught by Christian nuns who I still have good memories of the times I spent with them. But sometime in 2013, my alma mater was burnt down. There were issues that were not connected with the school. My academic performance convinced my father that he had to support his daughters to have an education. As they grew older as my brothers moved to Cairo as apprentices, where they started their own businesses.

I had just finished my secondary school as the best student where I made six A's in my A levels. Everyone in the village knew about this. But I came home from my mother's shop, and my father called me. My senior sisters had all gotten married. My father was not as quick and energetic as he used to be. He was Diabetic. He waited for my mother to come in and he began to talk. He said that he would be satisfied to let me get married, but that will not keep him happy. He said that no one in the family had a University degree and reminded me that a few neighbours and relatives have all gone to universities. People saw him in the streets, at the market and kept asking him if I was going to be off to the University. He suddenly found himself under pressure to educate me. He reminded me that before this meeting with me, he had already discussed it with my mother who agreed that it would be good to send me to a university.

He said that if I assure him that I will get a degree, he will support me all through the study. I cannot forget that night. I have never seen my father humbled by what I can call his deficiency. My father was not educated. But he was able to raise a Female Professor. I am proud of him. In the last few days at home before I left for the Suez Canal University, my father was concerned that I was becoming Western because I attended a Christian school, but at the same time, he did not mind that I speak English. He often reminded me that I should not forget that I am a Muslim and I should remember to live like one. My mother was concerned that I would be going away, but

her fears were concerned about my safety as I have never lived outside Beni Suef. There were no mobile telephones as you will have now. This meant that every two weeks, I had to travel between 3-4 hours to get home from the University. For my parents, seeing me every another weekend was something they looked forward to. It reassured them that I was safe, and I was making progress. He could also show off I suppose. About the time I finished my degree at the University, there was a growing awareness of women's education which challenged the assumptions that were already existing.

As an undergraduate coming to the end of my studies, I feared the worst. I could not imagine going back to Beni Suef to my father's mud house. I thought about the disappointment it might cause him. He had spent a fortune to send me to the University. During my final meeting with my supervisor, he asked me what my plans were after my studies. I did not hesitate to share what my worst fears were. He said that if my parents would agree, that he will offer me a job in his accounting firm as he was a consultant. I handed my project thesis, travelled to Beni Suef to inform my parents of the good news. My parents were happy. My father celebrated this good news and went about town telling his friends that I am going to live in the Suez. He boasted that his daughter has not even finished, but she got a degree level job. I spent two weeks with them, and a new phase of my life began.

Dr Mansour who was my supervisor at that time became my boss. He was very supportive, and we began to work on a project in the public commission Suez Governorate province that was to run for a few years which seemed to be for me a lifesaver. I had worked for a year when Dr Mansour called me to his office about a year of working with him and asked me if I wish to undertake a Master's degree at Suez Canal University. He said that there was a project that he has just gotten from the public commission in the Province and I can use it as a case study for my programme. I knew that he had my interests at heart and I agreed to undertake the project. I recall telling him that I do not have any savings for the tuition, but he promised to pay for the tuition and deduct it from my salary over the course of two years. That

was acceptable to me, and as I began the programme, academia and accounting became the world I knew.

Dr Mansour made a huge impact on my life. He introduced me to people who worked at the public commission Suez Governorate province. This paid off. Immediately I finished my Masters; I got a job with the public commission Suez Governorate province. Life in the public commission did not last long. I worked there for just about a year and a half. I got an offer from Suez Canal University, and life as an academic began. I joined the University as a postgraduate who had attained a degree in an area that in Egypt we had a reasonable staff shortage back then. It was an opportunity for me to work again with my former boss who was then an Associate Professor. For a female, it was an achievement that was enviable. But within the University, my role was not just teaching. It was more than teaching. I saw myself working in a job that the only prospect was developing myself and becoming qualified. This meant that I enrolled for my PhD at the Suez Canal University. It was a good reunion, and I enrolled as a part-time student. You know as I progressed on the job, I felt there was something that was missing.

Daily people would talk about their families in the staff room, and I saw that over time I was the only staff who was not married. I began to give this thought, but I was lucky I suppose, or I was at the right place at the right time. I met my husband at the annual Egyptian Society of Accountants and Auditors (ESAA) conference. He was working for a Bank in Saudi Arabia but was a member of ESAA. For a Muslim woman, there gets to a point in your life you realise that marriage is more than just you falling in love with a prince charming. It is for the sake of the Almighty Allah. It is for the sake of continuity, having children. It is also for the community and me; I knew this would crown my parent's achievements. One thing led to the other, and I got married to my husband. My father agreed to my choice and gave him a condition that he agreed to. I had to leave Egypt and join him in Saudi Arabia as an academic. I will give my husband credit. He has been very supportive and has been there for me.

I feel it is something entirely obvious that Postgraduates should work in universities, as they have achieved the degree which qualifies them to work in the university. Additionally, they should have specific objectives rather than being ordinary employees. In general, people have specific duties and jobs descriptions, but I assume that university is different, where it is a role more than a job. I think working in the university has its mission and goals more than a job. Thus, joining university had been a dream more than any other career'. There is something I observed not just among the foreign staff but even among the Saudis. Those who studied abroad are always complaining of classrooms and the environment of study. This I can say it is the result of the Saudi culture.

When we work as a single body in the name of the university, there is no difference between a man and a woman. We have the same degree and to an extent the same experiences of having studied and worked abroad. But internally, when we attend the departmental meetings that the female staff attends, our voices become inaudible. Our status is deemed to be inferior. We are not allowed to make decisions. We cannot take decisions; meetings are formal, and we cannot challenge authority. This makes the female staff down to earth at all levels, academically, administratively and culturally. I do not think that there is any form of equality. The men in the department think we cannot do the job. This might be the social legacy of Saudi Arabia. But it will interest you to know that some of my colleagues encourage the male staff to continue this discrimination as they do not wish to hear any discussion about gender equality. They think that when you talk about equality, you want to fight them. It is not just the men; the females are also encouraging this.

The truth is that Saudi female academics have an audible voice than a female academic who is not Saudi and is seen as an expatriate. I have to be clear about this. It is not just every Saudi woman. You have to come from a certain tribe and certain families that are related to the management or higher authority within the university or even outside the university. The voices of these women have weight. It is powerful, and they must be heard especially if they have a family member in the male section. These audible voices do not depend on their qualifications or their work efficiency from

what I have observed strongly. It depends on who is backing them. Some of the top management like the president of the University and academic Deans are from the same family. They have made the voices of their relatives powerful. This is the current situation at this University. Here men and women work at the same university. I do not understand why the workplace must have different rules for both men and women. In Egypt, it is quite normal to find a female Vice Chancellor or President. In Egypt, Hind Hanafy was appointed the President of Alexandria University. Here in Saudi Arabia, it is a different situation. Strict traditions control society. I sometimes think that if you possess the qualities and capacities that qualify you, there is no difference. I do not understand the workplace arrangements here. It is strange to me, but I have accepted this that this is the norms and workplace culture of Saudi Arabia. In any other society, this is the natural thing to do. Let the most qualified person do the job.

The movement for women is limited, unlike men. If there is an opportunity for me to work on a project outside Al Ahsa for example in Al Jouf University which is in Al-Jawf Region, it is about 13 to 14 hours of driving. I cannot do it even if I wish to drive myself; society will not let me do it. This means that year to year; I do not have the opportunity to collaborate with other colleagues as there are no trains or buses that can take me there. I just feel that I am shackled. I cannot ask my husband to drive me there as he works. I cannot afford to hire someone to take me there. In Egypt, I attended events and conferences, and I think I have stagnated to an extent save for the fact that I have become a Professor. This has made me believe that the society has made it that men have to progress faster than females. The opportunities are there for you to take advantage but the men drive themselves and bother less about how to get there. For female academics, there are challenges there to overcome which prevents women from attending sessions. Do you know that the common complaint is that I have a problem with transportation? I owned a car in Egypt. This is annoying. There are many advantages when you work with someone that you can see. Someone who you feel free to express your point of view too. You may be right or wrong. This is from my personal experience all the way back in Egypt. I like to deal with men and feel more comfortable working with them as they always practical. Here in Saudi Arabia, it is not allowed. I work with a Dean that I cannot see. I always call him the ‘alrrajul alkhafi’ which means the ‘invisible man.’ Unlike my experiences at Suez Canal University, I

able to reach out to my Dean. He could access the situation, and we could discuss the practicality of the work before us. Here in Saudi Arabia, the Vision of the Dean is limited. He operates in a world I think is far from the reality. He believes what he is told and is isolated from what is happening in the female section.

Unfortunately, when women take positions, there will be a few things that I have seen as positives so far. I can communicate with her. In the past, I have been able to keep up with this despite the Vice Deans that have headed this department. If you have a good attitude, she will speak well of you before the Dean. There will be fewer complaints about you. When your evaluation is done, you can clarify things face to face with her. The dean will only speak to you behind the barriers or curtains and receives feedback only from the Vice Dean or through the transmitters/speakers. He does not know what is happening while making judgments. He does not know how I feel about his comments. He does not know if I understood him. The meetings are so quick, and they do not last long as he believes the Vice Dean should have done the groundwork before he meets you. Within the University here, there is a general perception about women. They avoid us. They want to see less of us. They think we want to bring them down. They fear conspiracy. What are we conspiring to do when our voices cannot be heard? The social relations here are very poor.

I do not need a degree to show that I am a leader. I leave my academic qualifications aside, and the moment I get home I take on a new role. It is obvious; it is a great role. My academic degree does not make it any easier as I take on the responsibility of wife and mother. Sometimes this role conflicts with my professional work. But over time, I have been able to balance them. None supersedes the other. I am a professor of Accounting, and I am a woman of substance. My husband is proud of me. My children though they may not fully understand will someday appreciate the effort I have made. It is not a secret that my husband has played a significant role in encouraging and appreciating my efforts over the years. He supports me and also shares in my success. We share the family responsibilities and his support in the course of my career have been a major factor in my success. If I have not gotten his support, there would have been conflicting. He knows that I have managed the home very well. I am mandated

by Allah to look after my health as this benefits others. I believe that I will be questioned about it. I cannot ignore my family and my home. This is a great responsibility for it this is what Allah assigns to us. My home comes first. If there are enough time and strength to perform another role, it will be admirable, otherwise just look after your family, lead your children, and perform your role to the fullest. This is because we are originally assigned to raise our children and support them grow up in good manners to become useful to the society. It's worth nothing if I am a Professor making good efforts in graduating students who shall serve the society while I fail to raise up my children and educate them. I will not entertain such contradictions should be eliminated. (Source: Interview Transcript).

5.5. The English Literature Assistance (Dalal)

Dalal's story indicates how families influence and shape the careers of some female academics in Saudi Arabia. She explains how she was motivated to work in academia and highlights how the family background can make a difference to the careers of women within the university. Currently, on Post-Doctoral research in the UK, she shuttles between Saudi Arabia and Britain. She works in the English department and plays a key role in the recruitment of female staff. Dalal has been with her current employer since 2001. My interview with Dalal was interesting, and it was a constant reminder of not just the professional identity of the female academic but the identity that the society gives you. I sense Dalal from her family background had a feeling of pride, but this was deflated when this was at a crossroad with the identity the system gave to privileged Saudi citizens who come from a certain tribe. It raises issues around the socio-systems that the society uses to organise itself. This socio-systems demonstrate that the balance of power favours not just certain tribes but also those who express their power within the contexts they can control. At the end of the interview, I sensed the excitement from her voice as she laughed and told me how keen she was to see what my findings will be.

Dalal talked about her educational background and work experiences and how she got into the academia. Dalal talked about how her upbringing in the UK when her father was studying for his Doctorate meant that she was exposed to the world of academia early on. She remarked that this meant that there was a chance for the family to grow in the academic community. She begins to talk about her current role and some of the challenges that she has faced in doing the

job. She highlights what she described as the hypocrisy that allowed male and female staff to meet and discuss departmental issues face to face. She goes on to talk about the outcome of the meeting and how it changed her attitude towards meetings within the department. Dalal recalls an event that she referred to as the 'unseen walls of separation.' She expressed how the female staff and students are undermined. Dalal begins to talk about her motivation and passion for her job as an academic. She comes from an academic background.

She represents women who were motivated into the career as a result of their family background. The ability to beat the system regarding fairness has been supported by the family network arrangement which she says the family is the first to do that. She found out over time that some of the female staff had their brothers or husbands working in the same university in different departments. This reassured her that there is nothing wrong with it as long as they are the right people for the job. She felt a bit uneasy and explained that though these people were qualified just like herself, it is not about setting precedents. It is how the society has defined the workplace and recalled an experience that reminded her of her identity; Dalal commented on the how the lack of cooperation from her male colleagues. She took pride in the professional identity that academia gives you but talks about that which the society labels you with. This could have been influenced by the sense of pride from her family background; this was deflated though by the identity the system gave to privileged Saudi citizens who come from a certain tribe. (Source: Field Notes)

I come from Jeddah, a city in the Hijaz Tihamah region which is in Makkah Province. My father is a professor, and my mother is a housewife. I grew up in an uptown neighbourhood in Jeddah. My father was seen as a British man, and this was embodied in his philosophy. My mother had a degree, but unfortunately, she never worked. My father felt that she had a greater responsibility to raise us. I have a big sister and four brothers. I was everybody's favourite in the family. I would not say I was spoilt, but I got everything that I wanted. Growing up, the locals referred to my father as a 'Mesfar' in local Arabic which meant that he was always travelling. Now as an academic, I appreciate how much those travels made a difference and influenced my career. I am an English teacher. You may wonder why English. That might be because of my experiences following my dad in the course of his career. I studied

English Literature at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. My father believed that studying in Saudi Arabia will help me understand and appreciate our culture. My father worked at the University at the time. It made a huge difference. I simply joined him in the car when he went to work, and after work, we came home together. After my graduation, I got a job at King Abdulaziz University as a teaching assistant, and my Dad played a role to get me started on the job. To advance on the job, my father encouraged me to go for masters and a PhD in the UK So far, I have had in total over ten years of working as at academic at King Abdulaziz University.

My father studied in the UK, and he always talked about the importance of education. This over time became music to us. That was the world we knew. He made us know that being in academia may not always give him the money, but it was what he loved to do. I became keen to get started and became a research assistant at the university after my graduation. From there I came to the UK just like my Dad to do my post-graduate and subsequently my PhD in the UK. My career progression was upward, and everyone in the family joined the queue except my mum. We are known as the academic family. I work in the English Institute as a coordinator and trainer for the teachers. My role includes teacher training, and I work on the committee that develops curriculum in the English Institute. I carry out interviews with the teachers. On the job, there are challenges when it comes to developing the curriculum. All the meetings are done using circuit television. At the start of each meeting, we can see the men through the screen, but the men cannot see us. Over time the men rejected this and said that they are not happy that they cannot see us yet we can see them. This meant that currently in our curriculum development meetings, we just see the walls. We hear their voices, and it was difficult to deal with them. We have seven people, and we do not know how to distinguish between their voices. It is true at the beginning of the meeting they introduce themselves. I am Dr Mohammed, I am Dr Abdul, but as the meeting goes on, it is difficult to distinguish between them. For me, I felt that I was lost. I cannot tell who said what and who attended the meeting. It was so difficult, and our opinions are not taken seriously in the meeting. Our coordinator in the Female section has a weak personality. I am disappointed with this. Each time I told her that the female staff needs this for the books and curriculum, she says no. She believes that the men in the department should not be upset. She does not want us to be seen as troublemakers.

There was meeting for with visiting academics from the University of Oxford in the UK which concerned the discussion of a new textbook which was being used in the development and delivery of the curriculum. The visiting Academics from the University of Oxford insisted that since there were female academics who taught female students, they wanted to hear from them the feedback. This was laughable from my view as the Dean arranged this meeting at the Faculty of Medicine at the King Abdulaziz University. In attendance were one Male American staff, a Pakistani and Saudi national.

What happened at the meeting was very interesting, and that is what I call hypocrisy. I was among the female lecturers that went to represent the department. I was chosen because I studied in the UK and can engage in a good conversation with the visiting team. When we walked into the meeting, our colleague who was Saudi simple left the room and waited outside. They started the meeting an hour earlier. He was not comfortable with the idea that he will sit in the same room as females. He was just a representation of the conservative Saudi who will go to any length to avoid working together with a female academic. How then can he get first-hand information of what transpired in the meeting? We were welcomed and simply briefed on what they had been talking about earlier. We made suggestions, and we got the feedback, they told us it had been discussed. I got angry and asked what then the purpose of asking us to come for this meeting. This meant that our presence was just for attendance purpose. We received a report following the meeting. In this report, it said that the female academics have agreed with the visiting team from Oxford on this and that. I felt that we were just used to make up the numbers. When did we agree on these things? I stopped attending meetings as we are not given a chance to contribute. We do not have any authority. I just feel powerless. Looking at my days as a student in the UK, it was a different issue. I could attend postgraduate meetings, conferences and make a suggestion that made a difference.

The last time the president of the University had a meeting with the female students, there was an outcry that he was trying to promote a mixed learning environment. There

was an uproar among the staff members who are conservative. They strongly opposed such a face to face meeting. There are unseen walls that separate the men academics and female academics. This is not limited to the staff alone. There are courses that are offered in this university that is only given to male students. The females are automatically excluded. Degrees in Engineering, Marine Studies are deemed not suitable for women. This means that we lag behind the number of female engineers in these sectors. This makes us as a nation not to be competitive in this field. I think that the existence and progress of this university, the society at large will be a lot better if we have to promote mixed education having benefitted from such a learning environment in the United Kingdom. At the same time, I have empathy for them. I feel for them, and I can only hope that things change in the future. I do not know what will be the best thing to do to make the female academics more involved. In a survey that was carried out at the university following the visit from the team from Oxford, they surveyed the male students and excluded the female students in the department. Although the students both male and female make use of the resources, their views were not important. Only that of males counted. How is this representative of the students? The department continues to suppress our voices and make them inaudible. To them, we do not exist. We make up the numbers. It's a dream for me, my Father is a Professor in University, I have a sister who has a PhD, my husband, and all my brothers work in the university.

I am motivated to become a professor, following in the footsteps of my Dad. It is not just a job; it is not about the money, and it is a dream. From a young age, about ten, I have always wanted to be a teacher. At a young age, I always admired my teachers. During my secondary school days, I loved my Arabic teacher. She encouraged me and motivated me also to become an English teacher. I enjoy teaching. I love teaching. I love my students. As a teacher, you have more freedom to be creative and give these female students new knowledge. This I believe makes a difference as I teach mature adults, not children. It is very interesting to be an inspiration to them. To make something out of the knowledge for themselves. Looking at it, in a few years' time, the students come to you and remind you that you taught them this, you showed them that. In teaching, the rewards come to you later, and they are fulfilling to me. I can liken this to a medical doctor who treats you, and you return for a check-up looking healthy

and better. For a teacher, the feedback from a check-up comes later, and in some cases, they never come back.

I found out when I started working at the University that half of the female staff have relatives in the male sections. I noticed they shared the same surnames, or they were from similar tribes. I think this is worse than I expected. Can you imagine, in recruitment, we did some time, two prospective female candidates were not selected as they were not qualified? They proceeded with a discrimination claim that ordinary people who were not from a famous tribe interviewed them and did not choose them. We suddenly got a letter to the Prince that we should waiver our decision and accept them. Who disobeys a royal order? We had to hire them. This is sad and depressing. You can see this is the Saudi society for you. It depends on your tribe; you can call the shots'. My hands are tied as an academic here in the department. There are standardisations and procedures that we have to follow. The staff members over the past few years have been suffering from what I think is low morale. Our way of teaching and assessing students is a two-way system.

For instance, I have to teach female students and set half of the assessment questions, and my male colleague sets the other half. This the university says promotes standardisation. But it is awful to say that I do not agree with the male colleague over the questions to set. The male students and the female students have to our questions. The society is organised around tribes and your class. If I was not educated, who knows what would have become of me. My father did very well, and I commend him for all he has given us. I am Dr Dalal who to an extent can be heard because of my education and not my background. My father served as faculty member for 40 years in the Faculty of Medicine at the King Abdulaziz University. If he had no education, he would not have been recognised. He would not have served this long. The family has benefitted immensely from his service to this university. Within this University, I can say that I have people who can speak for me. (Source: Interview Transcript).

5.6. The Coordinator Accounting Lecturer (Dana)

Dana was nervous throughout the interview. This interview took place in her office which is shared with another female colleague who works in a different department. She was nervous about the interview taking place in the workplace as she did not want to disturb her co-worker. This meant that the interview had to be rescheduled at a time her colleague will be going for classes as the other options were quite challenging. It was interesting to see the signs of approval from her colleague since there was no chance to take the interview which was considered to be part of the academic work outside the university. Dana surprised me with the idea that she was not interested in the concerns of separating females from males. She believes the system is already unfair to her as a Jordanian, perceiving identity as a weakness that counts against her. Dana began to tell me about herself. She tried to explain how she began working as an academic. Dana begins to talk about the methods of teaching at the University. Dana feels that this is an issue that has to be addressed by the Dean. I asked her if these female students appreciate what she does for them. She expressed a sense of not belonging to the team within the department. Dana talks about the separation of staff based on gender that takes into consideration the societal values which based on religion insists that men and women must be separated. She acknowledged the challenges this posed to collaborative working. She goes on to give an instance that she has disagreed with the head of the department.

Dana begins to express fears of the inadequacy of her ability and her nationality which she thinks might be the reason that her male colleagues undermine her. It was an opportunity for me to understand why she thought this way. She talks about how this experience changed her perception of working with her male colleagues. She reflected her views on working under the supervision of women in the department. I asked her what plans she had in place to undertake training that might help her on the job. We discussed her plans, and she said that with the experience of not being appreciated that her ambitions on the job are put on hold. (Source: Field Notes)

I was born in the Bozrah which is in the Tafilah Governorate of Jordan. My father was a member of the Royal Jordanian Army, and he left the Army in 1979, and we all moved to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I know more Saudi Arabia than I know of my country of birth. I am now married, and I live with my husband here in Buraydah. I

currently work at Qassim in the University College of Management and Economics where I teach undergraduates in Accounting and Finance. I went back to Jordan to have a feel of my country of birth, and that was where I did my masters and fortunately met my Husband there. With a post-graduate degree, I was able to get a University job in Jordan. I worked at the University of Jordan for three years before an opportunity to work in Saudi Arabia came for my husband. I was worked for three months as an internal auditor before I got the job at the University. I went back to the University as I found an opportunity to teach Qassim University as there is female staff shortage in the field of accounting and finance.

So it was easy for me to get a University job again and I am happy doing that. I am only female in the department and the rest male staff. I currently teach two subjects Accounting and finance only. I do not wish to take on additional subjects as I have family concerns and responsibilities. For me as a woman, I prefer academic work in the educational field. I know the time I work, and once I am done, I head back home. In comparison with other jobs that require more time, teaching does not. At Qassim University, I have worked for six years. In total, I have worked as an academic for nine years. It meant that I had to move closer to my family who still lives in Saudi Arabia.

