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Examining the Career Paths of Women Vice Deans in Saudi Higher Education

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis embodies the results of my own work and has been undertaken by myself. The information derived from the literature has been acknowledged. The thesis that I am submitting to the university has not been submitted to any other university to obtain a degree.

This thesis has not been submitted or published anywhere except the following parts:

1. The pilot study in *the 5th CES Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference: 'Education in a Changing World'*, (May 2017), University of Warwick.
2. Abstract accepted for *2nd Academic International Conference on Social Sciences and Education*, (April 2020), Cambridge University. (postponed)

Abstract

According to the Centre for Education Statistics in Saudi Arabia, women are under-represented in academia, particularly among the higher academic ranks such as associate professors, and full professors. Likewise, Saudi women academics have shown there to be a lack of representation in senior leadership positions. The majority of women academics can reach the highest possible position as a college vice dean. This study examines the status of Saudi women working as college vice-deans (VDs) in the field of higher education to provide an in-depth understanding of their career progression and the features that shape this route. Looking specifically at a university in Saudi Arabia, this work explores the experiences of female VDs and elicits their own perceptions of their career paths within the academic world, along with what advances and hinders their career progression.

A mixed methods approach was used which included analysing the content of institutional documents by examining the institutional legislations and policies, as well as interviewing 14 female (VDs). There were 54 closed-ended Likert-Scale questionnaires provided from the female Heads of Department (HoDs) who have direct dealings with the female VDs, and who are familiar with aspects of their managerial life in the college. The data obtained indicates that a lack of preparation for management posts and the lack of authority of the women VDs were perceived as the main challenges in the career lives of the women in reference to their college vice-deanship position. Many of the female VD participants experienced delays in promotion and in being considered eligible for advancing their rank. The interviews clarified the reasons stated for this delay in their rank upgrade, including a lack of research productivity.

This study recommends tackling the lack of authority by expanding their authority. In addition, introducing a specific deadline by the university for academics for the purpose of research production and easing their managerial loads would help to increase their research productivity and in turn help to advance the women's academic rank. Combined, these may help to advance the careers of women VDs in Saudi Arabia and enable them to overcome the institutional difficulties while providing the required support to enable them to advance along their career paths.

Glossary

HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
VR	Vice Rector
VD	Vice Dean
HoD	Head of Department
ME	Ministry of Education
SCHE	the Supreme Council of Higher Education
MCS	Ministry of Civil Service
GASTAT	The General Authority for Statistics

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Leadership in higher education (HE) is dominated by a gendered culture that favours men and provides them with privileged access to senior management opportunities (Bagilhole and White, 2011). This gendered culture is taking place on a global scale, although its severity varies from one country to another. In Saudi Arabia, the position of women has always been difficult and challenging because of the conservativeness of society. Alhareth et al. (2015) stated that "... Saudi women suffer from the exclusion from participating and playing vital roles in their society and the deprivation from getting their rights" (pp. 122-123). Considering the cultural impact of the gendered experiences in society overall, the career paths of academic women are thought to be interrelated to the frameworks that structure their access to leadership (Moodley and Toni, 2017; Burkinshaw and White, 2017).

This study examines the career experiences of female vice-deans (VDs) in Saudi Arabian higher education. The aim is to understand the factors supporting or inhibiting the career progression of female academic leaders in higher education institutions (HEIs) so then a framework for women's career advancement can be developed. The chapter presents the study rationale, the problem statement, the research questions, and offers an overview of the structure of the thesis. In this chapter, I will also define the career paths of women in leadership in higher education (HE), and the background of HE in Saudi Arabia.

1.2 Rationale

This study seeks to understand the university environment from the perspective of women in a conservative society such as Saudi society. This is along with the institutional conditions that appear to constrain women's abilities under male authority and facilitate a working environment that is entirely suited for men. This focus emerged through two experiences. In one of the experiences that I had after I earned my bachelor's degree, I was forced to study a subject I did not wish to learn due to my family's decision to make me stay with them despite the limited subjects available in my hometown college. After graduation, I decided to stand up for myself and complete my education abroad, a decision that prompted challenges by my family and society. This experience changed my perspective and made me consider the impact of family decisions on women in my society, specifically Saudi society. I became interested in the effect of families on women's career choices, including the selection and advancement of their career. Another experience that led me to focus on this subject was a job interview I had while at college during which the female VD of the college was not permitted to chair the interview as this role was reserved for the male dean. Consequently, I wanted to gain further insight into the experiences of women in HE and to understand the status of those already in leadership roles but still under the control of male authority.

My position is that women are not the subordinates of men and that the reality of their lived experiences within academia must be addressed since universities are the main producers of knowledge and the outputs that get reviewed by officials that in turn lead to developments. It is at the university level that change must occur for women to be valued as both leaders and academics to generate further change.

Saudi Arabia is committed to achieving its 2030 vision for development. It pays to emphasise the endeavour's forward thinking:

“Our economy will provide opportunities for everyone – men and women, young and old – so they may contribute to the best of their abilities. We will place a renewed emphasis on lifelong training and we will seek to make the most of the potential of our workforce by encouraging a culture of high performance...Saudi women are yet another great asset” (Vision 2030).

This Vision has been adopted by the universities in Saudi Arabia. It features as a logo on institutional documents which indicates the HEIs' commitment. Since the Vision emphasises improving the lives of Saudi women and empowering them, research on their life experiences presents a valuable opportunity to analyse what Saudi women are going through in terms of obstacles and challenges. These are important factors when building knowledge of the situation and identifying methods of improvement.

1.3 Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a country located in Southwestern Asia and its population has reached 12 million citizens. It represents the third largest producer of oil after Russia on a global level (Vassiliev, 2013). After the discovery of oil in 1938, Saudi Arabia rapidly transformed into an industrially developed country and the world's largest producer of oil (Al-Khateeb, 1998). The adoption of five-year development plans contributed to making the country one of the wealthiest in the world, changing the lives of its population after a period of isolation in the desert. Following this change,

the vast economic growth due to its substantial financial resources has facilitated the construction of an educational infrastructure (Ramady and Al-Sahlawi, 2005).

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country that contains within its borders the most significant Islamic holy places, specifically the two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina respectively. The nation's Islamic foundations are established and have subsequently fostered a conservative approach to life, one that has permeated into the Saudi education system (Al-Khateeb, 1998; Sedgwick, 2001). In 1953, the Ministry of Education was established (Almunajjed, 1997), followed four years later by the establishment of the country's first university in Riyadh, King Saud University, a HEI that is now the largest university in the country (Alkhazim, 2003). The economic development has resulted in a vast expenditure on education to rates exceeding billions of Saudi riyals (SAR). In 2004, the governmental spending on education totalled SAR 63.7 billion (Ministry of Finance, 2004; Ramady and Al-Sahlawi, 2005), equivalent to more than £12 billion pounds. Since then, there has been a massive growth of expenditure on education which in 2019 reached SAR 192.82 billion (Ministry of Finance, 2019), equivalent to more than £38 billion pounds.

Younger members of the population can enrol in HE for free, therefore the number of students in tertiary education in Saudi Arabia outnumber those in neighbouring Egypt, although the population of the latter is more than three times that of Saudi Arabia (Bosbait and Wilson, 2005). This growth in the number of students has also prompted a rise in the number of HEIs in the country.

Between the establishment of the first university in Saudi Arabia in 1953 up until the mid-1970s, another six universities were founded (Alamrai, 2011). According to the Ministry of Higher Education (2011), there are 32 public universities across the country and an additional 434 colleges and institutions. Universities in Saudi Arabia admit both male and female students but have a strict policy of gender segregation on campus and in the facilities. With the exception of two universities, each university has a single-gender admission policy only, one of which is a female-only university and the other a male-only university (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). Over the last decade, the Saudi government has maintained control over essential aspects of HE, including policy approaches to the workforce e.g., compensations, promotions, retirement age etc (Alkhazim, 2003).

Women faculty careers present as having a slow career development and they have been a continuing concern within Saudi HE (Al Mohsen, 2014; Al Gamdi, 2012). One of the forms of this decline is the low participation of women in leadership roles in universities (Hamadan, 2005; Abalkhail and Allan, 2015). Abalkhail (2017), Abalkhail and Allan (2015), and Aldawsari (2017) have contributed to the discussion on this topic for several years, yet it remains limited, with most tending to study female administrators in different levels of management in the public sectors without considering their position or studying their career development in different like rank advancement and professional development programs. Thus, in the search for what is the highest senior position that the majority of women in academia occupy in Saudi HE, the position of college VD was found to be the highest post that female Saudi academics reach as Table 1.1 shows.

Table 1.1: Heads of Colleges in Saudi Arabia in 2017.

No. of Colleges	Dean		College VD	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
487	396	60*	112	248

*All 60 female deans were employed in female-only colleges.

As the above table shows, the majority of women occupying senior managerial positions at the college level do not surpass the rank of VD. This indicates that women in academia encounter a lack of access to top positions such as deanships and higher. At the time of this research, there has never been a female dean at any college (other than an all-female one) in Saudi Arabia and there are no female leaders in the upper echelons of HE leadership as the section below illustrates.

1.3.1 Organisational Structure of Saudi Higher Education

According to the System of Higher Education, the highest administrative authority controlling Saudi HE is the Supreme Council of Higher Education (SCHE). This authority consists of the following:

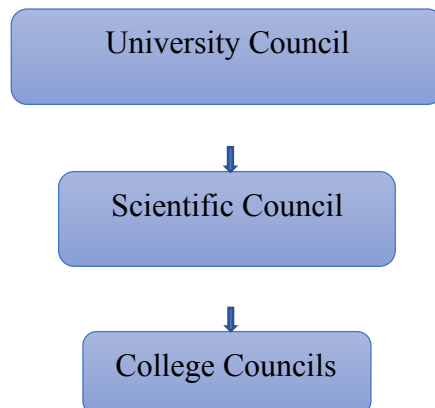
- Chairman: The King of Saudi Arabia/Prime Minister, who is the Chairman of the Superior Committee for Education Policy.
- Vice Chair: The Minister of Higher Education (integrated with the Ministry of Education in 2015).

- The Minister of Education.
- The Minister of Finance and National Economy.
- The Minister of Planning.
- The Chief of the General Office of the Civil Service.
- Rectors of public universities.

All the above officials are men. The SCHE monitors the implementation of the State's educational policy in the field of HE and the implementation of this system and regulations. Each university is subject to its supervision. The SCHE issues the rules governing the appointment, promotion, and secondment of Saudi faculty members to other positions inside or outside the university. The issuance of common regulations and the issuance of rules for the arrangement of the work of faculty members are also within the SCHE's remit (SHEC, 1994; Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013).

Under the SCHE is a hierarchical organisation of university councils. Each university has its own administrative organisational council with the University Council at the top, followed by the university-wide Scientific Council, and then the College Councils in each college.

Figure 1.1: University councils



Adopted from SHEC (1994).

The **University Council** and its components is the highest administrative body of the university, consisting of:

1. The Minister of Higher Education.
2. The University Rector.
3. Vice-Rectors.
4. General Secretary of the Higher Education Council.
5. College Deans.
6. Three experienced appointees by the Minister of Higher Education, who serve for three years.

This men-only council is the body associated with implementing the general policies of the university, including adopting the training and scholarship plan, seconding and reassigning faculty members and sending them on scientific missions, granting them full-time sabbatical leave, and terminating their services in accordance with the governing rules. In addition, the University Council makes decisions based on recommendations raised by the Scientific Council as addressed below.

Each university in Saudi Arabia has a **Scientific Council**. Its area of focus includes faculty affairs, research, studies, and publication. The Council consists of the following:

1. Vice-Rector for Postgraduate Studies and Research.
2. One member of the faculty for each college, all of whom hold the minimum rank of Associate Professor.

This council is tasked with approving the appointment and promotion of faculty, encouraging research, authoring, and publishing, and evaluating the scientific certificates provided by Saudi faculty. The University Council considers what has been addressed to it from the College Councils.

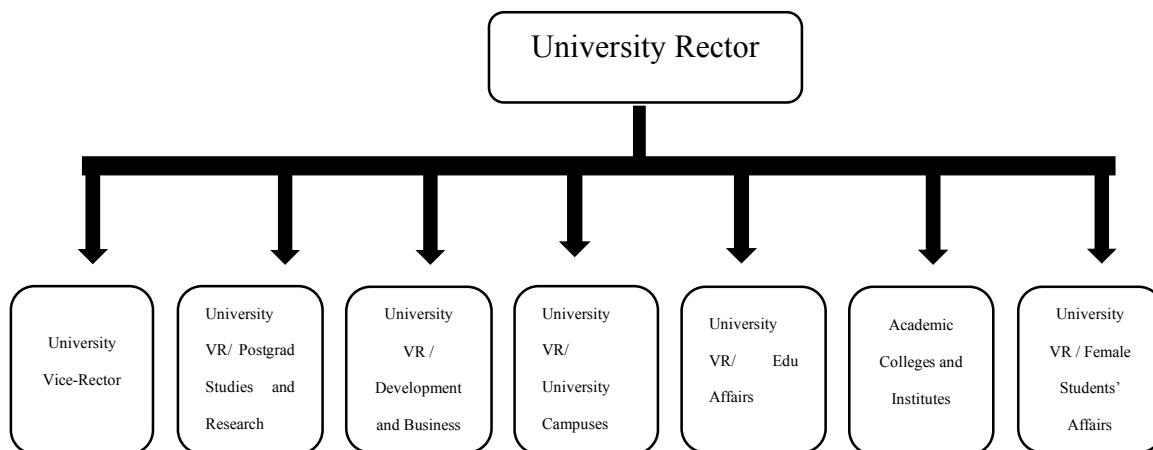
The **College Councils** are composed of:

1. The College Dean (male).
2. The College Vice Deans (males and females).
3. The Heads of Departments. (males and females).

This council considers matters relating to the individual college, including proposing the appointment and promotion of faculty members, and encouraging the production of research. As can be seen, it is in the college council that women begin to feature.

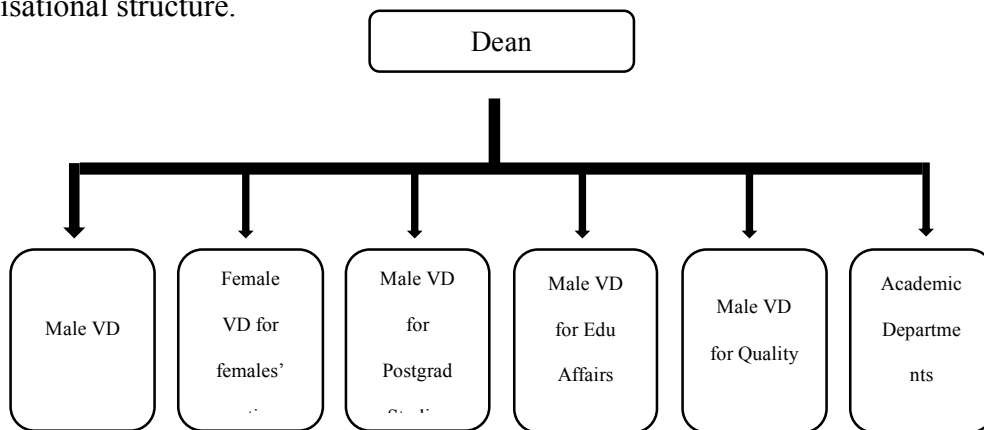
This organisational structure is common across Saudi universities which are headed by a rector supported by vice-rectors, each of whom is allocated certain tasks. It pays to note that within this hierarchical system, positions of power are generally occupied by men, including the rectors who are often selected by the Minister of Education. In addition, the colleges in the universities are directly headed by the rector who is always a male (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Common structure of Saudi universities (similar to the structure of the university under study and all positions are held by men except for University VR for the Female Students' Affairs, which is held by a woman).



The same situation applies to the organisational structure of the colleges as there is generally a nationwide uniformity with the exception of some idiosyncrasies made in accordance with the nature of the college. In general, however, they consist of a dean, a male vice dean (VD), a VD for females, as well as VDs for various affairs in the college such as research and postgraduate studies, educational affairs, and quality and development. The highest rank that can be reached by a woman is the university vice deanship for female affairs (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.3: Common managerial structure of Saudi colleges adopted from various colleges' organisational structure.



1.3.2 Faculty Ranks in Saudi Higher Education

The academic ranks of the faculty in Saudi Arabia are categorised starting from a teaching assistant then moving onto lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, and lastly, professor. According to the SCHE (1998), specific ranks require certain qualifications with the higher ranks also requiring scientific production. For example:

- Teaching assistants: minimum BA
- Lecturers: minimum MA
- Assistant professors: minimum PhD

The faculty members teach according to a certain quorum count for each rank (SCHE, 1998). The maximum teaching hours for each rank are:

1. Assistant Professor: 14 hours
2. Associate Professor: 12 hours
3. Professor: 10 hours

The higher the academic rank, the lower the quorum of teaching units. The total of 35 working hours per week are split across teaching, research, office hours, academic guidance, scientific committees, and other duties. Teaching hours are specified by the regulations for each member of the faculty according to his/her academic rank, which are then used to coordinate timetabling. These regulations include both sexes of the faculty as it is interpreted according to rank, regardless of whether it is held by a man or a woman.

Moreover, the faculty members can participate in university conferences, although attendance is subject to certain controls, such as:

1. The association of the conference with the specialisation
2. Council approval
3. The academic's obligation to provide a written report on his/her participation in the conference.

In this case, the university will cover the cost of participation by reimbursing the academic's travel fares and conference fees. Furthermore, if an individual desires to engage in non-academic work, for example as a consultant to an external party, an official request must be made from this body

to the university. Approval must be acquired from the Minister of Higher Education based on the recommendation of the councils.

Essentially, the salary of academics in Saudi Arabia is in accordance with the Salary Scale for Faculty Members issued by the Ministry of Civil Service. The salary of academics working in public universities is divided according to academic rank, meaning that the higher the academic rank, the higher the salary, and the higher the annual bonus (MCS, 2010).

1.4 Vision 2030 of Saudi Arabia

In 2016, Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman introduced a national vision to shift from an oil-dependent country into a diversified non-oil economy through increased investment (Khan, 2016; Patalong, 2016). This long-term vision aims to comprehensively transform the country, economically, culturally, and socially. It is accompanied by the National Transformation Plan (NTP), a roadmap containing a series of reforms. Vision 2030 contains three transformational themes, which are a “vibrant society,” a “thriving economy” and “an ambitious nation”. The transformation of the state is to be achieved through changes in society and economy. In each axis of the vision, a set of goals has been developed. The content of this vision is an important reference when making government decisions.

The first theme addressed is to become *a vibrant society*, with three sub-themes, namely, *strong roots*, *fulfilling lives* and *strong foundations*. The theme of *a vibrant society with strong roots* embraces investing in cultural events, increasing entertainment events and venues, and advancing its role as a country having major religious places, open to Muslims around the globe. The state is

committed to the Islamic principles of mastering work, adopting moderation as a way of life, and tolerance. In addition, production development in various fields is adopted to be achieved through discipline, equity and transparency. “The principles of Islam will be the driving force for us to realize our Vision” (Vision 2030:16).

In this instance, the state is harnessing its energies and capabilities in order to serve visiting pilgrims and Umrah visitors. In the last century and onwards, the number of pilgrims and Umrah visitors has tripled from what it was previously to reach eight million visitors. It is imperative for the country to provide the necessary services for the worldwide visitors. The state aims to welcome more than 30 million Umrah visitors every year according to the Vision. This situation has required the country to the capacity of the airports and the development of the Makkah metro, as well as enriching the visitors’ journey culturally through the establishment of museums and the preparation of tourist and historical places to develop the visitors’ journey within the Kingdom. This illustrates the state’s commitment to investing in tourism besides the role of religion.

Another aim is preserving and enhancing national identity. This will be passed onto future generations through the construction of national values, deliberations on how to develop society, and the holding of events to strengthen the national identity. In this aspect, the state is working to preserve all ancient archaeological sites, including national, Arab, and Islamic ones, while making them accessible for all. They are striving to more than double the number of Saudi heritage sites registered at the international level (UNESCO). The overall goal is to open the country to the world via tourism. Nowadays, culture and heritage tourism has become a “white oil” for the country (Khan, 2020).

The theme of *a vibrant society with fulfilling lives* is being advanced by encouraging investment in culture, entertainment and sport. The government is developing cultural and entertainment centres and sports facilities, supporting private and public sector initiatives as well as increasing job opportunities. The state is developing cities in order to develop the country's infrastructure and basic services. They are aiming to reduce environmental pollution in both the public and private sectors. Moreover, to raise the quality of life, the government desires three Saudi cities to obtain a rating that places them among the top 100 cities in the world; families to raise their spending on culture and entertainment within the country from 2.9% to 6%, and the percentage of sports exercisers to increase from 13% to 40%. The state desires to bring about a major change in kind of lives people lead.

The subject of *a vibrant society with strong foundations* comprises family caring, owning their housing. Furthermore, empowering the community is one of the elements of this topic. It aims to work through the development of the social welfare system in cooperation with the non-profit sector and the provision of job opportunities. Developing the health system and health services is also one of the aspects that this vision adopts. Although there have been attempts to develop the health system, the economic problems related to the oil crises since the 1980s have barred a developmental leap for the health system. This vision has brought about more reforms, especially after it focused on the economy being directed from the private sector administratively (Rahman and Alsharqi, 2018). The objectives of this topic may be summed up by raising the social capital from the 26th rank to the 10th rank, in addition to the country aiming to increase the average life

expectancy from 74 to 80 years. This may be because the state takes advantage of human resources and seeks to increase the minimum retirement age and expand job opportunities.

One of the most important aims is developing the educational system in cooperation with the family. This aim would be reached throughout providing students with the skills necessary for their personal and professional development. The vision introduced a programme under this topic to be established which is the “Irtiqaa” program. This is considered to be a way of measuring the performance of schools and measuring the extent to which the family is involved in school activities to raise the effectiveness of communication. The programme will also provide developmental programmes for the teachers. Although the state has been making efforts to improve the teachers’ development, “The issue of commitment and dedication towards educational sector of Saudi Arabia is a common issue, which needs to be taken into consideration for Vision 2030 (Yusuf, 2017, p. 114).

The second theme of a thriving economy is associated with investing in scholarships, education, and training in schools or in various professions to suit the needs of the market. Another economic aspect embraced is to support large, small, and medium enterprises in addition to supporting working families and facilitating their financing. Investing in professional and educational development to boost the economy has not overlooked the fact that women are an essential element for achieving economic growth in several areas.