I have heard about the use of glass barriers in some universities, this way of teaching is quite strange to me as here in Qassim, we can use the video conferencing transmitted through television. It is strange to say this, but as a female even though there is a staff shortage, I cannot teach the male students even though there is a medium which is the video conferencing. This has happened in the past and classes had to be rescheduled. The university has embarked on a drive to increase the number of male accounting and finance teachings, but there is no female staff added to the team. I sometimes feel that they university would prefer to have fewer women as staff because the male staff can teach the female students but we cannot teach the male students. The female student numbers in this department are more than the male students. Over time, I feel that I am burdened with the requests by the female students for extra support especially for the courses taught by the male lecturers. This is accounting, and sometimes they understand these accounting principles better when

there is a one to one support. This is not possible at this university at the ratio of female to male staff who work in this department. It is not balanced. When I talk about this, it is as if I am confronting and challenging the status quo. I am the only female, and none of the male lecturers listens to me.

I face in this department what I see as a lack of respect even from the students that I go out of my way to help. The head of the department is not doing what I was expecting from him. Why would rumours be the best way to decide if you do not seek clarification from the person concerned? It has happened in grading the students. The male lecturers take the decisions, and I believe I am forced to follow. I did a session with the female students and graded them. One of the female students complained and claimed that I am rigid. I look after their interests. I know that some of them when they graduate, they will appreciate what I have done for them in the course of their studies. I am sorry to say this, but I am just here to do my work. I come into work, and it is as if I do not exist. I have never taken part in the departmental meeting in the six years that I have been here. Well think around this, I am the only female staff. When they call a meeting, they do it in the male section and simply inform me of the decisions that they have made. They do not even ask me for any suggestions before the meeting. If they do that, I can tell them some of the things I think might be helpful to the welfare and teaching of the female students that I teach. It sometimes feels that I am not part of the department. I often disagree with the head of the department because I feel he intentionally tries to undermine what I am doing.

Although we both need the presence of each other, still I encourage separation. I am a Muslim, and I understand that society requires that. For instance; my section head is an Egyptian, he meets with men only and ignores females. Once I asked him about this, and his response was, we don't want to trouble you. He added "we are going to update you with all that is happening but that never happens. The university I work for did not accept any mixing or co-education. So, we have grown up with such logic. These men never admit that they can be wrong. My head of department asked me to prepare test assessment forms for his and my students. He wanted it ready in a week

as this will ensure that the printing is done in the proper and coordinated with the examination unit. If he wanted it to go his way, he should have prepared it himself.

After I had prepared the tests, he comes back to say that my questions are unusual for his male and my female students. I felt that he has not taught them well. If he had, they should be able to know these questions. I have prepared questions in the past in Jordan. I have never had any issues and not been criticised the way that he does. Well, it is always a man's decision in this department. It is sometimes unreasonable to say that a subject area has been covered, but the students cannot answer these questions. I sometimes wonder if my ability is not sufficient for the job. I am a holder of master's degree. I sense that there is no respect from my head of department who is an Egyptian. He keeps talking about training and paper publications. I feel it is more than that. I believe that it is because I am from Jordan. The Egyptians do not regard us and being a female staff; it is even more than that. There should be mutual respect between teachers. Some of the male lecturers have the same qualifications that I have. It is something I cannot even confront him to ask him about. He will not accept it. Before now, I had a head of the department who was Saudi. He cooperated with me. I never experienced all these. This man makes me laugh. He is just like me. We are all foreigners in this Kingdom. If the King issues a decree today, if I leave, he also leaves. Source: Interview Transcript.

You have to go and find out from people of your nationality. It is better to ask them this question than to ask me this question. Talk to them, and you will get more information. I repeat that as a foreigner, no one will listen to me. As an Expatriate who is a woman, no one will even listen to me. Women do not have a voice. If my head of Department does not consider my opinion, I strongly believe that it is the situation here because I am a woman in Saudi Arabia. Dana told me how she communicates with the head of the department using the WhatsApp application. She sees this as a barrier to be heard and to be understood. She talks about the problems this causes her at home. I communicate with the head of the department using WhatsApp. If I have an inquiry that I wish to make about anything, there is only one way to do that. Send him what's up message. My husband gets annoyed when I receive messages after hours; he

doesn’t like any communications after official hours. I never call him, and he does not call me either unless there is an urgent issue he wants to address with me. For example, there was an incident that happened when a female student complained about me for giving her a B+. The mother of the student took the matter up with the deputy of female department. The deputy could not resolve it as officially there is nothing much she can do. She is just there to act as a middle person. She forwarded the complaint to the dean. This issue meant that the head of the department had to call me and it was not pleasing to get a call on a weekend when you should be busy with your family responsibilities. Even during this conversation, he asked me to tell him about the student and did not tell me the gravity of what has happened. My view was not taken into consideration. If you are to tell your head of department about your student who has a B+, what else can you say? These are the kind of things that happen, and I do not think the communication lines are good.

I think that the men in this university do not like to talk with the females at all. They simply ask you for bits they cannot get on their own. My mind tells me that looking at what I have experienced that if the Head of the department taught that student, I would not have known how it was resolved. These days, I try to avoid having anything to do with them. I try to resolve the issues that I can on my own. It is only when I have issues that are beyond me, that are quite strong that I can reach out to them. All the information that I need, I try to get it from female colleagues or the secretaries. I often rely on those who have a relative working in the male section as their information is to an extent authentic. I deal with what I know and depend on others in critical issues, including news we get from around us. In the department, the deputy of female department liaises with the Head of Department who is a man. But I can say that I have not enjoyed working with her. I still prefer working with a man. Women are different, and I believe that jealousy is a problem. This woman has in the past portrayed me in a bad light. The problem started because she wanted me to work every day even on holiday. It happened that there was a time I was off work, and she emailed me, and I did not reply. She sent an email that copied the Dean, the Head of Department and all the male lecturers telling them that I am not cooperative, I am not flexible. You see that she does not know her boundaries. I should not be bothered I

am off work and far from the computer. That single email resulted in a query, and the Head of the department ever since has not been very cooperative.

I think the issues around training can be seen as doing it yourself if you want meaningful training. Every Tuesday there are lectures held by academic development department outside the department but within the university. The training is not relevant. They offer training on the use of Google in Advanced Search, the use of learning outcomes in the delivery of the courses. I do not depend much on these courses. This means that I spend money always to participate in external courses to develop myself. To ease myself the challenge of travelling as I cannot drive, I go for some online training courses, some of which are free or affordable for me. Even if I make arrangements to attend courses that take place outside the university, I have to compromise that with a rescheduling of lectures which is an obligation to the University. I have just stopped attending those training done by the academic development department. It is only a certification that adds nothing to me. It does not change my salary. It does not improve my circumstances in this department. I am a coordinator and do not like the position. There is nothing that I get from the position. I do not get promoted. I do not get rewarded financially. It means that I have to follow up and commit to more responsibilities which I do not get any appreciation in return for the work that I do. An instance here was during the assessment tests; there was a male doctor who left his papers with me. After the examination was over, I forgot to hand over his papers back. They put all the blame on me. You see that there is a lot of blame going on here. It does not mind holding on to the position, but it does not encourage you to aspire for more. I feel I am just here because there is no another female staff in the department who will compete with me for this position. (Source: Interview Transcripts).

5.7. The Marketing Lecturer (Gada)

She began to tell me about herself. Gada begins to talk about herself, how she entered into academia and her motivation. She talks about the challenges that she faced earlier when she first arrived which said was faced by some of her colleagues who came at that time. I asked her about her teaching experience in Saudi Arabia and what it meant to her. She explains that the use of modern technology can be challenging, especially when the technology fails, and the

department is forthcoming with repairs. She brings up issues around the achievement levels of the students. She offers an explanation why this is happening. She felt that the proportionate level of qualified male staff has ensured that the men in the department are not equal with the female lecturers. She talks about how this affects even opportunities for promotion and appointment to positions in the Department. Her demeanour changes and she beams with confidence. She relates her experiences as a coordinator who has highlighted some selective concerns within the workplace. With her perceived level of experience, she was also able to point out the need to support the empowerment of women but this she said has to start from home.

Her disposition changes as she talks about the societal views of religion and the expectations of a woman which she believes that it impacts on their performance. She returns to her view that she is comfortable working with a man. She agrees with the Dean who is her boss. She believes that there are benefits when you work with a man rather than a woman. She talks about what can be the challenges of having to work under a male but at the same time portrays herself as someone who has access to the Dean who is a Saudi national. I asked She her views on the separation of departments and how it has impacted on quality delivery. She began to explain that even though the department was separated in line with the rules of the university, it did not mean that the best regarding quality was delivered. The discussion shifts to how her family life plays a role in her job. (Source: Field Notes)

I have spent most of my life in Khashm el-Girba, a town in Kassala state in Sudan where I come from. I am married, and I have three children. I speak English fluently because, in my country, we have a lot of British influence. I went to Sudanese-English public schools. My parents are not educated. My dad believed that educating us was the best thing to do as he worked as a porter those days in Port Sudan. It was a bit of trend about 15 years ago to head to Saudi Arabia if you are skilled in working in academia. Growing up, I liked teaching since childhood. I love to act the role of the teacher, explain to people and my brothers and friends, and I like learning. I enrolled for my masters at the University of Khartoum, and upon completion, I returned home and began to look for a job in Saudi Arabia. I applied for the job from the Saudi embassy website, and I was invited for an interview.

The Dean of the University was there personally to interview me. After the interview, I was given a temporary contract after the terms were agreed. That enabled the embassy to process my entry visa for the job, and upon getting to Saudi Arabia, I completed the full contract which enabled me to process my residency. Now as part of my personal development, I am studying for my PhD at the University of Khartoum in Sudan on a part-time basis. My Dean is aware of this, and this does not interfere with my current role at the university.

I came here with my husband and three kids from Sudan. Even though the university helped us with issues around housing, furnishing the accommodation, that was the much they could do. I wish that they offered us more support back then. I had challenges at home. I wanted to return to Sudan in the first two years of the contract. In our culture, it is preferable the woman stays at home while the man goes to work. My husband found it difficult to accept the fact that he had to stay at home while I went to work. It took a long time for him to get a job. At some point, he got a job, but it was a low wage paying job. He was increasingly frustrated by the day. I had to combine the daily pressures that came from the university with that at home. I did my best to help him with a job. I spoke to people, but they could only advice and not help. I could not discuss this with the Dean who interviewed me as he may think I am not serious about the job which I had come there to do. All lot was going on but looking back today, I have spent 11 years here in Saudi Arabia. My husband has a better job. With the situation in Sudan, he prefers here. I have my parents here, and they live with us. I can look after them. As a Muslim, having my family here close to Mecca is significant for me. It is easy to perform the Umrah which is good for my faith.

Well, I consider it a privilege to be here in the first place. There is a lot that I have experienced as a lecturer, and in comparison, with what I experienced as a student in Sudan, I sometimes wonder if I communicate well with my students. As a student in Sudan, our teachers had direct contact with us. I believe that this is part of the educational process. The communication cannot be one party. As a teacher, I use the facial expressions and body language of the students to see if they understand what I

am saying. The movement of face and eyebrow matters. The feedback is very essential, so you can add to the information that you have already given them. Well, we make use of the glass barrier which prevents the teachers from seeing the students. At least the male lecturer can listen to what they are saying. It is different though when you are a female staff teaching female students. They see you; you see them.

One can see their body language and facial expressions and address their concerns. There was a period that we did not have connectivity in the class. It was difficult as the projector in the hall where I teach was not working. I put forward a complaint, and I did not receive any comment for the repairs until they were ready. The level and achievements of students taught by male staff are low as I have experienced which in comparison with those taught by females, they are more successful. As a coordinator, the female students often complain about their male lecturers because there is no room for them to go back and discuss their lectures or areas of concern with the lecturers. They start looking for fellow students who might have a good understanding of the topic to discuss this with them. I think that it is better to have female teachers for female students. The percentage of female students is more than the male students. This means that male teachers teach a high number of female students in cases where a woman cannot teach them at all. The university should balance it by looking for female staff to balance the proportion of female students. In preparing the lectures and exams, PowerPoint slides are prepared by both male and female staff. They reach an agreement to complete the curriculum exchange them to ensure consistency. The exam questions are discussed by each of them so that these questions will not be repeated. This helps improve the academic quality the examination must be unified.

The university must abide by a certain number of lecturers who must have doctorate degrees. These help the University to maintain the minimum requirement of doctors. The directive comes from the Ministry of Higher Education as it helps maintain the standards that have been set for quality assurance in the university. It is the national standard to have more PhD holders than lecturers and assistants. This means that

there is the likelihood that you will have more male staff than female staff. I am still studying for my PhD, and the restrictions on Saudi women makes it even more difficult to study while they are working.

There is a preference to have males in the management of the department. Obviously, they prefer men over women; they always assign males in both male and females section. There would be no superior females even if they got higher academic qualifications. For example, complaints by female students against a female lecturer in the department should be resolved by the female deputy. But this is not the case. They will be referred to the Head of Department who is a male. Does it mean that we cannot resolve things amicably or internally settle it instead of raising the issue to the men? Within this department, for promotions, they are subject to the academic PhD Degree of the Doctor. These are the rules for us here. There is no distinction however when it comes to training. But there is discrimination in appointments to relevant jobs and administrative tasks. They prefer men for the position of coordinator and women for secretarial and administrative jobs. Most of the courses coordinators are men. It is interesting to see that sometimes the oldest person in the department is the one who becomes a coordinator. They look for a male staff who will become the person responsible for courses/curriculum. I have never seen a woman become the head of irrespective of her academic degrees. It is a no-go area. The men believe that a woman cannot manage them.

Anything raised to the head of the department must have come to me. I should counsel him or Students' Complaints Office in issues I could not deal with. The nature of the work here in Saudi Arabia and the difficulty of direct communications between men and women limits what I can do. My role, however, is to be the link between them as all complaints are always raised through my office. With her perceived level of experience, she was also able to point out the need to support the empowerment of women but this she said has to start from home. In my opinion, to give an opportunity to women, we must first educate men and enhance their understandings which are gained from social institutions such as their homes and schools. We should target male managers and leaders by intensive educative training courses about women and

their importance and how to deal with them, the importance of women to be empowered through work and to explain their previous and current roles.

Men's views will change about women. Women can be targeted through intensive training in areas such as speaking and fluency and how to deal with men. It is an encouraging chance to acquire mental skills which the position they aspire will require those skills. This is paramount, and she shall deserve the job if she proves her competence. Women have an eternal struggle to prove their abilities and existence. Women feel that they are overpowered, but they show as if they are alright and can do duties with no problems or mistakes. The negative part is strictness and shyness more than confronting with Dean. We do not confront the Dean. This is my opinion, and I assume that we cannot communicate comfortably with men because we have a fear of presenting the wrong view. We are restricted anyhow. The meeting of all staff members is held in the training room that can accommodate up to 40 people, but there is a barrier between the male lecturers and the female lecturers. Their number is at least 20 people behind the barrier. The female staff is more in number, and we are isolated by portable glass curtains which become a barrier between the two groups of staff. We express our opinions through speaking only when given a chance. When the Dean asks if we have a concern, I am the only person who speaks in a joint meeting even though we do not see the men. My other female colleagues remain silent as they expect me as a coordinator to represent them.

There is a natural tendency in facilitating things from my view as a woman. If I make mistakes, I admit it, and he forgives me. A woman cannot do that to another woman. I believe that it is better to be supervised by a man because he has characteristics that are different from that of a woman. She talks about what can be the challenges of having to work under a male but at the same time portrays herself as someone who has access to the Dean who is a Saudi national. The men sometimes are controlling, and they do not accept the views of women, but I have been fortunate to give suggestions to the Dean and sometimes he accepts my views. He sees me differently maybe as I am a non-Saudi national, he is comfortable talking to me, and I share my opinion with him. This has changed the relationship I have with other female staff as

they reach out to the Dean through me. I see myself as representing these women especially when it comes to their concerns around issues within the workplace. Sometimes, I propose improvements through the head of the department who would raise this to the Dean. The Dean then considers them regardless of being a male staff or female staff proposal. The courses and rules must be integrated. Both male students and female students have the same system, but having different systems shall not lead to quality in the university. I do not mind if the subjects and curriculum are the same. At the moment, we have a combination of supervising departments of the educational process, and they should all be under one deanship rather than being separated. I am looking at the time, and I think of my family. This restricts her abilities and chances on the job, and I try to balance what goes on in my home and the University. For example, the preparation of assessments, marking and all that is on the job make you busy all the time and disturb your presence with children at home. With my earlier experiences when I first came to Saudi Arabia, I cherish every moment I spent with my family. (Source: Interview Transcripts).

5.8. The Medical Doctor with a PhD (Samar)

Samar grew up in Al Kharj Governorate, in the province of Riyadh. Samar is quite pleased and felt accomplished in her profession as an academic. I can sense from her achievements; she signifies the pinnacle of Academia for females in Saudi Arabia. Despite the frustrations, other female colleagues encountered with their career progression; Samar had the belief that things can always change. Samar is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Society Medicine and has spent ten years at the current university where she teaches 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of Medicine. She is the current deputy dean for University (Women Affairs). She holds 2 PhDs and is a member of the Saudi Board and Canadian Board in Family Medicine. She explained that she had all her studies in government schools and had never had any private education. She has worked in the private sector with a Hospital where she spent four years before moving on to the University as she loved teaching. Samar was one of the most qualified respondents. This made me a bit anxious about this interview. She proudly welcomed me to her office and made me feel at home before the meeting started (Source: Field Journal).

My father was a civil servant in Riyadh, and my mother was his first wife. I cannot tell what transpired between my father and my mother, but I understand over time as my father grew on the job in the civil service, so did his wealth. He made what I refer to a life-changing incident that forever changed his relationship with my mother. I can recall my mother telling us that my father was giving her a divorce. I did not get it. My mother then never worked. I still remember us all crying. There was no one to talk to. Over the years, I understood that my father wanted to take another wife and my mother refused. My uncle who was mother's brother was a businessman and asked us to come over to Al Kharj where he had his family home. I have faint memories of who my father is as he had not been in our lives since then. This incident changed my life. My uncle supported housed us until my mother remarried to his business colleague who promised my uncle that he would see me through the University.

My step-father looked after me. He gave my mother all she wanted. I have an extended family I will say that includes my half brothers and sisters. I have cousins who lived close to us as my mother's brother will usually bring his family to stay with us or we will go over to them when he travelled with my step-father. I am a qualified medical doctor, but teaching people has always been my passion. I took advantage of government scholarships to study for a degree in medicine, and it meant that at the end of my studies, I had to work in the hospital. When I got a chance to join the university, I took it, and it has not been the same. I have always worked hard. I will say I was quite fortunate. My mother always encouraged me. She reminded me that my Step-father would be proud of me and my half siblings looked up to me. I always thought to myself, 'if I did well, I could show that despite my challenging beginning, I could still be what I wanted to be'. I knew that being good at whatever I did will bring me opportunities. I took them. I feel I am recognised whenever I go back home to see my family. My step-father sees me as a positive role model. I know how much my success means to my family especially my mother.

The fulfilment at university is not much different from the hospital. I liked teaching. This is the only thing encouraged me to join the university. Now I feel the university is my world. Having two PhDs, I felt it was the place to be. It is all about motivation. My Dean

has been very supportive, and I can say he appreciates my contribution. My experience might be different, and I cannot generalise this to other departments. The fact that the administration of the university in the hands of men makes it difficult for the female staff to gain access to them. From supervision approval to approval of project funds. This is disheartening. The fact is that the opportunity decreases your chances if you are female academic and for the men, they have access to the vice-chancellor or the dean. This is unfair in every way you look at it. There is a chance for women in management! That means if we are qualified, we can be kind and pleasant, but it is possible not to have a chance of the effective administrative decision. This is what I hope. Unfortunately, we are still live in a patriarchal society where women are not supposed to lead. If we compare, 20 years ago, there was a change! We can see now a lot of ladies holding leading positions but not in the same way we wish. (Source: Interview Transcripts).

I strongly support the idea that women can work with men in the same place and specifically in my college. This is true, especially if that woman has a lot of knowledge, experience, and skills all of which can facilitate the process of developing the educational system and regarding curriculum development and evaluation and even the management of education. I don't support this present state of affairs where men and women are separated and kept entirely apart from each other. This separation I think affects the quality of output and even productivity, in my opinion. For example, there is a difference between men and women as individuals regarding interests, focus, and even mindset. This is not a weakness; it is a strength because this variety can be converted into something useful. My point is when we work together with men to facilitate research and publications, this will increase the number of research publications, the sheer variety of those publications, rigour, depth and finally quality. This will have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and research for the university as well. But as you must be aware, like other women here in Saudi Arabia, I am still held back by the norms and traditions of the society. I have experienced certain limitations, and frustrations. In my work experience here in the college, the majority of men had not taken the idea lightly, even when it was a mere suggestion, that I, like other women, may lead a department or a team. I have witnessed time and time again when an opportunity to lead, which came to me based

on my skills and experience and specifically my qualification, was thwarted and another colleague who was less qualified but a man imposed merely because there was an outcry regarding the idea that a woman, me in this case, should lead other men. The protest in my experience came from other male colleagues in both high and low positions. I experienced this time and time again, and I remember at one point I reflected on how I felt during these periods and was really depressed. One thing I noted which made me very angry was how men at high positions, like the deans and administrators and their deputies, even tried to frustrate my progress as if they were afraid that I would meet them 'at the top' and maybe challenge, overtake or ridicule them. They had reached a high position in education and positional authority but still felt threatened by me. Why?

They still believe that I, like other women, should be kept in a place where other women are gathered, like a harem, so that I can do my work freely. I hope you understand what 'free' means here? It says that I will not be productive if I was given higher responsibilities because I cannot perform those roles without encumbrances. Do you understand? In performing these roles, I will be necessarily brought in contact with men, you see. If I do work with them this way, based on the rules and norms in society, I will bring shame upon my family, and put my life in danger because this is even against the tenets of Islam. Also even when my family understood my desire to progress in my job by taking up higher responsibilities, and even when they offered support in many ways, I discovered that my situation at work (the antagonism of male members of management specifically) diluted my family's effort. In the end, I will say that no matter what I tried to do to climb the career ladder in my college, society and the men whom I worked with saw things differently. They looked at me as a woman who saw herself as being free. I would admit that sometimes the society killed my creativity and ambitions, specifically, when I found myself in those environments that were so openly antagonistic. In many of these instances, these damaged my enthusiasm to fulfil my dreams of being a team lead or taking up a management role.

But sometimes male figures in a woman's family can also be a problem. Even though my family has been very supportive, sometimes, families can also be a problem. I

know a friend of mine whose husband would not accept the idea of a paid driver to drive her to work even when there were significant events such as when the University she worked with offered her the opportunity to attend a workshop. Her husband insisted that only he would drive her. But there were times when he was not available or was at work and would fail to come and pick her up. Still, he refused for her to deal directly with a male driver. But, more significantly, my friend was also of the opinion that her husband saw this idea of workshops and events as leading to workplace promotion and higher responsibilities. In his view, this will bring my friend face to face with other men in more senior positions. Such exposure, even inside her organisation, will publicly demean his family. So you see, this is the problem. Like my friend, my progress is synonymous with damaging the reputation of my family.

Coming back to my workplace, therefore, in my point of view, it is very hard not to separate the male sections from the female one, as the structure of the university would not allow this. I must tell you that in many instances exams, schedules, and classes have been divided between purely male and female lecturers. We do consult each other sometimes in faceless ways like emails before sending our decisions to the Dean for Final confirmation.