The importance of the participation of women in the development process was taken into consideration, as it was clarified that, “With over 50 percent of our university graduates being

female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy” (p.37). Women were discussed in the Vision document three times, most of which is related to their recognition as part of the society next to the man. The most prominent aspect considered with women is that they are one of the goals of the Vision in terms of raising the level of their participation in the workforce. This will contribute to limiting the marginalisation of the importance of women's work. The Vision pursues to raise the level of women’s participation in the workforce from 22% to 30%. In the second quarter of 2016 when the vision was introduced in June, The General Authority for Statistics (GASTAT) revealed the data of all employed persons in the country by gender. The data presented that the percentage of females in the workforce at that time was 16.6%. This low percentage is comprised of working women in all fields. In contrast, there is a very high percentage of non-working women, reaching 64%. One of the reasons that may be attributed to this is the limited areas in which women can participate. At that time, women often worked in either education or the medical field. Additionally, the government determined the laws of the division of workplaces between men and women, who preferred men often in most workplaces. This made women stop seeking work, except where there were women-friendly jobs available (Naseem and Dhruva, 2017).

As part of a comparison between the above data with the current in an attempt to examine the progression of Saudi women in light of the reforms produced by the Vision, the 2020 statistics of GASTA show that rate of Saudi women joining the workforce has raised to be 33.2% of persons working in the varies fields. Globally, according to the Gender Gap Index report (2016), 29 Saudi Arabia is ranked as 141 in terms of economic participation and opportunity. Within the past few

years, this rank has surprisingly fallen despite the reform efforts. In 2021, the data from the Gender Gap Index report revealed that the gap has increased to rank 149. This could be explained as the national progression of Saudi working women has not been massively affecting global records. Although the national numbers are positive, it has not helped in terms of improving the gender gap situation worldwide.

Regarding women's empowerment in the Vision as they were considered in the theme of providing equal opportunities, the question arises as to how officials can ensure that in a sector like HE, women will be key players in the profession and have equal opportunities. Beyond the vision, it is the role of universities to provide equal opportunities for both genders such as in the leadership of HEIs. The government has adopted the 2030 Vision and the desire to change the lives of women in the country. However, is it possible for the women's participation to reach a higher level or will it be sufficient for the women's participation to reach this percentage, even though it is not a dramatic rise as it was to 22%? The demanded increase is presented as almost 8%. Why not to aim for more than that given percentage as the doors opened for Saudi women to work in many fields, such as the security field and sales sector, for example?

Moreover, Ambitious nation theme in the vision embraces an effective government that deals with the public, implements transparency, and fights corruption. The country is also moving towards becoming a pioneer in the field of electronic transactions. This has become tangible; therefore, work has been done on electronic governance. One of the objectives of the vision is to raise the e-government index to a higher rank. A prominent commitment that the vision has declared in reference to human resource development is as follows:

“We have yet to identify and put into effect the best practices that would ensure that public sector employees have the right skills for the future. However, by 2020, we aim to have trained, through distance learning, 500,000 government employees. All ministries and government institutions will be required to adopt best practices in human capital development. We will continue to hire individuals according to merit and work towards building a broad talent base, so they may become leaders of the future” (p. 69).

The state has the aspiration to implement the change as “these reform efforts led by the Crown Prince are more rigorous than any previous attempt at economic diversification made by the Saudis” (Moshashai et al., 2020, p. 382). Reforms are significantly demanded in every aspect. However, higher education has not been presented as major tool of the reforms in the document as it has mainly focused on subject production and student development. However, women’s empowerment seems to be addressed in the vision as an agenda to rise their presentation. Yet, the implementation of the changes left in the hands of officials at the level of the ministry and university leadership.

1.5 The Changing State and Current Study

Saudi Arabia has recently witnessed a major transformation by pursuing “moderate Islam” and seeking to end religious extremism. One of its most important features is the easing of social norms and a reduction in the influence of religion in the life of society (Alhussein, 2020). This has led to a major social and economic shift. Within the higher education sector, however, the changes have been limited to the academic curriculum. The religious curriculum has been reduced and there is more emphasis on science and improving student skills and educational outcomes (Al-Otaibi et

al., 2020). Within the period of data collection, it was only noticeable that the transactions between the researcher and the university or between the people in the study site were electronic. This may be attributed to the state's approach to applying electronic transactions in government institutions.

The next section will focus on addressing the problem statement of the study.

1.6 Problem Statement

Leadership advancement is one form of understanding the career advancement of academics, and it is usually associated with advancement in and to managerial positions. This form of leadership is often viewed differently from the advancements in professional rank, which is also associated with academic advancement and linked to research accomplishments. While these two forms of career advancement are relevant for both men and women in academia, they affect men and women differently not only in Saudi Arabia but the world over. What is particularly unique about Saudi Arabia as the context of study is that it is one of the most conservative gendered societies in which the glass ceiling for women in top leadership positions is a reality. There is no evidence yet of the link between higher academic ranks and leadership position as the administrators in previous studies were from various ranks (see e.g., Abalkhail and Allan, 2015; Abalkhail, 2017). However, it is significant to examine rank advancement and progression in leadership positions as they relate to aspects of career advancement for women in academia in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the Saudi women academic underrepresentation in HE is not only reported within the leadership but also in professional progress. According to the Centre for Education Statistics in Saudi Arabia, women are under-represented in higher academic positions (e.g., assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors). Table 1.2 illustrates the representation of women in academic ranks in Saudi universities.

Table 1.2: Number of Saudi faculty members nationwide by academic rank and gender (2015–2016).

Academic Rank	Male		Female		Total
Professor	1,630	88%	227	12%	1,857
Associate Professor	1,923	73%	714	27%	2,637
Assistant Professor	4,680	62%	2,812	38%	7,492
Lecturer	4,806	42%	6,525	58%	11,331
Teaching Assistant	9,155	46%	10,635	54%	19,790
Instructor	3,962	81%	913	19%	4,875
Other	54	68%	25	32%	79
Total	26,210	55%	21,851	45%	48,061

Source: Centre for Education Statistics (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia).

The table presents numbers that are indicative of the density of the faculty of both genders in terms of their academic rank in all universities across the country. Although the number of male instructors is four times greater than that of women, it can be observed that the number of female teaching assistants is higher than male teaching assistants. In addition, women occupy more than 50% of lecturer positions across the country. However, a sharp drop of more than 50% can be observed starting from the rank of assistant professor, which is a shortage that increases in the higher positions. Based on these figures, some questions can be raised such as the reason behind the notable decrease in the professional advancement of Saudi academic women in higher ranks, whether women choose to curtail their own advancement, and whether gender discrimination has a role to play. The data in Table 1.2 was considered in advance of conducting this study. More recent data indicates that a slight change has occurred since 2016, as Table 1.3 shows.

Table 1.3: Number of Saudi faculty members by academic rank and gender (2017–2018).

Academic Rank	Male		Female		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	
Professor	1,675	85%	291	14%	1,966
Associate Professor	2,102	72%	853	28%	2,955
Assistant Professor	5,594	61%	3,512	38%	9,106
Lecturer	5,383	43%	7,128	57%	12,511
Teaching Assistant	8,276	44%	10,455	55 %	18,731
Instructor	5,595	78%	1,528	21%	7,123
Other	15	68%	7	31%	22
Total	28,640	54%	23,774	45%	52,414

Source: Centre for Education Statistics (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia).

Comparing both sets of data indicates that there has been a slight amount of progress in the number and gender of the faculty reaching higher academic ranks. For example, at the highest ranks of professorship, the percentage of female professors in 2016-2017 was 12%, whereas this slightly increased to 14% the following year. In addition, a similar upwards movement occurred in the associate professor category from 27% to 28%. In contrast to this rise, the percentage of men in these ranks has decreased from 2016 in all ranks. Although the difference between the total of female and male academics is not massive, there is nonetheless a significant difference between them in the breakdown where men outnumbered women in the higher ranks.

Against this background, it is pertinent to study the current status of Saudi women in the field of HE leadership in order to provide an in-depth understanding of their career progression and the factors that shape their experiences in their professional journey. To understand the professional

lives of women in HE, I have studied the career path experiences of female VDs in HEIs, which is one of the most prominent leadership positions for women in HE in the country. This study explores the experiences of female VDs at a university in Saudi Arabia through their own reflections on their career paths in an academic environment. Furthermore, it assesses the factors that have advanced or hindered their career progression. This study also examines the way in which the organisational policies and practices advance and/or hinder the progression of women in academic leadership. Although the primary focus is VDs, organisational practices were also examined through the perception of the heads of department (HoDs) who are hierarchically a level below the VDs. They often ascend to the position of VD. Investigating women's career experiences in a Saudi university is crucial to understanding these experiences to reach a justification for the underrepresentation of women in Saudi higher education.

1.7 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to understand the factors supporting or inhibiting the career progression of female vice deans in Saudi higher education institutions. The study explores the experiences within the Saudi female VD's career paths and to examine the organisational policies and practices that have shaped their construction. To achieve this aim, the following question guided the study as the main overarching research question:

What personal, social, and organisational factors shape the experiences of the women vice deans' career paths in Saudi higher education and how can these experiences be improved?

This led to the formulation of three sub-questions:

RQ1: What factors shape and influence women vice deans describe their career choices and experiences?

RQ2: What institutional policies exist to support women's career paths and how do these policies support or inhibit the women's advancement to vice deanship and beyond?

RQ3: In what ways can the career experiences or career paths of female vice deans in Saudi HE be improved?

1.8 Understanding the Concept of Career Paths

The term *career* refers to “an occupation undertaken for a long period of a person's life,” whereas *path* is “the course along which a person or thing moves or a course of actions” (Hawker, 2008, p. 100, 522). There are several alternate interpretations of the term career path within the academic literature including that of Oriol et al. (2015). They define it as the process of professional development and state that the path differs depending on the dynamics of its movement as it advances, delays, or remains constant without any movement. It is therefore the process of development through a set of activities that occur in a specific timeframe. Sum and Dimmock (2012) elucidate that an individual's past decisions play a crucial role in understanding a career path. The decision exists only in the cultural and organisational context of the socialisation of the experiences that have occurred along the path (Bright et al., 2005). The term career path has been conceptualised in the form of a hierarchal advancement in rank (Bayer et al., 2009) or promotion (Sum and Dimmock, 2012).

Academic career experiences are conceptualised using several features. Lawrence (1998) illustrates concepts such as *career course*, *career role*, and *work patterns*, referring to the former as “the configuration of activities and positions that characterize an individual within a field or profession the way his or her work life manifests itself over time” (p. 19). However, she defines *career role* as the requirements and responsibilities assigned to a specific position in the

profession. In addition, how an individual practices their career role, such as their responsibilities, is demonstrated as the *career pattern*. Indeed, women's participation in academia is considered to use many concepts denoting career including the academic ladder (Smart, 1991; Diamond et al., 2016), leadership participation, and research output (Teodorescu, 2000; Sax, 2002). Overall, the existing research recognises academic career barriers and gender differences in the role played by women academics (e.g., Wright et al., 2014; Bain and Cummings, 2000). This subject is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 2 which provides a literature review.

The next section will attempt to conceptualise leadership in the HE context.

1.9 Leadership in Higher Education

Essentially, leadership has been generally defined as “an individual's influence on a group in order to reach a goal” (Rosch and Kusel, 2010, p. 29). Summerfield (2014) simplified the definition to meaning “make things better” (p. 252) yet this minimised explanation could be just an aspect of understanding leadership. Yukl (2013) defines leadership as “a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (p. 2). Leadership is different from management, not in terms of the position itself but rather in relation to the process or role (Elearn, 2007). According to Kotterman (2006), leadership refers to setting the direction toward a developed vision and change in the organisation, whereas management is mainly task-oriented and associated with technical dimensions such as planning, setting up timeframes, working on short-term tasks, and providing the expected results. Leadership is vital to drive organisations, including universities, towards success, as well as enhancing their financial and psychological wellbeing (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005).

In HE, leadership is subject to the consideration of the changes demanded by the stakeholders. Stakeholders require a shift from HE's classical role of producing knowledge through learning and research towards more engagement with global contemporary changes, represented in the economic priorities that include funding, globalisation, and the challenges of educating a large number of students (Davies et al., 2001). Public HEIs pay careful attention to the significance of their stakeholders, such as the government, their staff, and students (Sathye, 2004).

1.10 An Overview of the Structure of the Thesis

The overall structure of this study takes the form of six chapters, including the current introductory chapter which has aimed to provide the background of the study rooted in its research questions.

Chapter Two provides a review of the extant literature on the issues related to the current study, beginning with the research on the career paths of women in HE before moving on to cover issues of female leadership in HE in both the international and Saudi contexts. This is followed by a presentation of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

Chapter Three addresses the epistemological and ontological assumptions, and presents the research design adopted by this study followed by the approach of the sampling, data collection, and analysis of the study data. Lastly, it acknowledges the study's ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the findings deduced from the qualitative and quantitative data that was acquired from the interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. The data has been integrated to understand how the experiences of the female VDs is reflected from a different perspective which is the women HoDs working with the VDs.

Chapter Five offers a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter Four, drawing upon the related literature to provide an interpretation of the insights from the themes that emerged. It situates the current findings alongside the extant literature.

Chapter Six concludes the study with a summary of the findings, thus answering the research questions. It then provides recommendations for consideration and for further research. Finally, the chapter provides an acknowledgment of the study's limitations and challenges.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature and identifies the main themes in the literature. Key search terms included “gender and career paths,” “career paths and women in higher education,” “women and leadership in higher education,” and the relevant themes such as academic leadership and academic identity. Similar themes were also reviewed in the Saudi context. In the process of searching for sources, a systematic search technique was applied using Warwick search engines to access journals related to the subject such as Higher Education, the Journal of Higher Education, Management in Education, Gender, Work and Organisation, The Leadership Quarterly, and Gender and Education. Some of the themes exhibited points of convergence with various sources covering not just one theme but also related themes as well.

The topics related to women’s leadership in HE were accessed to elucidate the academic leadership in HEI. I began by introducing the theoretical framework to construct an overall understanding of the current study. This includes the theories of intersectionality, gendered organisations theory, and gendered organisational arrangements (the glass ceiling) for reasons that will be discussed in section 2.2 on the theoretical framework.

Since the study is concerned with individuals working within an academic environment, I address academic identity and the relevant studies. After that, the focus is on reviewing the studies on women and leadership in HE and the various issues discussed in this regard, detailing each issue

separately followed by the context of Saudi Arabia discussing the same topic. In addition, because the study is considering women in an Islamic country, I present a review of Islamic feminism. Lastly, a conceptual framework drawn from the literature review is presented at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Theoretical Framework:

Theoretically, this study is considered within the framework of the theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins and Bilge, 2016), gendered organisations (Acker, 1990; 2006), and Connell's organisational gendered arrangements (2006) to comprehend the Saudi women's gendered career experiences in gendered higher education institutions within a gendered society.

2.2.1 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a way of understanding life experiences by analysing the interplay of an individual's multiple identities such as race/ethnicity, gender, and age in relation to the experience of being subordinate or excluded (Collins and Bilge, 2016). The term intersectionality was first developed in 1989 by Kimberly Crenshaw, a law professor and social theorist who wrote a paper titled, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*. Crenshaw (1989) discussed the interaction of gender and race in the employment experiences of Black women in the United States, arguing that the anti-discrimination laws that were meant to address experiences of Black people were not enough to support Black people who were also women. Since the beginning of the studies on intersectionality and Crenshaw's work in the 1980s, the concept was spread to include those who have social dimensions intersected by their fragmented levels with a range of organisational and experiential relations (Davis, 2008). According to McCall (2008), this effort

shaped one of the most important contributions of feminist theory, which not only recognises gender as a separate category but also emphasises the existence of more attributes of the individual. Thus, to understand the interconnection of one's self-identities and to analyse how these identities interact, it is significant to apply intersectionality theory to the deep comprehension of an individual's identities. In an organisation where individuals live, work, and interact, organisations consist in their formation of a gendered structure based on a system of inequality through all the arrangements in the organisation, such as gendered classes in power (Acker, 2006; Acker, 2012).

The intersectional analysis of gendered organisations usually refers to Acker's (2006) "Inequality regimes." To consider the gendered system in organisations such as the current study, the theory of gendered organisations has been adopted to provide insights into how the institution is gendered. In order to gain an understanding of intersectionality of social identities in the organisation, Acker (2006) used the concept of an unequal system to address the conceptualisation of intersections at the same time and to identify barriers to equality in organisations.

Acker's concept of inequality in all organisations helps to conceptualise the manifold possibilities for discrimination and identify the obstruction to equal opportunities in the workplace at the same time. This inequality in the organisation differs in the degree of its presence and how severe it is as it is affected by the society outside of the organisation. (Acker, 2006). In organisations in Saudi society, the degree of inequality might be severe as there are segregated workplaces (Ridgeway, 2011). Thus, investigating the inequality system in the current HE institution is crucial to examine the gendered nature of the institution overall.

Intersectionality is a critical framework that provides a language and mind-set that enables the examination of interdependencies and interconnections between social systems and categories. It is relevant for practitioners and researchers, it maximizes the level of analytical sophistication, and it provides theoretical explanations of how the heterogeneous members of specific groups experience the workplace variedly depending on their sexual orientation, ethnicity, social locations, and class (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Sensitivity to such variations maximises the insight into different issues of social inequality and justice within firms and other institutions and, in turn, it also increases the chance for social change. As already indicated, the concept of intersectional location was coined from the racialised experience of minority ethnic women within the United States (Oxle and Corrigan, 2018). However, intersectional thinking has taken high prominence in management and business studies, especially in critical organisation studies. The major focus in this domain is the individual subjectivities in the intersectional areas such as when examining the occupational identities of minority ethnic women. The focus is on the individual experiences that are variously described as using the intracategorical approach, relying on systemic intersectionality (McCall, 2005).

According to Mareck (2016), the theory conceptualises knowledge as contextual, situated, reflective, and relational according to the economic and political power. It is linked with qualitative research methods due to the major role of giving a voice that is elicited through action research, narrative interviews, and focus groups. Within the social sciences, intersection provides the juxtaposition, crossing, and meeting point of two or more categories or systems of dominance, power, and oppression (Mareck, 2016). These categories involve social identities such as being a woman, sociodemographic categories such as ethno-cultural, social systems such as racism, and

social processes such as gendering. According to the United Nations, intersectionality is defined as a dynamic and structured outcome of the interaction between two or more types of discrimination or subordination. It mainly deals with the manners in which patriarchy, economic disadvantages, and other discriminatory systems take part in creating layers of inequality that structure the relative points experienced by women, races, and other groups (Collins and Bilge, 2016).

Intersectionality theory reflects that intersectionality is a unified nature of communal classifications such as class, race, and gender considered to be generating interdependent and overlapping systems of disadvantage or discrimination (Richardson and Loubier, 2008). It focuses on the overlapping identities and experiences of different groups of people to comprehend the complexity of the biases they experience. It identifies that different identity markers such as Black or women cannot exist independently of each other, thus creating a complicated convergence of oppression (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Black women experience different forms of oppression in social settings. It is necessary to understand intersectionality to combat the interwoven prejudice that people experience in their daily living.

According to some authors, this theory has created a shift in terms of providing a holistic view of understanding other dimensions in terms of gender considerations (Shields, 2008; McCall, 2005). It allows for an understanding of an individual's nuanced patterns when considering inequality (Romero, 2017). According to Phoenix and Pattynama (2006), "intersectionality is thus useful as a handy catchall phrase that aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it" (p. 187). The debate in some of the studies that

discuss this theory is that there is no clear methodology or a clear definition of intersectionality. This may create some complexity in that the social life, which is the foundation of identity, is basically a series of complex relationships that cannot be clearly analysed (McCall, 2005). However, this theory could be a significant key to analysing the constituent structure of interconnected humans, such as gender, race, ethnicity, isolation, age, and the propensity of a given component of human identity.

This tool of analysis has been adopted in several studies to try and better understand leadership identities. Richardson and Loubier (2008) applied this theory in their study of the interaction of attributes with leadership identity and concluded that there is a correlation between the diverse identities of the leader with leadership itself. Some studies have used the intersectional framework to analyse the interplay of intersectionality due to various identities with leadership (Moorosi, 2014; Chin, 2013). Richardson and Loubier (2008) also explained the importance of this theory when studying leadership due to its significance in the analysis of complex situations that may be difficult to understand if focusing on a single category separately. Cho et al. (2013) illustrated the application of the theory in the field of study through investigations into intersectional dynamics, discussing the discourse and debates on intersectionality whether theoretically or methodologically, and the diverse application of the theory as a “disciplinary travel” theory. The theory has versatility and adoptability which might be one of its key strengths.

Rodriguez et al. (2016) stated that intersectionality is a broad-based knowledge project that has been used to identify inequalities in social relations and even in organisations. Rodriguez (2016) also states that intersectionality is a field that explores identity and the source of power relations

within a society. Intersectionality has attracted much attention, especially in organisations where discrimination occurs. A predominant focus has been on the identity of the minorities in certain organisations. Researchers have examined the multiple differences between groups and the shifts of power between employees (Dennissen, 2020; Atewologun, et al, 2016). As one of the critical theories, intersectionality analyses the inequality not only within one organisation but also with multiple margined groups in several workplaces to find out how the level of inequality differs from one configuration to another (McCall, 2005).

Intersectionality analysis provides a deep understanding of the individuals who are discriminated against in several organisational settings. Bell and Nkomo (2001) demonstrated the pathway of executive African American women and compared their circumstances with their white peers. In addition, Moorosi et al. (2018) examined the role of identity of gender, race, and class (as an emerging identity in the study) of Black women school leaders from different settings, shaping the successful leadership of the women through the intersection of their identities with their leadership performance. Intersectionality in organisations is a growing field. However, most of the studies focus on the construction of identity and the relationship between the social identity and the work identity (Atewologun and Sealy, 2014). However, Fuller (2018) demonstrated the significance of the intersectional analysis of “*linguistic habitus*” and the social and institutional identities of women school leadership “simultaneity” to comprehend the extent to which women in such institutions are empowered or not.

To understand the nature of the experiences of women facing multiple oppressed systems, Carastathis (2014) elucidates that “This insight- that oppression is not a singular process or a binary

political relation, but is better understood as constituted by multiple, converging, or interwoven systems” (p.304). Analysing the daily life practices of subordinate women in a gendered society through the intersections of multiple aspects of oppression is significant as "Such diverse life experiences as stereotyping, silencing, and marginalisation do not lend themselves to simple, categorical analysis based solely upon gender. It is also necessary to know the race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and class of the woman in question to describe said experiences accurately” (Simein, 2007, p. 267). For women in an oppressive system like Saudi Arabia, it is significant to understand the experiences of women living multiple forms of exclusion. Therefore, intersectionality would assist in deeply interpreting the experiences.

Derived from the works of Black feminists, the idea of intersectionality came forward as a criticism that demonstrates the exclusion of the likes of ethnic minorities groups and their individualities (Collins, 1990). Researchers with an intersectional perspective have revealed that organisations that focus on a single identity have generally failed to resolve the power relations between their members (Strolovitch, 2007). Scholars have started to examine what intersectionality means, how women’s rights organisations practice it, and its impact on those organisations (Bassel and Emejulu, 2014). This theory has not only been adopted in the analysis of race and gender but it has also widely contributed to the analysis of other marginalised human social axes such as immigrants, for example (Kaushik and Walsh, 2018).