Of course, I have had to consult with my family for my career decisions in the past. Sometimes, it was a part of my desire to make them fill I was accomplishing something. I wanted them to relive the happiness I felt with any accomplishment with me and share beautiful moments, therefore. Thank God my family is so open and even my husband doesn't have any problems regarding if I was dealing with any men in high positions because he believes I will use my initiative and he trusts me. You know the higher I go regarding positions in the University, the more the likelihood that I will have to deal with men sections, male figures, and men in positions of power. These possibilities are there in job procedures and routines. But there are some constraints that some families present for women who may be a mother, a wife, or even a single woman. To appear as or fulfil the role of being obedient and attentive, she has to consult with them for every decision, and this consultation extends into workplace matters. Nuclear and extended male relations can make decisions and

even an old grandfather, who may ordinarily be considered as being out of touch with some issues due to age, can interfere in this decision.

You know the Arabic society they expect women like me to do everything from taking care of the household to taking care of her family with full commitments. Also, women have to plan special occasions like travelling, vacations and so on, invite her relative each weekend and her husband's family for a feast. All these duties do put pressure on me because I have to balance this with work and this can also be financially demanding when you may have to pay maids to take care of the house. I have had to prepare for marking and lecturing and giving both formative and summative feedback. I do admit that sometimes hiring a maid allowed me to have some time to myself. You know Arabic husbands don't like to do anything for themselves; they want everything to be ready for them. They don't like to do household chores or anything like it. This is how men are brought up, anyway. That is they are brought up to believe that these works belong to women and maids (servants) only. They feel this work lowers their value and position as men. You know household work requires a lot of time and effort. For me, I have three servants and a driver. I do admit that compared to other women I know - family, colleagues and friends - my life is relatively easy. These other women have to cook and do everything. Even when I had to travel, abroad, my mother helped me keep an eye on things and would always check on them, my maids, to make sure that work was being done as it should in my absence.

5.9. The Social Worker (Jeyda)

Jeyda is a social worker who is currently undertaking her doctoral studies in the United Kingdom. Jeyda is in her early years as an academic, and her story portrays the issues around selective personal development as a result of networks of support and family connections. The fact that she was able to progress when the University processes and policies do not permit this suggests that some female academics can advance in the career, but the friction and complexity around her story demonstrate that may not be the norm for women academics despite their perceived network of support. I interviewed Jeyda twice to ensure that I get to know more about her background and how this has shaped her choice of going into academia.

This was particularly important as she spoke of her background when I met her earlier. Jeyda tells me about her background (Source: Field Notes).

I was born in Al Majma'ah, a governorate in Ar Riyad Province. I will describe myself as the daughter of an affluent academic with links to royalty. I will not say more than that but growing up, I travelled around Europe with my family. We have a home here in the UK, and it all began when we were very young. We went to France, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the UK is seen as home. My father has academic links in Lebanon, Egypt, and the USA. I will say that I am a different person when I go to different places. This is a fact about me. In the UK and the West, I am very liberal, free to make choices about what I want and where I go. Back in Riyad, I live a very controlled life. I am currently single and focused on completing my studies. I have seen what I can call the good life, and I feel that as a Muslim, I have a role to play in helping others who are not so privileged as I am. This might have shaped my choice to study social work. My experiences going to school in Saudi Arabia was good. My father did not mind sending us to school abroad, but he was concerned that we might lose our faith to the influences of the West which he believed will be a failure on his part.

He sent my mother and my brothers away during holidays and travelled with us a few times. He was a very busy man. My mother never worked. But she was a mother for everyone. I saw her as being kind-hearted. She will give gifts to people especially during the Ramadan, and my father made sure that we were at home during the Ramadan fasting period. It made a difference I suppose, and this was some of the things that shaped my decision to study social work. I studied social work and qualified as a social worker. I have practised for several years, but over time I saw myself trapped between two domains. The world of social work and that of management. I have an MBA in management. My brothers currently are lecturers and the pull to get involved in that was there, but I resisted it. I got the chance to work in the university to teach social work, and I took it. With my MBA, I felt there was a need to have a PhD in social work. This was because I set up my charity as a platform our family can officially support young Saudis who are less privileged than I have been. I am currently involved in supporting young girls who have been through some form of abuse, and

no one talks about them. After my studies in social work, I thought of the best place where I can get close to young girls who have been ignored by the Saudi society. Do you know that a lot of young women have gone through difficult times from their families and I see them vulnerable? Some of them were made outcasts because they refused to get married and wanted to have a degree first. Well, I felt the university was the best place to get involved with this. I have done a lot since then, and now I believed that with a Ph.D., I would be able to stand as an authority to do more for these young girls.

For me to undertake this doctorate, I took a leave from my current position in the university. It is a bit hard to lose touch with my students but I visit home every six months to find out how they progress as the initiatives I run in our charity is seen as a skills development programme. I cannot lose the goodwill of the kingdom on my family. I work with the defined rules that cannot challenge the state. But here in the UK, I become a different person. I volunteer in the local council as a volunteer social worker. I am learning new things. I see it as a personal mission to make Saudi women better than what the society wants them to be. They are seen as not been important. But I know how important my mother was to my father.

Jeyda shifts to talk about how this inequality is also reflected in her workplace where she becomes academic. Jeyda explained that her social work background and the exposure here in the UK would provide her with an advantageous position to ensure that female academics can have the necessary support to deal with concerns about their wellbeing in the workplace.

I have seen that we do not have a system that cares for us at the workplace. In the UK, from experience I have had so far, there is a network of support. Yes, we need this as this can help us put on a united front to address issues that concern us. How can the university know that we need to hear when there is no one to put our case through? How long must we rely on the males in our lives. I think I am an exception. I was ready for the consequences. My other colleagues complained. I had the right

people speak for me. This caused a conflict, though. My fellow female colleagues were always referring to me when they went to make a case that would allow them to study. You can imagine, I felt uncomfortable all through. That was why when the chance came to move abroad for my PhD. I took it with both hands. I have pleasant people skills which I believe has helped me in the charity that I run. I sometimes wonder if this makes people jealous of me. I am approachable. It works for me. I wonder if people see me as being westernised. I can bring my colleagues together when we have to get something done. I just know that I do not like to be involved in the drama that goes on in the department. I have not even made up my mind. I might move to another university when I finish my study. The issue is that some personalities are just trouble because they know I am different.

The Dean called me on the telephone and informed me that I would not be getting any promotion. There was a consequence for doing what I did. I did not get any promotion during my time of the study. If you want to continue your masters, you have to do it in a personal way. I was officially demoted to an assistant lecturer who can enable me to study and work. I did not care about the money. I felt it was personal. I did not get the support from people I thought that were colleagues. I knew that I had to remain motivated. My uncle and my father worked at the university, and I found solace discussing my concerns with the male staff. Things changed pretty soon as I held on to complete my studies. A new Dean who knew my plight approved my funding for Ph.D., and here I am. Ever since then, I wish there is an electronic system that can help with our development. I remember my father saying that I was going through a difficult time. He told me that he would not directly step in, but he asked me to persevere. Back then, I hated doing things within the department. The only thing I loved doing was teaching my students. I was resolved to keep doing what I was doing. My dad offered to support me financially if for any reason I decided to quit. I knew that if I had left the university, the opportunity to do this PhD would not have come up. I am happy I did not quit. It is the determination I hope to share with those young girls I support. I always asked myself, if I quit, what will these girls I support say? Where then is the hope of those who want to beat the odds. I am happy I stood firm. Doing what you love is important to get to where you want to be.

There are certain people I will say that mentored me. They helped me to get to this point. Being a young woman with no one really to support you, I sought female role models who were based outside the Kingdom. I found one. She is a professor of Social work. This was one of the ways that I got my funding to undertake a PhD in the UK. Being accepted into the doctoral programme was not just applying. I was recommended to the programme as I demonstrated and met the requirements of the application. I can say that the support and has been there. My mentor linked me to the local council. They paid part of my school fees otherwise even though my father can be described as affluent by Saudi standards; I would not have come here. I have benefitted from mentoring, and I will continue with that when I get home. It is really difficult especially if you are in a male-dominated society. Being a woman does not give you a voice. I have experienced it at all levels. What I wear has to be acceptable to the men. What I do as a woman has to be acceptable to them as well. You see that the challenges are a lot. I am no longer young. I am single, and this is also not acceptable to them. I have only learned one thing which to keep on fighting for the things that I think I believe in. I will continue to learn all I can. I do not know everything, but the things I have learned have all worked for me. Who knows, there might be better opportunities in a few years' time to support young Saudi girls and women better than what I am doing now. (Source: Interview Transcript).

5.10. The Scientist (Safar)

The mood of the interview with Dr Safar was exciting. Dr Safar's body language was somewhat relaxed as the conversation continued. She is an Egyptian scientist who takes pride in having achieved her PhD in Three years from a British university. She explained that she became a full Professor in 2012 and had over 22 years of academic experiences with 29 publications. She said in the sciences scientific research papers is an achievement she takes pride in. Dr Safar came across during the interview as a confident woman who believes that there is a cause to fight. She positions herself using her current role and experience to play an active and participative part in the University which she thinks is essential. Seeing a female academic who was trying to represent two views of the world one as an academic and the other as a female academic who is fighting a system that is unfair. Of interest is that she is conscious of the consequences of her actions to take on the establishment which defines her personality. Safar talks about herself at the start of the interview. Safar switches to talk about the role of

her parents in making her passionate about education. These experiences. We continued to chat about her education, and She talks about her days at university. Safar's entry into the University was the start of the journey to get into academia. (Source: Field Journal).

I come from Qalyub in Egypt which is in the Qalyubia Governorate. I have been married for 20 years now and have two children. My father now late was a policeman, and my mother stayed at home to take care of us. Have four siblings and I grew up in Cairo which is not far from my hometown of Qalyub. I was close to my mother, and she was very protective of us especially as we lived in police barracks, she had to keep an eye on us. As children of a policeman, we had access to state schools in Egypt and my father always told us that he did not want any of in the police force which he always described as a dirty place to work. Growing up, I was not allowed to explore and play outside, but at home, I could be anything I wanted to. My parents had private tutors come to the house to teach us. This made us excel in school, and I was quite good with mathematics. I could still remember to be chosen to represent the school in a maths quiz. I was around 11 or 12 years old. The pictures are still there. I think it was natural for me to develop an interest in the sciences. I got a state scholarship to finish my secondary studies. Looking back, I appreciate the recognition that I got for the efforts I put in then. It gave me confidence and made me get support from the teachers in the school. Other students looked up to me. It became natural that I was expected to succeed in everything I did. I simply loved everything about school as I saw it as a way of expressing myself in what I did well and there was no limit to how far I could go.

I knew that I would go to a university and in making that decision, several factors had to be considered. I was seen as a star child, and it was natural that Al-Azhar should be the University of Choice. I never knew I would be a teacher. My parents decided on my behalf, and I thank the Almighty Allah for giving them the wisdom to make that choice. I was very good at the university. I came out with a first class, and I will say that I broke academic records within the department. I began with the role of a teaching assistant to the professor who supervised my project. It became obvious that the department will not let me go. Before I graduated, I was offered a scholarship to do

masters at Al-Azhar and a doctorate in the United Kingdom. I am proud to say I had a distinction and finished my doctorate in two years in the UK. I came back home to a hero's welcome in my department and was promoted to a senior staff. I went on to work with the university for another 12 years before an opportunity came here in Saudi Arabia. I was keen to learn something new. To challenge myself again and I came here.

Prof called me to tell me that he will be that year will be his last at Al-Azhar. He simply asked me a question? How far do you want to progress? I was not expecting that question. My thoughts were fixed on the fact that he was about to retire. He asked me "do you want to teach in Saudi Arabia"? Still lost for words, he said that he had been asked to recommend someone for a position at a prestigious university in Saudi Arabia. He knew me and believed that I would excel as I have done in the past. He asked me to go home and give it a thought, and it was also a chance for me to become a full professor. On my way home, I realised that this would be an opportunity to continue my personal growth. But there was only one thing more to do. I had to convince my husband that it was the right thing to do. I was involved in the affairs of my department, and I had gained a lot of confidence in the system in Al-Azhar. I acknowledge the role of my mentor, but I know that if I had not worked hard, I would not have been able to publish papers after papers. We were involved with a lot of science bodies, hospitals, and businesses. I knew that Prof had my progress in mind. I attended conferences, events and showcased our work. My mind was made up. I will go for it. I was able to convince my husband. We looked at the bigger picture, and with that, he agreed that I would go first and he could join me later with the children. I returned to work the next day and informed my mentor that I was ready to go. How it happened, I do not know. I only got an offer letter and the invitation to the Saudi embassy in Cairo. It was a good decision. I became confirmed as a professor with that move as I had been an associate at Al-Azhar. With my experience then, it was important for me to develop further and take on more responsibilities.

The new role I took up was one I felt gave me a feel that I have gotten to the pinnacle of my career and I can make a difference. I will say that I was wrong. There are many

things that were acceptable in Egypt which became unacceptable in the Kingdom. I will say that these are two different worlds for women. I lost my freedom to become in control of the research I wanted to do. Everything had to go through the men who sometimes see it differently. I had to slow down. My husband will tell me “you are a professor, you have good work benefits, do not cause yourself problems.” But things were not always right in the department. My early years here, I was not too bothered about what I will call departmental politics. I was concerned with settling into the department, settling into a new way of life with my family, getting the best schools for my daughters. But I began to realise that as a woman, my views were irrelevant to how the department was run. I saw politics in the department in Egypt, but the views of women were respected, and we were part of the decision making. My husband will always restrain me. I saw challenging them as being ungrateful to them. I saw myself being trapped between what is right and what is acceptable in the society. I now knew that I could only expect anything. In the department, I was made a coordinator. I was able to reach the Dean directly in the past. I feel he respected me because he knew my track record. But the new Dean rarely gives me a listening ear. Sometimes if you have experience, they do not care to appreciate your experience. They are looking for personal things that are far from academia. I will not stop making contributions to how things should be done in the department. It comes with a consequence. When I talk and complain about the way we are treated or how things are done, it brings me problems. When I keep quiet, I feel that it is entirely wrong. Keeping silence is not the option. I believe that I can change things, but this does not make the situation better. I live in the hope which has become far and distant to me as it is not easy to reach. When things change, I do not know. I do not know if you understand what I am talking about. It is not bureaucracy. I think it is a duty that I have to do. I can give you an example. If I have all these things such as boxes, we could not use it because we do not have management that is not cooperative even with simple things such as developing powerpoint slides for students. I have worked different men who have headed the department, and I think they are not fair. We have females who are closer to top management, but they do that just for their voices to be heard not that they voice out their concerns or even what we need in this department.

If I had not worked under a Dean before here in Saudi Arabia, I would have assumed that they are all the same. I think the way men work and relate to women depends on their philosophy towards women. It is surprising when I say this because I am married. I think some men are ridiculous in the way they think. They have this in their heads that women are completely inferior and have little to offer. I have lived in the UK for two years. I know that is not true. In Egypt, women have been perceived differently. There is no way to teach them to think otherwise unless they go out, experience other cultures and adapt it to the way they do things in the department. For me what should be important is who can get the job done. Women are physically different, and the men in the department should be able to know that we can do better if we are carried along. I assume that as an associate of the coordinator, I want everyone to be treated fairly. I am a kind of that woman who will let you hear my voice and opinion. Even if you do not take action to address my concerns, at least I have tried (Source: Interview Transcripts).

5.11. The Prisoner of the Society (Nadal)

Nada's story portrays to an extent the plight of many women in Saudi Arabia. She had issues getting to a private location where she could pour out her feelings. Nada was educated in Saudi Arabia, the USA, and Australia. She joined the university as an academic in 2009. She talked to me enthusiastically and appeared to be in a rush when the interview began. She was quick to the point that though she works as a coordinator, her preference lies with the teaching side of her role within the university. The structure of this interview allowed Nada to tell her story. She hoped that her current position which allows her access to the Dean and other people who are might have a say on her career would enable her to achieve the career growth she aspires. Nada demonstrates that it is not about earning status, but the job is important. She openly talked about the job overload which the female academics are burdened with which leads them to become disengaged with the roles in the organisation. Nada began the interview by telling me about herself. Nada began to explain the difficulties she had getting approval to go for her studies abroad. She talks about the need to travel with a guardian in Saudi Arabia and how it nearly became an obsession for the brother.

She recalled an experience she once had with the brother who had travelled with her as a guardian. She explained how the treatment of women could have devastating effects on women. She gave an example of a relative who had to overcome and live with the fact that her family and society treated in a humiliating way. She switched and began talking about her current role. She speaks as if she is in a helpless situation going by the joint nature of her role as an academic who is also managing the relationship between male staff and female staff stating; Nada's tone in the interview began to shift to one that showed optimism in the change that might someday come. She believed that in being a coordinator, the benefits might come from the experience in the future but expressed doubts if her views will count (Source: Field Notes).

I was born in Najran, a border town in the south in a conservative family. I have a big brother, two other sisters. I have always referred to my brother as big as he is 12 years my senior. We managed to get by when I was growing up. My mum did not work, and my father was into all sorts of things. From farming to the cross-border trade; anything that could put food on the table. He was hardworking. I studied medicine in Saudi Arabia and had a chance also to study in the USA. However, in the year 2010, I got a scholarship to study in Australia. My education abroad changed many things for me. I appreciated how easier it is to be a woman outside the borders of this kingdom. I could do things on my own by myself without the help or permission of any man. I have been looking for a chance to escape the prison I have lived in. So now when the chance comes for an event outside Saudi Arabia, I take it without looking back. It feels like being a prisoner in your society. It is not as easy as it seems. I had to follow the procedure that was in place for anyone who wanted to study abroad. This meant I had to travel to the capital in Riyadh. That is the only place you can submit your documents as all the ministries are there. My father is an old man. It was a challenge explaining what I want to do and why I had to travel to Riyadh. I had to explain this him severally. If I can recollect, at least ten times; this was not sufficient. I had to call relatives, write it down on paper so they could explain it to him. It was not easy. My father was not patient with me. He shouted in my face, and that was embarrassing. She continued noting that all her relatives got involved in the decision to allow her to go abroad. My father called a meeting with our relatives. He said that the family had to be aware. I recall that very day. It was a Friday after Jumah prayers. All my cousins and relatives

came to the house. They did not agree with the decision to go abroad to study. I remember an uncle asking my father how he can allow me to go and live outside in an environment that is mixed. They believed that it would make me lose my moral and spiritual values. My father reminded them that he believes that I will not lose my values. I have attended medical school here in Saudi Arabia and never lost these values even though we were exposed to the men in the medical school. He told that he supports my intention to go abroad. I know a friend whose father refused to support back then. The family told her that if her father does not support her, they will not. She eventually did not travel abroad. I am lucky. My big brother travelled with me to Riyadh to submit the documents that were required.

You know as I am not allowed to do things on my own in Saudi Arabia. Growing up, I was not allowed to do anything let alone travel without a guardian. My brother always followed me everywhere I went. At some point, I felt it was becoming an obsession. Being my senior, I lived in some form of fear. He never allowed me to step out without covering my face. The hijab was not enough. He always said that he did not want me to be a woman who will bring shame to the family. After a while, he agreed I could take the face cover off and go with the hijab. I cannot enter the public places where there are only men working if it does not have a female section. I recall a miserable experience I had with my brother. We travelled all the way from Najran to Riyadh by road. We spent about 9 hours on the road. But when we got the place, there was no place for females. I had to sit in the car for another 3 hours. The car could not be left running because the weather was hot. I remember looking at the temperature gauge. It was in the summer. It was around 50 degrees. There was no place to stay. We needed to get my documents signed. There were a lot of people coming. They came with their wives and daughters. The life of a woman is just here equivalent to being a prisoner. I have an aunt who for some reason, she was estranged with the husband. This led to a divorce. Women are treated as nothing without men here. After the divorce, my aunt wanted to move on. It was difficult. She was working yet she could not get an apartment to rent in her name. She worked. She was a teacher. My aunt moved into her brother's house who is married with kids. Unfortunately, she did not get on well with the wife of the brother. Her brother always told mocked her. He told her that she has brought shame to the family and was not welcome to live in their

house. I recall my aunt coming to the house, crying. She was inconsolable. If the husband rejected her, the immediate family is doing the same. There was no one to go to. It was when I went to the USA and Australia that I saw how women could be supported in difficult times. Her brother finally rented her an apartment in his name and brought a driver to take her to school.

Currently, I am the coordinator of the department; it took me a full year to think about it. Do I want to see myself in teaching more than administrative work? The most challenge I faced is between the administrative and teaching work. I teach alongside my responsibilities as a coordinator. Truly, I like teaching. My priority is always to teach, no matter how huge the administrative load is! Although the hours are equal, I would prefer to see the lecture hall more often. The workload of the coordinator leaves me exhausted, and it is not part of what I am paid. I believed that in being a coordinator, it is an additional experience for me in the future. Administrative work is an opportunity for self-development and gaining experience. I know what difference it could make because I love change for the better. If I have an idea or suggestions that can benefit society and add to my development such as preparing materials for workshop training delivered to other staff, it will add to my career ambitions. The university is not ready to take my opinion. Probably they have a different view to arriving at the middle ground for a solution. The college has a particular vision which might be different from what I think is right. As Nada ended her story, she rounded up by saying:

In going into academia, I am passionate about the teaching aspects of my current job role despite the challenges that I have encountered and despite the workload which I believe is a price that I have to pay (Source: Interview Transcripts).

Chapter Six

6. Findings

6.1. Introduction

In chapter 5, I laid out the unique experiences of women in academia in a Saudi context. This chapter aims to establish a framework through which to tease out the differently experienced constraints as influenced by social norms, professional requirements, and individual and shared values. This multi-level framework broadly pays attention to the cultural, organisational, inter-subjective, and personal levels within which the lived experiences of women are nested. Specifically, in this section, I draw on authored narratives of my research participants (See Chapter Four) with which I seek to answer my research question: ***How does discrimination and subordination operate in the everyday lives of women in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how do they respond to these***?.

I have organised the rest of this chapter as follows: I broadly divide the chapter into two parts. In the first part, I articulate findings relating to the barriers women face as well as the social, institutional and organisational dynamics that provide an understanding regarding the multi-dimensionality of these barriers. This approach is meant to provide a broad understanding of linkage or otherwise between and among taken for granted factors which constrain women in countries like Saudi Arabia. Secondly, the second section in this chapter is directed at analysing findings which reveal how women negotiate or navigate these barriers. Here, I aim to show how women experience these barriers, how they make meaning of these barriers and the conflicts and paradoxes that may be contextual, but which may question or extend extant gender literature regarding the limitations women face in countries like Saudi Arabia. At the end of this chapter, I specifically list out the findings of my study preparatory to discussing these findings in more detail and linking these to extant feminist theories in the next chapter.

6.2. The Barriers

6.2.1. Socio-Administrative Processes

Responses show that certain organisational practices inhibited the progression of women because of their socio-cultural origins. Indeed, these practices were an

extension of the case in the larger society and may be an affirmation of the argument by Syed et al. (2009) that the organisation functions as a structure that replicates the larger society by promoting and reinforcing the subjugation of women. Some of these practices are so embedded in the core of the societal value system that it is not easy to effect any change. For instance, some participants spoke of a period when the president of their university tried to by-pass one of the organisational practices to enable certain privileges for female academics within the organisation. Specifically, the president sought to facilitate more access by female employees to the all-male management staff based on improved and more functional reporting lines. The act caused an uproar from the largely male staff members of the University and had to be rescinded not only due to the massive and disruptive nature of disapproval but specifically because the basis of disapproval was rooted in and so legitimated through more enduring societal practices as captured by Dalal:

> *The last time the president of the University had a meeting with the female students, there was an outcry that he was trying to promote a mixed learning environment. There was an uproar among the staff members who are conservative. They strongly opposed such a face to face meeting. There are unseen walls that separate the men academics and female academics… All the meetings are done using circuit television. At the start of each meeting, we can see the men through the screen, but the men cannot see us. Over time the men rejected this and said that they are not happy that they cannot see us yet we can see them. This meant that currently in our curriculum development meetings, we just see the walls (Interview: Dalal)*

This situation was suggestive of how the powers of University administrators were checked and controlled by societal value systems. Changes had to be legitimised by the social structure and value system. Consequently, the dominance of males in the society/organisations in Saudi Arabia signified how difficult it was for even the authorities of the universities to affect changes - mainly due to emotional and religious attachment to socio-cultural values which constrain and determine organisational

values, practices and processes. Specifically, organisational practices were not considered in line with how they may disadvantage one group (in this case women) and simultaneously privilege another group (men). Rather, the justification was based on societal precedents, which meant that many female academics suffered. Two participants among others, for instance, captured the mood of all others by calling her male Dean "invisible man" because he was never seen or accessed by female academics. Hence, Dalal complained about the organisational processes which were standardised and rigid even when it was evident that women suffered under these practices while Abeer clarified that such practices also involved underrepresentation or no representation of female academics to university management and the extrication of male supervisors from female subordinates:

> *Here in Saudi Arabia, it is not allowed [seeing the male Dean]. I work with a Dean that I cannot see. I always call him the 'alrrajul alkhafi' which means the 'invisible man'… Here in Saudi Arabia, the vision of the Dean is limited. He operates in a world I think is far from the reality. He believes what he is told and is isolated from what is happening in the female section…The dean will only speak to you behind the barriers or curtains and receives feedback only from the Vice Dean or through the transmitters/speakers. He does not know what is happening while making judgments. He does not know how I feel about his comments. He does not know if I have understood him clearly. (Abeer)*

> *My hands are tied as an academic here in the department. There are standardisations and procedures that we have to follow. The staff members over the past few years have been suffering from what I think is low morale. Our way of teaching and assessing students is a two-way system. For instance, I have to teach female students and set half of the assessment questions, and my male colleague sets the other half. This university says [it] promotes standardisation. But it is awful to say that I do not agree with the male colleague over the questions to set. (Dalal).*

This state of affairs was something I could relate with after all I had been denied training opportunities while my position was availed a more junior male colleague, by my gender. The reason for my denial was blatant and those that did this unapologetic; I was supposed to understand why and live with it. I remember well that in all that time I wondered: is being a woman a minus?

6.2.2 Pressured Work environment

Additionally, responses show that these practices above brought friction and disagreements between male and female colleagues, about the standards or quality of teaching and assessment. The content of the exams was one. Here, more qualified female teachers were forced to accept the suggestions of less qualified male teachers about what to include in exam questions and standards of assessment due to the perception that as the women academics were a lower gender. Participants like Dana and Safar revealed the frustration they felt with this perception, the effect it had on them including unfulfillment and demotivation because the status quo was stunting their careers and limiting their progression up the career ladder:

> *Over time, I feel that I am burdened with the requests by the female students for extra support especially for the courses taught by the male lecturers. This is accounting, and sometimes they understand these accounting principles better when there is a one to one support. This is not possible at this university at the ratio of female to male staff who work in this department. It is not balanced. When I talk about this, it is as if I am confronting and challenging the status quo. I am the only female, and none of the male lecturers listens to me. (Dana).*

> *The new role I took up was one I felt gave me a feel that I have gotten to the pinnacle of my career and I can make a difference. I will say that I was wrong…everything had to go through the men who sometimes see it differently. I had to slow down. My husband will tell*

me "you are a professor, you have good work benefits, do not cause yourself problems". But things were not always right in the department. (Safar)

What was suggested by participants, however, was that restrictive administrative practices had some underlying manifestations, implications and influences and played out in different ways. The essence of this argument by participants can be captured under three headings:

5.2.2.1. Male preferences

Nadeen and Abeer best capture the mood of other participants who indicated that their university administrative processes helped men, not women, to progress academically by affording them the opportunity to further their studies and to develop themselves. What this meant was that men progressed to higher positions, while women stagnated. The disparity in pay between male and female academics, therefore, widened considerably:

Women are not allowed to teach online courses. These courses are considered overtime of course for them. That is why a male lecturer's salary could be twice as much as that of a female lecturer who is of the same academic level and qualification, simply because he could get more things, such as extra hours, online courses that the university grants him internally and externally, publishing books, etc. His salary and benefits are doubled. (Nadeen)

When we work as a single body in the name of the university, there is no difference between a man and a woman. We have the same degree and to an extent the same experiences of having studied and worked abroad. But internally, when we attend the departmental meetings that the female staff attends, our voices become inaudible. Our status is deemed to be inferior. We are not allowed to take decisions. We cannot take decisions; meetings are formal, and we cannot challenge authority. (Abeer)

Regarding these different treatments of men and women in the workplace, I reflect on the narrative of Nadeen (see section 4.2). As our discussion progressed, Nadeen talked about her workplace and the challenges of communicating with her male colleagues as a female; She told me that this was quite different in the Private universities that she has worked in, which she noted did not have communication issues but rather issues with discipline. It is important to note the way Nadeen recalls her previous experience at a private university as this gives an insight into the dilution of the conservative culture of the society in some sectors and the differences in the way male students learn in comparison to women.

We discussed how the university seems keen on the need to get the males to meet performance targets and she revealed how the university tries to support the male students, and this performance disparity demonstrates that often, females outperform males. Nadeen raised the issue of teaching methods in a class which she saw as having an impact on the quality of feedback students received. She believed that this kept the students engaged throughout the course of the class. This challenge is not only limited to the female students. She points out that her male colleagues have this challenge too. She discussed her experiences of being a female in a department where the female staff had no chance to make contributions to their welfare during staff meetings. She recalls confronting a male colleague over this. I asked her if other female staff felt this way. She believed that based on her position as a coordinator in the female department, she deserves more. She was quick to remind me that she ought to be deserving of full-time research work in the university which she should merit as a result of her academic qualifications and was disillusioned. Her past experiences quickly deflated her passion, and she expressed her disappointment in the way things worked in the university. She was passionate about her experiences and continually brought her personal experiences into the story which can account for her view of the world. She saw herself as a point of reference amongst her colleagues. Nadeen hoped things would change for good in the future. She expressed her frustrations further with the management. She talked about career progression and limited training opportunities in the department. Nadeen emphasised this: These limited career progression and training opportunities mean that there is a big gap in

the chances of females succeeding in academia as administrators. She tried to convince me that there might be no need for females to aspire for management roles in universities in Arab countries.

6.2.2.2. Gender versus skills considerations

Women were forced to follow decisions made by sometimes less qualified and less knowledgeable male colleagues without question. This is because women were not given roles or jobs that matched their qualifications neither were men. Gender determined job roles, not qualifications. Participants noted that even when they did contribute, it was ignored or overruled. Thus, as Dana, Gadar and Nadal clarify, the quality of the input was judged by the gender of the person who made it and not based on its merit:

> *It has happened in grading the students. The male lecturers take the decisions, and I believe I am forced to follow…they do not even ask me for any suggestions before the meeting. If they do that, I can tell them some of the things I think might be helpful to the welfare and teaching of the female students that I teach. It sometimes feels that I am not part of the department. I often disagree with the head of the department because I feel he intentionally tries to undermine what I am doing. (Dana).*

> *There is a preference to have males in the management of the department. Obviously, they prefer men over women; they always assign males in both male and females section. There would be no superior females even if they got higher academic qualifications. (Gada)*

> *We received a report following the meeting. In this report, it said that the female academics have agreed with the visiting team from Oxford on this and that. I felt that we were just used to make up the numbers. When did we agree on these things? I stopped attending meetings as we are not given a chance to make a contribution. We do not have any authority. I just feel powerless. (Nadal)*

6.2.2.3. Societal Restrictions in an organisational settings

Participants also referred to societal restrictions that played out in organisational settings. As it was in the open society, women were not allowed to move around without a male relative and were not allowed to drive (although as at the time of this write-up, this policy on driving had changed. Effective June 24th 2018 women were allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia). This hindered the extent to which female academics could collaborate with colleagues even within the organisation. Abeer captured the essence of this argument by revealing that in Saudi Arabia, the perception among employers, universities inclusive is that a woman may be too constrained by societal value systems to perform organisational roles. These perceptions also paved the way for some of the limitations female academics faced. For instance, jobs that require mobility or open interaction were denied women even if they trained for or were qualified to take it up as revealed by some participants:

> *The movement for women is limited, unlike men. If there is an opportunity for me to work on a project outside Al Ahsa for example […] I cannot do it even if I wish to drive myself; the society will not let me do it. This means that year to year; I do not have the opportunity to collaborate with other colleagues as there are no trains or buses that can take me there. I just feel that I am shackled. Within the University here, there is a general perception about women. They avoid us. They want to see less of us. They think we want to bring them down. They fear conspiracy. What are we conspiring to do when our voices cannot be heard? The social relations here are very poor. (Abeer)*

6.2.3. Patronage

Responses show that one of the barriers to their career progression was how some women were favoured and others were not. In essence, not every woman in the academia suffered equally. There was the likelihood of privileged treatment of some female employees at the expense of others by male administrators or their proxies.

Consequently, evidence of favouritism subsisted. More specifically, responses reveal that not every woman was career stagnated or constrained as the other. There were differences, and these differences were as demotivating and frustrating for participants as much as the effects of stagnation. This preferential treatment received from male administrators and colleagues was conditional depending on one's family name, tribe or simply familiarity with anyone who had connections with the men in authority because even under these conditions, still, it was not possible for women to relate directly with male administrators. This was an organisational based policy. (see the narratives of Dalal, Abeer and Dana in Chapter Four).

I do recollect that in my case, it was my husband who had to follow through the documentation I filed when I was ill and had to request to be excused from work officially. My husband had to report to my workplace for days because there was a need to follow up with the male clerks who were supposed to push my application through and I was too ill to do that. It was not out of place in my University therefore to see a man, who was not a member of the organisation relating with employees, handling official documents and undergoing organisational processes on behalf of his wife for instance in the case of childbirth or illness.

Therefore, women adopted the use of personal and familial ties and connections further evidencing how societal value systems can be watered down or circumvented by class and privileges in Saudi Arabia (I discuss this in more detail in the next chapter). However, the effect was that those who had their needs and requests met in the organisation were not necessarily more qualified or deserving than others but may have more connections and influence in the larger society based on familial influence, affluence, wealth, status and even tribal background. This translated into ties which elicited preferential treatment within the organisation. Such treatment tended to progress the career of one female at the expense of many others and represented a barrier to the progression of the generality of female academics based on merit, as revealed by Nadal and Abeer:

I found out when I started working in the University that half of the female staff have relatives in the male sections. I noticed they shared the same surnames, or they were from similar tribes. I think this is worse than I expected (Nadal).

I have to be clear about this. It is not just every Saudi woman. You have to come from a certain tribe and certain families that are related to the management or a higher authority within the university or even outside the university. The voices of these women have weight. It is powerful, and they must be heard especially if they have a family member in the male section. (Abeer).

Participants also revealed that the intervention of authoritative figures or those in positional authority in the support and progression of some female academics was a continuation of the very process that brought those "privileged" female academics into the University system in the first place. Indeed, participants made connections between the organisation and the larger society. For instance, responses indicate that some female applicants were recruited based on the influence of some member of society. These include society members who had good standing (socially or politically) or who had influence or affluence/wealth. Those so recruited still relied on these same influences when they got into the organisation to progress their career. The point is this organisational practice reflects the wider use of patronage and family/kinship networks in SA society. Consequently, as Nadal and Nadeen clarify, women are integrated into this system but occupy the bottom tier of it because of their sex:

Can you imagine, in a recruitment, we did some time, two prospective female candidates were not selected as they were not qualified. They proceeded with a discrimination claim that ordinary people who were not from a famous tribe interviewed them and did not choose them. We suddenly got a letter the Prince that we should waiver our decision and accept them. Who disobeys a royal order? We had to hire them. This is sad and depressing. You can see this is the Saudi society for you. It depends on your tribe; you can call the shots'(Nadal).

A woman cannot get all that because of the barriers of communication, gender, and personal judgment of her qualifications. There are so many problems in terms of equality between the two genders and within the same gender. (Nadeen)

6.2.4. Intra-gender Mistreatment

Responses also revealed some level of antagonism not among female academics in the main, but from male appointed female coordinators to their female subordinates. In essence, some female coordinators did not show sympathy for the constraints and limitations that their fellow women faced. Rather, participants suggested that coordinators were antagonising their female subordinates based on personal animosities and because they were interested in keeping those who appointed them (male administrators) happy. One of the ways they (coordinators) achieved this was by suppressing the complaints and the concerns of their subordinates. This translated into mistreating female academics in their care by not properly voicing their concerns or simply not voicing those concerns at all although these subordinates were still expected to perform their job functions. Failure to do so meant that such female employee will be poorly rated and reprimanded even sacked. Indeed, some participants like Dalal, Abeer and Dana saw this mistreatment as encouraging male academics and administrators to oppress their female counterparts as well.

> *Our coordinator in the Female section has a weak personality. I am disappointed with this. Each time I told her that the female staff needs this for the books and curriculum, she says no. She believes that the men in the department should not be upset [displeased]... She does not want us to be seen as troublemakers. (Dalal)*
>
> *But it will interest you to know that some of my colleagues encourage the male staff to continue this discrimination as they do not wish to hear any discussion around gender equality. They think that when you talk about equality, you want to fight them [men]. It is not just the men; the females are also encouraging this…unfortunately, when women*

take positions, there will be a few things that I have seen as positives [changes] so far. (Abeer)

In the department, the deputy of female department liaises with the Head of Department who is a man. But I can say that I have not enjoyed working with her. I still prefer working with a man. Women are different, and I believe that jealousy is a problem. (Dana)

6.2.5. Grievance Handling

Responses while in principle (based on university value statements for instance) grievance redress mechanisms existed, in reality they were either absent or flawed. Indeed the structure of the process itself begged the question because grievances had to be resolved by male colleagues through sycophantic proxies (female coordinators). Based on this, the chances of reporting or complaining about mistreatment or abuses and being heard were slim if not non-existent. Consequently, grievances by female academics were hardly ever resolved because there was a limit to how much the female complainant could interact with a male counterpart and even female coordinators failed or refused to represent grievances of their subordinates to male administrators. Indeed, the process for reporting formally as well as the content of the report itself needed their (male administrators) approval an indication that the process, when initiated, was more likely to be stifled at some point. Participants indicated that women who had concerns that affected their jobs or how they met set targets, deadlines and timelines were eventually compelled to be silent while still being evaluated as if these concerns did not exist. The point is the limitations women suffered was not recognised when rating their performance, and their progression was limited based on what may be considered poor outcomes or low productivity linked to these unaddressed organisational restrictions. Gada and Safar among others clarify this state of affairs:

For example, complaints by female students against a female lecturer in the department should be resolved by the female deputy. But this is not the case. They will be referred to the Head of Department who is a male. Does it mean that we cannot resolve things amicably or

internally settle it instead of raising the issue to the men? Anything raised to the head of the department must have come to me. I should counsel him or Students' Complaints Office in issues I could not deal with. The nature of the work here in Saudi Arabia and difficulty of direct communications between men and women limits what I can do. My role, however, is to be the link between them as all complaints are always raised through my office (Gada)

When I talk and complain about the way we are treated or how things are done, it brings me problems. When I keep quiet, I feel that it is entirely wrong. Keeping silence is not the option. I believe that I can change things, but this does not make the situation better. (Safar)

In my case, I once sought to report a junior male employee who had plagiarised my work and ideas and blatantly told me there was nothing I could do about it. Indeed, I was helpless: there was no structure to lay out my grievance – I was a woman after all. Even the deviant knew this and whenever he had the chance, he would smirk at me. It was funny to him. Yes, when you are not the one on the receiving end, discrimination and dominance do have a terrible sense of humour.

6.2.6. Education and Training

While responses reveal that there were organisation-led internal and external programmes for employee learning and development, participants suggest that the quality of training or which training an academic was exposed to was dependent on their gender. For instance, the training courses offered by the Universities to most female participants were so insignificant regarding content, structure, relevance and applicability (for personal or career development). However, their male colleagues were exposed to richer, more robust, career applicable and task-relevant training. This process of exposing female Saudis to one set of training which is limited, restricting them to only doing certain jobs or limiting their progression and job roles when they do get employed is embedded in the Saudi socialisation process started at the very early educational stages of the girl child (Hamdan, 2005; Al-Khateeb, 2007). Within the organisation this process continued as emphasised by participants Nadeen and Nadal:

We cannot be seen as equals, when the proportion of women to progress is limited, unlike men. I mean when there is an opportunity to participate in conferences, seminars, and external labour workshops…etc., women are pushed aside… These limited career progression and training opportunities mean that there is a big gap in the chances of females succeeding in academia as administrators. (Nadeen).

This is not limited to the staff alone. There are courses that are offered in this university that is only given to male students. The females are automatically excluded. Degrees in Engineering, Marine Studies are deemed not suitable for women. This means that we lag behind the number of female engineers in these sectors. (Nadal)

This situation as narrated by participants had two effects. Firstly, it prevented female academics from having the required credentials for advancement to higher career responsibilities and, secondly, it allowed their male colleagues to progress to higher roles by giving them the opportunity to acquire the required credentials. In essence, some administrative practices within the academia aid the subjugation of women were explicitly discriminatory although the university still presented itself as availing all employees of equal opportunities. Among others, participants like Nadeen and Dana indicated this in their responses:

Sometimes they offer us training courses that are not relevant in any way, for instance, how to use PowerPoint? Would a lecturer with a master or PhD not know how to use PowerPoint, the blackboard, and search the internet through Google? Such topics will not be given to children at primary school. You get the feel that they underestimate you. What is worse is that these courses are compulsory. As for training courses, men do not consider women qualified, simply because they are women. This makes some of my colleagues feel

that they are less influential [relevant] because they are women. They use us here to fill the gaps. We are not given any attention. (Nadeen).

The training is not relevant. They offer training on the use of Google in Advanced Search, the use of learning outcomes in the delivery of the courses. I do not depend much on these courses. This means that I spend money always to participate in external courses to develop myself. To ease myself the challenge of travelling as I cannot drive, I go for some online training courses, some of which are free or affordable for me. (Dana)

Specifically, my discussion with Nadeed (see section 4.2) is instructive here: Nadeen said that for females, it is not a matter of whether someone is qualified or not. This is not only in this University but all our Arabic countries. It is a big management issue. We study management but don't apply it. As a result, there is no equality and justice concerning the same gender. Personal beliefs about women and socio-cultural dispositions, rather than qualifications, play a great role in judging others. Then they added gender. So, it is possible to say there is this double effect of gender and personal bias. Men could be more qualified. They prove their loyalty to someone through certain things, such as letting them publish their research and giving them training programs. That is why their share of publishing, holding different positions, and training and attending courses is greater than ours. They are the only ones in control of online courses. Women are not allowed to teach online courses. These courses are considered overtime of course for them. That is why a male lecturer's salary could be twice as much as that of a female lecturer who is the same academic level and qualification, simply because he could get more things, such as extra hours, online courses that the university grants him internally and externally, publishing books, etc. His salary and benefits are doubled. A woman cannot get all that because of the barriers to communication, gender, and personal judgment of her qualifications. There are so many problems in terms of equality between the two genders and within the same gender.

6.2.7. Communication

Participants emphasised the effects of limitations in communication between male and female academics and between female academics and male administrators. Based on responses, it was evident that women communicated through representatives or a female coordinator, who herself was limited in the way and manner she could approach the head of school or the Dean, for instance, as well as the extent she could go to represent the concerns of the female academics fully. While responses show that participants felt betrayed by the perceived passiveness of the female coordinators, coordinators also expressed their frustration at representing the female academics to management. Consequently, the feeling between coordinators and their female subordinates was mutual regarding communication as suggested by Gada and Safar:

> *We express our opinions through speaking only when given a chance. When the Dean asks if we have a concern, I am the only person who speaks in a joint meeting even though we do not see the men. My other female colleagues remain silent as they expect me as a coordinator to represent them. (Gada)*

> *I saw myself being trapped between the what is right and what is acceptable in the society. I now knew that I could only expect anything. In the department, I was made a coordinator. I was able to reach the Dean directly in the past. I feel he respected me because he knew my track record. But the new Dean rarely gives me a listening ear. (Safar)*

Specifically, responses indicate that the issue of communication was deficient regarding channels and structure as some participants were quite open about their frustration at having to go through proxies who sometimes misrepresented information or outrightly abandoned it based on perceptions of irrelevance. Although some participants offered that using other mediums like phones and emails were allowed:

It is hard at the university here to communicate with the male department. We use different means of communication as opposed to face-to-face communication. You can use the phone and email only. (Nadeen)

I communicate with the head of the department using WhatsApp. If I have an inquiry that I wish to make about anything, there is only one way to do that. Send him WhatsApp message. (Dana).

However, responses suggest that these mediums were used to compel female academics to do extra work or to obligate them after work hours. Interestingly, these mediums which worked so well in achieving more input from women failed to serve them when the need to use them to raise concerns arose. Indeed, even channels of communications which exploited women's free times also bestowed certain limitations. For instance, Dana and Nadeen raised the point that this was causing disagreements and marital tensions with their husbands:

The problem with the phone is that males will not call you at specific times. They could call when you are at home and when it is not convenient... It would put a woman in an awkward position when a male stranger calls her at home. This is well-known. Most [domestic or marital] problems result from communication by the phone. Of course, communication by email is quite preferable because you can be so formal, do only what is requested from you, i.e. only in relation to what is needed, and that is it. (Nadeen)

My husband gets annoyed when I receive messages after hours; he doesn't like any communications after official hours. I never call him, and he does not call me either unless there is an urgent issue he wants to address with me…These are the kind of things that happen, and I do not think the communication lines are good. (Dana)

Participants thus revealed the effect of these defective communication system/style on organisational interaction, relationships, and workflow. There was also some evidence that some female employees were communicating with relatives or family members in the male section to get official work done. Indeed, responses reveal that other women were also latching to these women who had relatives in the male section to ask for help with meeting purely official requests and needs. What this implies is that to get work done, to meet a deadline or a target, a female academic had to rely on informal networks of ties and relationships. Thus, while the requirements were official, the tools to accomplish them, for the female academic, were discretionary, personal and even informal. This consideration was revealed across the data, but the response below by Dana presents it in a nuanced way:

> *These days, I try to avoid having anything to do with them [male academics]. I try to resolve the issues that I can on my own. It is only when I have issues that are beyond me, that are quite strong that I can reach out to them. All the information that I need, I try to get it from female colleagues or the secretaries. I often rely on those [fellow women] who have a relative working in the male section as their information is to an extent authentic. I deal with what I know and depend on others in critical issues, including news we get from around us. (Dana)*

In the preceding sections, I focused on articulating the themes which emerged from the data suggesting the limitations women face in the academia in Saudi Arabia, the context, interconnectedness and multidimensionality of these limitations based on societal, organizational, patriarchal and even interpersonal and emotional dynamics as well as the overall significance of these considerations – for instance their implications for how women are subjugated, discriminated against and oppressed as well as how these state of affairs bestows privileges on one group (men) while simultaneously disadvantaging others. In the next section, I begin to show how another set of themes inform us regarding how women negotiate these barriers and the implications for how women pursue careers in Saudi Arabia.