Intersectionality contributes as it is a significant tool for understanding the construction of the nature of social oppression through the narratives constructed due to the influence of social oppression (Wijeyesinghe and Jones, 2014) The authors demonstrate that it is a tool for deepening

the understanding of human experiences and guiding how to work to understand the dimensions of inequality and oppression in the social experience. Thus, in this study, intersectionality is used to perceive the social interactions shaping the experiences of minority members in an oppressed system. Therefore, this study adopts intersectionality as a theory for understanding the career experiences of women vice-deans including the level of their empowerment in their position.

Experiences of women in institutions, such as women academic leaders in HE institutions in Saudi Arabia need to be interpreted through the lens of intersectionality to comprehend the form of their cultural and gender identity influencing their career.

There have been disagreements in the literature regarding the implementation of intersectional practices because advocates fail to agree on the ways in which intersectionality can be attained. Due to this difference of opinion, they often wrongly promote an additional understanding of oppression while ignoring the consideration of the system. In doing so, mainstream organisations encounter more barriers (Writers, 2010). The most evident criticism of the theory is that it still stereotypes people into different groups (Crenshaw, 1989). The groups are more complicated instead of considering each person's exclusive experiences. The theory groups people depending on their identity markers. The created groups get an endless number of supplementary physiognomies until only one person can fit into the novel category. If a person views everything that results in obstruction such as looks, personality, and abilities, they will view their experiences as exclusive and cannot classify simply (Richardson and Loubier, 2008).

Although intersectionality mainly discusses class and racial inequality, the sort of discrimination might be culturally structured, producing high level of systems of oppression not only through

gender discrimination but also through the cultural grounds of oppression on women like the lives of women in Saudi Arabia. “Women’s lives are constructed by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression. This insight – that oppression is not a singular process or a binary political relation, but is better understood as constituted by multiple, converging, or interwoven systems.” (Carastathis, 2014, p. 304). Thus, the complexity of the oppressive systems on the lives of Saudi women such as gender and culture might be comprehended by analysing how it is converging and interacting in those women’s lives.

2.2.2 Gendered Organisations Theory

Acker (1990) introduced the theory of gendered organisations to produce an understanding of the role of gender in the organisations. This theory elucidates that institutions are associated with the nature of gender differences that affect men and women differently. It argues that organisations, and particularly institutions of higher learning, are gendered and shaped by the practices and expectations that privilege men and disadvantage women. In this framing, the fundamental structure of the institutions is constructed based on gender discrimination. The daily organisational practices make the discrimination a common occurrence that is taken for granted. In institutions, the work of women is assessed on the basis of their social role and their association with maternal responsibilities. The relationship between masculinity and institutional power may be deeply rooted in institutions, and it is linked to socio-cultural policies. This interrelation may vary according to the nature of the sub-societies where the organisations are located. In gendered institutions, the institutional power is controlled by men, especially in traditional bureaucratic organisations, hence any decisions are made in a gendered manner to favour men in the top positions. Furthermore, in the hierarchy, men have the vital role and this is one of the dimensions

of inequality in the organisations (Acker, 1990). Although attempts have been lately made to reduce the male domination of institutional power by involving women in management, their presence is not sufficient if they find themselves discouraged. Encouraging women to reach the top is not sufficient if their managerial life is not sufficiently managerial (Acker, 2014). This means not giving women enough support to perform their role and grow. These are considered to be semi-administrative, which is a common issue in many parts of the world, but the difference is deeper in terms of the differences in experience from one place to another (Acker, 2014).

2.2.3 The Glass Ceiling

Linked to Acker's gendered organisations, Connell (2006) introduced an approach that combines what has already been introduced in gender studies with what contributes to the policies and practices that affect women's progression in organisations. Connell (2006) argued that women tend to experience more discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice in the workplace that blocks their attainment of higher positions of leadership, despite women having attained the necessary credentials and having proven their capability in managerial positions. The glass ceiling is a metaphorical expression that explains an invisible barrier that blocks women from attaining higher leadership positions (Al-Manasra, 2013). According to the glass ceiling approach, the barriers that women experience are not only located within the organisations but within the societal norms, roles, expectations, and gender regulations. This regulation includes the dimensions that divide the work between the genders, including determining the type of profession for each sex in certain occupations appropriate to masculinity and professions specific to feminism, as well as the distribution of power and authority between the two sexes so then the sex of males dominates females. In addition, the glass ceiling is a metaphor for gender bias against women in organisations.

It represents the barrier against women established by male “gatekeepers” who have power over women’s leadership appointments which explicates the minor representation for women as leaders (Carli and Eagly, 2001). Although Eagly and Carli (2007) later introduced the labyrinth metaphor, arguing that the career paths of women take unexpected turns and that the challenges women face are not only at the top of organisational leadership, the glass-ceiling metaphor still has relevance in societies where the progression of women to the top is blocked by gendered regulations.

In this study, the presented theories are used to understand the experiences of the women VDs in the institution, and to explain the interaction of gender, culture, and the social and organisational practices in order to comprehend the multiple factors that affect the construction of the career paths of the female VDs in Saudi HE.

2.3 Career Paths of Women in Academia

The discussion of women’s career paths, specifically in the academic field, has emphasised the fact that women experience unstable careers (Burkinshaw and White, 2017; Boud and Brew, 2013). The study by Bain and Cummings (2000) reviewed the factors affecting the career development of women in the academic field. These factors were represented as the societal factors, professional-organisational barriers, and institutional variations that did not sufficiently evidence the motivation of career choice for women (Conley, 2005). Women have been shown to have a low representation in higher academic ranks relative to academic career progression which reduces the women’s opportunities in terms of leadership progression (Eddy and Ward, 2015).

According to Cooper et al. (2007), career development is an ongoing process that involves decision-making, finding the pros and cons, taking into consideration the other alternatives, and acting and evaluating the decision. In the last decade, the representation of women in academia,

especially in the West, has improved due to administrators overcoming the discrimination in academics. However, in Asian countries, due to the lack of government effort and the traditional norms, women are still facing difficulties when it comes to exercising their basic rights (Morley and Crossouard, 2015). Social, cultural, and psychological factors have a great influence on the career development of women, especially in academia. Factors such as work-family responsibilities, staying away from home or traveling a lot, and a lack of leadership opportunities are challenging.

The literature has clearly highlighted the gendered issues in the academic career that labels women a professional minority (Heim and Murphy, 2003; Jones and Palmer, 2011; Tanenbaum, 2011; Ceci et al., 2015). Likewise, there is a significant amount of research evaluating the roles and opportunities available for women in the business sector. However, concerning the academic environment and gendered opportunities in academic institutions, it is quite stranded and diverted, while being discussed merely as one of the influencing factors of under-representation of women in the respective industry (Jones and Palmer, 2011; Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; Pautasso, 2015; Laver et al., 2018).

Besides that, studies have further identified several causes which include the lesser inclination of institutions towards hiring female employees, a lack of female role models in academia, less chance of promotion, hiring decisions, and gendered biasedness (O'Connor, 2014; Jones and Palmer, 2011). For instance, Tanenbaum (2002) conducted research and identified that women are sometimes forced to react defensively because of the intense level of struggle and hard work that they put into their jobs, as well as seeking recognition and acknowledgement. However, in most

situations, when their male colleagues are recognised for their professional values and contributions and are promoted, it instigates a defensive attitude among the women, urging them to react (Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; Ceci et al., 2015; Pautasso, 2015; Laver et al., 2018; Lewiss et al., 2020). Another study revealed that academic careers and specifically the opportunities available to women in higher education, where women are hired to academic positions, are usually entry level positions. However, on the contrary, their male peer groups possessing a similar level of skills and abilities or experience are over-represented when signing up for executive positions (Cooper et al., 2007).

Female relationships are identified as one of the key reasons for the under-representation of women in academic careers. Considering this stance, Jones and Palmer (2011) conducted a study in order to understand the challenges that women have to face to excel in their academic careers and the key influence of other women in the institution, both as a student and as an employee. The researchers opted for a psychodynamic perspective to formulate the theoretical foundation of their study following which the perceived image of one women professional was assessed from the perspective of their female colleagues. Several discussions with the female professionals working in the public colleges were conducted to ascertain the extent to which they were supportive of each other, especially in terms of encouraging each other to focus on their career advancement. In addition, the researchers extended the focus of the study and explored the efficacy of support provided to the women by their female supervisors and departmental leaders, helping them to combat the challenges and excel in their careers. The outcomes of the study identified that the institutional as well as inter-personal culture in the academic institutions as the two key influences following which the results from the quantitative study showed that women provide their

colleagues with the required support. However, the qualitative study contradicted these findings and identified other women as a key hindrance, holding them back from excelling in their career advancement (Jones and Palmer, 2011).

Gasser and Shaffer (2014) identified the issue of gender inequality based on which the researchers further presented a model of career development for women reflecting the academic pipeline and their experiences as pass through their career in academia. The model consisted of a comparative analysis of the experiences of women pre-, post- and during the process of faculty appointments. Furthermore, the model identified the importance of career counselling for women, enabling them to share their concerns with a counsellor, working with them to improve their academic environment. The findings of the study identified that women possess unique interests that are further depicted in their interest in career development in academia. The model highlighted the prevalence of barriers related to a lack of mentoring and the poor counselling of women faculty members as hinderances within this pipeline.

Putasso (2015) expanded the focus of research and conducted a study to investigate the challenges related to increasing the representation of women in academia at the Italian University Habilitation. The researchers identified the provision of opportunities to women equal to men as a challenge which required an immense modification to the higher education policy. Furthermore, it was identified that the utilisation of a standardised and quantitative assessment of potential teachers at the time of hiring may prove to be an effective way of ensuring the fair and transparent selection of researchers in academia, considering which the data was collected from the Italian university. The outcomes identified that the percentage of women applicants was approximately

36% for the academic positions which was far more than the actual number of female professors working in the universities in Italy. However, very few of the applicants were hired at the professor level, hence they were offered an entry level position. Likewise, a noticeable gap was recorded between the proportion of women applicants at the associate level and those who applied for professor level academic opportunities. The study further identified that although the success rate of both male and female applicants in the selection test was not more than 1%, however this result was not reflected in the hiring ratio of men and women in the university. This clearly indicates the existence of discrimination and gender bias against women in academic careers.

The situation was not found to be any different in academic medicine and related fields which are associated with the science and medical disciplines. Laver et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of the literature within the domain of medicine and other medical fields in order to understand and discuss the role and contribution of women in academic careers. The research was primarily designed to summarise the analysis of all interventions and techniques previously suggested by the literary researchers as a means to enhance the participation and inclusion of women in academic careers. The findings from the 18 research studies identified that the majority of researchers had suggested mentoring, professional development, counselling, education, and networking programs as the key interventions required to increase the number of women in academic careers. It was further identified that the majority of women are engaged into such activities which involves the maximum devotion of their time, hard work, and reduced participation. The study further highlighted that the extent to which any of the suggested intervention is successful depends on the level of hard work, time, and labour required which is usually discussed within the context of bottom-top approaches. Therefore, it was suggested for the

academic institutions to ensure the conducting of an in-depth analysis and an evaluation of the level of efficacy of all interventions using the top-bottom approach. This should ultimately lead to an altered higher education policy and a shifted focus of the higher management towards hiring more female employees in the academia (Laver et al., 2018).

It has been further identified that the progression towards gender equality is comparatively low in the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) when the topic is discussed within the context of the representation of women in the field concerning opting for academic careers (Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; Ceci et al., 2015; Pautasso, 2015; Laver et al., 2018; Lewiss et al., 2020). Straub and Bonocori (2020) identified the situation of an increased prevalence of gender disparities in the field of STEM as a worsening phenomenon where despite the increasing number of women in academia. The number of women academic professionals is quite a bit less, with no or minimum signs of being changed. Kahn and Ginther (2017) conducted research into the inclusion of women in academic careers with a focus on STEM subjects and identified the negative orientation of gender parity, thus explaining that the lesser progression of women in the STEM fields was primarily because of the gendered stereotypes where men were considered to be good at studying and teaching technical subjects compared to women (Kahn and Ginther, 2017).

A significant amount of research was identified related to the unfavourable working environment for women in academic institutions (Adamo, 2013; Ceci et al., 2015; Gasser and Shaffer, 2014) following which researchers advocated that an unwelcoming and threatening working environment creates uncomfortable situations for women. Some studies represent data showing there to be a gender disparity among academics of a professional rank as evidence of the women's shortage in

the prestige ranks such as full professors (Gangone and Lennon, 2014; White, 2003). The relation of advancing women in professional ranks and leadership has been considered a connecting factor within the issue of career advancement for women. Bilen-Green et al. (2008) assumed the possibility of making progress in the professional ranks of women and facilitating this through the intensive presence of women in the administrative structure of organisations.

A great deal of the literature explains the factors influencing the career advancement of women. For instance, Bain and Cummings (2000) illustrated the influences on women's career in academia embodied in the field of the subject such as what they refer to as "female friendly" fields like social sciences and health sciences rather than other subjects such as the institutional impacts of policies, practices, and procedures and the support of family-friendly policies, as well as childcare, to better comprehend women's career advancement (Eddy and Ward, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2013). Some educational hierarchal systems in countries such as the English system have a negative influence that prevents academic women from pausing their career development when they wish to temporarily do so due to family responsibilities (Bain and Cumming, 2000).

From the addressed studies, it is shown that the factors affecting the advancement in professional rank of academic women were alike. This supports the argument that advancements in academic leadership are linked to the factors within both the institutional and social dimensions. Thus, the subject of career progression, and perhaps one of its components, is related to the extent to which women are recognised for leadership positions.

2.4 Academic Identity

The literature on academic identity puts an emphasis on the fact that HEIs are the key players in shaping and developing academic identities for individuals. Henkel (2005) indicates that the nature and structure of academic identity is based on two main factors: the society of the HEI and departmental discipline. Academics have to yield to the obligations of providing decent academic performance in the teaching and development of learning, research, and knowledge generated based on, as well as following, personal values and belonging (Kogan, 2000). Academics strengthen their identities as experts in their discipline and also as professional teachers, as well as being collaborative members of their departments due to the additional role requirements (Winter, 2009).

Academic identity is understood in relation to the complexity of the structure of the person's lived experiences and their being in the place and belonging to it (Clegg, 2008). Madden (2005) argues that the difference in identity affects leadership in a social and cultural framework. This context affects the perceptions of the leaders. This cultural framework is established on a social basis that builds the concept of gender through it and also defines the daily lives of men and women. Like other institutions, academia is permeated by the prevailing social concepts (Carvalho and De Lourdes Machado, 2010; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2011).

Studies concerning academic identity present the numerous factors that affect the construction of an individual academic. Deem (2003) suggests that academic work does not vary according to gender, since both men and women perform the same tasks of teaching, research, and management. However, when this work is considered in greater depth, other intersections of the individual

identity of academics emerge such as race, culture, and so on. These are displayed in gendered disciplines and yield certain gender differences in some outcomes. For example, it has been observed that the research productivity of male academics tends to be higher than that of women (Bentley, 2011; Bain and Cummings, 2000; Airini et al., 2008). Gender identity is influenced by the institution in various ways, such as how power is controlled in the process of promotion in the organisation (Bagilhole and White, 2013). Haake (2009) believes that the focus on academic leadership often depends on the social construction of men and women and an awareness that they work as part of two different and homogenous groups. Most studies agree that a leader's identity is firmly connected to the social influences, as well as the influences of their intersecting identities (e.g., age, marital status, race) and the influences of their professional background (Haake, 2009; Wheat and Hill, 2016).

A study by Deem and Lucas (2006) highlights that academic women are more aware of their own academic identity in teaching, research, and management. In addition, the authors point out that those who recently entered the academic field had a prior conception of this particular nature and tend to combine these tasks. Very few had no prior conception of the research work required. Their identity was based on a clear conception of what academic work was. In contrast, Churchman (2006) believes that the complex nature of academic work has contributed to the construction of a large number of academic identities due to the studies reporting on the entry of modern requirements related to the market, the financial needs affecting universities, and the showing of multiple identities other than a traditional identity. Ultimately, even though these requirements progress into HE, the larger and key identity remains what can be summed up in teaching, research, and management.

The interplay of gender and academic identity has been examined by Haeruddin et al. (2019). In HE, intersectionality is significant when seeking to understand an individuals' perceptions in academic life (Hearn, 2012). In the work of Eckstrand et al. (2016), intersectionality was found to be valuable in academic medicine to develop medical environments that include several identities and differences. It is crucial when seeking to enhance the experiences of people in various academic environments.

Shelton et al. (2018) presented perspectives on intersectionality in academia through the narratives of women faculty and the issues they experience. They emphasised that “identities mattered in their recounted experiences and continue to matter in their everyday lives” (p. 9). In addition, the influence of intersectionality on women's studies has been discussed by Luft et al. (2009). They suggest that “We must examine not only the kinds of discrimination that occur within institutions but also the ways in which discrimination becomes a fundamental part of the institution's organisation and implementation of its overall purpose” (p. 41). Identity involves privileges, advantages, disadvantages, and different levels of power (Garran and Rozas, 2013).

2.5 Academic Leadership

The literature on academic leadership in HEIs is different from the leadership of other organisations in that it calls attention to all elements of the academic environment of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship (Sathye, 2004). HEIs are created to increase human creativity and the individual academic's development. They are different because of their “educational mission – a complex and variable mix of teaching, research, service, and outreach” (Bolman and Gallos, 2011, p. 5). Academic leadership has a strong collaborative nature with academics dividing

their time between teaching and research. Ramsden (1998) identifies academic leaders as teachers, researchers, networkers, the recognisers of skills, and performers. Effective academic leaders are skilled networkers and communicators (Spano, 2017). They possess the ability to establish rapport and trust among staff (not only in their own faculty) and to involve them in the decision-making process (Rich, 2005; Sathye, 2004). Academics are required to be teachers at the same time as researchers, and to possess select expertise and professional judgement (Rowley and Sherman, 2003; Rich, 2005).

While leadership in education is generally understood as setting directions, generating visions, and encouraging others towards the achievement of the school's objectives and linking these to part of the influences that affect the school's improvement and student learning (Davis, 2009; Dimmock, 2003), academic leadership tends to be different. According to Sathye (2004), academic leadership in institutions of higher education is different from the leadership in other organisations as it demands the academic leader's attention towards all elements of the academic environment at the same time – teaching, learning, research, and scholarships. Academic leadership entails a strong social nature, requiring collaborative work and both professional and humane behaviour in both teaching and research at the same time. Ramsden (1998) addressed the characteristics of academic leaders, stating that they need to be teachers, researchers, networkers, the identifiers of skills, and performers. Effective academic leadership involves a key skill like networking, which refers to the ability to build rapport and trust among the staff and not only those in their own faculty. This also relates to involving them in the decision-making process (Rich, 2006; Sathye, 2004). Academic leaders are required to be teachers as well as researchers, experts, and professionals in decision-making (Rowley and Sherman, 2003; Rich, 2006).

Studies examining academic leadership have represented the unique nature of HEIs as educational and research environments that require the faculty to be not only teachers but also expert researchers and leaders. Furthermore, the faculty should adapt to the leadership position, as even when they are working as both full-time managers and faculty at the same time, they are also a source of academic leadership (Strathe and Wilson 2006). Fitzgerald (2014) states, “leadership in universities involves multiple and complex tasks and responsibilities that are physically, intellectually and emotionally demanding” (p.33). Studies have also shown the complexity of leadership in academic institutions that is formed by the nature of authority, whereas leadership often depends on an individual who is recognised for their expertise, the extent of their peer and professional recognition, and the ability to make a change. It is in this sense that academic leadership tends to be male-dominated (Machado-Taylor and White, 2014; Ross-Smith, et al., 2005). Women academics is reported to be less manifest as leaders which is attributed to their work and personal life balance (Dunn et al., 2014). There are different perspectives of women’s leadership in HE around the world. Many studies in the past have pursued the extents associated with the rank of women within an identified country or the same at the international level (Oexle and Corrigan, 2018).

In academic leadership, the issue is not only the internal demands of the university context itself, but also the demands outside of the university campus. There are limits that control the power of the authority in the top management in HE. These constraints are subject to a complex relationship between the state and the HE system, including the borders related to changes in the government and the market (O’Conner, 2014). HEIs are moving to obtain funding to develop the basic university functions such as teaching and research. Universities are increasingly exposed to the

expectations of the business community which force the HEIs to deal in a commercial way that may be seen of as an important factor in raising the local economy of the region (Davis et al., 2007). Kezar (2014) supports this view of the changing nature of universities towards being market driven at the time of women's reaching for power positions. This creates pressure on them. However, Henkel (2017) indicates that academic institutions have become less stable when striving to meet the many external requirements. O'Connor (2010) supports this by saying that there are limitations regarding the departments of academic institutions and the complex relationship between them and the state. This in turn is determined by the changes in the market. HE systems have varied goals, interests, values, priorities, motivational instincts, and needs compared to the other firms. It is complicated to comprehend the HE system. The academic leadership must retort effectively to the continuing alterations that portray contemporary universities (Marecek, 2016).

2.6 Women and Leadership in Higher Education

A great deal of studies have discussed women's leadership advancement in HE (e.g., Bagilhole and White, 2011; Bagilhole, 2007; White, 2003; Madsen, 2008, Airini et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2004). These studies consider the low level of women in seniority posts in universities and have tended to agree that the policies thus far have not worked effectively to close the gap of gender inequity in the top managerial positions.

Studies that concentrate on the gender and leadership differences in HEIs show that the "classic" problem of gender inequality is not only limited to one society. It is more or less severe in some geopolitical contexts (Morley, 2013). Morley and Crossouard (2015) investigated women HE

leadership seniority in the South Asian context (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri-Lanka) which have similar socio-cultural and belief systems. They reported the low record of gender equality as well as a lack of gender consideration in terms of HE policies and categorisation. There are no statistics or evidence in these countries showing the status of women and the extent of their advancement. This may have increased in number but the low representation of women, especially in senior positions, has not changed significantly.

Women are most disadvantaged in higher education in terms of getting a high position and highly paid jobs (Longman et al., 2018). The career paths of women in HE are riddled with more challenges compared to those of men, and women get less exposure to leadership positions in HE. Women are therefore less well represented in HE leadership positions than men. The entry- and mid-level pipelines are saturated with women, but women are fewer the higher up the career ladder. Historically, women represent a lower percentage of managers and college professors worldwide (Marecek, 2016). Within the United States, the role of female professors and administrators has grown with stimulating turns and twists since the early 1800s. While women workers were less in the corporate setting, they have found a niche in education (Parker, 2015).

Some studies emphasise the fact that although women occupy educational positions in greater numbers than men, their participation is limited when it comes to reaching top managerial positions (Davidson and Burke, 2004; Shah, 2015). Considerable attention should therefore be paid to examining the factors that affect the construction of women's career paths and the way they interact to cause a low representation of women in top managerial positions in HE.

The literature shows that these issues are shared by women globally in different cultures, religions, and geographical regions (Morley, 2014). In Morley's study, women leaders in HE from 16 countries around the world reported issues in their experiences. These include "leadership is a loss" (referring to ineffective experiences in leadership), legislative frameworks that enable women to create progress, cultural norms that inhibit women's career aspirations and orientation, and socio-cultural practices and belief systems which are reported to hinder their career advancement.

Institutions may have a role in disrupting the career development of women and the skills required. Women's work alone is not enough if there is no suitable environment to support them in terms of opportunities and development (Eddy and Ward, 2015). There is a non-existence of gender-disaggregated figures held at the regional and country-level to evaluate and inform operative policy execution. There is less research-based indication to notify the policy development on leadership and gender in HE due to the low research record for women's leadership (Oexle and Corrigan, 2018).

Gendered institutional practices have been identified as the key roadblocks for the under-representation of women in academic career opportunities. There are certain sub-aspects which are considered to be additional yet significant influencers blocking the selection and progression of women for and in academic positions (Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; Ceci et al., 2015; Pautasso, 2015; Laver et al., 2018). The three key aspects have been identified by researchers to be academic recruitment, less opportunities for promotion to an improved rank, as well as the obstacles limiting the opportunities available to women to take up a leadership role and more responsibilities. A lack

of opportunities for women in academic careers is one of the most highlighted legacies and concerns where the under-representation of female faculty members is attributed to bias (Adamo, 2013), the over-representation of male faculty (Ceci and Williams, 2011; Gasser and Shaffer, 2014), discrimination, and the inequitable provision of opportunities (Ceci and Williams, 2011; O'Brien and Hapgood, 2012; Adamo, 2013).

Considering promotional hinderances as one of the key barricades for women in the academic careers, Bartels et al., (2021) highlighted the need for the development of an effective and supportive system for women working in the higher education industry. Keeping in view this stance, the authors conducted a study and explored the challenges that women are most likely to face specifically in terms of getting a promotion which, on the contrary, forces them to leave their academic careers due to biased favour being given to the male peer group. The researchers clearly identified the efficacy of the faculty development for the academic institution, thus revealing that an effective institutional system provides equal opportunities to male and female faculty members related to hiring, selection, and promotion as well as acknowledgement. As a result, the prevalence of an effective system leads to a diverse, collaborative, and equitable working environment for female academic professionals. Bartels et al. (2021) divided the faculty members into three distinct groups which were categorised on the basis of their seniority and gender, comprised specifically of senior faculty, trainee advocates, and allies of the female faculty. This was intended to help identify the key reasons why there were discriminatory behaviours in the institutions of focus. The second group consisted of the departmental chair heads who were responsible for developing a supportive environment in the department for all male and female faculty members. The researchers identified that although the chair heads were appointed to a very important and

challenging role, the amount of training that they had received to avoid discriminatory behaviour was nominal. The study further suggested for them to organise family friendly workshops so they can realise the importance of female faculty members. The third group that participated in the research was the promotion and tenure committee. The members were primarily responsible for the performance evaluation, assessment and awarding of promotions to the employees in the institutions. The researchers dedicated special focus on this category due to their association directly with the hiring and promotion of female staff members as an acknowledgement of their contributions in the institution. The promotion committee was involved in the research to a great extent and provided suggestions to the researchers about improving the working environment for females in terms of their academic careers. Avoiding gender bias was one of the highlighted aspects identified by the committee as a part of the institutional developmental interventions.

The third aspect in support of the gendered attitude toward women hindering them from pursuing an academic career was the very limited opportunities for career advancement to leadership roles. The literature has clearly evidenced the prevalence of a decreased level of parity for women taking up leadership roles at both corporate and academic management levels (Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; Ceci et al., 2015; Pautasso, 2015; Laver et al., 2018; Lewiss et al., 2020). Although there is a significant amount of literature highlighting the need for equality for men and women, women are still required to struggle against the glass ceiling. They work harder than males with an uncertain expectation of receiving acknowledgement for their contribution in the same domain. Studies have clearly identified that men are offered leadership roles and are considered to be influencers compared to women faculty members. This perceived image of women as leaders limits their mobility in the upwards direction where promotions are generally awarded to male faculty

members. The struggle of women for leadership roles is deemed to be continuous, requiring them to keep fighting for equality and for the acknowledgement of their competencies, skills, and capacities. However, in the majority of cases, their desire to reach the top rungs in their respective profession remains unmet.

Clarke et al., (1999) identified that in order to pursue their academic career, women are required to sacrifice their self-development goals. The researchers further identified the reasons for this discriminatory behaviour and argued that the academic environment is usually masculine dominated where the male faculty members are provided with ample opportunities to showcase their skills and competencies. In contrast, women fall prey to gendered stereotypes and are required to opt for either their professional or personal identity, never both, thus threatening their jobs and position in the institution. For instant, Primerer et al., (2009) identified that generally women faculty members are unaware of the competition, and are not allowed to argue or negotiate in order to attain the top-level positions in the institution. The study further identified that feminine leadership qualities are often stereotyped specifically when discussed within the context of possessing an effective leadership role, therefore academic managers usually avoid taking risks and are therefore unable to imagine women as successful leaders. The study specifically used a term in their research revealing women to be “ill suited” for leadership roles. This was further criticised by other researchers and feminist critics (Primer et al., 2009).

Giscombe (2007) identified cultural barriers as one of the key issues barricading the progressive trajectory of women in their academic careers. According to the researcher, academic institutions usually exclude women from the social groups and prefer for men to become part of their

administrative teams. As a result, women who are appointed to the token positions are still expected to work more than their male colleagues and to fulfil all responsibilities of being a leader with no acknowledgment, entitlement, or encouragement for their work (Giscombe, 2007).

A similar stance was highlighted by the research findings of Franco-Orozco and Franco-Orozco (2018) who evaluated the role of women as leaders in an academic institution. The researchers highlighted that women are generally loaded with extra work related to teaching and curriculum designing. Apart from fulfilling their assigned responsibilities, they are expected to take on the advice of the male colleagues and work under their supervision. This reduces the chance of them utilising their knowledge, skills, and abilities while being considered minority workers and unofficial mentors for the academic students.

Researchers have clearly identified that the struggle of women is real where they strive hard to attain recognition among the male professionals who are appointed to the elite positions. This is where the skills, competencies, and abilities of all faculty members are not very differentiated specifically when evaluating male and female professionals (Adamo, 2013; Tanenbaum, 2011; Franco-Orozco and Franco-Orozco, 2018).

Women face structural barriers due to the lack of important information because people often do not want to tell them. According to Tanenbaum, (2011), it is considered that women are more emotional than men due to which they cannot act in an authoritarian manner. Since they are less aggressive than men, people always expect them to compromise or smile more and help more which sometimes has a negative impact on the idea of having a female leader. Ladies are for the most part more slanted than men to see better standards, to experience elector delay, and to note

the absence of institutional help, all of which are significant deterrents to female political administration.

As per the study conducted by Franco-Orozco and Franco-Orozco (2018), women are more energetic and enthusiastic. They take care of their employees, are always encouraged to achieve their goals, and can form a good team to achieve their goals. They have to work harder so to prove their dedication. To date, many officers have the perception that women are neither physically nor mentally strong enough for job. For the longest time, men have been leaders due to which when considering for a leader, companies and organisations have often thought of a man. Even now when women are going into the engineering and science fields, men still do not want them to enter the male-dominated space (Ceci, 2011).

The female faculty perceive that there are other departmental and institutional barriers to overcome. It is expected for women to succeed and cope in the prevailing system (Scott, 2018). This structure relies on the male career arrangements, and women are not taken into deliberation. Female members often contend with the personal and professional issues that new male members cannot. Women have to figure out the recompense assembly that results in tenancy and earn admiration for their publications and research. They have heavy teaching loads, advice errands and the need to locate adequate and available childcare. Women faculty members assume that their hard work will be properly rewarded (Christman, 2003).

Different countries have their perspective on female leadership in HE. Longman et al. (2018) presented the outcomes of a grounded theory connecting 16 people working in faith-based

organisations concerning the role of the structural fit/culture in the leadership experience and aspirations. Scott (2018) published the outcomes of their phenomenological study including five women positioned on the chair of a panel of executors in the southeast state of United States. The study reflected that women leadership has the capability to lead, to organise an operative meeting, and to possess a better level of knowledge of the operative board management. The women's management expansion is a significant approach to prepare and equip for higher records associated with the upcoming women leaders within HE (Zhao and Jones, 2017).

Vicary and Jones (2017) conducted an auto-ethnographic study in higher education in the UK. The women's employment under short-term contracts such as sessional or zero-hours recruitment was the common practice. Around 54% of the theoretical staff and 49% of the education staff were recruited in this manner. The study reflected that the inadequacy of enduring and appreciated service within academia results in professional isolation, lower self-esteem, and a decline in leadership aspirations due to the lack of business development chances. Parker et al. (2018) contributed in the setting of HE in Australia. The study explored women's leadership in HE. Australian universities were found to be where gender equivalence at the level of a lecturer cannot ensure gender parity at the senior levels. A program was developed for assisting in the advancement of women to the associate rank. The applicants are expected to show their leadership aptitudes in the areas of research, education, clinical service, appointment, and numerous other areas of leadership expansion that are vital to the program's design. The full involvement of women in leadership in post-secondary establishments is serious in connection to prudent decision-making, organisational culture, financial, and relational reasons. The increasing engagement and

visibility of women in higher education is necessary to benefit the educational system's productivity.

Bagilhole and White (2011) examined gender in universities and its impact on women's participation in senior management positions in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. They found that the percentage of women in top management positions was low in all eight countries, thus concluding that universities prefer to employ highly reputed male academics to occupy positions of power. The under-representation of female in management has a negative influence on the different countries and in the communities. Woolley et al. (2010) explored the benefits of the inclusion of a diverse population in the leadership role as it increases the company's profitability. Longman (2018) focused on the importance of having the voices of women in the decision-making process as a part of bringing in the desired diversity. Primarily, the recent research in many countries shows a movement towards higher provisions for females in leadership. This is related to the increasing displeasure not only related to their financial condition but also in connection to the behaviours and attitudes required to hold government office. Gerzema and D'Antonio (2013) recognised the increased level of discontent in terms of the male-normed mock-ups of people in supremacy. The outcomes of the survey reflected that people are frustrated by the world-dominating codes of masculine behaviour, and thinking. Programmes of control, aggression, rivalry, and a black and white rationale have subsidised the numerous issues that organisations are facing today.

Some studies have reported that there are major obstacles preventing women from obtaining leadership positions in HE. The following section addresses some of the barriers which include

social barriers (e.g., family responsibilities, cultural norms of natural caring, and the emphasis on maternity) (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016; Airini et al., 2008), institutional barriers (e.g., slow career development for women, institutional policies, and gendered institutions), and “internal” barriers (e.g., personality and skills) (Madsen, 2008; Tessens et al., 2011; Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016; Airini et al., 2008; Morley, 2014; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Bornstein, 2007; Black-Chen, 2015).

A common feminist outlook in organisations is that women have always struggled to gain respect, equality, and the same rights as men. However, the struggle has not been easy, especially within some cultures where there are conservative societies. Traditional society mostly utilises the patriarchy system where men are considered to be superior to women and have the right to rule them (Ghane and Nojournian, 2021). The patriarchal ideology has penetrated the social structures of most societies and even organisations still endorse that women are struggling to have their rights valued.

Organisations are the main place where inequity is developed and then copied (Bowleg, 2012).

Acker recommended determining the various elements of the inequality system in the organisation examined such as the social differences as the basis of inequality, the process and practice of creating, maintaining or challenging inequality, the methods of control and consent to such practices, and how to sustain the ethical activities that challenge inequality.

The literature shows that these issues are shared by women all over the world in different cultures, religions, and geographical regions. Nonetheless, the question here is concerned with how strong the dominance of these factors is in relation to the professional lives of women in Saudi Arabia.

There appears to be a dearth of knowledge in this context, hence this study will serve to supply the gap in the literature.

2.6.1 Family Responsibilities

The family component and its associated responsibilities are among the most prominent and significant obstacles in the professional life of female leaders in academia. Some studies (e.g., Airini et al., 2008; Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016; Fitzgerald, 2014) have demonstrated that this factor is influential in connection to the career paths of women, causing a delay in the career development of the same women in accordance with the responsibility of family care. Family care is a crucial issue for women who are working on their career development as it that may affect their access to leadership positions.

Women are capable of managing roles in such a way as to prevent two-sided role negligence (Parker et al., 2018). If a career is preferred, some women face the threat of a broken or worse home. Some women prefer their career to marriage, meaning that they live alone at home or remain unmarried for their whole life. On the other hand, the married women who prefer family responsibilities have to sacrifice their career or resign from their jobs. Due to this, the inner potential ability of the women is buried forever. Women who take on only one role are not seen of favourable at all. These unbeatable and outstanding women should fight to meet the challenge if they pursue both roles. For this, a mutual understanding between husband and wife is highly important to complement each other in the family (Spanò, 2020). Women face the complexity of dividing themselves between the duties of being a wife and being a career woman. The major responsibility of all women is the establishment of a prosperous and happy family. This

responsibility imposed on the family makes things harmonious. Women make an effort, provide everything to support the integrity of the family, and take care of the honour of the family along with their husband and children (Siddique et al., 2011).

It is a common notion that a woman in a formal leadership position appears different than a man. This judgment is broken down by their achievements and skills. The difference is merely due to their physical appearance because leadership is a type of dominance built by the personal capability that invites others to perform things based on acceptance (Kelly, 2019). Leadership suggests a specific capability. A leader is selected based on their competence and skills, instead of the capability to lead. When women become formal leaders, they face many issues as career women (Lantara, 2015). Primarily, careers encourage women to have a strong sense of concentration and will that is not demanded of a woman ordinarily. Women must have the confidence to lead, elaborate on their ambitions, and make an effort to perform. Ambition, competence, and success are attained while also regarding their role as a house maker and working alongside men. Women's leadership is mostly understood through adulthood (Oexle and Corrigan, 2018).

Needing to take care of their children, unconscious bias, and family obligations are the major barriers due to which women fall behind when it comes to promotion. Moreover, the burden of their family responsibilities affects decision-making. In the research done by Adamo (2013), in some cases where woman put their career before their family, society disapproves. In the case of men, it is said that the person is a workaholic. It has been observed that women do not want to be at the senior level because they do not want to bring work conflicts home.

Around the globe, conflict occurs due to a work-life imbalance, which has a negative impact on women. In the research paper done by Gasser (2014), serious consequences occur due to an imbalance between work and life which affects the family and career of both genders. Women suffer from guilt when their children are young if they do not spend enough time with them, which in most cases forces them to leave their job or hire a maid. As a result, women then wait for their children to grow up and for the right time to come so then they can pursue their career.

The time is changing to one where men and women collaborate in numerous domains of life (Gerzema and D'Antonio, 2013). Women's capability is evident in numerous types of professions and jobs. All women are capable of work as well as men and no jobs are impossible for women. Their work is no worse than men but women cannot equally perform some of the tasks that need a lot of energy such as harbour porter (Kelly, 2019).

2.6.2 Low Research Records for Women

Research productivity is an essential requirement for career development and advancement for both women and men in HE. However, it can take more than 10 years of research to gain the desired achievement of advancing one's career (Bain and Cummings, 2000). For female academics, publications and conference participation can be delayed or postponed during the period of motherhood due to childcare responsibilities (Bilen-Green et al., 2008). Some studies have sought to investigate the academics' recognition of this relationship, often finding there to be a high level of awareness of the existence of a necessary and implicit relationship between research and teaching (Robertson and Bond, 2001). Brew et al. (2016) explained that the development of research may be through the availability of institutional factors and the social dimensions of the

environment in which the academics work. They reveal that academics must follow a clear vision of research, teaching, and management.

If the women faculty publish equally to men, then it cannot be the published rates that help the junior faculty to attain tenured status. Feminist scholars also challenge the primary assumptions made by alternative paradigms (Warner et al., 2018). These challenges are threatening the investors in the status quo that are motivated to discredit women's research. Service is another domain that is reflected as a disservice done towards the women faculty. The women faculty serve a great number of recognised groups. It is expected from the women faculty for them to aid three to four times as many groups as men. Also, women are considered to be tokens on these committees and they are not always able to give their point of view or have a voice (Vicary and Jones, 2017).

The workload of women in less senior roles can prevent them from taking part in the research activities required for career advancement (Fitzgerald, 2014). Fitzgerald explored the endeavours of female leaders to create opportunities for themselves in HEIs. This was done through narratives with many female academic leaders in Australia and New Zealand. The study revealed the series of leadership experiences that the women have undertaken to clarify the opportunities available for women. They explained the complexities and barriers that must be overcome in order to achieve gender equality in the leadership of HEIs. Brew et al. (2016) illustrated how leadership affects women's career imbalances in other academic activities, such as research.

In addition, the higher contribution of women in HE is a crucial expansion goal within numerous republics worldwide. It creates special schemes and initiatives for increasing the participation of women in HE (Warner et al., 2018). Paswan and Singh (2020) collected research publication data from 50 productive institutions and 5 major institution systems and planned a longitudinal study for five years. The outcomes show that the level of women's participation is different in different disciplines such as 37% in biology, 32% in agricultural science, 31% in social science, and 32% in medical science. The analysis of the citations showed that male-authored credentials have an advantage as an influencing factor compared to female-authored papers (Paswan and Singh, 2020). Women who occupy senior positions in HEIs have been the “exception”, even within highly reputed universities and colleges (Bagilhole and White, 2011, p. 91). Stereotyping women and gender segregation are socially related ideologies. Stereotyping women has an influence on the rate of female participation in the workforce, resulting in the under-representation of women in leadership positions (Scuch et al., 2014). Fuller (2013) illustrates the role of culture and society in gender discrimination in their success in the workforce. She clarifies that the roots of this are the social and cultural norms along with the stereotype that women should only perform family responsibilities and so on. This fact of stereotyping women has an influence on female participation in the workforce.

2.6.3 Socio-Cultural Norms and Gender

Women's leadership is also influenced by the power of the socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, belief systems, class and caste system, as well as the inadequate investment in women, firm culture, leadership perceptions, selection and recruitment, gender and authority, and family responsibilities (Gerzema and D'Antonio, 2013). If women only act upon their duty of

child-rearing practices, they cannot involve themselves in their professional life. In terms of being a female leader, the most important thing is capability backed up by an academic background in the field of work (Gedminiene and Kaminskiene, 2016). Women can be successful leaders if their intelligence is better than their subordinates, if they have social maturity, are a good listener, a good leader, an immunity to problems, and openness in their communication. These principles of leadership are primarily the direction for leaders can move to attain the organisational goals. If these principles are fulfilled, there would not be a difference between men and women (Crenshaw, 1989).

Society has given the image of motherhood a high position. Leadership means hierarchy and competition related to responsibility and dominance. Considering the women's point of view, leadership is the ability to manage internalisation, dilemmas, manifestation, participation, and integrity (Shepherd, 2017). The personality trait of a leader makes up the maturity, and leadership also combines feminine and masculine qualities such as sensitivity, firmness, gentleness, courage, empathy, and stiffness. Women can behave as a leader through multifaceted personality traits that are crucial for making appropriate decisions. Without these necessary traits, the leadership will face complexities and consider their opinions to be due to being a woman who is a weak person, even if it is not true (Warner et al., 2018).

Women also face many objections due to the cultural attitude of society that considers a man to function as the head or guard of the family. It is a physical obstacle in which women are underestimated when it comes to the need to perform heavy duties at home (Gerzema and D'Antonio, 2013). The physical obstacle is that women are burdened by the contractual duty to

become pregnant and to give birth. Women are also considered a nurse to their child while the man of the household is absent from these responsibilities. This necessity declines the freedom of women when it comes to remaining active in numerous domains of life. If a woman is pregnant with more than a dozen children, her working age will be used for honourable duties. It is the major responsibility that all women perform in their life (Gedminiene and Kaminskiene, 2016).

The strong ideology practiced in the Netherlands is that women are mothers, meaning that they are not permitted to work in organisations. Childcare services are another controversial issue that hinders the academic recruitment of women. Women who stay at home, possess the cultural status, care for their children, and cannot support their husbands financially have a weak financial position due to their lower participation rate within the labour market (Benschop and Brouns, 2003).

Women face a theological obstacle that hinders their capability to perform leadership roles in HE. Women are human beings like men but their duties also cover standing next to their male partner, providing to his needs, and making him comfortable. As per the theological view, women are made from the ribs of a man, so this means that women must take care of men (Benschop and Brouns, 2003). This story is stuck in people's minds and it has become a hindering factor to the women who want to participate in a significant role. This sociocultural obstacle is a stereotype. It is thought that women are weak, passive, dependent, sensitive, and surrender. They are opposite to men who are considered to be strong, active, independent, intelligent, and having greater potential (Alcalde and Subramaniam, 2020).

Women also face obstacles to their viewpoints. This difficulty arises as an outcome of the dichotomous philosophy amongst the men and women. Females are considered to be a homebody

and males are considered to be an out of the home-person. This dichotomous point of view makes women uncomfortable to go outside of the home and men do not take part in household matters as it is considered to be inappropriate for them (Collins and Bilge, 2016) Giscombe (2007) identified cultural barriers as being one of the key issues barricading the progressive trajectory of women in their academic careers. According to researchers, academic institutions usually exclude women from social groups and prefer for men to become a part of their administrative teams. As a result, women who are appointed to the token positions are still expected to work more than their male colleagues and to fulfil all the responsibilities of being a leader with no acknowledgment, entitlement, or encouragement for their work (Giscombe, 2007).

In Asia, the social and cultural barrier is patriarchal. Women are considered to work at home, while men are expected to work outside of the home. These roles are faithfully supported by authentic, religious, ideological, ethnic, financial, and social elements. In these social orders, men are required to work outside the house and to make money, while women are involved in decisions according to their appearance and their capacity to take care of a home, their spouses, and any children (Gasser and Shatter 2014). Women are not given enough of an education as they are considered a thing that must work for the betterment of the home, which is holding them from advancing in their career and academia. In the context of Saudi Arabia, social barriers strongly exist. Alfawzan (2017) indicated that Saudi working women have faced an issue with transportation due to the pre-2017 status of the women's driving prohibition.

Cultural identity differs from one region to another and the discrimination against women might be worsened in some places, creating a severe hierarchy and segregation (Van der Hoogte and

Kingma, 2004). Therefore, understanding intersection of gender identity within a particular cultural context might lead to analyse “the way in which cultural diversity intersects with gender relations are complex in theory. In practice, things become even more complex” (Van der Hoogte and Kingma, 2004, p. 50).