6.3. Navigating Barriers

6.3.1. Family support

Responses revealed that the expectations society had of married women as wife and mother sometimes clashed with the organisational requirements of the job role, as revealed by participant Abeer. Also, participants like Nada also indicated that the extended family was typically involved in deliberating and deciding on the extent to which a female member of the family could progress educationally and professionally although, in the final analysis, the father or the father figure was expected to make a final decision. As further clarified through the responses of Abeer and Nada:

> *Sometimes this role [wife and mother] conflicts with my professional work. But over time, I have been able to balance them. None supersedes the other. (Abeer)*

> *I remember an uncle asking my father how he can allow me to go and live outside in an environment that is mixed. They believed that it would make me lose my moral and spiritual values. My father reminded them [extended family] that he believes that I will not lose my values. He told them that he supports my intention to go abroad. My big brother travelled with me to Riyadh to submit the documents that were required. (Nada)*

In my discussions with Nadeen (see section 4.2), she observed that the unmarried woman faces many problems in the Arabic society. She gets judged for every move. If she gets an extra course, they will talk about how lucky she is and that everything goes well for her. They would also say that she knows a certain person for that. You are always in trouble. It is a problem for you whether people like you or not. They

dislike you, and this affects your salary, promotion, and work. You know when you are liked, it affects your reputation. So, as a single woman, you must be very conscious of trouble. You don't know whether you should do this or that. You must choose what would do less harm. Having a relative, like a brother or a husband can facilitate university issues. Those of my colleagues who are married enjoy some benefits. Their husbands can communicate in person with the male department or with the male Dean himself. He sorts out things for her. For instance, we have in Ramadan training courses for a male lecturer and his wife. Very often, they appoint the husband and his wife in the female department together. This, of course, facilitates many advantages for my colleagues whose husbands work here'.

My discussions with Abeer also showed significant frustrations that were mitigated by a husband's support. Abeer told me about her husband who she met at an event in Cario. Abeer believed that the career aspirations of women like her in Saudi Arabia were something that should be encouraged. She believed that having a degree can empower a woman to get started in Academia with ambition. Abeer continued and highlighted aspects of that the perceived discrimination of female academics that depends on a network of connections. Abeer paused and said that this situation had discouraged her when it comes to aspiring to managerial or leadership positions within the university. Abeer began to express frustration at how the Saudi Society has limited her opportunities and made things complex for her. Abeer highlighted how she felt working under an invisible man as a Dean in Saudi Arabia which she said had stark differences which can limit opportunities for female academics. Abeer talked about the things she likes about being managed by a woman although she commented on the support that she has gotten from her husband.

Further, participants revealed how their limitations as regards mobility and freedom to walk around were mitigated by help from family members who offered support. This support helped women to get a job and even after then to continue in the job otherwise the contract may be terminated. Some responses captured this consideration:

> *It was not difficult for me to convince my brother to come to Saudi Arabia with me then as he had a temporary job. That made it an easy*

decision for him to move with me. He just finished from the University and was weighing a lot of options then….Time flies. He has finally settled here…got married and brought his wife to join him in Saudi Arabia…he is still my guardian. (Nadeen)

I had to leave Egypt and join him in Saudi Arabia as an academic. I will give my husband credit. He has been very supportive and has been there for me. It is not a secret that my husband has played a significant role in encouraging and appreciating my efforts over the years. He supports me and also shares in my success. We share the family responsibilities and his support in the course of my career have been a major factor in my success. If I have not gotten his support, there would have been conflicting. (Abeer).

Also, family contacts within the University also helped to represent and meet the needs of participants like Nadeen, Nadal and Jayda who also revealed that the married woman in Saudi Arabia enjoyed certain benefits compared to the single woman. For instance, husbands have a role to play in representing the married woman by speaking directly to her male superiors. Unlike what may be acceptable in contemporary organisations, participants revealed that it was quite normal for male family members and relatives to intervene in official issues concerning a female relative even when they (male relatives) were not members of the organisation. Married female academics were sometimes availed certain opportunities such as training courses which they could attend with their husbands showing that in the Saudi society some discrimination against single females was institutionalised and acceptable and that marriage offered a woman a higher place in the social strata.

Also, female academics took advantage of situations where male family members or relatives were also employed in their organisation to advance their cause and to raise their concerns and indeed, to progress career-wise. While on the face of it, this seems liberating for some women, the point is in relying on (male) family support to pursue careers; women are still placed back in dependency on men. They can never see themselves as having achieved success on their own without male support. As

summed up in the responses of Nadeen, Nadal and Jeyda, even while making career progress these women are made subordinate in new ways:

> *Having a relative, like a brother or husband can facilitate university issues. Those of my colleagues who are married enjoy some benefits. Their husbands have the ability to communicate in person with the male department or with the male Dean himself. He sorts out things for her. For instance, we have in Ramadan training courses for a male lecturer and his wife. Very often, they appoint the husband and his wife in the female department together. This, of course, facilitates many advantages for my colleagues whose husbands work here'. (Nadeen)*
>
> *The society is organised around tribes and your class… I am Dr Dalal who to an extent can be heard because of my education and not my background… My father served as faculty member for 40 years in the Faculty of Medicine at the King Abdulaziz University… The family has benefitted immensely from his service to this university. Within this University, I can say that I have people who can speak for me. (Nadal)*
>
> *I did not get the support from people I thought that were colleagues. I knew that I had to remain motivated. My uncle and my father worked at the university, and I found solace discussing my concerns with the male staff. Things changed pretty soon as I held on to complete my studies. A new Dean who knew my plight approved my funding for PhD, and here I am. (Jeyda).*

The statement by Nada, Nadeen and Abeer, Nadal and Jeyda resonates with my own my own experience. I remember that in my case, members of my extended family were opposed to my going to the university and advised my father to marry me off rather than allow me to get engaged with the corrupting influences of more western education. Amidst vehement and united opposition, my father decided I should further my education. Of course, while the father or the father figure may overrule opposition,

there could be consequences. These could include exclusion through alienation or ostracism. This form was not physical extraction or loss of contact though. Rather, it had more to do with disinterest in future calls for advice by a hard-headed father from family members. Because this act (requesting the guidance of family members as regards a pending decision) was regarded as showing regard and respect for the family structure and for senior family members, refusing to heed a call for advice by a family member was one of the strongest forms of rebuke. However, my father took this risk. But his action showed the fragmentation and contradictions that could arise in these matters not just between family members but even between institutions such as the family and the organisation.

6.3.2. Male Empathy

Responses suggest that not all men are conservative or resistant to more equal relations with women. Across responses, accounts of male help at one time or another subsisted revealing in some instances, male empathy – or when men of authority/influence provide reassurance/support to female academics within or outside the organisation. Some participants also revealed that not all male colleagues or administrators showed animosities towards women at least not to them, and in fact, some were friends in strange places as they offered help in several ways. Firstly, five participants, one of them being Jeyda, signified that they were directly aided by male administrators who were connected to or had been contacted by family members on their behalf. Familial-organisational connections, therefore, drove empathy or help here. Still, three participants claimed that male administrators aided them at one time or the other, without the intervention of family members. Nadeena and Abeer were in this category:

> *My uncle and my father worked at the university, and I found solace discussing my concerns with the male staff. Things changed pretty soon as I held on to complete my studies. A new Dean who knew my plight approved my funding for PhD, and here I am. (Jeyda).*

It was very difficult to do a doctorate in the UK and still work. I could not afford to lose my job. My head of department said that he knows that I wanted to study and he understood my plight. I still remember those words; 'we are with you and supporting you'. I said to him; 'I promise this programme will not affect my teaching', to which he replied; 'sure, we will help you. (Nadeen)

Dr Mansour who was my supervisor at that time became my boss. He was very supportive… Dr Mansour called me to his office about a year of working with him and asked me if I wish to undertake a Master's degree at Suez Canal University… I knew that he had my interests at heart and I agreed to undertake the project. I recall telling him that I do not have any savings for the tuition but he promised to pay for the tuition and deduct it from my salary over the course of two years. That was acceptable to me, and as I began the programme, academia and accounting became the world I knew. (Abeer)

Secondly, some participants insisted that while some nepotism was needed before you could get attention from male administrators, regardless, they had received the attention they needed. Still, some responded in ways to suggest that administrative issues that had to do with women welfare were in fact given some preference over that of men in some instances. This offered some unique insight as it was a departure from the more general narrative. Gada, for instance, mentions that a dean she had worked with at some point was very accommodating of her ideas. Safar offered that her experience was that male administrators were not very receptive to a suggestion from female coordinators but that she had a unique experience of working with one who was very different from the rest because he was very engaging and cooperative. Nadeen offers the surprise of even praising "men" although she eventually clarifies that it was the married women that were more likely to get some attention (typically by having their husbands make presentations on their behalf) and not just every woman – single, widowed and separated academics bore the brunt of intention in this context:

Sometimes, I propose improvements through the head of the department who would raise this to the Dean. The Dean then considers them regardless of being a male staff or female staff proposal (Gada)

If I had not worked under a Dean before here in Saudi Arabia, I would have assumed that they are all the same. I think the way men work and relate with women depends on their philosophy towards women. (Safar)

'To be fair, men, including those in the management, are very respectful. For instance, if there is an error with regards to the salary, or if I ask for a holiday or a visa, I will be granted what I request. The priority is given to women. They take into consideration that women don't have a car as we are not allowed to drive. They show a great understanding of these aspects. Apart from that, I can see that a woman who has a husband gets the priority in that her courses and timetable are sorted out, and has extra hours'. (Nadeen)

What is clear however is that some women, in spite of constraints to their progression, still found some empathy in some male administrators. This was facilitated through family, independent of family or based on the personal disposition or whims of the administrator himself. In essence, such disposition was not typical and was of a very idiosyncratic nature. Regardless, some women had benefited from this exception at one time or the other. Once again, what this meant is that informal structures and relationships were used to conduct official business since the formal structures did not allow or inhibited women from performing their official job roles without hitches. Indeed, as against the idea that informal societal structures supported formal organisational systems (see section 5.1) in this case, informal institutions and processes circumvented formal organisational restrictions.

Some participants painted a picture of frustration with the system within the universities especially as regards how they were perceived by their male colleagues

and the constraints that this represented. One participant captured what several responses implied:

> *I have seen that we do not have a system that cares for us at the workplace…Yes, we need this as this can help us put on a united front to address issues that concern us. How can the university know that we need to hear when there is no one to put our case through? How long must we rely on the males in our lives…It is really difficult especially if you are in a male-dominated society. Being a woman does not give you a voice. I have experienced it at all levels. What I wear has to be acceptable to the men. What I do as a woman has to be acceptable to them as well. (Jeyda)*

My discussion with Safar here was instructive because her mentor and helper was a man and she felt that male deans could be flexible regarding female constraints depending on their age, but that in all, they could be very helpful (see section 4.9).

For Safar, getting a varied experience was key to her self-development, and she began to seek opportunities elsewhere. Safar described the conversations that she had with her mentor who was about to retire that made her think of getting started in another environment which led to her coming to Saudi Arabia. Over the years, personal growth and development had become a part of Safar's philosophy. It became opportunities for her to improve her professional career. Safar went on to talk about the significance of her experiences at her University. A lot of her previous experiences were taken for granted, particularly as a woman. Safar talked about what she saw as a clash of cultures in the workplace. She saw herself representing the female academics who became subdued and suppressed by the processes in the workplace which support the subjugation of women as they cannot express their views. Safar then talks about the style of managing a department which she believes it varies depending on the age of the Dean as well as their personality.

6.3.3. Informal Networks

Responses suggest that women form networks of informal relationships through which they get things done. While these relationships happen spontaneously, over time, they begin to influence the way these women get their concerns addressed, have their voices heard and get their needs met. The relationships painted by participants assume several dimensions. For instance, it can come from a place of a coordinator who sees herself as a representative of the females and who has a listening ear in the male administrator she reports to. Therefore, the network of women here is facilitated by the nature of the working relationship between a female coordinator and a male administrator. The smoother such a relationship is, the more likely informal networks will be formed among female academics. Also, women who are aware of such a smooth relationship will lean on the coordinator to get their voices heard or will latch on to those who are close to the coordinator to get their problems solved. The important thing is that a relationship of trust amongst participants was built based on the working relationship between male and female coordinators or administrators. The response of Dana and Gada put this submission in context:

> *These days, I try to avoid having anything to do with them [male academics]. I try to resolve the issues that I can on my own. It is only when I have issues that are beyond me, that are quite strong that I can reach out to them. All the information that I need, I try to get it from female colleagues or the secretaries. I often rely on those [fellow women] who have a relative working in the male section as their information is to an extent authentic. I deal with what I know and depend on others in critical issues, including news we get from around us. (Dana)*

> *I have been fortunate to give suggestions to the Dean and sometimes he accepts my views. He…is comfortable talking with me, and I share my opinion with him. This has changed the relationship I have with other female staff as they reach out to the Dean through me. I see myself as representing these women especially when it comes to their concerns around issues within the workplace. (Gada)*

6.3.4. Hopefulness

What was also evident from responses was that in spite of barriers, participants had personal goals which were important to them. One way they circumvented the limitations and the effects of the barriers was to engage in activities within and outside the organisation which while not related to climbing the career ladder, at least directly, still reinforced those personal goals. It also acted as a buffer – something which gave these women a sense of accomplishment and relevance and which helped their self-esteem as revealed by Abeer, Safar and Nada

> *Within the University, my role was not just teaching. It was more than teaching. I saw myself working in a job that the only prospect was developing myself and becoming fully qualified. This meant that I enrolled for my PhD at the Suez Canal University. It was a good reunion, and I enrolled as a part-time student (Abeer).*
>
> *I acknowledge the role of my mentor, but I know that if I had not worked hard, I would not have been able to publish papers after papers. We were involved with a lot of science bodies, hospitals, and businesses. I knew that Prof had my progress in mind. I attended conferences, events and showcased our work. (Safar)*
>
> *Administrative work is an opportunity for self-development and gain experiences. I know what difference it could make because I love change for the better. If I have an idea or suggestions that can benefit the society and add to my development such as preparing materials for workshop training delivered to other staff, it will add to my career ambitions. (Nada)*

Some of the participants were more philosophical/religious about their prospects regarding their career and also showed some optimism. In essence, a sense of hope drove them in such a way that they navigated barriers with a positive psychological disposition. The significance of this is that it brought these women a sense of

reassurance about the prospects that things may change and so will their situation. These are indications of a political hope that by being pioneers they will make it easier for others to follow after and that the system will change as a result of their struggles. The responses of Nadal, Jeyda and Nada represented these imperatives, which were common in fifteen out of twenty participants - a very strong emotion to hope for a better tomorrow:

> *I am motivated to become a professor…It is not just a job; it is not about the money, and it is a dream. From a young age, about ten, I have always wanted to be a teacher…I always admired my teachers…I enjoy teaching. I love teaching. I love my students. As a teacher, you have more freedom to be creative and give these female students new knowledge. This I believe makes a difference as I teach mature adults, not children. It is very interesting to be an inspiration to them... In teaching, the rewards come to you later, and they are fulfilling to me. (Nadal)*
>
> *I am happy I did not quit. It is the determination I hope to share with those young girls I support… Doing what you love is important to get to where you want to be…I have only learned one thing which [is] to keep on fighting for the things that I think I believe in. I will continue to learn all I can. I do not know everything, but the things I have learned have all worked for me. Who knows, there might be better opportunities in a few years' time to support young Saudi girls and women better than what I am doing now. (Jeyda).*
>
> *In going into academia, I am passionate about the teaching aspects of my current job role despite the challenges that I have encountered and despite the workload which I believe is a price that I have to pay. (Nada).*

6.3.5. Denial

However, the idea that female restrictions and subjugation in social and organisational spheres was detrimental to the progress and development of the female was not shared by all participants. Rather some saw such limitations as necessary to focus the woman's attention on her primary role, which is taking care of the home. This perspective was best illustrated by Abeer, who indicated that she was not ill-disposed to how the societal and organisational limitations have carried on because she saw her primary role as that which required her to take care of children, husband and home; this was a priority and more important than a job or a career. For Abeer, restrictions on her career progression were in her best interest and the interest of service to her community. Abeer's views are rooted in religious dogma – or the idea that some divine and all-knowing supreme being orchestrate a woman's place - is representative of the view of some female academics that what is perceived as subjugation by the rest of the civilised world is, in fact, honourable and protective of the woman. In essence, women like Abeer would argue that these perceived restrictions should remain:

For a Muslim woman, there gets to a point in your life you realise that marriage is more than just you falling in love with a prince charming. It is for the sake of the Almighty Allah. It is for the sake of continuity, having children. It is also for the community and me… I do not need a degree to show that I am a leader. I leave my academic qualifications aside, and the moment I get home I take on a new role. It is obvious; it is a great role… My husband is proud of me. My children though they may not fully understand will someday appreciate the effort I have made… I cannot ignore my family and my home. This is a great responsibility for it this is what Allah assigns to us. My home comes first. If there are enough time and strength to perform another role, it will be admirable, otherwise just look after your family, lead your children, and perform your role to the fullest. This is because we are originally assigned to raise our children and support them grow up in good manners to become useful to the society. (Abeer)

6.4. Summary of Findings

Based on responses, women navigate barriers within the academia by firstly recognising that they exist and that they are not going away soon; this was a fact that

participants implied they lived with every day. These restrictive processes and practices have been analysed under the sub-themes socio-administrative processes, pressured work environment, societal restrictions in an organisational setting. These sub-themes make up the core construct - institutional practices. These barriers did not occur in a vacuum. These women felt the effects through avenues such as legitimised discrimination and patronage which make up the core construct - intra-gender mistreatment. Consequently, by accepting that these barriers exist as evidenced by the restrictions, constraints and work environment, the task for female academics, therefore, was managing those barriers in such a way that they can move around but not necessarily past them. While at least one participant suggested she was supportive of those barriers because she considered them religiously and culturally honourable to womanhood, all other participants sought ways to mitigate the effects or avoid the constraints entirely.

Participants particularly used family support which was very significant in a collectivist, male-dominated, and traditional Saudi Society. Women could not walk alone or even together without a male escort to accompany them; otherwise, they were constrained to stay indoors. This affected the responsibilities women could also take up by way of job roles because there was no way they were going to move around to perform official duties without a male escort and escorts did not come easily. The identity of the male escort that was also a limitation because while a male was allowed unless that male was related to the woman by blood or was her husband, he could not act as an escort. For the woman who was single or widowed and did not have a male to support, that may spell the end of a career. The family also played a part in relationships within and outside the organisation. Familial connections and networks could help a woman navigate the murky waters of socio-organisational restrictions.

Participants who had fathers or brothers working in the organisation all agreed that they used these connections to help their work. But participants also revealed that not all male behaviour towards women was antagonistic. To this extent, the personal disposition of a male administrator to women can determine the degree to which he aided them when they had a need. Participants talked about Deans who offered no

help, Deans who helped after they assumed responsibility and Deans who had a listening ear (and of course Deans who did not). Expectedly, some changes that a Dean or President of a University could institute were limited and can even be resisted by male subordinates to the extent that the majority perceived such changes as deviating from the social values or religious codes. While some of this help offered by male administrators were personal, others were influenced by family connections and networks, tribal affiliation, and affluence. The sub-themes grievance handling, education and training, and communication make up the core construct – Administrative practices.

Further, participants felt that one of the ways they navigated the barriers were through other female coordinators who were their “voice”. This was conditional because there were administrators who just wanted to let things be as they were and so would not represent the female academics to the authorities or did so selectively and cautiously. However, there were others who did so in very effective and constructive ways. What was clear, however, was that the disposition of the male dean in the subject institutions remains an overriding influence and can determine the extent that a coordinator may go in representing the concerns of the female academics. Therefore, women began to form informal networks of trust and help. Again, these networks had a lot to do with relationships because it obligated a female academic to connect with another female who had the ear of a male administrator or male academic who could help her with a need. Attachment to one who had such connections was therefore important. Based on this last point, the sub-themes family support, male empathy, informal networks make up the core theme- social/organisational support systems.

Some participants referred to their hopes for the future. In order words, they expressed optimism that things will change for the better or that their endeavours had some connection to the brighter side of things. Others expressed enthusiasm in continuing with the things that interest them and which gave them fulfilment. What can be deduced is that it was less likely that these interests or these hopes were going to change the status quo; or that it was going to give these women some leverage before their male counterparts. However, what is clearer still is that the disposition to face

tomorrow and the courage to do so was present and ongoing with participants. These women have just chosen to live in spite of all. The sub-themes hopefulness and denial make up the core construct self-fulfilling activities.

Therefore, the findings in this chapter suggest that, firstly, societal structures and systems evidence a dual outcome by aiding some organisational restrictions on women but paradoxically also acting as a mitigant, a relief from those same restrictions. While women were denied certain basic privileges, class, family name, hierarchy, connectedness (within and outside the organization), tribal affiliation and even marriage meant that some women enjoyed certain privileges while other women did not

Secondly, women relied heavily on nuclear and extended family relationships to navigate the perilous waters of male domination. Certain groups of women though were more likely to face discriminations of a deeper level than others including single women, widows, the poor and unconnected. No matter the class associated with a woman, the male still reinforced the status quo: ultimately a woman needed to depend on a male figure to achieve anything that was considered successful; even the definition and limits of success.

In the next chapter, I engage with discussing the findings in more detail by linking them to the research question as well as theoretically grounding these stated core themes.

Chapter Seven

7. Discussion

7.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I undertook an analysis of the research findings based on the stories, personal experiences, views, opinions and narratives of my research subjects (see narratives in chapter four), and through the articulation of emerging sub-themes from the data. I concluded the chapter by showing how a set of each sub-theme was indicative of and linked to some core constructs/themes. In this Chapter, I engage in a detailed discussion of these core themes - institutional practices, administrative practices, and, social/organisational support systems – using the lens of applicable theories and scholarly perspectives. All through this chapter, I show how these themes throw more light on the constraints women face in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how they navigate these limitations and how these findings address the research question ***How does discrimination and subordination operate in the everyday lives of women in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how do they respond to these***? However, I articulate this last point in more detail in the concluding chapter.

7.2. Institutional Practices

Findings suggest that certain organisational policies and procedures within the academia in Saudi Arabia did not exist in a vacuum. While on paper they exuded formal administrative characteristics such as those in western developed nations including neutrality, impartiality and egalitarianism, in practice, these formal policies seemed imitative rather than real and were linked to [informal] socio-cultural norms and values legitimated by traditional Arabian culture and the Islamic religion. Since these practices were rooted in religious precedents and dictates, disobedience was out of the question even if, as in most cases, each ensuing outcome mostly privileged men and disadvantaged women. Consequently, in constraining women in this regard, organisations in Saudi Arabia, and in this case the academia, functioned as an extension or replication of society (Syed at al., 2009) a situation which can be explained based on certain scholarly submissions I discuss in Chapter Two. For instance, it suggests that the constraints on women are imposed in Saudi Arabia

through structural, legal, institutional and organisational means founded on Islam, and relative to Western and developed countries, these policies may be difficult to change because they are neither popularly derived, legitimated or sustained (Almassi (2015). This is key because the waves of feminism which I discussed in Chapter Two developed in western countries because of certain democratic structures including legal and institutional. While political and religious repression which necessitated gender activism was present, changes occurred because there where modifications of the laws that governed society, and these were sometimes protested, debated and frequently altered and continues to be. In the Islamic state of Saudi Arabia, the Quran is regarded as the single unquestionable and infallible document on which all laws rests and on which social norms and values subsist. Its tenets and norms are not popularly derived, they are shared through enforcement. This sharedness is not necessarily indicative of popular approval though (as in developed western countries today) but suggestive of imposed and enforced commonality.