2.6.4 Institutional Practices and Gender Discrimination

Some studies indicate that there are institutional practices and barriers that the faculty members know about and confront in their attempts to achieve a leadership position. Some of these practices are presented as gender discrimination. New faculty members often compete with professional and personal issues in ways that may not be gender-specific but rather are academic practices in general, such as knowing the rewards they may have, seeking respect for their research work, and offering advice to officials (Christman, 2003). At the individual and institutional levels, there is the hierarchical nature of organisational relations that has become accepted and indisputable in the regulatory environment (Churchman and King, 2009). Kezar (2014) suggests that women should integrate their efforts into leadership using the strategies of men’s successful leadership. However, this suggestion pressures women to follow men to be recognised, and further burdens their work. Most research indicates that women are under-represented in top positions yet studies have shown that women make a significant effort to overcome the difficulties they encounter. In Shahtalebi et al.’s (2011) study, the participants reported that some factors contribute to improving the situation of the low number of women in leadership positions. For example, a stable social life, supportive family availability, a supportive husband, colleague support and friendly relations, and an attitude of cooperation and management. Through an awareness of these factors, these women are able to balance their jobs and family life, although their responsibilities are significant.

Van den Brink and Benschop (2012) found that when HE positions are advertised and candidates invited to apply, the HEIs create transparency. In contrast, closed recruitment procedures veil gendered practices. Organisational practices of inequality may not only address the policies that prevent forgetting discrimination but they also need to monitor the HEIs' implementation of these policies to ensure that they are effective and comprehensive.

Women are recruited to the least senior administrative positions and get the least amount of income compared to the HE proprietors. The picture is evident for women of colour, as only 14% of HE managers are from an ethnic minority (Alcalde and Subramaniam, 2020). Women of colour are also understated in full professorships and tenure which lessens the chance of maximising the prescribed leadership points in universities and colleges. Women are not only deprived of the top leadership occasions of an extended occupation but these chances vanish at numerous points along their career course. When women get a leadership position, they face encounters entrenched with recognised systems and structures (Zhao and Jones, 2017).

Hiring discriminatively was identified to be another key aspect attributed to gendered stereotypes. Rivera (2017) highlighted the stance that the positive perception of men as being good at technical subjects and the negative perception of women being poor at STEM subjects is the key construct facilitating the discriminatory attitude of the academic institutions. Likewise, it was proclaimed that the prolonged prevalence of hiring discrimination leads to a reduction in the available opportunities for women in relation to starting and advancing their careers in academia. Lewis et al. (2020) pointed out that women who are associated with the STEM subjects and who look for

academic careers in the related fields need to have a diversified social capital, which in simple terms, is categorised as enlarged social networking.

Attaining gender equivalence in leadership is a crucial issue of impartiality. When women are denied the ability to take part in the highest leadership sites, they are unable to make a change in society and the associated offices. Leaders mostly exercise high rank, privilege, and power. Leadership is one zone that unlocks the door to the other prospects that also intensify the perquisites of leadership. Biases show subtle and significant obstacles for women (Gedminiene and Kaminskiene, 2016). The structure of HE and the workplace culture deters women from being heard and productive. Women of colour are assumed as token representatives. The successful programs and ideas are accredited to the males and occasionally white women as well. The programs and ideas given by female recruits are professed as soft retorts and canned (Alcalde and Subramaniam, 2020).

As an additional factor, the literature suggests that females face the complexity of finding a mentor despite the evidence that the output of the junior faculty is high. These situations result in a feeling of segregation being felt by the junior women. The first year is highly important for the new faculty and the female new faculty involves a double bind (Zhao and Jones, 2017). Female faculty are often considered to be an outsider in their department. If women are a member of a minority group, then their experiences are more complicated. A sense of isolation is another reason for this minority group leaving school. The most common three problems faced by the women faculty are the teaching load, research support, and the expected research/teaching balance. Advising responsibilities and sizeable teaching is considered to be an inhibitor to their publication

productivity as female teachers are likely to be more involved in teaching instead of their research endeavours (Lantara, 2015).

Women leaders in diverse areas of the HE segment rarely get a chance to segment their involvement with their peers (Christman, 2003). This is not due to the difference in the transfer of theoretical programs or disinclination to talk to their colleagues but instead to the existence of a time famine. As a result of women's under-representation in the seniority in academia, women are absent in the decision-making made within the decision-making bodies in the HE institutions (Morley, 2013). Women are ready to meet the novel challenges such as decision-making (Vicary and Jones, 2017). This is applicable to engineering, technology, and mathematics to permit women to move forward. The equality of men and women cannot be wasted if the women are mobilised in terms of their abilities. When the abilities of women are the same as men, they will compete against men to live without wasting their womanhood (Warner et al., 2018).

To understand the gender gap differences in relation to achieving a leadership role, Scuch et al. (2014) examined the "motivation for power" in both genders. They discovered that women are less motivated than men to obtain leadership positions. However, they mentioned that "experimental studies have provided evidence that the motivation for power can be enhanced through measures such as role modelling and training courses" (p. 367). Women's motivation to hold positions of power can thus be increased through training that aims to improve their motivation.

The inclusion of women in academic careers is an extensively researched topic (Adamo, 2013; Tanenbaum, 2011; Franco-Orozco and Franco-Orozco, 2018) where the majority of researches, whether their work has been conducted within the context of developed or developing countries, have evidenced the under-representation of women as academic professionals (Heim and Murphy, 2003; Jones and Palmer, 2011; Ceci et al., 2015; Laver et al., 2018). Many studies have shown that women working in academia face a lot of gender discrepancies all over the world which includes many internal and external factors. Much of the literature review on the development of women reveals that in the past, gender has been an important factor when considering academia.

The literary analysis has clearly evidenced the stance that the opportunities for women in the academic fields of engineering, medicine, science, and maths are less restrictive regarding their ability to showcase their skills in the field of their interest, pushing them toward a myriad of structured as well as highly systematic inequality (Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; Ceci et al., 2015; Pautasso, 2015; Laver et al., 2018; Lewiss et al., 2020). According to Barterls et al. (2021), the need for the development of an effective and supportive system for women working in the higher education industry cannot be ignored. Keeping this stance in mind, the researchers explored the challenges that women are most likely to face specifically in terms of getting a promotion. On the contrary, this forces them to leave their academic careers due to biased favour being given to the male peer group. It was ascertained that women struggle hard in order to attain parity in their careers. However, the barricades become a glass ceiling for them, where any hesitation or lack of ability and focus of the women towards breaking it might intensify the competition in the institution (Cooper et al., 2007; Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; O'Connor, 2014; Pautasso, 2015).

Eckstrand et al. (2016) stated that within the context of intersectionality regarding the identities of people of multiple identities, there are three pillars to consider: “(1) cultural patterns of discrimination,... (2) interrelationships between identities must be understood in the context of social institutions and their inherent power dynamics and (3)... use of an intersectional lens can also reveal unique strengths and resiliency in different communities” (p. 904). Examining the experiences through intersectionality is vital to capture the inadequacy of the social relations within society, the organisations, and the HE institutions. The aspects of gender, and culture are the leading cause of inequality and discrimination in many societies (Van der Hoogte and Kingma, 2004) which has been examined in this study.

2.7 Women and Higher Education Leadership in The Islamic Context

Within the Islamic context, women’s leadership in education has not been massively discussed. However, Saeeda Shah has significantly contributed to the field of the Islamic context, particularly the context of Pakistani and British Muslims. Shah (2017) articulates the complexity of the relationship of sociocultural practices, conservativeness, and religion by stating that “The extent to which a religion or a belief system influences social action is linked to the role it is accorded in a community” (Shah, 2017, p. 77). In Shah’s (2015) work, the women heads of the colleges were found to be prioritising their gendered roles as wives compared to their “positional power” in the institutions due to the socially constructed role of women in Pakistan. In another study, Shah (2009) found that women educational leaders practice management based on the framework of religious values and socio-cultural practices. She argues that “practices and discourses cannot be de-contextualised. What is empowerment or development for a Muslim female leader cannot be de-linked from their Muslimness” (p. 25). In addition, Hamzah et al. (2016) found that female

academic leaders in Malaysian universities are associated with the Islamic principles in their career to impact the empowerment of effective professional work. The gendered practices of being underpowered leaders is taken for granted for women in the Islamic context which in turn they rely on as the source of the values in their personal lives.

Studies in the Islamic context of women's leadership in HE institutions has also discussed the issues confronting the women academic leaders. These issues are mostly presented as social and religious challenges, personal issues, and organisational challenges. These challenges are the same broad themes facing women leaders in HE globally. A study of South Asian Muslim female leaders in the UK pointed out that the intersectional experiences of gender, ethnicity, religion, and family status reported by the participants shows that they encounter gender discrimination from other Muslims and ethnic minority men which impacts on their career (Tariq and Syed, 2017). In Qatar, women leaders in HE confront the issues of inequality and cultural barriers as well as challenges to do with their workload and lack of knowledge of the work (Amatullah, 2018).

A cross-cultural study by Almalki et al. (2016) examined the challenges faced by Muslim women academic leaders in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. The findings of their study addressed the themes of social and religious attitudes and how they were attributed to the restrictions according to the principles of society and religion that should be followed. For example, some of the social challenges they presented were negative gender stereotypes of women, particularly women leaders, their social background, their family background, and their lack of confidence and freedom. In addition, Shah et al. (2020) investigated the barriers enabling the career progression of academic women in Pakistani Universities. The outcome of their study presented that many

institutional barriers are in the way of the academic leaders' career such as issues with cooperation from their colleagues, issues with family-friendly policies, the administrative workload, the lack of facilities, the poor institutional support and research sources, and the challenges with acceptance for young leaders. However, the depth and nature of the issues differ even in different Islamic countries as the challenges that affect the advancement of academic career progression might be worse in some contexts such as Saudi Arabia in relation to the intersection of not only gender but also cultural identity, creating a unique HE leadership experience.

2.8 Women and Leadership in Saudi Arabia Higher Education

The Saudi educational system is based on Islamic principles in addition to being government funded. Traditionally, women's education has been affected by the social and economic impacts in Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia. (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013, p. 118). Profanter (2014) states that the "key to this patriarchal system is a system of male domination in which the male is given legal power and prestige which is withheld from females" (2009). In a country like Saudi Arabia, men are completely controlling society and women have to be under the power of men. "It was possible to describe Saudi Arabia as 'the society of men' because men monopolized professional work, as well as all kinds of political, economic, and social authority" (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013, p. 118).

As mentioned earlier, the oil discovery has played a significant role in creating changes in the country such as economic improvements due to the increase of financial resources and income, as well as the introduction of a wide range of educational programs across the whole country (Hamdan, 2005). Bahgat (1999) explains that the vast growth of the country in terms of financial

resources assisted in improving the country's social services, including an educational system that combines Western education and traditions. Nowadays, Saudi Arabia encourages women's empowerment as can be seen in the example of Norah Al-Fyez who was the first female duty minister in the Ministry of Education (Rather, 2012). However, the vast gap in women's advancement has not been removed yet.

A few studies in the Saudi Kingdom highlight some of the barriers that women face in advancement to top managerial positions in universities in the country (Hamadan, 2005; Abalkhail and Allan, 2015). According to these studies, cultural underpinnings derived from the culture's potent link to Islam form the framework that controls the lives of Saudi women. This has had the effect of shaping gender roles in all areas of work, including higher education (Abalkhail, 2017). From these studies, the challenges encountered by women in Saudi Arabia appear to be diverse, varying from cultural norms to institutional practices that limit their effectiveness in the workplace. However, the greatest obstruction for Saudi women appears to be their participation in the decision-making process (Alahmadi, 2011; Aldawsari, 2016; Alahmadi, 2005; AL-Eisa, 2011). Abalkhail (2017) examined women's advancement in leadership from the perception of women leaders in Saudi higher education. In her study, the participants indicated that Saudi women are perceived to work for their own wellness or to "subsidise" the financial status of their family. In addition, Abalkhail (2017) demonstrated that women reported acts of discrimination when it came to promotions, where men would have greater opportunities in practice.

The subordination of women to men because of the patriarchal nature of Saudi society that limits the opportunities given to women has created the biggest challenge of their lives (Alfawzan,

2017). The lack of opportunities for Saudi women to gain a leadership position has historically associated with cultural unacceptance and legislation preventing women in Saudi Arabia from occupying leadership positions (Alsubaie and Jones, 2017). Although the government of the current regime of King Salman has been exposed to progress (Alotaibi, 2020), women's leadership empowerment in HE has not been progressed yet.

According to Abalkhail (2017), the family was found to be the most powerful positive influence on the lives of women regarding their entrance into academia. She specified that "Male family figures assumed a noteworthy part in female relatives' profession improvement" (p. 175), suggesting the need to examine more closely the family as the key player for Saudi women leaders in the starting of their professions. Similarly, Alahmadi (2011) explored the difficulties that women pioneers in Saudi Arabia face, showing how family and social difficulties had a minimal effect on the women's securing of an influential position. The presented evidence of family support from a figurehead who is "male" seems to be the key for Saudi women to enter academia. This finding may indicate the need for a Saudi woman to receive assistance from a male who is in the same or relevant career path as her. But the question remains - is it only the males who have the power to shape the professional destiny and life of Saudi women?

In Allison's (2021) study, the women academics stated that they were unable to overcome the societal barriers because they may be exposed to stereotypes and therefore will not be able to solve their professional difficulties. Alsubhi et al. (2018) suggested that "Women should pay attention to the sensitivity of the social norms during their practices of leadership roles" (p. 12). However, this might worsen their condition since the biggest reason for their under-representation is

associated with the loss of support from their male colleagues, which requires societal change (Allison, 2021). Alomair (2015) also attempted to address that advancing the state of Saudi women leadership in HE would be through “a transformational leadership framework. The use of this framework has been deemed successful in higher education settings, and identified as most effective in carrying out social change” (p. 90). However, social change is unlikely to happen except through governmental legislation, which is usually slow (Allison, 2021). Thus, the key source for the change is in the government. However, could the process of achieving such governmental decisions be through the top powerful male officials in the field who are leading the gendered system?

2.9 Islamic Feminism:

Feminism is defined as the system where women's rights and their contributions within society are observed. The general outlook of feminism embraces the inclusion of women in political, social, and economic equality (Ennaji, 2020). Crucially, the norms provide the support for the gender disparities which privilege the men but alienate women. Having male privilege and domination has been ingrained in society such that it appears normal and natural (Tonnessen, 2014). Feminism has been considered a rising discourse that asks for equal rights for all people. Islamic feminists view communities as safe places where all genders should feel free and independent (Hirji, 2021). The concept of "Islamic feminism" gained attention from the 1990s and was produced by several Muslim women who used the term in their writing such as Iranian Mir-Hosseini in 1992, and Saudi Mai Yamani in 1996. These were followed by Turkish Yesim Arat, Nilufer Gole, Feride Acar, and South African Shamima Shaikh (Badran, 2002).

Some of the first actions of Islamic feminists started with women campaigning to have equal respect, equality, and the same rights as men within the Islamic religion (Hassan, 1991; Wadud, 1999). The patriarchal system interpreted the Quran to oppress the female gender, thus the interpretation of Quranic texts was patriarchal. Islamic feminism is deeper and comprehensive, and it advocates for equal women's rights in the public domain and the need to reread the texts of Quran to gain a non-gendered interpretation (Mir-Hosseini, 2006, 2018; Abou-Bakr, 2011).

Mir-Hosseini (2006) stated,

“The holy texts, and the laws derived from them, are matters of human interpretation. Moreover, those who talk of Islam, or indeed of religion in relation to Islam, fail to make a distinction now common when talking of religion in other contexts, namely, between faith (and its values and principles) and organized religion (institutions, laws, and practices” (p632).

Secular feminism also advocates for balanced rights in the private sphere (Afshari,1994). Conventionally, Islamic feminism argues against the idea of male domination and the oppression of women, especially within the private sphere (Winkel, 2021). Feminists are calling upon all Muslims to embrace equality in their religion. Much of the initial work performed by Islamic scholars has majorly focused on workshops and other literary materials that are there to educate on Islam (Golriz and Miner, 2021).

Khader’s (2018) study shows that most Islamic women have taken on religious arguments to reduce the injustices used to oppress women in their marriages. Islamic feminists find the most basic terms within the Islam text and how that can be translated into real life. One of the tools that

have been used is the notion of “ijtihad” in the interpretation to be compacted with “feminist ijtihad” in the interpretation of the Quran (Mashhour, 2005). Through this, people can gain different linguistic methodologies, whether they be patriarchal or feminine.

The term “Islamic feminism” is a term that has been used to create awareness that all men and women deserve equal treatment based on the readings of the Quran (Djelloul, 2018). Feminists are re-examining the meaning of the Quran and educating people on the stereotypes that have been used to criticise women. Islamic feminists acknowledge that there are significant gaps between Islamic law and women's rights. However, Islamic feminists are not encouraging the abolishment of Islamic laws but rather, they seek to improve the personal status of women within the Muslim regions. One of the main observations is that Muslim societies have been corrupted by patriarchal practices, and ideas (Rasheed and Sharma, 2021). Islamic feminists call for a present-day interpretation of the Quranic texts as they change as time and seasons change. The stress, oppression, and discrimination that women face, especially within some Islamic countries, makes them want to break from men's control and take the lead in their own lives (Fakhr and Messenger, 2020).

Male Islamic jurists were asked to rule cases with fairness and not with discrimination (Duderija, 2020). There has been some progress made by Islamic feminism in some Muslim countries like the Moroccan government who brought in reforms after a series of public debates by women reformists. In 2004, the Moroccan government brought in a bill stating that people in marriage had equal rights and that no person had rights over the other (El-Haddad, 2020). According to Pertiwi

et al. (2019), the Quran identifies that all human beings are equal irrespective of their religion. Islamic feminism uses the Quranic notion to enforce the implementation of gender equality. In contrast to the debates in the rereading of Quranic texts from a feminine perspective, Crimp and Richardson (2008) argue that they “have been told that Islam is a religion of peace and equality; that Islam has a high regard for women, and that Islamic laws have given women power. However, I have seen little evidence of this and certainly virtually nothing written in the Quran” (p. 5). In addition, Ghane and Nojournian (2021) thinks that Islam mostly rides on the patriarchy system, where men are considered superior to women and have the right to rule and dominate over them. They point out the classical and post-classical interpretations based on male-centred questions and experiences. They also point out the overall influence of the patriarchy in the society that they live in. Shah (2017) indicates that one form of Muslim society's interpretation of women being non-leaders is that the Prophet Muhammad is a male. Islamic feminism is meant to explicate the idea of gender equity as part of the Quranic notion that states that all people are equal irrespective of their gender (Barbato, 2017).

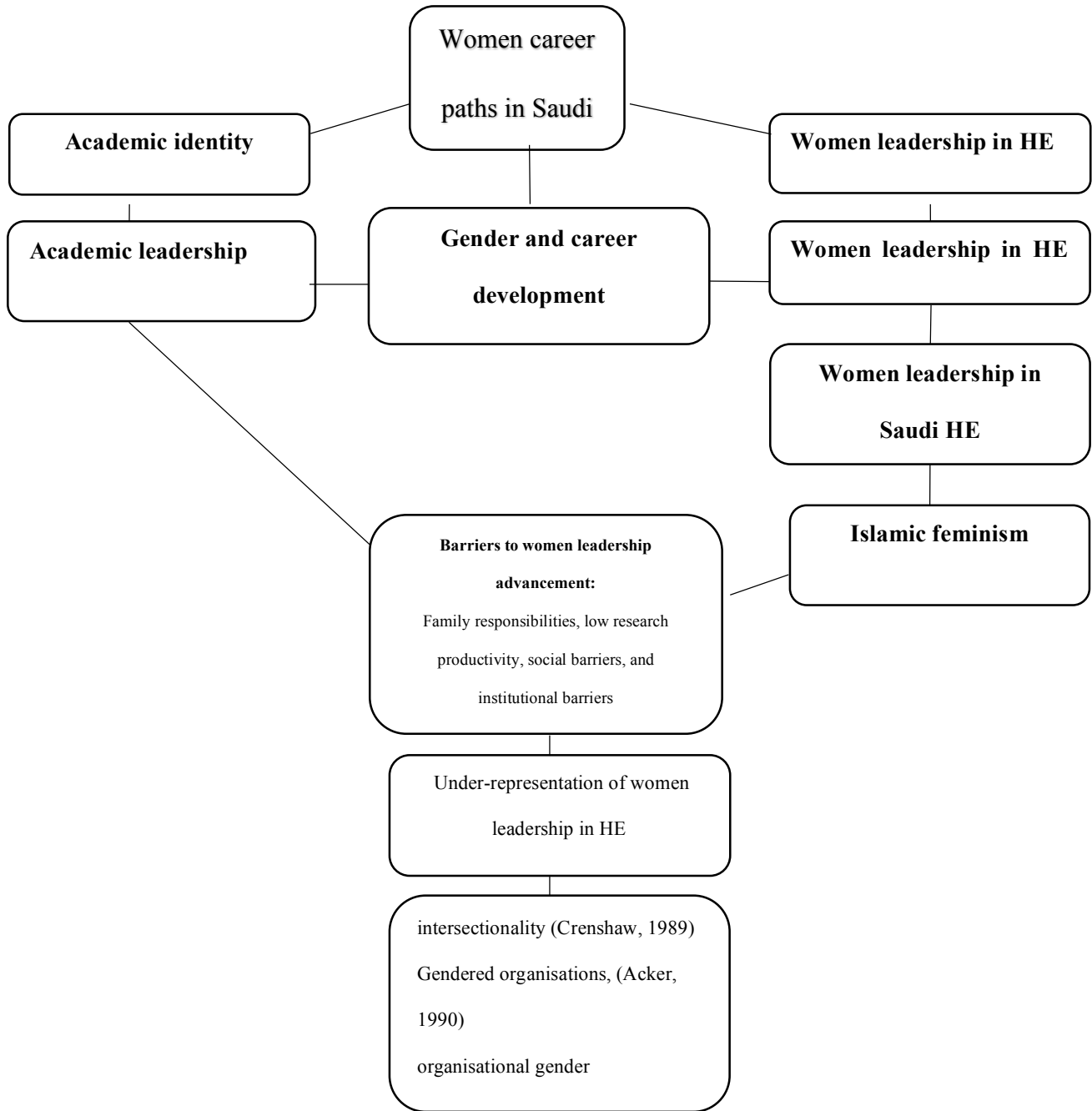
Despite the many challenges that Muslim women have faced, there have been tremendous improvements in many areas such as education, health, and demographics. Due to Islamic feminism, there has been rapid progress in the previous decades in many aspects of life, notably health and education (Hossain, 2021). However, women are still delayed as they do not receive enough support from their male counterparts. There have also been challenges to being unrestricted compared to the traditional roles that view women as homemakers but not people who can pursue education and work (Maheshwari and Nayak, 2020). Understanding and solving these barriers would be effective at making more women empowered.

With the rise in women's education and empowerment, more countries are including women in elective seats. More women have also been granted the right to vote and run for office. Almost all Muslim states have enacted these changes (Mohamad, 2018). In addition, Saudi Arabia has empowered women in the Shura Council (equal to Parliament) and they have recently been able to become ambassadors. Even with such changes, most Muslim women have a low representation in the workplace. Even though Muslim women are under-represented in the formal political system, their involvement to become empowered has grown (Mohamad, 2018). Islamic feminists involve an approach to encouragement that is meant to demand change. It relates to the common struggle of women fighting discrimination against women and pursuing gender equality.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

This literature review culminates in a conceptual framework that informs the explanation of the women vice deans' career path experiences. Several concepts are central to understanding these experiences.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework of the study:



The concepts such as the women’s career development, women’s leadership in HE internationally and in the Saudi context, and academic identity and leadership are the themes that interrelate in the subject of career advancement and in relation to the barriers in academia. To understand the theoretical stance of the experience of women in this study, theories of gendered organisations and

organisational arrangement as well as the intersectionality of identities such as gender and social status have been adopted for a better understanding of these experiences.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study along with the design and justification of the choices made. The research methodology refers to the specific technique and procedures used to identify, select, analyse, and process the information about the research topic (Kumar, 2019). The study seeks to gain a deep understanding of the factors that shape the career experiences of female VDs in Saudi HE. In this study, a mixed methods approach which involved both qualitative and quantitative methods was used. The qualitative methods included analysing institutional documents and interviewing the female VDs. The quantitative side entailed administering a closed-ended questionnaires to the sample of female Heads of Departments (HoDs), who are an administrative level below the VDs. A researcher using such a mixed methods approach acquires “quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems” (Creswell, 2015, p. 2). Triangulation is the fundamental aim in the interpretation of such research data.

This chapter answers two questions, including how the data is collected and how it is analysed. The research methodology is the most important contributing element of research that provides a framework to use in the study. It directs the researcher towards maintaining the authenticity of the study. In addition, this chapter thoroughly discusses the research approach, the research design, and the sources of the data, along with justification for the subject selection. Insider research and

ways to mitigate bias are discussed in this chapter. The data collection, analysis, and ethical consideration are thoroughly explored to understand the procedure used to research women vice deans and their leadership experiences in Saudi HE.

3.2 Research Questions

The aim of this study is to comprehend the experiences of the Saudi female VDs' career paths in an academic institution and to examine the organisational practices that have shaped the construction of said career paths. To achieve this aim, the following was investigated as the primary research question:

1. What personal, social, and organisational factors shape the experiences of the women vice deans' career paths in Saudi higher education education and how can these experiences be improved?

This led to the formulation of three sub-questions:

RQ1: What factors shape and influence women vice deans career choices and experiences?

RQ2: What institutional policies exist to support women's career paths and how do these policies support or inhibit the women's advancement to vice deanship and beyond?

RQ3: In what ways can career experiences or career paths of women in female vice deans in Saudi HE be improved?

3.3 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy deals with the nature, source, and development of knowledge. It relates to how the data about a research phenomenon is analysed, collected, and made into data. The

research philosophy relies on the formulating of assumptions and beliefs. The practical research implications influence the selection of the specific research philosophy. The crucial philosophical variations between the studies rely on numbers and facts (Chetty, 2016). The realism research philosophy focuses on the notion of independence of reality from the human mind. It is based on the assumption of a scientific approach to knowledge development. The most common forms are direct realism and critical realism. Direct realism explains what is seen and what is gained. In addition, this philosophy shows the world through personal human senses. At the same time, critical realism argues that individuals experience the real world's images and sensations. As per critical realism, image and sensations can be deceptive and may not portray the real world (Carvalho and White, 1997).

The positivist research philosophy claims that the social world is understood objectively. Scientists are the objective analyst in this form of research philosophy. They dissociate themselves from personal standards and work independently. The positivism research philosophy follows the interpretation that only real knowledge can be reached through observation, such as trustworthy measurements (Yilmaz, 2013). Positivism considers the role of the researcher as being narrowed in terms of the focus on the data interpretation and collection objectively (Flick, 2018). Within these studies, the research findings are mostly quantifiable and observable. Positivism depends on the quantifiable observation that results in the statistical analysis. Positivism uses the realist view which shows that knowledge is produced through human experiences. It has an ontological and atomistic view of the world that comprises observable events and elements that interact in a determined, observable, and regular manner (Goertzen, 2017). Within positivism, the researcher is independent of the study, and there is no provision of human interests within the research.

Positivist studies mostly used the deductive approach while the inductive approach is mostly associated with the phenomenology philosophy (Fleming, 2018).

Interpretivism includes the researcher interpreting different elements of the study. It integrates human interest into the study. The interpretive researcher assumes that the access to reality depends on social constructions such as consciousness, language, instruments, and shared meanings. The development of the interpretivism philosophy relies on the critique of positivism in the social sciences. This philosophy focuses on quantitative and qualitative analysis. The philosophy is linked with the philosophical position of idealism. It is used for grouping numerous approaches such as social constructivism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology (Eliadis, 2018). These approaches reject the objectivist interpretation that meanings inhabit within the world independently of awareness. The research must relate to the social action of appreciating the variations among people. Interpretivism relies on meaning and employs multifaceted methods for reflecting the different domains of the issue in question (Denzin, 1973). The most famous changes in interpretivism involve hermeneutics and phenomenology. Hermeneutics indicate the philosophy of interpretation. It mainly relies on literature and has little relevance to business studies (Hox and Boeije, 2005). Phenomenology tries to investigate the world by experiencing the phenomena (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). The interpretive approach is based on two major beliefs, inclusive of relativist ontology and transactional epistemology. The former perceives a reality that depends on understanding and meaning at the experiential and social levels. The latter explores how people are attached to their knowledge, meaning that there is a key link between the research subject and the researcher. This philosophy is multiple, socially constructed, and has weak research predictions (Kumar, 2019).

The researcher's worldview is substantial in the foundation of a mixed methods study, and it can be illustrated according to four types: postpositivist, constructivist, transformative, and pragmatist (Creswell and Clark, 2018). A philosophical focus to the research is offered through these worldviews, which can be adopted either separately or combined (Creswell and Clark, 2018). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) illustrate the association of a pragmatic paradigm through mixed methods research using some features of qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study. The main consideration should highlight the research questions other than focusing on the worldview as mentioned earlier. It is important to omit the compulsory selection of either post-positivism or constructivism. According to the stated characteristics of this particular paradigm, this mixed methods study lies under the pragmatic paradigm.

The pragmatism research philosophy accepts several concepts that are only relevant when they support action. Pragmatics recognise numerous ways to interpret the world and undertake research. There is no single point of view that provides the whole picture and there are multifaceted realities (Eliadis, 2018). The most exclusive paradigms in this research are interpretivism and positivism regarding the sources and nature of knowledge. Within pragmatism, the research question is the most important element. Pragmatics combine both interpretivism and positivism within the scope of a single research study based on the research question's nature (GuhaThakurta, 2015). The pragmatic research philosophy mostly deals with different types of facts. It shows that the selection of the research philosophy is mostly determined with the help of the research problem. Within the research philosophy, practical outcomes are considered to be highly important (Flick, 2018). Pragmatism cannot belong to the philosophical reality and system. The researchers have freedom of choice, and they are free to select the techniques, methods, and processes that fulfil their needs

and research aims. Pragmatics can never view the world as an absolute unity. The truth is the one that is currently in action, and it cannot rely on the mind that is not the subject of dualism and reality (Chetty, 2016).

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003) work on the pragmatic paradigm, informing research questions rather than the method used to collect the data helps to answer questions. For example, in the mixed method pragmatic approach, the ontology may be single or multi-realities, whereas for epistemology, the method is the process of using the appropriate method of "what works" to answer the research questions even if it combines two different research methods.

3.4 Research Approaches

The research approach is the process that spans the steps from broad assumptions to the detailed methods of data collection and interpretation. Research approaches are broadly categorised into three types: the quantitative research approach, the qualitative research approach, and the mixed-method approach (Nardi, 2018). Quantitative research is expressed in graphs, statistics, and numbers. It is used for testing the existing assumptions and theories. It is used for establishing the generalisable facts about the research topic. It is a systematic investigation of the phenomena through quantifiable data gathering and executing computational, mathematical, and statistical techniques. It collects information about the potential and existing clientele using select sampling methods (Etikan and Bala, 2017). The outcomes attained through this method are statistical, logical, and unbiased. The data collection is conducted on large samples that represent the whole population. It is data-oriented research and based on both primary and secondary methods of research. Quantitative research is accomplished using groups of participants who are the

representatives of the population. The data analysis is highly straightforward and less time intensive. This was preferred for this research. This research has a wide scope in terms of the data collection (Flick, 2018).

Contrastingly, qualitative research is a research method that relies on obtaining data through open-ended or conversational communication. This method permits an in-depth understanding of the issues of focus, and further probing is used to get a deeper insight. The researcher tries to acknowledge the feelings and motivation of the interviewees. Qualitative research is designed to assess the target audience's behaviour or perception concerning a particular research topic. The outcomes of the research are mostly descriptive, and inferences are drawn from the data easily. Qualitative research capture altering attitudes within a target group. The limitations of quantitative methods do not bound this approach. It is flexible and uses useful insights to adapt the research questions and to alter the setting to better the responses. It is used to work with complicated issues by breaking down the meaningful inferences so then they are easily understood and readable. It is a highly communicative method, and people develop their trust in the researcher. Raw or unadulterated information is collected (Chetty, 2016).

The mixed-method research approach is a methodology for collecting, analysing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research. This research approach is used when integration better understands the research issue than either approach alone. By mixing quantitative and qualitative research, the researcher gets an in-depth corroboration and understanding. It offsets the weaknesses of each approach. The most important characteristic of this approach is the possibility of triangulation, which is the use of several methods, data sources, and researchers to study similar

phenomena. Successful triangulation involves the careful analysis of each method's type of information, such as its strengths and weaknesses. The mixed-method approach is used for validating or corroborating the outcomes gained from other methods. It is highly effective when little is known about the research topic. It is used to continuously look at the research questions from various angles and to reflect on the potential contradictions and unexpected findings (Nardi, 2018).

3.4.1 Mixed Methods Approach

Mixed methods research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative tools in the process of the data collection and analysis (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007; Shorten and Smith, 2017). The key feature of this approach is combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study. There are several reasons why a mixed methods approach was adopted for this study. Firstly, such an approach combines the strength of qualitative methods (e.g., interviews in this study) in terms of providing rich data with the strength of quantitative methods (e.g., closed-ended questionnaire) to allow for a large sample of participants to provide simple responses quickly.

Secondly, there has been increased consideration in literature of mixed methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Cameron, 2009; Bryman, 2006; Johnson, Turner and Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Studies that have discussed the antithetical nature of qualitative and quantitative research methods have been critiqued by research that shows how utilising the two methods alongside each other in the same study elicits their strengths. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) elucidated the necessity of discontinuing the argument that only one method should be used, and countered that it is essential to take advantage of both. One of their reasons is that the

introduction of mixed methods research occurred only 20 years ago for the purpose of using any research tool that may contribute to answering the research questions (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). In this study, the data gathered from quantitative instruments shows a broader picture of information dimensions among the study samples. Burke and Onwuegbuzie (2004) attempted to show that it is not important to focus on the contrast between qualitative and quantitative methods, but that mixed methods must be seen as a third way that combines the strengths and reduces the weaknesses of a particular study.

Thirdly, the main aim of adopting mixed methods research is for triangulation. According to Greene et al. (1989), the five essential purposes of the mixed methods study are triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion. First, *complementarity* is a purpose of mixed-method research as it seeks enhancement and elaboration while resulting in clarification, and illustration according to the results from other methods. It is used to maximise meaningfulness, interpretability, and construct validity by counteracting the inherent biases and capitalising on the inherent method strengths.

In addition, the second purpose of a mixed methods study is *development* as it seeks to utilise the outcomes from one method to inform or develop another method. The development is highly construed to involve sampling, measurement decisions, and implementation. It is used to maximise the construct validity and the inquiry outcomes by capitalising on the inherent method strengths. The third purpose is *initiation* that seeks discovery and contradiction in addition to new perspectives of the framework and questions recasting from one method to another. The fourth method's purpose is *expansion*. This extends the range and breadth of the inquiry by utilising

various inquiry component methods. It maximises the inquiry scope by selecting the methods that are most effective according to the multiple inquiry elements. The fifth purpose is *triangulation* that seeks corroboration and convergence while also resulting in correspondence according to the various methods. The term triangulation is a practice that uses multifaceted data sources and multifaceted approaches to analyse the data to maximises the credibility of the research study. It aligns multiple perspectives and results in a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Combining different methods is useful to validate the research outcomes. The multi-method research design involves a biographical analysis of diaries, narrative interviews, and focus group discussions in one study (Greene et al., 1989).

Triangulation facilitates data validation through the cross verification of more than two sources. It also tests the consistency of the findings gathered by various instruments. It also maximises the chance to control and assess some of the threats that influence the outcomes. Triangulation is not merely validation. It also widens and deepens the understanding. It is used for producing innovations in conceptual framing. It results in multi-perspective meta-interpretations (Turner et al., 2017). The data in this study was triangulated by looking for convergences and differences between the two methods (the interviews and the questionnaires).

Denzin (1973) stated that triangulation comes in four basic types: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation includes space, time, and persons. Investigator triangulation includes multifaceted researchers in the investigation process. Theory triangulation includes more than one theoretical scheme in the phenomenon interpretation. Methodological triangulation includes using more than one option to

collect data such as interviews, documents, and questionnaires. In the present study, methodological triangulation was used to explore the women VDs and the subject of their leadership in Saudi HE.

In addition, Carvalho and White (1997) shed light on the four underlying reasons that motivate researchers to use triangulation. *Enriching* is the first reason that reflects the outputs of various formal and informal instruments and how they add their respective values to each other through exploring the various domains of an issue. *Refuting* reflects that one set of options disproves a hypothesis selected by another set of options. *Confirming* shows that one set of options confirms a hypothesis selected by another set of options. *Explaining* shows that one set of options explores the unexpected findings taken from another set of options (Carvalho and White, 1997).

Triangulation is used in the present research to minimise the biases. This is because relying on one option can result in biased data. There are multiple forms of bias encountered in the research that can be removed with the help of triangulation. Measurement bias mostly occurs in research, and it is caused by the way that the data is collected. It permits the researcher to combine group and individual research options to reduce biases such as the peer pressure among focus group applicants. Sampling bias also occurs when the whole population is not covered. When some convenient parts are merely converted, it results in inclusion bias. Triangulation mostly combines the various strengths of the available options to get sufficient coverage. Procedural bias is another form of bias that manifests when the participants are under pressure to give information. Triangulation permits researchers to combine engagements to the point where the applicants get more time to give their responses (Turner et al., 2017).

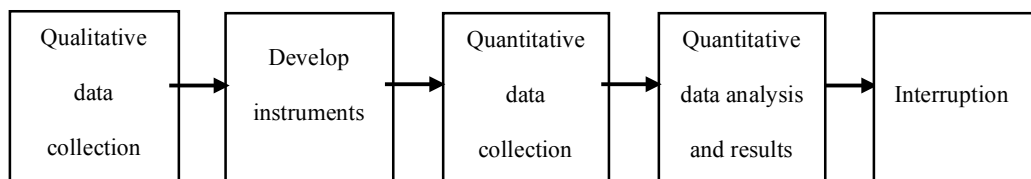
Complementarity aims to explain the results obtained from one method with those obtained from another. Initiation looks for contradictions in the results elicited from one method in order to adopt new perspectives and questions in the other method. Development utilises the results of one method to assist in the development of another method. Expansion seeks to expand the inquiry using different methods for various elements of the inquiry as a whole. Lastly, triangulation is used to compare the results by looking for the similarities and differences in the data collected from different tools (Greene et al., 1989). Triangulation is a major reason for conducting a mixed methods study as it allows the researcher to test the validity of the acquired data. In this study, triangulation was accomplished by gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, and comparing the findings. Subsequently, the outcome data was contrasted in order to ensure that the interpretations of the data were reliable. Thus, “[b]y examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). It is also a strategy used for examining the credibility of the data (Rallis and Rossman, 2009). Triangulation’s major purpose is for conducting a mixed method study to test the validity of the data as it is used in this study.

3.5 Research Design

This study examines the lived experiences and insights of female VDs who occupy a managerial position at a HEI in Saudi Arabia. Mixed methods studies are designed according to three specific designs: a convergent design, an explanatory design, and an exploratory design (Creswell, 2014). The disparity among the designs is in the quality of the data collected either simultaneously or according to the timeframe set for a particular type of data to be collected and analysed before the

construction of the other type. Then comes the construction of the other type according to the results of the previous method, whether it is qualitative or quantitative (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2017; Crewswell, 2014). Morse (1991) pointed out that a “sequential design is used if the result of one method is essential for planning the next method” (p. 120). This method was developed by building a quantitative instrument for the data collected through the qualitative instrument, which Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) classify as “instrument-development design.”

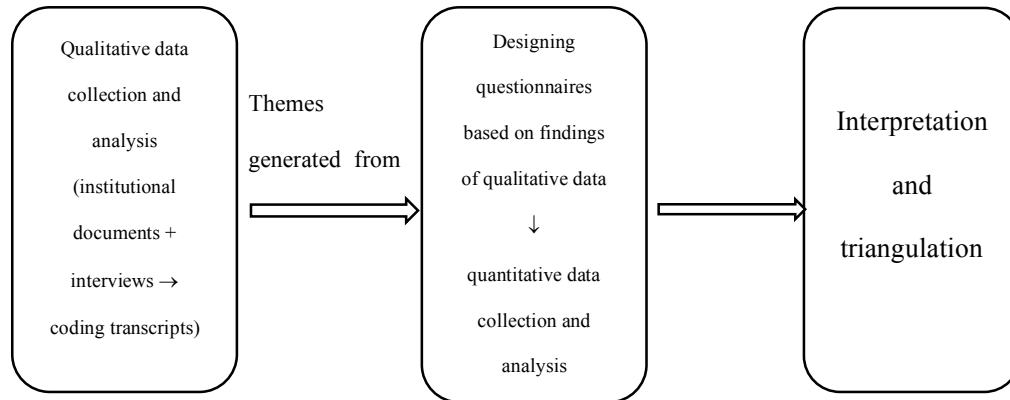
Figure. 3.1 Instrument-development design



Source: (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2017).

This study’s focus on human experiences renders it primarily preoccupied with qualitative aspects. To elucidate further, the interviews were the most prominent phase and key source of raw data, followed by the quantitative instruments that sought to validate the qualitative data and to look at the dimensions of those additionally involved in the work of the female VDs. According to the above, the construction of the study was “QUAL → quan (Qualitatively driven with a sequential quantitative supplement)” (Morse, 2016, p. 6).

Figure 3.2: The design of the current study



For this purpose, an exploratory sequential design was developed for use in this mixed methods study (see Figure 3.2). The core elements in the design are embodied in the process and timeframe regarding the conducting of the data collection and analysis procedures. In these procedures, the qualitative data was collected and analysed in transcript. The questionnaire was constructed from the themes mentioned in the interviews. Data triangulation was the main purpose of the data set, as well as to attain another perspective from which to understand the experiences. Eventually, the findings in both methods were compared in order to establish a deeper understanding of the study problem.

3.6 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in June 2017 in the last weeks of the academic year. Semi-structured interviews were held with two VDs from different colleges in which they were asked about their life history. One interview was held in the participant's office at the college, while the other one was conducted via phone. Both participants demanded the full disclosure of the interview

questions beforehand. During the interviews, they chose not to discuss their family or personal matters, and so their life histories were scant and left me with many unanswered questions.

Based on the pilot study, I revised the research strategy and shifted the focus away from questions that pried too far into the participants' personal lives while still eliciting sufficient information to understand their career development experiences. For example, semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask questions directly and to get the VDs' perspective, reducing the full disclosure of any matter that might be considered sensitive in the personal life-history interviews. By nature, most Saudi women are reserved. I realised it would require a great deal of time on my part to build an adequate rapport with which to conduct life-history interviews. I also realised that there would be a great deal of information that they may not have, such as information on the policies and employment practices in general. Thus, I decided to provide the participants with the questions prior to the interviews for the purpose of building trust and, most importantly, to put them at ease with the content of the study and to allow some reflection about it. In addition, this strategy allowed the participants to have the opportunity to think about their answers and to provide in-depth descriptive answers (Burk and Miller, 2001).

3.7 Data Collection Phases

In social and behavioural research, qualitative and quantitative methods have been deemed helpful (Johnson et al., 2004). In mixed methods studies, researchers are recommended to follow procedural elements for each method separately, whether qualitative or quantitative (Creswell and Clark, 2018). Fundamentally, data collection can be explained as “a technique that is used to collect empirical research data. It is how the researchers get their information” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Therefore, the process of collecting information in this study followed the implementation

of a set of procedures related to each other that were conducted in sequence according to the design allocated in this study (see Section 3.5). It illustrated the chronology and built the content of the questions first on the basis of the research questions, and then the same again based on the construction of the questionnaire according to what was drawn from the previous instrument. The data collection started with the search for documents containing the work regulations of the academic institution. Nonetheless, the same questions that governed the analysis of the documents were also asked in the interviews (e.g., the institutional policies that consider women). Most government institutional policies in Saudi Arabia are adopted by a purely male hierarchy that dominates the decision-making processes.

3.7.1 Research Site

Institutional selection was done for two reasons. The first was the demographic dimension of the faculties in the university. Some of the colleges are located in big cities with a correspondingly large population (and there may be more than one university in the city), some colleges were in small cities with an average population size, and a very limited number of colleges were located in one city that follows the main university in the big city. Although this feature is found in a few universities in Saudi Arabia, the other reason, to some extent, was the ease of transportation for the researcher who needed to travel from one city to another to conduct the interviews at various colleges in a specified geographical area. The demographic nature of the research site may enrich the possibility of a micro-level of difference in the experiences between the culture of a large city and the culture of the smaller cities.

Preparation for the data collection started with the formal procedures carried out by requesting access to the university through electronic transition paperwork to reach out to the dean of postgraduate studies. This procedure took three months to complete, at which point permission was obtained to access the university. This led to the start of the fieldwork and data collection.

3.7.2 Insider Research

The most important and influential element of research was positionality: how individuals view the world from various perspectives. The knowledge situatedness shows that the researchers are variedly situated according to their intellectual, social, and spatial locations through their intellectual history and lived experiences. All of these factors shape the individuals' understanding of the world, and the knowledge that people produce. Positionality shows the way that the researchers are positioned by others, ourselves, and specific discourses concerning the relational and multiple processes of the differences. Positionality shapes the research and both enables and limits the research insights. It is further increased to consider others' reactions as researchers. The researchers are embodied, visible, and an integral element of the research process. The embodied presence as a researcher and the subjects' response mediates the research encounters (Qin, 2016).

Insider research is most common in work-integrated learning research but there is limited information about the associated ethical and methodological dilemmas. Insider research is defined as the research undertaken in a community, group, and organisation in which the researcher belongs to or is familiar with (Hockey, 1993; Mercer, 2007). Insider research is present in a continuum that depends on the researchers' closeness to the different research domains. A researcher can investigate different parts of a firm and gather data from either strangers or close friends. Numerous methodologies have been used to conduct insider research that are not limited

to case studies, ethnography, and action research. The examiner's insider position determines the study design, data collection method, and the best way to analyse it (Fleming, 2018).