7.2.1. Sharedness

Findings suggest that the relevance, effectiveness or perceptions of fairness of these processes are not judged based on how they advantaged or disadvantaged groups but based on how acceptable they are in the wider society. Indeed, my own experience with my University suggests that academic and administrative policies would frequently state one thing, but in real terms the practice was different. Further, such societal constraints also legitimated staff dissent and rebellion to positional authority and even circumvented management authority because an employee could refuse official instructions on the basis that it was wholly or partly inconsistent with religious dogma. This was the idea behind the rebellion of mostly male employees against a policy which seemed to favour women (with no obvious disadvantage to men though) instituted by the male University president in Dalal's story (see section 4.4). Here, what was dictated by social or religious values was seen as commonly accepted or shared through common ascriptions of meaning and values by members of the organisation. Consequently, sharedness - of such traditional or religious dictates also meant that irrespective of social or organisational hierarchy, everyone was supposed to act consistently within these requirements.

Indeed, as findings suggest, the basis for such requirements and obligations was overtly paternalistic, and typically, it had to conform with the comforts of the male gender and the distress of the female in organisational contexts. This gender-biased and constraining values depicts an exchange between societal and organisational institutions and norms as well as the dynamics that underpin process and outcome has been articulated by the social exchange theory (SET). I refer to this theory in chapter Two (see section 2.3.1), where I argued that set provides a potentially useful way of understanding the negotiated character of social exchanges. SET explains human associations as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties. More specifically, based on this theory, within the academia in Saudi Arabia as in the wider society, interactions between employees and between managers and subordinates is based on an individual subjective evaluation of alternatives resulting in a generation of obligations (Blau, 1964). However, findings from this study offer some departure from some propositions of the SET. For instance, evaluations of what is cost or benefit in the process of interactions by academics – male and female - are not subjective but objective because they are based on predetermined and conditioned standards such as religious dictates and traditional and even family values.

Further, in the academia in Saudi Arabia, findings reveal that exchanges are not negotiated as proposed by SET theorists but mandated. Finally, while SET emphasises that these interactions and relationships among individuals and in this case, employees have the potential to generate high-quality relationships (marked by mutual trust, support and respect - Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997) evidence from this study suggests that such was not the case. Most participants I spoke with were aggrieved, some were angry, and because the structure to address these within the organisation was hardly ever evoked, the women I spoke with did not exude these characteristics. My own experiences which I found frustrating and unfair such as being denied career opportunities attached to my discipline in favour of more junior male colleagues - left me exasperated, not trusting, and most assuredly that outcome was not negotiated, it was enforced and mandated (see Chapter Four). I find that these findings are consistent with that of certain authors as I discuss earlier in this study (see Chapter One and Chapter Two).

For instance, the process that creates the structure for and sustains the ascription of job roles and determination of career progression for members of an organisation is described as essentially male-dominated (Walby, 1990; Giddens, 2006) and forces, and coerces women into job roles and role competition with male colleagues not by choice or negotiation but by compelling these women to fit into role attributes adapted for males by males or their proxies. Indeed, I also discuss the idea by feminist scholars, that the social and organisational subordination of women is the consequence of systemic exclusion and discrimination through male hegemony, imposed, enforced and coerced (not negotiated) through social institutions which limit female social inclusion, allow selective organisational participation and involvement and consequently limit or constrain career progression (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990). This was one of the points of Dalal's story for instance (See section 4.4). In preference to male students, female students were excluded from certain courses offered in her university (although this, as part of broader government policy, and typical in Saudi Universities – public and private - as I discuss in Chapter One). While women may want to study these courses out of personal interest, inclination and ambition, courses like engineering, marine studies and journalism are deemed not suitable for women, and they are prohibited from studying these. Indeed, this abolishment contributes to the eventual perceived economic insignificance of women, as I discuss later in this Chapter.

7.2.2. Dissent

Findings suggest that like me, this limitation created a work environment that was distressing for many women. For instance, the idea that male junior administrative or academic employees could overrule the directive of a senior female's academic or counter it was typical. Female employees did not always sit and stare though. On the contrary, responses indicate that the environment was characteristically pressured mostly because of expressions of disagreement and frustration. These expressions of open dissent from these women seemed a departure from what happens in the broader society where open expression of discontentment is seen as synonymous with revolt and even depravity, only expected of one who has a lowly family name or an unbeliever and punishable by ostracisation or even a prison sentence. Therefore, regarding the proposition of the SET, findings in this study suggests that in some

instances, individual behaviour may depart from the expectations of the collective when the context accommodates such based on shared perceptions of costs and benefits. For instance, while some participants admitted to openly complaining about a grievance in the organisation – even though they were aware that nothing would come of it – they all accepted that they would dare no such thing in public because they believed they might be imprisoned or socially maligned.

Within academia, responses suggest that their place or connections to people high up the social or organisational hierarchy sometimes emboldened them. It seemed obvious that women could vent their anger and frustrations, but that did not change the limitations they faced. Indeed, while some expression was allowed in some quarters within the organisation, it seemed everyone accepted that it was all but noise and yet they still felt the need to make that noise. Therefore, while the organisations broadly reflected societal constraints on women, specific cases of dissent and bickering evidenced that it was not always the case that the organisation was a reflection of the society – sometimes it was different even if that did not change how society viewed these issues specifically in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the idea by some scholars that in Arab countries women may be motivated not necessarily by self-interest, but social expectations, obligations and responsibilities (March & Olsen, 1989) may be contingent on context. This is because while social routines and rules that outline institutional processes may be grounded in the logic of what is socially, and so organisationally appropriate, it was not always the case that there was no contention from the women at least within the organisation. However, if, when and how women expressed their inclinations, passion and motivations in organisations in Arab countries may sometimes differ from if, when and how they may express the same in the wider society. The point is that the lines between institutions of government, religion, traditions and culture and the organisation in Saudi Arabia frequently overlapped but were not always indistinguishable.

7.2.3. Disparities in Income

Findings suggest that institutional practices reinforced the subjugation of women by creating income disparities. For instance, women were not allowed to avail themselves

of personal development opportunities and training. This meant that men progressed unto higher positions while women's careers tended to stall. These organisational constraints were connected to institutional limitations such as the educational curriculum from the ministry of education which prepared girls for specific jobs and men for others. Right from the onset, then, a girl child was socialised and prepared to earn less, be less economically relevant and, within the organisation, to crawl even if she can fly. Indeed, participant responses affirm scholarly views that women are made to undergo training in countries like Saudi Arabia for lower level educational or other clerical jobs that limit their access to professional opportunities in the labour market (Cordesman, 2003). However, as I discuss in Chapter One, evidence of some socio-cultural transformation over the last few decades have increased opportunities for female education and employment although in comparison to other countries the numbers are still low (Al-Ahmadi, 2011).

Indeed, I would argue that this is consistent with Simone de Beauvoir's (1952) argument that the woman is typically perceived as other in a patriarchal society like Saudi Arabia and that this mindset and disposition was underpinned by a male inspired ideology accepted as a norm and enforced by the ongoing development of myths used to qualify women as the second/lower sex. Further, Butler's (1988) performativity theory (see section 2.2.1 and 2.3) argues that being a woman in countries like Saudi Arabia is not a natural manifestation of womanhood but a forced and learned performance of gender in order to fit the symbolic order (Lacan, 1958, 1966, 1982). Therefore, as second wave feminists argue, some of this constraint women experience in gendered careers and job roles have been justified by the patriarchy (see Smith, 1983). For instance, the exclusion of women from organisational hierarchies and top-earning jobs in Saudi Arabia have been linked to lower commitment and motivation on the part of these women compared to men (Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010). School curriculum is also structured to synonymise social restrictions with the protection and honouring of womanhood (see Alhazemi et al., 2013). Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter Two, this limitation was similar to the constraints which first wave feminists sought to address – the excluding of women because of what the patriarchy perceived as lower mental capacity suited for just domestic work and not well-paying job or positions in the organisational hierarchy.

However, while some scholars (Smith, 1983; Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010; Alhazemi et al., 2013) have noted these obstructions to women's career and professional development, what seems mostly ignored but is revealed in findings of my study is how these restrictive societal structures, paradoxically, serve the dual effect of good and bad simultaneously as if a double-edged sword (I discuss this in more detail in later sections of this chapter).

7.2.4. Class and Identity

Findings suggest that in some cases, organisational policies and structures served to restrict women while in others those same structures which aided these restrictions freed these women too. The response from participants such as Jayda, Nadeen, Dana and Abeer (see Chapter Four) coupled with my experience as a Saudi national and a female academic reaffirm that the socio-cultural principles of the country inhibit professional choices for women compared to men and career opportunities and progression are strongly gendered (Gallant and Pounder, 2008). While this observation is not novel, it was also the case that women who were of a particular social class and connected to rich, famous, political and powerful individuals who were so noted in society were more likely to have their voices heard and opportunities like career progression availed them by the male-dominated administration system. It was also the case that under this state of affairs hangers on – those who relied on the benevolence of those in higher social and organisational positions - also benefited (As stated by Dana and Dalal – see Chapter Four).

What this suggests is that social identities inhibited or facilitated female privileges depending on the interplay of other social identities. Gender then in Saudi Arabia cannot be articulated as an isolated identity but based on its link to other identities such as class and marital status. Findings suggest that how women navigated these constraints in these contexts indicates that the framing and perceptions of gender identities in the academia in Saudi Arabia are still underpinned by considerations around male dominance, control and even endorsement. Findings then do not show a dyadic relationship of men versus women, but a more multidimensional relationship based on intersecting identities (Holvino, 2012). A woman was not discriminated

against based on her gender alone but its connection with other social identities such as class. Indeed, the benefits and privileges that come with a connection to class sometimes mitigated the constraints of gender. Women navigated constraints therefore in spite of negative stereotypes (Burke and Mattis, 2005; Almunajjed, 2010; Al-Rasheed, 2013). How she was also perceived was not only based on constraints but also privileges where they applied. A woman from a wealthy family was more likely to progress compared to one from the lower class. Class stratification was, therefore, a factor in navigating the limits imposed by gender and even though it was more visible in the broader Saudi society, it also overlapped and crossed into the workplace. Thus, the crafting of female identity in Saudi Arabia is the outcome of several intersecting/overlapping social identities as well as related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). I discuss the significance of these intersecting, interlinked and overlapping identities under the sub-theme patronage in section 5.1.3.

Further, even when a woman was from a poor background or was socially unconnected, reliance on others who were directly or indirectly connected to social privilege helped her navigate the constraints placed on her by institutional structures and processes of the dominant Islamic religion. Still, it was men administrators, clerks and supervisors who authorised the availing of the privileges and benefits that were otherwise denied these women. It was also men who facilitated the institutionalisation of the process without deviating from norms and expectations. In all cases, for instance, the Dean may help a female staff be availed training but will have no personal interaction with that same staff. Thus proxies, representations, and go between formed a parallel structure within organisations through which individual women availed themselves of certain benefits and privileges.

7.2.5. Relational Ties

Findings suggest that women took advantage of relational, emotive and interpersonal ties affiliations and relationships to navigate constraints and limitations placed on them within organisations. It was also the case that women broke ranks sometimes to attend to personal career goals and ambitions. Thus, infighting, blackmail and backbiting or

actions which showed the male colleagues that a woman reinforced their dominance, sought not to challenge even junior colleagues, allowed herself to be overruled, were typical. While some gender scholars criticise the assumptions that female equality with male specifically as regards organisational roles is about competition for senior positions, and that women are sometimes forced into imitative roles (Walby, 1990; Giddens, 2006), scholars still seem narrowly fixated on analysing female behaviour based on patriarchal hierarchical or vertical power structures and relations within organisations. What is frequently ignored, as suggested by findings in this study, is how horizontal relations – relations amongst women themselves – or the strive by these women for privileges, benefits, positions damage a sense of female camaraderie and how this, in turn, reinforces male dominance and female discrimination. This is linked to the suggestion by Beauvoir (1952) that women may be complicit in their domination by men as I discussed in Chapter Two.

Responses reveal for instance that one way that women navigated constraints was by taking advantage of those same constraints to present themselves as distinct and separate from other women. Indeed, where bonds were formed among women, it was not always symbiotic – it was frequently parasitic and selfish. What this further served to do was that it restricted women from forming a voice or a common front. So, what is revealed in this study is that in seeking to avail themselves of privileges as individuals, the solidarity among women sometimes became fragmented. In section 5.1.3 and 5.1.4 I discuss how favouritism subsisted in the workplace of participants; not every woman was career stagnated or constrained as the others. There were differences, and these differences, preferential treatment based on family name, tribe or simply familiarity with anyone who had connections with the men in authority (see the narratives of Dalal, Abeer and Dana in Chapter Four). Those who attached themselves to these privileged women did not seek help for others but themselves – it was not a case of “me first”. It was a case on “me only”. Under such conditions, it was difficult to have a common voice to present a common front, therefore.

It was as if it was a fight for the survival of the fittest. Women in positions of authority who had some control over other women still sought allegiance and suppressed these

women – after all, part of their job role was to maintain status quo which they did by imitating men. Findings indicate that the more forceful and authoritarian a woman was to her subordinates, and the more this disposition is evidenced to her male superiors, the more likely she is to attain higher supervisory roles which guarantee her future in the organisation.

I also witnessed this imitative authoritarian behaviour among female coordinators while collecting data for this study. After the university management granted me access to participants, a few prevented me from interacting with other female academics. I remember being under the impression that these female supervisors acted as if the more privileges were denied their subordinates through their own (superiors) actions, and the more such denials were asserted, emphasised, evoked, and stressed, a feeling of control, approval, and accomplishment was achieved. Indeed, findings suggest that being a woman in Saudi Arabia, and specifically in the academia, is an imitative performance of gender (Butler, 1988).

The point is administrators were expected to perform or act like their male counterparts - dictatorial and assertive. In essence to rise the ladder within the organisation or to assume supervisory responsibilities, women were expected to act like males synonymous with coercion, suppression and demand for subservience; acting feminine in Saudi Arabia in these contexts can be a minus (Sadi and Al-Ghazali, 2010). Indeed, here again, we see a limitation of the SET and the SIT because, in the broader society, women were expected to perform the female roles based on social and traditional expectations and norms. In the organisation, however, women aspiring for leadership had to act like women – when the situation called for it – but also act like men -sometimes against their fellow women - to show they could manage responsibilities ascribed with supervision.

7.2.6. Performing Gender

Findings reveal that context (situatedness) reinforced the dynamics of the performativity of gender in the academia in Saudi Arabia. However, unlike the core concern of Butler (1988), performativity here was not only underpinned by stereotypical expectations around acting like a woman. More importantly, it had to do with also acting out male roles when the situation demanded to reinforce the stereotype. One way this happened, findings suggest, is that female administrators or supervisors selectively (mis)represented their subordinates concerns to management. When they had the opportunity to help women unto their career paths through promotions, they did this based on favouritism, not skills, experience or hard work. While these women also had their constraints and limitations – for instance, they could not overrule certain decisions made by male administrators, nor could they demand or make certain changes. Thus, they were still bound by institutional, societal and organisational constraints. However, where they had any power to make decisions, they did so based on interpersonal considerations.

The overall effect was that women sought their attention through acts showing loyalty and even subservience. Findings suggest that women told on others, there were infighting and divisions. Ties and bonds were formed in all cases notwithstanding - factions of sympathisers and antagonists. This fragmentation served some women well and constrained others. Those who progressed were mostly loyal and favoured. Those who did not the disfavoured. The response from participants Gada and Dana (see section 5.2.2.) show that the relationships painted by participants assume several dimensions: it can come from a coordinator's close relationship and association with a male administrator she reports to, for instance. Therefore, the working relationship between a female coordinator and a male administrator determined associations of favour and disfavour, loyalty or otherwise among women.

Again, this state of affairs was underpinned by how women saw themselves, how they perceived others saw them and the expectations from significant others that influenced the resulting behaviour. This cognitive side to male domination and female subjugation in countries like Saudi Arabia was the emphasis of second and third wave feminists.

This is the idea that female subjugation translates into some level of responsibility on the part of women (see Chapter 2) because some women are agents of this domination for several reasons including personal ambition, a sense of abandonment (if you cannot beat them, join them) or even conviction. As regards the last point, findings suggest that based on religious socialisation (emphasising female inferiority and male superiority) some women believe that reinforcing the stereotype is an expression of piety.

In all, responses affirm scholarly views that in Saudi Arabian academia as in the broader society how women see themselves and how they are seen by others is official, institutionalised and legitimated by state and religious institutions (Almunajjed, 2010). However, findings further reveal that explaining constraints through male hegemony (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990) is overly simplistic, narrow and even predictable if not obvious in the context of Saudi Arabia. What seems more thought-provoking is the multidimensionality of the dynamics of female exclusion specifically in the workplace. For instance, some women reinforced the women-are-inferior-to-men stereotype because it seemed personally rewarding to do this. Also, while some institutionalised organisational and societal structures constrained the progress of some women, it facilitated that of others - based on their social identities and even their connections to power, influence, affluence and wealth. What this suggests is that perception of relative power (Boudeu, 2004) which provided benefits, privileges and advantages (positions) where contingent on how the woman was symbolically represented in the broader society which also influenced her progress within the organisation.

7.3. Administrative Practices

In chapter five I discussed the subthemes - Grievance handling (5.1.5), education and training (5.1.6), and communication (5.1.7). These made up the core theme – Administrative practices (5.3), which I briefly discuss in section 6.2. In this section, I begin to articulate this core theme in more detail.

Findings suggest that in Saudi Arabia, certain administrative practices such as recruitment and selection, employee resourcing and reward, employee relations, grievance handling, training and development amongst others exist in organisational statements and policies (see my narrative in 4.1 and the narrative of Nadeen in 4.2). Incidentally, some other policies are even advertised on the university website worded in western-styled formal organisational narratives and presented to the neutral observer in ways to suggest egalitarianism and such western values indicative of freedom, independence, liberal thought and individual rights. Indeed, the statement of organisational values and policies in the academia in Saudi Arabia emphasise equal opportunities for both males and females (Al-Ahmadi, 2011) regardless of societal norms.

This situation seems a deviation from the propositions of the Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1979) (which I mention briefly in Chapter two) or the idea that the identities of individual members of a group underpin the actions of collectives and that the values implicit in these identities will govern the behaviour of group members. In Saudi Arabia, these identities are grounded in indigenous social norms and values which, in the final analysis, underpin and influence organisational dynamics. Consistent with these findings, some scholarly works do argue that interpersonal relationships of domination and submission between male and females are sanctioned through how individuals in countries like Saudi Arabia construct their identity to fit the existing structure (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004) and socialisation of male and female and the influence of cultural norms and values in that process justify discriminatory treatment of employees based on gender within the organisation. However, these discriminatory practices within formal organisations like universities are not revealed through value statements.

The point is that based on the responses of my participants (see sections 5.15, 5.1.6, 5.1.7), I will argue that while formal and educational institutions in Saudi Arabia seem to laud and in principle favour western organisational and administrative value systems - which by merely stating them represents a deviation from traditional and societal norms and values and even religious dictates – gender still influences if and how she

rises the career ladder. For instance, administrative policies exist on paper, but findings suggest that in practice, women cannot avail themselves of the benefits of these policies due to gender bias. My own experience tells this story (see section 4.1). I was recruited and selected based on the fact that I was a married woman who could afford and commit to organisational roles and duties by the active participation of my husband. Notably, the lines between family and organisation in Saudi Arabia are thin and overlapping with family members sometimes performing organisational procedures in place of a female employee even when they (family members) are not employees of the organisation.

Further, studies like that of (Sidani, 2005) specifically point to the existence of discrimination against women within organisations even before they enter those organisations in countries like Saudi Arabia. Thus, while social class and identity are significant considerations in how a woman may even enter the organisation and eventually navigate the gender-based constraints (see section 6.1.4) findings in my study go further to show how complicated this state of affairs is. A woman's ability to get a job is not contingent on skills or experience or even passion. It is dependent on a male guardian approval - and commitment. Nadeen narrative (4.2) confirms this. Also, when I was sick several years ago, it was my husband who came around my workplace to process my leave papers otherwise I could lose my job for being absent. Indeed, in some cases, findings suggest, administrative processes were used selectively (see the narratives of Nadeen, Gadar, Safar, and Nadal in sections 4.2, 4.6, 4.9, and 4.10 respectively). Based on these responses, administrative policies were not always subverted or dormant but was sometimes utilised interpersonally. The point is responses suggest that administrative practices in the academia in Saudi Arabia are more interpersonal than it is formal.

Its application or lack of thereof is dependent on the Deans and male administrators (See Nadeen's narrative in 4.2). Here, it was not as much about what was set aside and what was not as it was about how what was in place was utilised and for whom. For instance, complaints or grievance may be instituted but may not be progressed except a male administrator intervened processes (see section 5.1.5 and the narrative

of Gadar and Safar in 4.6 and 4.9). Mostly, when a woman complained about a man, processes were not followed through as when a man complained against another man or a woman or when a woman complained about another woman. Rather, it was the case that when a woman complained about a man, it was resolved by pronouncement not linked to policy of the university. Where administrative processes were applied at all it was selectively done. For instance, where a woman is aggrieved and has a complaint about a man, the man was heard in writing and verbally; the woman was typically (mis)represented by a female coordinator. Even when she was required to write her complaint, she was subjected to a limited word count, a summary of the basic details. In reality, administrative processes were subverted, but in principle, statements of these policies subsisted.

7.4. Social/Organisational Support Systems.

Findings reveal that participants seemed very aware and conscious of the constraints they faced how it affected them negatively and how they could be less burdened were these restrictions to be removed. However, responses suggest that participants were equally aware of what they considered supports which aid them to navigate. It was a strange state of affairs – where one is grateful to one's tormentors for intermittent reprieves even when the status of one remains that of a captive complete with all the restrictions and despair associated with being one. I seemed to marvel at this too: The idea that society will pride itself as regards moral values by placing restrictions on one gender and allowing the freedom of the other. The idea that the only way to symbolise this assertiveness of that same morality was to remove the propellers that advance one gender while keeping it steady for the other. However, I also marvel at how that same society will allow individuals and groups to erect parallel structures and networks through which they navigate these barriers. By allowing these parallel structures, I will argue that the management of my University, for instance, has not only admitted that these constraints are disadvantageous but also institutionalised the escape mechanisms and even endorsed them. I also found these contradictions as contained in participant responses.

However, this was the case in Saudi Arabia. Women utilised several organisational and social support systems which were erected informally based on the recognition that such structures and processes brought about some reprieve for these women. For instance, the idea that women relied on familial and social connections, on the goodwill of a dean or an administrator, as hangers-on to some other female who had connections to the political elite, the upper class or even the royal family and where women gathered together in groups to talk and exchange ideas within and outside the organisation were indicative of social affiliations and networks being utilised. While such networks may not be unique to Saudi Arabia, how they arise, the dimensions and perceptions of relative power that inform them and underpin gender relations as well as how individuals navigate through them are theoretically fundamental but remain largely unexplored.

Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter Two, some authours (e.g. Hull, Bell-Scott & Smith, 1982; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983; Smith, 1983; Bell, 1984; Lorde, 2000) highlighted the need for feminists not only to confront external forms of oppression but also to scrutinise other forms of oppression and discrimination that women may have internalised, such as family. Indeed, While intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Collins, 2015) presupposes that structures like the family, considered internal and supportive to the woman, may be linked to a woman's internalised interpretation of whom or what they are, this incidentally also aid female subjugation because in countries like Saudi Arabia, the family acts as a support system as much as it acts as a tool for the continued subjugation of women. For instance, as I discuss in Chapter two, it is through the family that the girl child is taught in the first instance that a man is economically relevant and domesticity and obedience is required of a woman (Almunajjed, 2010; Metcalfe, 2011, Moghadam, 2004, Sidani, 2005).