Insider research brings in a lot of benefits as well as deal with multifaceted challenges. The researcher is passionate about exploring the research topic on which this research was conducted. The researcher commits him/herself to the research despite the challenges. If the researcher is an outsider and not a part of the topic area, group, status, and culture, he/she will not understand the problems he/she is working on. Therefore, it becomes complex to justify the research findings (Carvalho and White, 1997). The position of the insider and the extent of the familiarity of the researcher to the researched and their closeness should be perceived as a continuum of many aspects to understand the differences between researcher and researched (Mercer, 2007).

Insider research must be mindful of researcher bias when the researchers' personal experiences and values influence the research design, process, and research questions. The researcher needs to take various steps to minimise the potential bias by using different research process stages. For example, in this study, utilising quantitative questionnaires helped to minimise researcher bias in relation to the data gained from the informants. This was as well as avoiding the sharing of any personal experiences related to the subject with the interviewed participants. The researcher must be cognisant of the potential harms of informant bias. When the participants share their views in the interviews, they can influence the shared information through their different perceptions. The participants only share their feelings, problems, and issues with the researcher if they fully understand it. The researcher must perform his/her role by remaining in a neutral position and declining the temptation to share his/her experiences. The participants also ask about the

researchers' experience and different questions in insider research. By doing so, rapport and trust are developed with the research participants. Greater familiarity in the interviews means that there are fewer assumptions and probing questions in the interviews. The researcher must be wise because his/her position can have an evident influence on the participants (Fleming, 2018).

The researcher in this study shared certain aspects with the study participants, including the same nationality, culture, religion, gender, and work environment. This resulted in them having an insider researcher status, and implies that there are some interpretations such as interactions that would be familiar to an insider researcher but unfamiliar to an outsider researcher (Burgess, 2002). In some debates on insider research, concerns have been raised of the “full coverage” of the settings and society when they are already well-known to the researcher but not to the readers (Burgess, 2002). “Organisational narratives, or storytelling, can be used to share understandings of organisational life ...this manipulation has been a key strategy in introducing new practices to academic staff. But, to have this effect, the stories must have meaning for academic staff” (Churchman and King, 2009, p. 514).

As a Saudi researcher, I share the same culture and religion as the participants, and thus I have knowledge and understanding of complex social situations such as the process of holding interviews as well as understanding the limitations of sharing personal experiences for some women. Thus, these details of cultural and institutional principles are perfectly understood by me. In such cases, a cultural insider is highly accepted in the researched community which is a significant feature when conducting successful fieldwork as well as providing adequate coverage

of the cultural aspects to facilitate a good understanding of the culture (Liamputtong and Suwankhong, 2015).

3.7.3 Sources of Data Collection:

Information and evidence are gathered through multifaceted means. The most common data collection methods are primary and secondary data sources (Carvalho and White, 1997). Primary data sources have been used in the present research conducted on women VDs and leadership in HE. This data source was selected because it provides a window into the past and gives unfiltered access to the record of the social thoughts during the specific period of study. The primary data source develops critical thinking skills. It brings the reader into contact with first-hand accounts of the happenings and events under focus. It relates the person with past events and promotes a deeper understanding of history through a series of human events. It provides multifaceted perspectives on numerous issues both present and past. It also constructs knowledge and encourages the researcher to wrestle with any contradictions. This method is preferred because it provides information on where, what, when, how, who, and why. It can come in the form of printed, written, and graphic information. It also stimulates the personal involvement of the reader. Primary sources are highly effective in research because they will provide an insight into the career experiences and challenges that the women face and why they align with the leadership positions in the HE. The first-hand information will help to develop strategies to combat the challenges prevailing in the domain of the women's leadership in Saudi HE.

3.7.3.1 Interviews:

In general, there are three types of interviews that are used in research - structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (Stuckey, 2013). A structured interview is a type of interview in which the

researcher asks a predetermined set of questions of the participants. In this method, the questions are planned and created in advance. The same questions and the same question order is used for all research participants to maintain symmetry. Structured interviews are also known as patterned, planned, standardised, and formal interviews. In structured interviews, similar questions are asked of all participants, making it easy to compare the research participants' answers (Johnston, 2017). The participants can be evaluated fairly and objectively, so the structured interviews make them legally defensible. At the same time, structured interviews have some disadvantages as they are harder and more complicated to formulate. It is difficult to ensure that the researcher sticks to the interviews. This type of interview is mostly impersonalised and cold, and this makes it harder to provide an excellent participant experience. A structured interview can be conducted using a few simple steps. The interview questions are developed that are asked of the participants. A scale is used for grading the participants' answers. The detailed notes of the participants' answers are collected and later evaluated (Hox and Boeije, 2005).

Unstructured interviews are a type of interview in which the researcher asks questions that are not prepared in advance. The questions are asked as part of a free-flowing and spontaneous conversation that means that different participants respond to different questions. Unstructured research interviews are also known as informal interviews, free-flowing interviews, and casual interviews. The major benefit of an unstructured interview is the use of a personalised approach. This is instrumental when equally qualified participants are compared. This method provides more options for a free conversation that helps the participants relax and makes them comfortable in the interview (Kumar, 2019). On the other hand, unstructured interviews have a major disadvantage when it comes to comparing the answers and evaluating the participants objectively and equally.

The unstructured interview questions can never be prepared in advance but it does not mean that the questions asked in the unstructured interviews are totally random. The researcher keeps the interview purpose in his mind and assesses the general qualities and skills of the candidates. The researcher gathers and records crucial information about the participants. The researcher has a focus but is flexible (Kohler et al., 2019).

A semi-structured interview is an interview in which the researcher asks a few predetermined questions while the rest are not planned. Some questions are predetermined and asked of all participants but the remaining ones arise spontaneously within flexible communication. This type of interview is also known as hybrid interviews, moderately structured interviews, and combined interviews (Polit and Beck, 2010). Semi-structured interviews were utilised in this study. They combine both unstructured and structured interview styles and provide the best of both worlds. They can secure the participants' objective comparison and provide spontaneous and personalised approaches that permit the exploration of the participants' stimulating points. The disadvantage of unstructured interviews is that they are less objective and harder to defend. A semi-structured interview is highly effective compared to other types of qualitative research (Queirós et al., 2017). It is preferred because they flow more like a conversation than any other technique, such as question-answer sessions. This method leaves room to answer the questions creatively and to ask different forms of the open-ended questions. It is tailored to the researchers' experiences and skillset. This method encourages two-way communication and allows for a comprehensive discussion of the various research topics. With a conversational tone, the participants feel more comfortable and expand on their experiences with the researcher (Martin and Bridgmon, 2012).

3.7.3.2 Online Questionnaires:

Online questionnaires have been used to collect quantitative data in this mixed-method research. It is a research process that involves sending surveys to the participants. It was analysed through SPSS to draw out the meaningful research outcomes. Surveys are mostly inexpensive and only incur a small cost per respondent. They are useful to describe the characteristics of large samples. No research method gives such a broad capability that ensures an accurate sample for gathering targeted outcomes to draw conclusions and make crucial decisions. Surveys are flexible and administered in numerous modes such as email surveys, online surveys, paper surveys, social media surveys, telephone, and face-to-face surveys. The present research used the online survey method to approach the women HoDs in the university. The anonymity of surveys permits the researchers to respond with more candid and valid outcomes. The respondents were honest and open in their answers throughout the survey. The survey's anonymous nature provides an avenue for unambiguous and honest responses compared to other forms of research method (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015).

In a mixed-methods study, close-ended questions provide predefined choices to the participants. They have to respond using options such as strongly disagree, disagree, I do not know, agree, and strongly agree. The participants are not free to write their opinions in their own words. It was expected of them to select the most representative option for each item. They had to select one multiple-choice option from the provided choices. Close-ended questions have pros and cons in mixed-method research. There are numerous pros of close-ended questions in the survey where researchers desire to attain a high response rate. Close-ended questions can be easily answered

without exerting much time because the participants have to select only one option. It is easy to answer because the participants cannot write the answers in their own words (Yilmaz, 2013).

Due to time paucity, the participants avoided filling in the time-consuming feedback but they were able to easily fill in the form. This results in a better response rate when a specific set of questions is provided. The chance of irrelevant answers is maximised which makes it complex to analyse the feedback in the case of open-ended questions. Close-ended questions have already established and defined answers to select from. The answers to the questions can be compared easily because only the predefined answer options are available to the participants. The responses of numerous demographic groups can be compared easily. It is easy to replicate and modify close-ended questions (Flick, 2018).

On the other hand, the cons of close-ended questions also influence the research outcomes. Close-ended questions cannot give detailed information. The ratings of the participants' experiences are collected but the details cannot be collected through this method. The researchers cannot explain the underlying rationale for the selection of the different choices. Close-ended questions also do not give information about the thinking and feelings of the participants. It hampers the ability to get a real insight into the problems. All possible answers are not covered by close-ended questions (Johnston, 2017). Every participant is different and has a unique value. Even though researchers try to add all of the desired answers to the question, there is still a chance that the researcher's answer is not applicable. Sometimes more choices confuse the participants, and they cannot answer the items accurately. The options in close-ended questions may suggest answers that the participants do not think of. The options enable the researcher to think in a completely different way. The participants that have no opinion will also answer the questions in a way that sometimes

leads to non-significant research outcomes. It is not possible to find out whether the participants misinterpreted the item (GuhaThakurta, 2015).

3.7.4 Qualitative Phase

3.7.4.1 Institutional Documents Data Collection

To explore the institutional policies, procedures, and legislations and their role in shaping the career paths of the female VDs, it was important to examine the relevant university documents. Institutional policies are built from what is written in the institutional documents which shapes the organisational relations and the formation of integration and interactions, as well as their implications in terms of the institutional practices (Museus, 2007). In this institution, looking at the procedures related to professional development and leadership, as well as the policies that concern female academics, facilitated an understanding of the nature of the women's work. To support this research, I sought out documents related to the faculty and policies correlated with the issues stated.

The websites of the university and the Ministry of Education provided access to the required documents as they contain extensive information about the university and HE in Saudi Arabia in general. The institutional documents housed in the legal department included the rules and legislation on the following:

Higher Education Council System and Universities.

The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like.

Saudi Regulations (Board of Experts).

The selected documents consider the faculty affairs in the university. Regarding “authenticity” (Fitzgerald, 2012), which refers to the originality of the document, the documents are considered to be electronic copies of the official copy issued by the official authorities. Some documents were obtained from the Ministry of Civil Service’s website, such as the documents on the academic ranks and the salary scale of said ranks in degrees and differences. The process of analysing the selected documents is presented in section 3.7.4.3.1.

3.7.4.2 Interviewing Process

In all domains, the data collection was led by the research questions (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). My research looked at the experiences underpinning the female VDs’ career paths in the university, and so I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 of these women. Because a researcher must identify the most appropriate method in order to address the needed information for the research questions, I selected interviews “to gain knowledge from individuals” (Kajornboon, 2005, p. 2). Conducting interviews in social science research is a major component in data collection (Powney and Watts, 1987). This data collection method could be basically described as, “by interviews, we mean face-to-face verbal exchanges in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to acquire information from and gain an understanding of another person, the interviewee” (Rowley, 2012, p. 260).

The protocols in unstructured interviews are not framed by the same elements required in semi-structured interviews, including open-ended questions (Stuckey, 2013). However, “the basic themes or topic areas of the investigation are likely determined ahead of time, but not the sequence

or the content of the specific questions” (Knox and Burkard, 2009, p. 3). In the middle of the two types lies the semi-structured interview, which as I mentioned earlier is controlled by essential aspects to discuss and build “a foundation on which the interview is built but one that allows creativity and flexibility to ensure that each participant’s story is fully uncovered” (Knox and Burkard, 2009, p. 3). This form of interview is “characterized by increasing levels of flexibility and lack of structure” (Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 3). This is because the use of “[o]pen-ended questions elicit[s] responses that are meaningful and culturally salient to the participant; unanticipated by the researcher; [and] rich and explanatory in nature” (Stuckey, 2013, p. 56). Furthermore, semi-structured and unstructured interviews “allow the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses – that is, to ask why or how” (2013, p. 56). This is significant for gaining features within the life experiences narrated by the interviewees. Because this study aimed to comprehend the human experiences behind the shortage of female participation in high academic ranks, the appropriate method of data collection was deemed to be interviews, albeit supplemented by an analysis of the supporting institutional documents and questionnaires.

2. Sampling for Interviews

Sampling is a process used to select and draw out an accurate representation of a group or unit. It can be done through numerous techniques based on the sample's nature and subject matter (Etikan and Bala, 2017). The selection of this institution was done for two reasons. The first was the demographic dimension of the faculties in this university. Some of the colleges are located in large cities with a high population, and there may be more than one university in the city. Some of the colleges were in small cities with an average population size, and a very limited number of colleges were located in one city that followed the main university in the big city. Although this feature is

found in a few universities in Saudi Arabia, the other reason, to some extent, was the ease of transportation in terms of traveling between the inter-colleges from one city to another to conduct the interviews in a specified geographical area. The demographic nature of the research site may enrich the possibility of a micro level difference in the experiences between the culture of a large city and the culture of one of the smaller cities.

The process of selecting the sample in this research comprised of selecting the total population of female vice deans (VDs) in the university, which was 17 women VDs. The reason for choosing the sample of women vice deans was that the majority of women in academia occupy this position. This is not extended to other top positions in higher education, as shown in Table 1.1.

The sampling in this study was purposeful, and knowledge was obtained from the people who are living the experience under examination. Sargeant (2012) emphasises that “subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful; participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 1). All 17 female college VDs in the university were invited, and 14 of them agreed to participate in the study and were interviewed.

Qualitative sampling in this exploratory sequential design study was considered in the form of purposive sampling, in which “the researcher purposefully selects individuals, groups, and settings for this phase that maximize understanding of the underlying phenomenon” (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007, p. 287). The technique of selecting the sample in this study was specific due to the characteristics of the particular group (female vice deans) that could provide the information needed to understand the phenomenon. In both qualitative and quantitative methods, the study

sample was defined by its own criteria which distinguishes it as a group. Purposeful sampling represents the knowledge obtained from people who have lived the experiences under examination. Subsequently, qualitative data was used to develop a quantitatively constructed instrument for use with a different and larger sample to triangulate the data (Creswell, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews in this study were undertaken individually in more than three campuses in various cities with distances ranging from 150 km to 300 km between the campuses. The interviewees were invited via email to participate. In the first stage, five VDs agreed to participate, and so meetings were arranged one and a half months in advance, prior to the start of fieldwork, since at that time I had not yet travelled to Saudi Arabia to begin the data collection. After two weeks, another email was sent, successfully reaching another four willing participants. The female VDs who could not be reached through email were contacted via text message, which led to a total of 14 interviews.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to engage in a free dialogue with prompts offered by the researcher at appropriate points. Furthermore, such interviews generate interactions between the interviewee and interviewer (Newton, 2010). This particular type of interview requires a guideline of the themes to be covered during the interview. Essentially, interviews offer a deep understanding of a phenomena that may not be intensely understood by any other method (Gill et al., 2008).

I started my interviews on the main campus located in a big city as it is the closest city to my arrival airport. I stayed in a local hotel after successful early arrangements with some of the VDs.

Although I had arrangements with other VDs on the same campus, I had to move to another city as the VDs had full timetables which delayed some of the main campus interviews. I travelled to one of the small cities by car due to the lack of public transportation in Saudi Arabia. The journey from one city to another was expensive due to the accommodation and transportation costs. In my fieldwork experience, inclusive of the interview arrangements and cancellations, in addition to multisite travelling, it proved to be challenging. I was restricted to other interview arrangement in the other cities also, and so I went back and forth between the campuses.

Throughout the interviews, most participants wanted to express their experiences and understood the importance of the study. Some difficulties occurred during the interview stage, such as one VD agreeing to participate and arranged a time. Subsequently at the time of the interview, she refused because she did not have permission from the dean, even though the researcher had already obtained permission. Later on, I received a message from her willing to meet. Additionally, there was a concern surrounding the extensive responses about their personal life, which was respected.

3.7.4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

3.7.4.3.1 Documentary Analysis

The method of documentary analysis was utilised to study the gendered nature of the institutional policies that guide the career development of academics. Bowen (2009) defined documentary analysis as “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic material” (p. 27). Documentary analysis allowed extensive review of the documents from the institution, such as the policies guiding the working conditions, the requirements for promotion, the provision of childcare facilities, and the provision for maternity and paternity leave,

among others, in order to develop new insights into the institutional factors that could affect the progression of women in leadership. The document analysis is presented as part of the interpretation to gain an understanding of the content, as well as the common practices and meanings, and to increase the deductive quality of the results (Rapley 2008; Wamboldt, 1992).

To explore the institutional policies, procedures, and legislation, and their role in shaping the career paths of the female VDs, it is significant to examine the relevant university documents. The institutional policies are built from what is written in the institutional documents which shape the organisational relations and the formation, integration, interaction and their implications for the purpose of implementing the institutional practices (Museus, 2007). In this institution, upon looking at the procedures related to professional development and leadership, as well as the policies that concern female academics, this facilitates an understanding of the nature of the women's work. To support this research, I sought out the documents related to the faculty and policies correlating with the issues stated.

The websites of the university and the Ministry of Education provided access to the required documents as they contain extensive information about the university and HE in Saudi Arabia in general. The institutional documents housed in the legal department included the rules and legislation on the following:

Higher Education Council System and Universities.

The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like.

Saudi Regulations (Board of Experts).

The selected documents consider the faculty affairs in the university. Regarding “authenticity” (Fitzgerald, 2012), which refers to the originality of the document, documents are considered to be electronic copies of the official copy issued by the official authorities. Some documents were obtained from the Ministry of Civil Service’s website, such as the documents on the academic ranks and the salary scale of said ranks in terms of their degrees and differences.

The content analysis methodology was applied to understand how practices are shaped within the institution. This analysis was used for the documents as it is the most common procedure used to analyse “meanings” and other valuable content in similar studies (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In addition, it facilitates triangulation, as it was utilised in combination with the interviews and surveys (Brown, 2009).

Public records are a primary source that can be analysed not only in qualitative research but also in mixed methods research as well (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). An institutional culture is built on what is written in the related documents which contain the policies that shape said culture, that outline the dimensions of the organisational relations, and that demonstrate the formation of integration and interactions, and their implications for institutional practices (Kuh, 2001). Content analysis is an opportune technique to examine the patterns and actions through the relevant documents (Stemler, 2001).

As a technique, content analysis “seeks to analyze data within a specific context in view of meanings someone—a group or a culture—attributes to them” (Krippendorff, 1989, p. 403). Bowen (2009) specifies five reasons for using document analysis: 1) when it offers researchers information on how the participants operate in the specific setting, 2) when it may help to inform

and develop the research questions, 3) when the inferences drawn from the documents can provide important value in terms of knowledge, 4) when the documentation provides an approach to tracking change and development (e.g., through an analysis of various drafts, which was experienced in this study due to the amendments made to documents created more than 22 years ago), and 5) when it is possible to verify the results or evidence obtained from other data collection methods. For example, understanding the policies and promotion procedures, as Bowen (2009) points out, means that “[t]he researcher can use data drawn from documents, for example, to contextualise data collected during interviews” (p. 30).

To analyse the content of a document, Krippendorff (1980) illustrates six procedural steps that should be followed: 1) defining which data should be examined and how this should be achieved, 2) “unitising” or defining and identifying the “units” in the data that should be analysed, 3) correlating the population to the document content, 4) coding and classifying the outcome data into categories, 5) identifying how the coded data is associated with the research question or phenomena, and 6) validating the inferences. Each of these steps was considered in the present study, starting from identifying the needed documents.

The researcher in this study selected the data to be considered such as the legislation on academic affairs such as the policies on recruitment, the criteria for occupying select positions, the academic rank upgrade criteria and procedures, and the family-friendly policies. To reach the required documents, the official online website of the institution under study was accessed through the deanship of the faculty members and employee affairs, followed by selecting the Bylaws and Procedural Guides documents. From the documents related to the administrative staff and faculty,

the choice was made to select the faculty-related documents, for example The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like. In this document, two versions were examined as one was an old version dating back to 1997 and a recent version was issued in 2017. After the first stage of identifying and accessing the documents to be analysed, the stage of identifying and unitising the needed data related to the study was applied. Neuendorf (2017) defined units as “Units can be words, characters, themes, time periods, statements or turns in an interaction, or any other outcome” (p. 2). For example, the units addressing the requirement of an academic rank upgrade were considered to be a theme correlating to the population of the study (faculty). Coding was then applied to the data such as upgrade, recruitment, and research production. The codes were then categorised depending on the type of the policy in relation to the research questions such as an academic advancement policy, leadership advancement policy, or family-friendly policy. After coding the meanings, “drawing inferences” was applied which is “the most important phase of a content analysis. It applies the stable knowledge about how the variable accounts of coded data are related to the phenomena the researcher wants to know about.” (Krippendorff, 1989, p. 407). In the process of generating the themes, an attempt was made to extract the main theme associated with the unit “While sorting and naming themes requires some level of interpretation”, where “interpretation” was kept to a minimum” (Anderson, 2007).

As the document was originally written in Arabic, the analysis was done for the Arabic versions as well as one English version of the documents. After generating the codes, the code categories as well as the meaning units were arranged in a table to better correlate the data with the related research questions, see Appendixes J and K. Regarding the selecting of a significant piece for

analysis in the texts, Drisko and Maschi (2016) argue that “researches must take care in selecting suitable samples for content analysis as well as to code and analyse this material thoroughly and consistently” (p. 13). In the current study, selecting significant pieces from the available documents was considered to be in accordance with the phenomena under study and the topics in the context-related research questions as “The researcher must therefore locate a source of communication relevant to the research question and ask questions that can be solved by content analysis” (Prasad, 2008, p. 9).

To validate the inferences, the external criterion was used in which “research findings closely related to one’s own issue and objects of examination, and of whose validity one is convinced, are brought in as a standard of comparison” (Mayring, 2014). The required criteria for the qualitative sample were Saudi women academics in leadership positions within a male-led institution. In total, 17 female VDs met the required criteria, and went on to provide rich data and validity as part of the content analysis (Krippendorff, 1989). The external criterion in this study was the outcomes following the interview data which will be extensively discussed in Chapter Four.

3.7.4.3.2 Analysis of The Interviews

As it is mixed-method research study, the qualitative research data was analysed using thematic analysis. The thematic method was used to analyse the interviews specifically. It is mostly used for setting texts such as interview transcripts, therefore this method was preferred in this research. The researcher closely measured the data to identify common themes such as ideas, topics, patterns of meanings, and many more. The answers to the interview questions were analysed using thematic analysis. This permits a lot of flexibility when interpreting the data and when approaching a large

set of data by sorting it into broad themes. This includes the risks of missing nuances in the data. It is mostly subjective and focuses on the researchers' judgment, therefore it needs careful reflection on the personal interpretations and choices (Etikan and Bala, 2017).