However, in Saudi Arabia, specifically in the academia, findings suggest that women formed or utilised social networks of support systems to mitigate, downplay or run away from discrimination. However, the most stable of these networks, based on findings in this study, is the family (see 5.2.1). The family served several roles in Saudi

society and facilitated networking even outside the organisation. The socialisation of the woman started through the family, and incidentally, reinforcement of expectations about a woman assumed an image-making dimension as the woman progressed into womanhood. It was the case that when a woman deviates, it was not seen only as a personal embarrassment to the individual, but more importantly, it was seen as the denigration of the family name. It was also in the family that the economic relevance of the man was superimposed over and above the domestic significance of the woman. Patriarchy in Saudi Arabia, therefore, had an economic twist (Metcalfe, 2011, Moghadam, 2004, Sidani, 2005). Marriage mostly started as a family induced economic prerequisite for the woman's family, as the husband was typically a ticket for even the woman's family to survive. Widows were quickly married off – as a necessity. Single women were heavily disadvantaged. Thus, male dominance here was ascribed economic significance as endorsed by the state.

But support also came from male figures outside family circles. Some participants, for instance, mentioned Deans in their schools who were favourably disposed towards them not physically or personally, but these administrators had a listening ear and gave detailed feedback through their proxies who were mostly female administrators. Further, participants felt that one of the ways they navigated the barriers were through other female coordinators who were their "voice". Indeed, some female administrators just wanted to let things be as they were, as I have discussed in previous sections in this Chapter, it was not always the case that male suppression was executed through male administrators – sometimes the contrary was the case.

In essence, it was also the case that the harshness or otherwise of exclusive and discriminatory organisational practices and relationships even if societally legitimated and culturally approved was also dependent of the personality and influence of the male Dean. Indeed, findings suggest that female administrators mostly switched administrative styles – authoritarian or benevolent, passive or active amongst others – based on the disposition of the Dean towards women. It was also the case, though that it was in times of harshness and experiences of exclusion that women were more likely to form informal organisational networks of support. However, findings suggest

that such support systems were not without connection to a male figure. For instance, support systems were dependant on the most pressing needs of its constituents. Some women needed to progress their careers, take up more teaching responsibilities indicative of higher pay, training and further education, grievances addressed, and disciplinary issues resolved. In all, however, findings reveal that a male figure at least was always connected to a group, not directly though. Members of these informal groups used proxies, male relatives, male siblings, social connections and even family influence to reach the decision makers – the Dean or the school president.

Therefore, the likelihood that women will form informal networks of trust and help was mainly dependant on how pressured the school environment was, and this was contingent on the personality and disposition of the male Dean. When it did happen, these informal social networks obligated female academics to connect with another who, directly or indirectly, had the ear of a male administrator or male academic. Attachment to one who had such connections was therefore important. Based on these points, while on the face of it, support systems such as family, marriage, and informal groups within organisations offered some sense of liberation for some women, these processes still needed the intervention of a male figure in all cases which thereby reinforced female dependency on men. However, women navigated constraints based on these imperatives.

7.5. Personal Reflections

I have narrated my story in section 4.1, to give the reader insight into my social and organisational circumstances and how this informed my motivation to undertake this study. In this section, I undertake some more personal reflection regarding my life to throw some light on how my experiences resonate with that of my respondents.

In my experience as an academic in Saudi Arabia, certain administrative practices such as recruitment and selection, employee resourcing and reward, employee relations, grievance handling, training and development amongst others exist in

organisational statements and policies. Incidentally, some other policies are even advertised on the university website worded in western-styled formal organisational narratives and presented to the neutral observer in ways to suggest egalitarianism and such western values indicative of freedom, independence, liberal thought and individual rights. Indeed, the statement of organisational values and policies in the academia in Saudi Arabia emphasise equal opportunities for both males and females (Al-Ahmadi, 2011) regardless of societal norms.

My husband was not just required to consent to my getting a teaching job in writing as a condition for the offer. He had to do this as part of the preliminary documentation and even before the interview. He also signed a commitment promising to avail himself for documentary necessities when the need arose because as a woman I stood the chance of coming face to face with a male clerk, administrator or supervisor if I undertook to carry out these tasks myself. Therefore, I got my job not only based on my skills and abilities but spousal consent and commitment – in writing. In essence, had I not been married, I would not have gotten the job, but even married women are denied job roles because their husbands disapprove, or because their husbands approve but cannot commit to being available when needed due to other limitations including sickness, disability, or even job demands. Also, when I was sick several years ago, it was my husband who came around my workplace to process my leave papers otherwise I could lose my job for being absent even if it was proven that I was indeed hospitalised and incapacitated. However, men did not go through these same procedures. While my husband was supportive in the beginning, I had to bear many things and not tell him because sometimes, involving him caused some friction at home because it impacted negatively on his time.

Moreover, when we started raising a family, it was also the case that his responsibilities and his irritability increased – I had become a burden even though we needed the cash from my job as a lower middle-class family. Thus, familial support from a husband or father aided women too within organisational settings. A married woman like me would get answers and a more positive response to job inquiries than a single woman. Indeed, while family support involved even extended family

relationships, it was also the case that these supports were more impactful when a woman had direct male support from a husband. Women who were single or widowed were more likely to be disadvantaged.

However, there were limits to what help a male spouse could offer at certain times within organisational settings. Indeed, I experienced these limits personally when I was aggrieved because my place for external training had been granted to a more junior male colleague. I could also not understand why my input as regards examination questions had been set aside for the suggestions of a less experienced and junior male employee for a particular course. I was a module leader, and this was not even his core subject area. Further, when a male colleague plagiarised my ideas, and he blatantly admitted he did it but that there was nothing I could do, I felt frustration. Even though grievance redress processes were in place, I could not avail myself of these because they were blatantly set aside, rigged or biased to favour the male colleague, when the complainant was a woman. Under these circumstances, my husband could not help, and I felt helpless. Thus, my motivation to embark on this study is based on my personal experiences while working as a lecturer in Saudi Arabia. I am driven to understand the constraints that prevent women from working in higher educational institutions and from rising the career ladder upwards. One can seek to understand this situation, for instance, using Adams's (1965) theory (that employees seek to maintain equity between the inputs that they bring to a job and the outcomes that they receive from it against the perceived inputs and outcomes of others). My experience as a female academic has shown that this type of discriminatory treatment has led to much dissatisfaction and frustration among the female lecturers in higher educational institutions. In search of achieving equity, for instance, these women will seek to navigate or overcome the constraints they face in social and organisational life. Therefore, I am also interested in how female academics navigate and overcome these barriers if at all. Other factors that influenced my interests in my study include the culture of my country, which is patriarchal; my educational background (especially my master's degree in the United States, which exposed me to a more liberal culture) and my personal experiences in my workplace. These factors had me asking questions which I hope to address in my study.

I must add that although I was born and bred in Saudi Arabia, and although I received education in gender-segregated schools and colleges, I have also seen incredible economic, political and social changes in last few decades. The Saudi government has actively ensured the equal access to education for both male and female students. I am thankful for that system that I could become a university lecturer and receive a government scholarship to pursue my doctorate in the United Kingdom. Like me, there are a huge number of women who pursued and earned doctorate degrees either from local or western universities reflecting a very high level of education in female population (World Economic Forum, 2014). Though there have been examples of women rising to a leading position in Saudi Arabia (World Bank, 2009), they remain few compared to males in similar positions, as women face more difficulties in organisations and the issue is prevalent even in educational institutions.

Finally, I must add that one motivation for my desire to research on women in higher educational institutions in the context of Saudi Arabia is my personal and professional experience in teaching and 'being managed' instead of being able to participate in management roles. My inclination is also influenced by my notion of gender equality in the workplace and my belief that female lecturers in Saudi Arabia, being hard-working, dedicated, compassionate and highly passionate, are very much capable of holding a leading position and contributing to organisational success. Through this study, I hope to contribute to the movement of changes by revealing the underlying factors of the problem. Being a woman from such a conservative society, I expect to face many challenges while uncovering the hidden truth of women's career paths in educational institutions. My story and journey so far take the neutral reader to the next sections, where I present the stories of other female academics who have shared their experiences with me.

7.6. Conclusion

Findings in this chapter have highlighted the constraints women face and how they navigate these constraints. In Saudi Arabia, the lines between institutions like the family, dominant religious establishments and formal organisations like the academia are thin. This is because social norms and religious values influence organisational structures and processes influence and. In the wider society, these relationships are determined and fixed. Individuals as members of the society are socialised from an early age to see themselves and others as society determines. Within the organisation, individuals continue to play out their ascribed and fixed roles based on notions regarding what is ideal and what is deviant, what is right and what is wrong. Even within formal professional organisations like higher educational institutions policies may exist in principle but in practice, execution is crafted to fit societal expectations and meaning. Consequently, even when such policies advantage one group for instance men, and disadvantage other groups such as women, including unmarried, disabled or widowed, they are still sustained because they remain legitimated by social norms and religious dogma. In essence, the means justifies the end.

Relationships then between groups are not negotiated in the broader society and within the organisation, its asserted, mandated and dictated. This way, the organisation serves to extend the traditional social norms of society and the Arabian values as well as the codes of the dominant religion. Even when organisations claim equality and equity in its value statement, in practice, it discriminates along the lines of gender as dictated in the wider society. Indeed, based on these considerations academic organisations in Saudi Arabia is an arm, an extension of the society and frequently stands indistinguishable from it. What is evidenced in my study, for instance, is that HR policies, systems and processes regarding recruitment and selection, resourcing and reward, grievance handling, training and development and employee relations, while explicitly stated was not practices as stated. Rather, in practice, it assumed societal, relational and interpersonal dimensions. For instance, the subject universities in this research claimed to adopt equality, fairness and equity in their policy statement for recruitment and selection. However, a woman who had skills and experience without a male guardian or consent of one will be denied opportunities from the onset even when such conditions were not applicable to men. Women who

were unmarried or widowed therefore suffered constraints. The fairness of the process even if disadvantageous to one group was legitimated on the bases of the constraints placed on women in the broader society even if the organisational policy stated otherwise.

However, what seems apparent from the findings in this chapter is that women navigate barriers by converting the same structures that bind them to mitigants. I will call this paradoxical state of affairs the double-edge effect. The point here is that women I spoke with did not exude any hope for changes – none implied that they had any belief that things will change for the woman. Each, however, showed awareness of how these processes can be still used under certain conditions to favour them because, while organisational practices and the societal values that underpinned them constrained women, on the one hand, they also act as relief under certain circumstances by offering a means of escape from these same constraints.

Further, the likelihood that a woman would mitigate some of the vices of gender discrimination in the academia was increased by her other social identities which were also linked to her gender. Thus, while my study recognises the intersecting identities of women – where gender is linked with other social identities such as class, tribe, and marital status – my findings reveal an interesting departure. While intersectional theorists treat linked identities as synonymous with interlinkages of oppression, in Saudi Arabia, a woman may mitigate oppression based on her gender with her connection to class or status. In essence, identities were not always linked to oppression but a woman, based on her gender, could embody both privileged and oppression in no particular order. The unique way women gravitate across these identities and the power implications is has been discussed in this chapter. For instance, each identity of privilege such as class which mitigates an identity of oppression such as gender is connected to a man. Thus, even privileges reinforce gender stereotype, male dominance and female discrimination. In all, patriarchy underpinned this a woman's social identities as what gave it relevance was a male figure.

Consequently, married women, who had the consent of their husbands and whose husbands agreed to participate as unofficial employees had more chances of having a fruitful career than widows, single or disabled. When the father of a single woman undertook to act as a husband, she had more chances for employment and career progression. Connection to class had to be to a wealthy male, a male from the political elite or royal family or even a top male bureaucrat. What was apparent therefore was the state induced economic significance of the man over the woman. Indeed, the domestic relevance of a woman was a part of the socialisation process for that gender and reinforced gender stereotypes in the wider society and within organisations.

Of interest also is the finding that women still made use of men to navigate barriers – in this sense even the oppressor was used as a mitigating tool. Male siblings and their connections, male tribal affiliates and even benevolent male deans were used in this sense. Women also used social networks. Informing networks, and in relating to one another within organisations, more selfish reasons bind these women, and even though the intention to socialise in this manner is initially parasitic, it always led eventually to a symbiotic outcome as these women gain from each other. Indeed, the personal disposition of the male dean was significant in the academia because it determined how female coordinators related to their subordinates. The more a dean showed benevolence to women, the more female coordinators were likely to be less oppressive and more approachable. The less, the more autocratic. When a dean was also less amiable to women, the likelihood that women will form informal social networks increased because informal avenues where used to meet organisational needs.

Finally, the complaint from most participants that women feel constrained and discriminated against does not suggest that such feelings are spontaneous or mutual – some women see themselves as comparatively privileged. This is because women were more likely to compare themselves to other women in their environment who were less privileged than others from other parts of the world were any privileged they enjoy pale in comparison.

In the next chapter, I will engage with articulating the contribution that these findings make to the gender literature and how they address my research question before concluding the study.

Chapter Eight

8. Contributions and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I articulated the sub-themes that emerged from the data and also discussed the findings of my study. In this chapter, I conclude the study by, firstly, articulating the research gaps to show how the findings contribute to filling these gaps as well as how they address the research question specifically. Secondly, I highlight my theoretical contributions specifically regarding contribution to the gender literature as well as methodological contributions. In the final part of the chapter, I discuss the implications of the study for theory as well as study limitations and directions for future research.

8.2. A Recap of the Study

My study aims to understand the lived experience of women professionals as represented by female academics and how they negotiate their working lives/careers in the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia. Based on this stated aim, some findings were revealed after the analysis of my data in Chapter Five. Firstly, findings suggest that societal structures and systems evidence a dual outcome by aiding some organisational restrictions on women but paradoxically also acting as a mitigant, a relief, from those same restrictions. While women were denied certain basic privileges, class, family name, hierarchy, connectedness (within and outside the organisation), tribal affiliation and even marriage meant that some women enjoyed certain privileges while other women did not. Secondly, findings also suggest that women relied heavily on nuclear and extended family relationships to navigate the perilous waters of male domination. Certain groups of women with specific social identities though were more likely to face discrimination on a deeper level than others including single women, widows, the poor and the unconnected. No matter the class, a woman, was associated with. However, the male still reinforced the status quo. Ultimately, a woman needed to depend on a male figure to achieve anything that was considered successful, and even the definition and limits of success were dependent on male endorsement.

In Chapter Six, I engaged with discussing these findings in more detail. I concluded that Chapter by broadly highlighting the constraints women in the academia in Saudi Arabia face and how they navigate these constraints. Consequently, based on the Social Exchange Theory (Blau 1964) which I discuss in Chapter Two and Chapter Six (see sections 2.3.1; 6.1.1), I established that in Saudi Arabia, the lines between social institutions like the family, dominant religious establishments and formal organisations like the academia are thin and frequently indistinguishable. This is because social norms and religious values influence organisational structures and processes. In Chapter Two, Using the theory of gendered organisations (Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004; Acker, 2006), I establish that within organisations, social exchanges between men and women produce constraints for the latter. I also use Butler's (1988) performativity theory (see section 2.2; 2.3; 6.1.3; 6.1.5; 6.1.6) to show that in the broader Saudi society as within organisations, these relationships are predetermined and relatively stable.

As Women specifically as members of the society are socialised from an early age to see themselves and others (identity) as society determines – women then are engaged in performing gender based on expectations and endorsement of the patriarchy. Using the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979) and the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), I argue that gender as an identity, the biases associated with that identity and the underlying constraining societal values that underpin both identity and biases depicts an exchange between socio-cultural, organisational and institutional norms. Gender relations then evidence how identity, norms, values and context translate into negotiated and subjectively evaluated social relationships. Consequently, even when organisational policies advantage one group (men) and disadvantage other groups such as women, including unmarried, disabled or widowed, they are still sustained because they remain legitimated by social norms and religious dogma. In essence, the means justifies the end.

However, I also argue that what seems apparent from the findings is that women navigate barriers by converting the same structures that bind them into mitigants. I called this paradoxical state of affairs the double-edge effect (I discuss this in section

6.1.4). I reveal then that even though women showed awareness of the constraints they face in the broader society and within the organisation, they showed awareness of how these processes can be manipulated to act as relief under certain circumstances. Connected to this point, in Chapter Two, I explored feminist theories like intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Collins, 2015) to show how women embody multiple but complementary identities of oppression (see chapter 2.1; 2.2; 2.3). In Chapter Six, however, I explain how women in countries like Saudi Arabia may also embody contrasting and even contradictory identities symbolic of oppression and privileges simultaneously and how they may use this paradoxical twist as a mitigant against oppression.

Further, in Chapter Six, I also reveal that women still made use of men to navigate barriers – in this sense, even the oppressor was used as a mitigating tool. Male siblings and their connections, male tribal affiliates and even benevolent male Deans of the university and their proxies were used in this sense by women to navigate barriers. Women also used social networks and informal networks and in relating to one another and with men to get benefits within the organisations. In Chapter Six, I also reveal that more selfish reasons sometimes bind these women as each seemed engaged in a fight, sometimes against each other for personal progress in a way that seemed to suggest that betrayals, personal animosity, backstabbing, snitching and even outward show of loyalty to the men reigned. I link this back the view by Lorde (2000) (see section 2.3 and 2.4) who offer the view that women are complicit in their domination by men. Breines (2002) concludes is the internalisation of external forms of oppression which consequently influences how women see themselves – their self-identity. Regarding this last point (self-identity), I refer to some arguments regarding how women craft their identity specifically during feminists' movements in the second and third waves (see section 2.2) to admit that feelings of discrimination were not general, spontaneous or mutual. Indeed, some women see themselves as comparatively privileged compared with others who they perceived as less privileged. Identity then was based on the subjective nature of this assessment. Constraints were not perceived as all-encompassing – to negotiate the boundaries, some women relied on their sense of privilege as a mitigating factor to negotiate the murky waters of male subjugation in Saudi Arabia. Finally, to negotiate barriers, women relied heavily on

nuclear and extended family relationships. No matter a woman's social identity, ultimately, a woman needed to depend on a male figure to achieve anything that was considered successful, and even the definition and limits of success were dependent on the corporation and endorsement of a male figure.

8.3. Research Gaps: An Overview

The social and organisational dimensions of gender discrimination are well articulated in the works of Acker (1990; 1992; 2006) using the theory of organisational gendering while scholars like Alvesson and Billing (1997) and Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) also support this theoretical foundation. The main idea here is that power relations within the organisation are entrenched in a socio-cultural system which defines meaning and identity within organisations based on the divisions between male and female. These differences manifest through organisational practices underpinned by jobs types, job roles, hierarchies, remunerations amongst others leading to the institutionalisation of gender hierarchies within the organisation, which effectively justify and legitimise power relations between genders. Indeed, certain aspects of Aker's (1990; 1992) view regarding gender relations within organisations and the broader society has been re-echoed by other theories such as the Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1979) and the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964). Based on these theories, gender as an identity, the biases associated with that identity and the underlying constraining societal values that underpin both identity and biases depicts an exchange between socio-cultural, organisational and institutional norms. Gender relations then evidence how identity, norms, values and context translate into negotiated and subjectively evaluated social relationships. Consequently, exchanges are presented as individual subjective evaluation of alternatives resulting in a generation of obligations. While these contributions are acknowledged, when applied to the Saudi Arabian context, certain insights, paradoxes, contradictions and gaps become apparent:

Firstly, how subjective evaluations of social actors - in this case women - assume objective significance regarding process and outcome consequent on predetermined, conditioned and relatively stable socially legitimated standards such as religious dictates, traditional and family values are missed in extant studies. Gendered theorists,

however, attack the view by SET scholars that relationships of subordination engendered and embedded in systems evidencing oppressive regimes of negative stereotypes reflect negotiation as against assertion; and that social interactions and relationships among individuals - women and men – do not generate high-quality relationships (marked by mutual trust, support and respect - Liden, Sparrowe and Wayne, 1997). Rather they produce mistrust. Therefore, what is ignored in scholarly works on gender relations is the dynamics of how trust and mistrust are instrumentalised by social actors to support structures of oppression in organisations, how these develop (or fail to develop) in different contexts and why. While mistrust is emphasised by gender theorists and trust by SIT and SET theorists, my study reveals the idea that, paradoxically, based on socio-cultural dynamics, trust can also develop between oppressors and oppressed and mistrust among the oppressed. For instance, the benevolence of some male deans led to very positive outcomes for some participants like Nadeen as well as others (see section 5.2.2 and 6.3). It was also the case that in some instances, the connection of some women based on family name or wealth allowed them (and women connected to them) certain privileges facilitated by the male dean or other male administrators because of their class (see section 6.1.4). However, women also fought among themselves, and even female coordinators antagonised their reports in some instances because of their gender (see section 6.1.6).

Also, gender relations theorists analyse discriminations women face within organisations as a reflection of institutionalised constraints in the broader society (Acker, 1990; 1992; 2006). SET theorists also claim that the organisation is a reflection of the larger society within which it exists suggesting that to some degree organisations broadly reflect societal constraints on and privileges of its members including women. What is omitted in existing studies, however, is how women in different professions may embody the changing social and organisational landscape in countries like Saudi Arabia. Indeed, what may be interesting for more research on how analysing organisations along with or separate from the wider society may reveal unique perspectives from each level and how this may change the overall research outcome. The error of analyzing at the wrong level has been referred to as “the fallacy of the wrong level” (Galtung, 1967, p. 45). In section 6.1.2 for instance, I discuss how

women sometimes protested their oppression within the organisation, and that in some instances this was accommodated to the degree that they were allowed to do this – not that it changed anything. However, while the organisation is presumed to enforce society's whims, women would hardly dare to protest or voice descent publicly in Saudi Arabia. Analysing these distinctions between society and organisations separately while not losing the linkages may be a better approach than generalising and this is the approach I have adopted in this study.

Secondly, while scholars note that social impediments serve to constrain women's career and professional development, how these structures may serve a dual effect (good or bad) simultaneously based on the meaning-making of subjects has not been examined. Further, while scholars note that social impediments serve to constrain women's career and professional development, how these structures may serve a dual effect (good and bad) simultaneously based on the meaning-making of subjects has not been rigorously examined in religious, non-secular societies like Saudi Arabia. Gendered relations, then, when presented this way, appears simplistic and narrow and ignores many culturally contextual causal factors and implicit contradictions. This may have implications for uncoupling, understanding and addressing relations of oppression in countries like Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, the government, the dominant religious group, social, institutional and organisational bodies all officially recognise only male and female gender identities. Therefore, while I recognise that some other strands of gender studies exist, such as queer theory with its association with bisexual, lesbian and gay subjects, as well as intersex bodies and identities (Giffney, 2004; Kemp, 2009), extant studies broadly divide discussions into two poles of identities in the main – male and female. Even criticism against heteronormativity through views such as gender ambiguity or androgyny are focused on vilification of this dichotomy. However, gender theorists have advanced the theory of intersectionality to show that gender can be interlinked with other identities, including sexual orientation (Heilbrun, 1973; Martin, Cook & Andrews (2017).

Consequently, within studies which mainly emphasise the male-female divide, female gender is suggested as complementary and interlinked with other oppressed social

identities (Collins, 1990, 1998; Breines, 2002). This suggests for instance that while a broadly dyadic relationship exists, it embodies other oppressed identities and their interlinkages. The theory of intersectionality (see section 1.5; 2.1; 2.2) then stresses these associations (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Collins, 2015). However, what may need more research is how contrasting (rather than complementary) identities symbolic of oppression and privileges respectively may also intersect in countries like Saudi Arabia where the male-female dichotomy/distinction is strictly recognized, enforced, and institutionalized and where other identities are repressed.

Based on this last point: Firstly, there is a need to examine the possibility that predetermined identity labels pre-slapped on research subjects may alter how we interpret meaning-making by women in contexts like Saudi Arabia, including the meaning they ascribe to their identity symbolically rather than [only] literarily. Secondly, scholars still seem narrowly fixated on analysing female behaviour and relations in countries like Saudi Arabia based on patriarchal hierarchical or vertical power structures and relations within organisations (Walby, 1990; Giddens, 2006). Studies which show how horizontal relations – or relations amongst women themselves – evidenced in more personal striving for privileges, benefits, and positions damage a sense of female camaraderie and how this, in turn, reinforces male dominance and female discrimination are theoretically fundamental but remain largely unexplored.

8.3.1. The Relevance of Gaps to Research Question

My study seeks to answer the research question ***How does discrimination and subordination operate in the everyday lives of women in academia in Saudi Arabia, and how do they respond to these***?.This research question suggests the need to explore existing societal and organisational constraints that professional women, and in this case women in the academia, face in the pursuit of careers in Saudi Arabia and more importantly the dynamics of how these women overcome, attempt to bypass or transcend these difficulties. The relevance of the research question, therefore, stems from certain gaps that exist in the gender literature and

which has been analysed in the previous section. However, in this section, I will attempt to link the gaps to the research question.

While in the western literature the constraints women face in countries like Saudi Arabia are presented as given - conclusive and granted - the dynamics of how constraining factors play out and the experiences of women as they navigate and negotiate these constraints is not given. Based on their own stories – through their voices - my participant's narratives evidence paradoxes, contradictions and conflicts in this taken-for-granted context of Saudi Arabia. My study, therefore, reveals that the experiences of these women regarding these constraints are dynamic, multidimensional and complex. Thus, while extant studies broadly reveal that how women see these limitations are based on subjective evaluation of these constraints, my study reveals that these evaluations are rather based on how women attribute objective significance to both process and outcome of these constraints. This objectification is contingent on traditional Arab culture, family values and ideals of the dominant religion (Islam). These imperatives are conditioned, predetermined, relatively stable and socially sanctioned. Certainly, rather than the emphasis on the opportunity for informed choices, as is the focus of scholars who argue for subjective evaluation, what seems more apparent is that perceived outcomes are institutionalised and authenticated based on existing and acceptable social standards. In essence, the presumption in the western literature based on gender theories in that context (Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004; Acker, 2006), that social exchanges between men and women produce constraints for the latter may ignore the meaning women ascribe to these constraints. The focus on the limitations women face then may be based on predetermined stereotypes, a generalisation of concluded studies in other contexts and the slapping of labels of meaning on research subjects rather than a reflection of how women see these imperatives and how, based on these ascribed meanings, they navigate these contexts.

For instance, it is taken for granted that the basis for exchanges or high-quality exchanges is predicated on trust and in contexts where subordination, discrimination

and oppression of women take place, mistrust will reign as these women will have a negative relationship or a negative exchange with their oppressors – men. However, this study shows that the meaning women ascribe to the constraints they face is informed by the dynamics of how trust and mistrust are instrumentalised by social actors women inclusive. Also, findings from my study show that trust also develops through these oppressive constraints in the sense that in some cases women signified that they trusted the men who were supposed to be their oppressors. Indeed, in some cases too, women who were supposed to have experienced constraints where the ones who oppressed their fellow women. Indeed, the generalisation of oppression, as well as the constraints women face in professional leaning organisations in countries like Saudi Arabia, may lead to a misunderstanding regarding outcomes in specific professions.

The education sector in Saudi Arabia is unique because it accounts for over eighty-five per cent of working women all. Though women are still not allowed to practice certain professions like engineering and journalism, the higher educational institutions may embody the changing social landscape in that country. For instance, as regards how women navigate constraints in their workplace and, in this case, the academia, what is emphasised mostly by scholars are social impediments as constraining career and professional development of women. My study, however, reveals that to look at certain organisational structures as only qualifying as constraints are narrow and misrepresentative. On the contrary, organisational processes, procedures, practices, policies and people may be indicative of what I have chosen to call the dual effect. This is how women simultaneously make meaning of organisational imperatives, structures and processes – as good or bad – based on the social identities embodied in the woman. Here, professional women are seen as embodying contrasting and complementary identities symbolic of oppression and privileges simultaneously, which they employ to navigate constraints. Thus, in Saudi Arabia, gender may underpin a woman's identity and may determine if and how she may be oppressed because its indicative of disadvantages. But other social identities such as class and status - embodied by the woman may indicate privilege. She uses class then, for instance, to navigate, mitigate and water down the negative effects of

gender. Rather than interlinked identities that are complementary, women in these contexts navigate constraints by embodying contrasting identities.

8.4. Contributions to the gender literature

This study contributes to the literature on gender in several ways:

Firstly, my study recognises what is accepted by some gender scholars (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990; Acker 1992; 2006) - that exchanges between individuals – men and women - as members of groups in the organisation and the broader society take place based on certain shared values rooted in socially legitimated standards and expectations. However, rather than seeing these exchanges as subjective – because they are based on changing societal expectation and choices of individuals - this study also reveals that shared perceptions of the individuals underscore the process through which this exchange takes place and the outcome. Indeed, the assumption that society is dynamic – notwithstanding – in societies like Saudi Arabia the constraints women face is institutionalised, open, socially sanctioned, politically legitimised and rooted in traditional Arab culture and religious dogma (see Chapter 2).

Consequently, process and outcome of the exchanges between males and females in the organisation as in the open society is based on relatively stable and enduring standards (I discuss these in detail in section, 2.3; 2.3.1; 2.4). Therefore, I will argue that individual societal perception of the end rather than the means of oppression governed relations between men and women in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the instruments which enable and sustain the constraints women face is acceptable if it serves an end that is consistent with tradition or religion. Denying a woman career advancement while her male colleagues are allowed to progress is not seen as oppressive or discriminatory because the woman's status in society according to religion is to play second fiddle. Therefore, shared perceptions reinforces stereotypes and distributes privileges and disadvantages not based on the negative effects on the parties – even when women fared badly – but based on societal perceptions and endorsement of the outcome which women use to navigate constraints.

Secondly, my study reveals how trust and mistrust are manipulated by the oppressed to achieve ends and mitigate if not bypass the constraints that they face. Thus, my study reveals instrumentality of trust and mistrust. This does not focus on how the individual manipulates self to trust or mistrust but how the individual manipulates shared symbols and societally endorsed representations of trust and mistrust to walk around discrimination. Indeed, in this case, the agency of these two imperatives are perceived by these women as a means to an end not an end in themselves. While mistrust is emphasised in much of the gender literature as indicative of the feelings that the oppressed women have for their male oppressors (Hartmann, 1976; Marshall, 1984; Smith, 1987; Walby, 1990; Giddens, 2006), I found that this understanding is overtly oversimplified and narrow. Firstly, my study uncouples the dynamics of complex relationships that go into the instrumentality of trust and mistrust, the relationship between the actors and how each is used.

Against the assumption in the literature that the two poles that exist are the oppressor and victim with the men being the former and the women the latter, what seems more apparent is that relationships of subordination engendered and embedded in systems evidencing oppressive regimes still reflect assertiveness by these women and not negotiation. That is each party in the relationship asserts themselves, men and women. The picture of women fearful, anxious and abandoned may, therefore, be misrepresentative. Rather, what seems more apparent is that men are not always oppressive, and women are not always oppressed, men are not always unhelpful - sometimes in this study, they (men) served as mitigants to the constraints women faced. At other times, women were the oppressors when for instance, women fought against each other and when the female coordinators sought favour from their superiors by performing oppression – acting like men openly in other to be approved or endorsed – typically for higher responsibilities. Therefore, the dynamics of this acknowledged vertical relationships and not so acknowledged horizontal relationship has been uncoupled in this study.

Thirdly, while scholarly works present women in countries like Saudi Arabia as oppressed and constrained (I also show the constraints and oppression I faced personally in my narrative in section 4.1), my study reveals that this overgeneralisation overlooks the dynamics inherent in some professions such as the academia. To this degree, claims that the organisation is a reflection of the society it exists did not always hold in this research. For instance, some women openly protested against constraints in the organisation - even though they understood that not much would come from it because nothing will change. However, these same women also believed that it was impossible to protest these constraints in the open society without risking indignity, attack on their family name and image and even a prison sentence.

In essence, in some instances, the organisation accommodated some freedom of expression. Indeed, within the organisation, there were cases where women were heard, favoured or even helped. Some participants even indicated that they were being treated fairly regarding how their needs were attended to by their university, than their male colleagues. In the open society, then, women could not protest these constraints. In this sense, therefore, the organisation served as distinct from the society in certain professions such as the academia. What my study then suggests is that a specific profession may reveal the dynamics of the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor to the degree that the oppressed was not always disadvantaged and the oppressor was not always advantaged. Indeed, it also means that the organisation sometimes served the mitigating function because it provided an avenue for these women to escape the harsher effects of constraints that applied in, the broader society.

Fourthly, my study reveals that gender relations in Saudi Arabian organisations are underpinned by certain contradictions and paradoxes that are inherent in the broader Saudi society and reflected in professional organisations like the academia. While scholars have noted how social impediments serve to constrain women's career and professional development (Fagenson, 1990; Morrison, 1992; Tharenou et al., 1994; Powell, 1999), these structures have been presented as [only] bad, constraining, disadvantageous, ill-conceived and ill-perceived and inimical in all cases

to the development of the woman. This is in the sense that these societal structures and processes [only] serve to limit women's career development as a reflection of the constraints she faces in the wider society. My study reveals, however, that while these structures are placed to constrain women, in many cases, women have converted these structures to vehicles of progress (see section 5.2). In the open society too, women are unable to advance to job roles or progress to higher career roles except they have a male guardian who could be a father, brother, son or husband (see section 5.2.1). In the open society too, the family is used to socialise males and females into their expected roles and positions in the society. However, while these structures are seen as limiting, the position of the male Dean may be used to favour a woman when, for instance, she is related or connected to the Deans family or associates, or from the same tribe as the Dean, who can be influenced by some wealthy or influential person. The family may evoke a relationship with another family who may then influence how a woman may be treated without abrogating the constraining structures already in place.

Thus, the structures serve for disadvantages and oppression simultaneously (I discuss these extensively in Chapter six). This way it is plain to see the paradox: without these oppressive structures, the woman may not progress. Still, while these structures constrain some, it is also the case that it represents a mitigant for others. Constraints then are contingent on how individuals can convert social and organisational structures into favourable ones and consequently, favourable outcomes. While this stated simultaneity and multidimensionality are yet to be rigorously explored, this study shows that gender relations are complex in a society like Saudi Arabia and to understand these relations, one must capture these paradoxes rather than presenting them simplistically. Thus, my study looks at the organisation in professions like the academia in Saudi Arabia as embodying the changing social and organisational landscape which may change the overall research perception.

Also, scholars recognise intersecting social identities meaning that a woman may embody more than one identity but, in all cases, her multiple identities are linked complimentarily meaning that oppression against one identity is linked to

discrimination against other interlinked identities. This much is based on the proposition of the intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1990, 1998). However, my study affirms the existence of these interlinked identities such as woman, wife, mother, middle-class family, married or single, widowed or divorced, professor or master's degree holder amongst others. However, over and above this, my study reveals an irony: women also embody contrasting and contradictory identities which in along with their gender which embodies disadvantages, embody privileges too, suggesting for instance that while a broadly dyadic relationship exists, this relationship embodies other oppressed and privileged identities. Thus, while the theory of intersectionality stresses complementary identities of oppression, my study applies this theory to uncouple how in relatively under-researched contexts like Saudi Arabia, contrasting identities with some indicative of disadvantages and some indicative of privileges, are used by women to navigate disadvantages.

8.5. Methodological contributions

I have discussed how I collected my data and my motivations and experiences while at it in Chapter three. In this section, I will present an overview of the methodological contributions of this study. My study reveals several aspects of gendered perspectives, underpinned by the experiences of women in the academia who formed my research subjects as well as myself. I, therefore, focus on organisational and wider socio-cultural imperatives that affect women regarding jobs, societal roles and expectations specifically in Saudi society. The power of my approach then is first, based on the idea that my participants and I share certain commonalities (Reedy, 2009): we are women, Arabs, academics and have experienced the repressiveness of male domination and control as well as have hopes to advance in our professions. For the reader, then, the point is that this sharedness has made me a voice for my participants, and for women in Saudi Arabia and more importantly, in their voice, I have found my own voice too.

Secondly, my research gives voice to these women, thereby instilling a power element to the discourse through my reporting and relaying of my participant's narratives as well as mine (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Thirdly, my focus is on bringing some change in Saudi Arabia for these women and therefore not only do I situate myself in

the discourse, by desiring emancipation and change, but I also admit that my research seeks to change the power dynamics in the rather unbalanced gender relations in Saudi society. Thus, my research adopts auto-biography and a form of 'self-ethnography', which has helped me to proceed based on a specific approach to reflexivity (see Cunliffe, 2003, 2008, 2011). Reedy and King (2017, p. 3) validate this approach specifically regarding my desire for change which they have termed as "engagement with activism". Also, my approach is practical and applicable in management research and equally germane to practitioners. I discuss this in Chapter Three (see section 3.0).

Thus, my research contributes to methodological approaches in gender studies. By adopting an autobiographical approach (Merton, 1988), I engage in constructing my personal experience as well as my life story reflexively thereby allowing the impersonal reader to make judgments of my narrative dispassionately. Based on the characteristics which I share with my participants as already stated, I then weave my story into their story in such a way that my story stands uniquely reflective of the experiences of these women and vice versa. Indeed, my narration or my story and their narratives make an essential contribution to how I uncouple and present my participants' experiences. While I acknowledge that my experience has some influence on my understanding of my participant's responses and experiences to a certain degree (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) through my study I reveal that, like my participants, even my experiences, views and preconceptions have also been subjected to exploration. Thus, with the researcher being part of the researched and the experiences of the researched articulated through the experiences of the researcher, this study makes a methodological contribution to gender studies. My identity as the researcher, a woman, a wife, mother, daughter, professional, academic and indigenous Saudi have shaped my identity and my predisposition and the lens through which I view these personal experiences with that of other female academics. This way, my research is not just an instrument for knowing but knowing in such a way that changes social knowledge as it stands today (Davies, 2012).

Indeed, while using unstructured interviews and autobiographical life histories have been advocated and validated (Merton, 1988; Stanley, 1992) I argue that I use it uniquely in my study because I have used life histories as a way of unearthing 'marginalised voices' (Reedy, 2009, p. 5). This is because I present an understanding of how stories connect to the lives of my participants and how a common and shared understanding of these experiences between my respondents and I creates an opportunity for me to comprehend these experiences as they recount their stories using their words. To understand their stories, therefore, I also tell my story using the autobiographical approach (Stanley, 1993). Further, a strong point of my study is that extant studies in mainly western contexts focus on gender relations based on aggregated statistics such as on the numbers of women in different occupations and different levels of organisations. In my study, I focus my methodological approach to an area they seem to ignore: the individual lived experiences of these women within their organisations.

8.6. Implications for Theory

This thesis contributes to theory more broadly by including a multi-level framework for analysing women's experience in a Saudi context and focusing on how these constraints play out at the cultural, organisational, inter-subjective, and personal levels. However, the study also makes more specific contributions in several ways.

Firstly, my study calls for a reassessment of how gender relations are conceived and perceived and researched. I propose that differences in context must be taken into account. If inequality and oppression must be addressed in the broader society and constraints stemming from or reflective of these societal constraints within the organisation mitigated, an appreciation of the uniqueness of context, and changes implicit and inherent must be taken into account. Thus, my research calls for a reassessment of studies in this order to uncouple the paradoxes and contradictions which offer more insight into how women view and navigate constraints – in different social and organisational contexts. The assumption that women face constraints is not enough to help us understand how these constraints play out in countries like Saudi Arabia. Accepting that these constraints are institutionalised and socially sanctioned politically legitimised and rooted in traditional Arab culture, and religious dogma does

not say much either. Rather, certain questions needs to be answered: How do actors in organisations objectify and instrumentalise the process or outcome of interaction/exchange? Can we understand these processes when we see them as subjective evaluation alone? Is it possible that the oppressed can also sustain or even favourably utilise instruments of oppression? Do these considerations play any role in sustaining gender stereotypes? Consequently, the need to understand how trust and mistrust are used based on how men and women, oppressor and oppressed perceive these in different contexts is fundamental.

For instance, uncoupling what instruments in the exchange processes mean to actors may be a way of understanding how the exchange is negotiated or asserted in these contexts, and how the balance of power may tilt to the oppressed at certain times based on the instrumentality of identities such as status or class. In order words, is it true that societal dictates in countries like Saudi Arabia affect every woman equally or are there exceptions? Further, gender scholars would need to wean themselves of the male-female dichotomy and begin to uncouple more multi-dimensional relationships and how these other factors affect the outcome of gender relations. While extant studies may present men as the oppressor and women as the oppressed, we see from my study that the relationship is even more complex and intricate. For instance, women were sometimes more favoured than men based on their connection to powerful families, dominant tribes, the political elite, the royal family and even people of class and affluence. Under such conditions, the woman – and her close connections - were more likely to be favoured in career progression than even other male colleagues. Indeed, sometimes women also oppressed each other. Female administrators oppressed female reports after all in my study just as I experienced the vindictiveness of a female administrator during my time in university.

Thus, the question is: can studying horizontal rather than vertical dimensions of relationships tell us something about gender stereotyping and how women remain constrained or negotiate constraints in Saudi Arabia? Further, the need to uncouple how women negotiate and mitigate constraints will reveal that women also use instruments of oppression to better themselves. It is the case that women mitigated

constraints by turning the instruments through which such constraints were executed into mitigants. In order words, the idea that societal structures and organisational processes only serve to constrain women ignores how such structures can be converted by some women to favour and even progress them. This submission cannot be generalised, though, because occurrences in this study seemed contingent on a woman's class, social network, marital status and even organisational position. However, it is the case that such still exists as proven in my study and may well offer some insight into why women do not have a common voice to protest their conditions in Saudi Arabia. One possible explanation is because some may consider it beneficial.

Also, there is a need to uncouple how women self-identify and the intersecting identities that they embody. Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) describe overlapping social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination, Collins (1990; 1998) and Touraine (1998) discuss multiple intersecting identities different from the component identities, which are mutually co-constitutive (Collins, 2015). However, this study arouses several questions in this regard: are gender relations defined by two identities alone and in this case men and women? Can women embody interlinked but not complementary but contradictory identities? Can identities indicative of oppression and privilege be embodied in Saudi women simultaneously? This study calls for a recontextualization of the intersectionality theory, then, by stressing that contrasting identities indicative of privileges may be used by women to negotiate complementary and interlinked identities of oppression.

Lastly, my study calls for the need to examine the possibility that in concluding that globally women are marginalised and discriminated against in the broader society and the workplace, researchers may end up overlooking changes that may have occurred over time, in specific professions and sectors across different contexts and how these changes may change the overall research perception and outcome in countries like Saudi Arabia. Then, scholarly focus on analysing female behaviour based on patriarchal or vertical power structures and relations within organisations (Walby, 1990; Giddens, 2006) may end up presenting a linear, predetermined and narrow

perspective regarding gender relations. My study shows that relations are not based on the male-female dichotomy, the oppressor and oppressed, the helpless women and the invigorated others etc. Rather exceptions and paradoxes and their implications have been captured — for instance, horizontal relations – relations amongst women themselves – evidenced in the personal striving for privileges, benefits and positional authority a sense of female camaraderie and how this, in turn, reinforces male dominance and female discrimination.

8.7. Limitations of the study

My research is not without limitations. First, I carried out this study using a limited sample size (twenty female employees from two Universities in Saudi Arabia) within a space of six months. However, my focus was not on achieving statistical generalisation but an analytical generalisation. Indeed, I consider such a limited sample size as acceptable since I attained theoretical saturation (Creswell, 2013). As this study is focused on the experiences of women academics in Saudi Arabia, a considerable amount of data based on unstructured interviews relevant to understanding specifically how women navigate and negotiate constraints in the academia was gathered and analysed. I would argue that the level of depth of analysis which I carried out in each narrative of my participants certainly compensates for the limited size of the sample. Additionally, even though my participants were selected through a rigorous purposive sampling process, there can be potential for some bias based on the subjective nature of participant views.

However, I acknowledge some effort on my part to (i) sample only those women who have spent at least five years in the academia (ii) Sample women from two universities – one public and one private. (iii) Use unstructured interviews as a data collection tool to increase the possibility of gathering robust data (iv) Use my identity, experience and background as a lens through which I uncoupled and articulated participant views, as well as documents. I have also adopted a reflexive account of the data collection process (Humphreys, 2005; see Chapter 3). I have not done this to control bias, as I would argue that the subjective views of these women relayed based on the meanings that they ascribe to their experiences of oppression is a strength of my research, which

deals with the socially constructed and inherently subjective views of participants within social and organisational contexts. While my background as the researcher as well as my identity, profession, and gender are acknowledged, my predisposition has also been subjected to exploration in the study (Cunliffe, 2003, 2008, 2011) although, admittedly, these factors may have influenced the views I expressed in my study.

8.8. Directions for future research

My study calls for the need to uncouple how gender relations may differ in different contexts, how women experience oppression in organisations and the broader society and why. One way to proceed is to understand what these constraints mean to women in different contexts and based on this to understand the instrumentality of the structures and processes through which female oppression takes place. It is not enough to generalise oppression and female constraints. How women see these oppressive structures and institutions may well differ from the meaning that we as researchers slap on them. Therefore, the meaning women ascribe to symbols, structures and institutions of oppression may well help in comprehending how women reinforce negative stereotypes or how they circumvent the inherent constraints. Secondly, there is a need to also look at how women may embody different social and other identities and how these identities may intersect or contrast, how they may be contradictory or complementary. Indeed, the significance of this call lies in the idea that women may utilise identities in different ways and different social and organisational contexts. When we look at only interlinked identities rather than how women evoke, transit, negotiate or instrumentalise their identities, we may never be able to uncouple the dynamics that underpin how women use identities to negotiate constraints in organisations.

Finally, a suggestion in extant studies (De Beauvoir, 1952; Lorde, 2000) is that women may be complicit in their domination - by acting out a stereotype pinned on them by the patriarchy. However, this alone may not explain situations were women turn against other women strictly based on their gender and cases where women seek to oppress women so that male superiors can endorse them or indeed when women remain complacent because it suits how they believe that religious piety should be expressed. What will be more interesting is to find out how women's access to

privileges and the link other women have to these advantages may be seen as beneficial by these women rather than constraining. In order words, how privileges are instrumentalised and objectified in Saudi Arabia may offer insight into not just how women see these benefits in the context of existing societal constraints, but what it represents to them. Indeed, if what we define as constraints for these women represent benefits or symbolises advantages to them, and if these perspective and ideas are broadly shared among them, then when we cry for freedom for women in these contexts, we may just be crying more than the bereaved.

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