The interviews were held in Arabic, and constructing the transcripts involved a subsequent translation phase. The most appropriate method to analyse transcripts is thematic analysis, as it is “a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set... [Thematic analysis] allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences” (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Accordingly, a researcher should identify common and significant themes to understand the studied phenomenon. Emphasis should be given to studying each theme separately so as to understand the causes for the existence of this topic as a common and significant factor generated from the data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined six phases in the process of thematic analysis. First, the research should engage with themes to gain knowledge in the stage prior to the analysis itself, especially if the collection process was done through interviews. The researcher sought to gain familiarity with the themes in the transcription stage. Second, the researcher should develop the initial themes as they go through the data, developing a list of themes from what is represented in the dataset and increasing the familiarity level. Third, the researcher must analyse the code with the aim of narrowing the focus by figuring out the different codes and combining similar ones to illustrate the key themes. In the fourth phase, the themes should be reviewed and refined. The process of revision extracts recurrent themes that are not needed and classifies some of them into either categories or sub-categories. By the end of this stage, the researcher will have an overview of the

important themes and their combination which highlights the outcomes of the qualitative data. Fifth, the researcher should define and apply additional refinement to the themes to ascertain what they are about, and to identify the areas in which each theme is addressed. They should aim to acquire an understanding of what all themes address in general. In the last stage, the researcher should write up a report on the analysed data. Consequently, the above stages were followed in this study to establish a proper map for use in the analytical process.

The transcripts resulted in two copies, an Arabic version and a translated English version. Although the translation was done by the researcher due to the high cost of translation services, the original and translated versions of selected passages were reviewed by an English lecturer. The transcripts were analysed through a coding technique “comprised of categories of data and themes that the researcher is interested in. For categorization, “data are examined and grouped based on similarities ... and each category is assigned a code.” (Cope, 2016, p. 3). Coding supports the researcher in connecting the data and making an interpretation (Cope, 2010).

The first step of thematic analysis is *familiarization* which helps to learn about the data. It is necessary to get an overview of all of the types of data used to better analyse the individual items. This includes the data transcription which is a method used to convert speech to text word for word. It is the most common practice used when conducting interviews as it enables the analysis to be performed. Interviews can be transcribed by using different methods. The methods depend on the goal of the transcription, such as verbatim transcription, intelligent verbatim transcription, and edited transcription.

Verbatim transcription is the process in which each word is transcribed, including the expression of emotions such as stuttering, laughter, and hesitation – like ‘uh, and other’ pauses. This type of transcription is mostly used in research where the researcher is interested not in what is said but in how it is said. Besides this, intelligent verbatim transcription is the most common transcription method in which every word is written but where there is an absence of irrelevant fillers such as 'yeah,' 'uhm,' and 'you know.' The grammar mistakes, long paragraphs, and broken sentences can be fixed to improve readability. This method is more readable than verbatim transcription because some of the data such as hesitation, pauses, and emotions are lost in the process. Edited transcription is the edited and summarised version of an intelligent verbatim transcript. Fillers like 'you know' or sentences can be omitted so long as they do not change the story's meaning. After the data familiarisation, the translated transcripts will be changed from non-English to English if the data was not in English originally. If the researcher found any non-English transcriptions, they are converted into English but this requires a lot of effort to be exerted. The perfect matching terminology is necessary during translation because it will change the meaning of the participants' perceptions and views. The present research used the edited transcriptions to gain an in-depth insight into the interviews' significant responses on the research topic (GuhaThakurta, 2015).

The second step of thematic analysis is *coding*, which is the stage in which the data is coded. Coding involves highlighting sections of the text that are mostly sentences and phrases. It comes up with the shorthand codes and labels as a description of the content. It identifies a passage in the text and the other data items while identifying and searching concepts to find relationships between them. Coding is not merely labelling. It also links the data to the research ideas. Codes enable the researcher to organise the data in a structured way. The two common coding approaches are data-

driven and concept-driven. The researcher uses the predetermined coding scheme and reviews the initial observations to construct a coding scheme depending on the major categories that emerge. The present research used data-driven coding. In the extracts from the interviews, numerous phrases were highlighted in varied colours based on the different codes. Every code indicates the idea or feeling shown in the part of the text. In this stage, the researcher must be thorough, and this is where the researcher goes through the transcript of every interview. Everything must be highlighted that jumps out as potentially interesting and relevant. New codes are continually added and all of the appropriate sentences are highlighted (Denzin, 1973) (see Appendix G).

The third step of thematic analysis is *generating themes*. This is by looking at the codes created in the previous steps. In this step, the patterns are identified, and the themes generated. Themes are mostly broader than codes, and it is an umbrella term used in coding. In some cases, different codes are combined to form themes. The vague codes are discarded in this step. Sometimes codes become themes without making any changes. Potential themes are generated that are helpful to the research (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). In the next step, the themes were reviewed. It is ensured that the themes are accurate and useful. Later, the themes were defined, and appropriate names were given to them. Defining the themes includes formulating each theme and figuring out the way to best understand the data. Naming the themes includes coming up with easily understandable and succinct information for each theme. Later, the analysed data was written appropriately with supportive research evidence (Etikan and Bala, 2017).

This research used manual coding rather than the coding software Nvivo. The use of the software is highly effective if the researcher is getting used to it but manual coding gives a better insight

into the research issue using critical thinking. The software packages maximise research productivity but they cannot alter the human role in the critical process of interpretation and analysis (Goertzen, 2017).

3.7.4.3.3 Data Analysis Through Intersectionality

The intersectionality approach in data analysis has been considered due to the exposure of exclusion experiences across both personal and professional experiences. From the reviewed literature on intersectionality, particularly the theoretical framework on the intersection of social identity and institutional practices, the researcher focused on the practices experienced as a result of social identities, specifically gender and cultural identities. The focus was on the practices within the personal experiences involving their family and the institutional practices in their career experiences which produced marginalisation and silencing due to the power systems of society and the institution. Thematic analysis has been applied in this intersectionality study (Cole et al., 2012). The codes generated from the experiences related to gender and cultural identity showing the social practice of oppression and exclusion were applied. For example, “authority” code was the theme and intersectional interpretation of the experience under this code that showed the exclusion of the VDs from power on socio-cultural and institutional grounds. Therefore, the interpretation of the data through intersectional lenses was substantial in terms of understanding the construction of the experiences and influences shaping the construction of the experience itself. Regarding the analysis of data within the intersectional framework, “As a theoretical framework and a practical tool, it makes a unique contribution to advancing understanding and empowering marginalized groups in the context of management, organizations, and beyond.” (Atewologun, 2018, pp. 14-15). As a researcher, it was important for me to recognise that the intersectionality in

the data may not be clearly recognisable. The analysis was therefore conducted while keeping in mind the social context of the data (Hunting, 2014).

3.7.5 Quantitative Phase

3.7.5.1 Questionnaires Data Collection

Questionnaires were adopted to triangulate the data, and the themes concluded from the interview transcripts were used to inform the questions. The survey was developed to elucidate and verify the aspects mentioned in the interviews, such as the themes related to the institutional practices, preparation programmes, and training. The questionnaire utilised a five-point Likert scale with the answers ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, I do not know, agree, to strongly agree. This type of questionnaire was adopted due to the large-scale sample and to reach the highest possible response rate to enrich the research data.

The sample included female HoDs. These women do not hold the same position as the VDs but they work in the same college system as the VDs' subordinates and those who have direct dealings with them.

3. Sampling for Questionnaires

In mixed-methods research, two types of quantitative sampling methods are used, specifically probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling shows that each member of the population has an equal chance of selection in the research. The four main types of probability sampling are simple random, systematic, stratified, and cluster sampling (Etikan and Bala, 2017). Simple random sampling reflects that each member of the population has an equal chance of

selection. The sampling frame involves the whole population (Kohler et al., 2019). Systematic sampling is quite similar to simple random sampling in that it is comparatively easier to conduct. Every member of the population is given a number, and the participants are selected at regular intervals such as third, fourth, etc., instead of randomly generating numbers. Using this type of technique, it is crucial to ensure that there are no hidden patterns in the data in case an invalid source is specified. Stratified sampling is used by dividing the population into subpopulations that are varied in numerous ways. This helps when making precise conclusions to ensure that every subgroup can appropriately represent the sample. Cluster sampling includes the population's division into subgroups but every subgroup has the same characteristics as the population. Instead of selecting participants from the sub-group, the researcher selects the entire subgroup. If the clusters are large, the researcher can sample the participants from them. This method effectively deals with dispersed populations because there is no risk of error in the sample (Etikan and Bala, 2017).

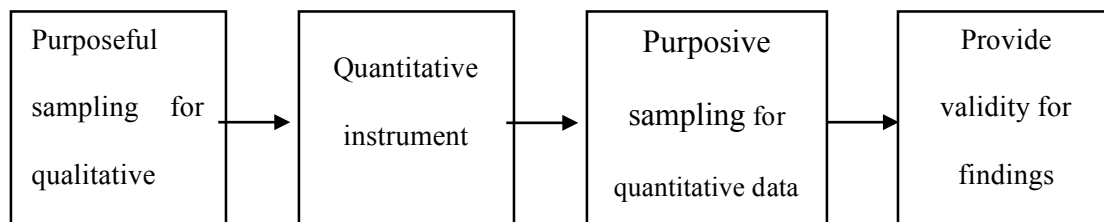
Non-probability sampling is the process in which the participants are selected depending on non-random criteria. Every individual does not have a chance of being involved in the research. This sample type is cheaper and easier to access. It cannot be used for making valid statistical inferences about a population. These techniques are effective for use in qualitative and exploratory studies. The most common techniques are convenience, voluntary, snowball, and purposive sampling (Yilmaz, 2013). Convenience sampling involves participants that are accessible to the researcher. It is an inexpensive and easy way to collect the initial data but there is no way to ensure that the sample is the population's representative, therefore it cannot produce generalised outcomes. Voluntary response sampling is similar to convenience sampling in that is based on ease of access.

The researcher does not select the participants by directly contacting them but they instead volunteer themselves by responding to the online survey (Fleming, 2018). In purposive sampling, the researcher uses its judgment to select a handy sample for the research purpose. It is mostly used in qualitative research where the researcher wants to have detailed knowledge of a specific phenomenon instead of making statistical inferences. Effective purposive sampling must have clear criteria and an inclusion rationale. Snowball sampling is used for a harder population when the participants are difficult to access. This is where the participants are approached with the help of other participants, and the data for the research is complicated (Eliadis, 2018).

The present research on women VDs and leadership used a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, for the quantitative data collection. This offers two primary advantages. First, individuals can make subsets of the larger groups at random, and each person in the large group set has a similar selection probability level. It develops a balanced subset that has the highest potential to represent the larger group. Simplicity makes the sample less complex than other methods of data collection. The individuals in the subset are randomly selected without any additional steps. In addition, purposive sampling has been used because this process obtains the sample that could most serve the research purpose from a group who are the best for providing knowledge of the subject. The selection of the technique should mainly consider the nature of the research and whether it is quantitative in nature so to consider whether it should be convenience sampling that is used or qualitative in nature where it should be purposive (Etikan et al., 2016). This is essentially qualitative in terms of the nature of this study.

The quantitative sample consisted of women who work directly under the female VDs, meaning that the two groups interact. The HoDs were able to express their views regarding their administrative and institutional experiences at the university. Subsequently, the phase of utilising the qualitative data to develop a quantitatively constructed instrument for different samples of a larger size than the qualitative study enabled data triangulation (Creswell, 2015).

Figure 3.3: Sampling of the participants.



Sargeant (2012) emphasises that “subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful; participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study” (p. 1). The selected participants are those “who possess certain traits or qualities” (Koerber and McMichael, 2008). For the purpose of collecting data through questionnaires, the online questionnaire was sent to 113 female HoDs for the second sample, as they are working directly under the VDs and are expected to be future VDs. The HoDs were selected to provide another perspective on the subject and for the purpose of triangulation and validation, as mentioned earlier.

The formal procedures to send the electronic paperwork to the vice presidency of Research and Postgraduate Studies in the researched university were met in order to obtain the required permission to send the online questionnaires to the participants. When the questionnaire was sent,

15 responses were acquired immediately. After that, responses were received intermittently in the first week, resulting in a total of 28. After three weeks, another attempt was made to reach the participants, taking the total to 54 responses with a response rate of 47% out of 113 administered questionnaires.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Since the project examines human experiences in Saudi Arabia, the disclosure of certain personal experiences caused a dilemma, especially in the context of family experiences. Due to the conservatism of Saudi society, the interview dialogue was limited. As an insider, I respect and am sensitive towards this issue, so I allowed the participants to speak about their experiences freely, giving them the choice not to respond to sensitive matters or to avoid delving too deeply into the narrative of their family/personal details. Although building rapport with the participants could be beneficial in this case by sharing personal experiences to evoke answers from the interviewees (Tang, 2002), this technique could cause bias in the informants' answers. Holstein and Gubrium (2003) argue that "the interviewer must avoid any action that would imprint her or his presence onto the respondent's reported answer" (p. 13). To obtain the maximum amount of information possible, scheduled and non-scheduled prompts that support the full narration of the experiences should be given (Sandy and Dumay, 2011). In addition, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) suggest, "[a]s responses are given, the interviewer can in turn respond with prompts that repeat the words used by the interviewee. This process signals the need for further clarification without leading the interviewee" (p. 316). Thus, the researcher did not share the personal experiences to prevent possible bias.

Confidentiality was highly considered in this study, which anonymised and thus protected the participants' names and personal information, as well as the college names, and the name of the university itself. I notified the participants of the confidentiality of their personal information (Wiles, 2008). The recording of the interviews was done after obtaining an expression of agreement from the participants. Although two of them refused, I managed to write down the conversation and have them review the transcription to add content if they wished to. The data was accessed and used for research purposes only. Regarding integrity, no false information or fabrications were reported. Fairness was applied to all participants, and no one was excluded based on discrimination. No one was forced to participate against their will, and all individuals were respected. The interview transcripts were shared with the participants to verify that their accounts had been accurately captured.

The ethical considerations have been maintained in the research. There are many ethical codes of conduct that regulate a researcher's behaviour. These codes discuss the numerous issues in this research, and the other issues linked with professional practice. Within the ethics discipline, numerous approaches are used to examine the values and ethics followed in research. The researcher has ensured that no harm can occur to the voluntary research participants and that all the participants got the opportunity to participate in the study. The researcher considered six broad ethical areas in this research.

Voluntary participation was ensured in this research, and deception and coercion were avoided. The research participants who decided not to participate in the study were not included. The researcher acknowledged that the participants are assisting in the research, meaning that they are

a crucial component. The issue of voluntary consent has been tackled critically. Consent was also asked of the Vice Presidency of Higher Education and Research at the university under study, and later individual consent was taken in verbal and written forms separately.

Informed consent was taken from the participants after ensuring that the participants fully understood what was asked. The informed consent issue was addressed by using an information letter that was given to all the participants who were invited to participate in the research. It used the official letterhead of the university to increase the participants' responses by indicating that they were working with a professional platform. The included information was sufficiently clear, and the target group understood whatever was asked in the research. The letter contained all of the important information about the research topic and its benefits for the individual, for society, and for the community. The researcher explained everything in the informed consent form such as who, what, and why related questions.

Confidentiality and anonymity have been mentioned in the research. This information was given via the information sheet. The respondents' answers were kept anonymous and confidential. The researcher ensured anonymity and did not know about the participants. This was inclusive of a random phone survey and the distribution of the survey being done randomly. The identity of the participants was not revealed after the research analysis. Confidentiality is paramount in this research because the participants shared sensitive information with the researcher.

Chapter Four

Findings

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the data collected from the interviews, document analysis, and questionnaires are presented. In the examination of the career paths of the female vice-deans (VDs),

this study explores the incidents related to their career experiences. Thus, the findings are mainly presented in this chapter in a thematically chronological order. In the first section, I will offer a summary of the biographical data of the participants which will be followed by the main study findings obtained from the interviews with 14 female VDs employed by the university. This is as well as the findings from the documentary analysis. In addition to this qualitative data, the quantitative findings from the Likert-scale questionnaires answered by 54 female Heads of Department (HoDs) at the same university will also be presented. The qualitative and quantitative data sets were integrated to compare the similarities and differences in the presented experiences and to triangulate the data.

4.2. Background Data of the Women Vice Deans

As mentioned, 14 out of 17 female VDs from the university participated in this study. The biographical data of the participating VDs has been summarised in Table 4.1, which includes age, length of managerial experience, and the duration of their current position. The data revealed common characteristics between the VDs, with most holding a doctorate as well as

having prior managerial experience. Nevertheless, they differ in other managerial aspects in the university as discussed in the following sections.

Table 4.1: Background of the VDs

VD no.	Age	Marital Status	Highest Qualifi.	Career Length	Years as a VD	Years in Mngmt	Academic Rank	Year of Earning
1	45-49	Single	PhD	18 years	4	8	Assistant Professor	2010
2	40-44	Married	PhD	15 years	3	10	Professor	2018
3	30-34	Married	PhD	9 years	1	1.5	Assistant Professor	2016
4	50-55	Married	PhD	33 years	4	20	Associate Professor	2010
5	30-34	Separated	PhD	5 years	4	5	Assistant Professor	2015
6	45-49	Married	PhD	22 years	2	8	Assistant Professor	2010
7	40-44	Married	PhD	22 years	9	21	Associate Professor	2014
8	45-49	Married	PhD	28 years	6	11	Associate Professor	2018
9	40-44	Married	PhD	17 years	4	4	Assistant Professor	2014
10	40-44	Married	PhD	19 years	5	19	Assistant Professor	2013
11	40-44	Married	PhD	16 years	6	6	Assistant Professor	2012
12	30-34	Single	MA	2 years	2	3	Lecturer	2016
13	35-39	Married	PhD	14 years	5	7	Associate Professor	2015
14	45-49	Married	PhD	23 years	3	21	Assistant Professor	2009

4.2.1 Age

Most of the participating VDs were middle-class women in their forties who had started their careers in their twenties. The majority of the VDs who started the job in their twenties most likely entered the workplace after graduating from the baccalaureate at the age of about 22 years. Some started their career in their twenties (such as VD6 and VD7) which also indicates that their academic careers started immediately after graduating from their bachelor's degrees.

The majority of the VDs were in their forties and had been in the role of college VD for somewhere between two and four years at the time of their interview (e.g., VD1, VD2, VD6, VD9, and VD14). In addition, the eldest VD (VD4, in her early fifties), who has also had one of the longest careers in higher education, had only been in the VD position for four years. Some of the women reached the position of VD in the same period although they were in their thirties (e.g., VD5). VD7 has been in the position for nine years since her thirties, meaning that she obtained the role at a relatively young age. However, the tenure of the VD position is mostly short and ranges between two to four years regardless of age.

Comparing the ages of the female VDs and HoDs, the age range difference between them is noticeable. Most HoDs are in their thirties (59%), either 30 - 34 years (33%) or 35 – 39 years (25%). On the other hand, most of the VDs were in their forties, as mentioned above. As most of the HoDs were in their early thirties, this could mean that there could be some increase in the number of future VDs in their thirties as the management period for each position is usually two years. This would allow many of the HoDs in their thirties to become VDs in this age range.

4.2.2 Marital Status

Almost all the VDs are married with the exception of three (two never married and one separated). Only one married VD has no children, stating in the interview that she believes they will negatively affect her career progress: “I have no children, [so] I can focus more on my job and be distinguished.” On the other hand, the VDs with children did not mention that offspring had made any difference to their career. This could be because their family helped and some described their mother’s help during her postgraduate studies: “Studying has a negative impact on family life, but

fortunately my husband was not with us, [and] my mother was caring for my children with the housemaid.” VD10 expressed how she was lucky not to have her husband with her at that time, as this would have raised the load of her family responsibilities. She wanted to minimise her responsibilities with support from her mother and housemaid. Obviously, the negative influence she is mentioning means that she has family responsibilities with a husband and kids, suggesting that her husband is an additional responsibility rather than a supporter. These responsibilities would have been difficult to manage if her mother and helper were not there to provide help. However, although the other VDs did not mention any obstacles due to their family responsibilities, VD10 and VD3 mentioned the negative effect of having a family which might be different experiences due to their personality or specific situation. VD10 was pregnant during her postgraduate studies, thus the presence of her mother at that time was significantly needed.

4.2.3 Qualifications of Participants

All of the VDs hold a PhD except for one, VD12. She is among the three youngest VDs and is considered the newest in the profession (see Table 4.1). This might be due to her position in a college located in a small city with fewer faculty members than usual. Another consideration might be that she has newly joined the career and has the shortest career length (see Table 4.1) due to some of the reasons presented in section 4.6.2.

The HoDs were asked for their qualifications to provide data on the background of the women’s academic progress in the university. Table 4.3 below summarises the qualifications of the HoD survey respondents.

Table 4.2: Qualification of the HoDs in the study

Qualification	HoDs	Percent
MA	17	31.5
PhD	37	68.5
Total	54	100.0

As Table 4.2 shows, most of the HoDs had already earned a PhD degree although they were mostly in their thirties. However, 31.5% of them were yet to obtain their doctorate. This is most likely because of their young age and due to them being in the early stages of their careers. It could be justified as an institutional policy requiring early academics to develop their academic studies, the same as the majority who returned to their work holding PhDs in their thirties.

The justification for the raised number of PhD holders among the HoDs is found in *The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like*(2017). In the regulations on appointing teaching assistants, the document explains:

If three years have passed since the appointment of the teaching assistant and he/she has not enrolled in his/her postgraduate programme without justification, the university council may transfer him/her to an administrative job. (10)

This sort of regulation makes a significant difference to the academic progression of the female faculty. It suggests that in the future, a PhD may be a requirement for further promotion posts, including the VD appointment, regardless of the other circumstances or the size of the college. It is arguable that the policy’s phrase “*without justification*” might be interpreted as providing room

for the support of female staff. However, there is no further clarification or example of the circumstances that could be identified as “*justification*” for not enrolling in postgraduate study. Thus, the policy remains vague and lacks specific details that would support and protect the female staff if they are not able to undertake postgraduate study within three years of being a teaching assistant for maternity reasons.

4.2.4 Vice Deans’ Experience in Management

The figures for the duration of the years in management in Table 4.1 show that the length of managerial experience varies in duration from one VD to another. Some of the VDs’ experiences reached 20 years (e.g., VD4, VD7, VD10, and VD14), while others had around 10 years (e.g., VD2 and VD6) or much less experience (e.g., VD11 and VD5). In contrast, VD3, VD12, and VD9 had recently joined the management in the university. This shows that long managerial experience is not a common pattern for those in the vice deanship position and may not necessarily be a requirement for promotion. Consequently, the faculty who are new to management at the institution, in the first years of management, may just be eligible to become a college VD.

Another dominant pattern here is that some of the VDs suggested that the duration of their role was relatively short compared to the beginning of their career in management. Three of them (VD4, VD10, and VD14) have a vast gap between the length of their managerial experience and the length of their experience in vice deanship. On the other hand, VD5, VD9, and VD11 have been in management for the same length of time as their VD duration, such as 4 years or 6 years after joining management life. Them now being a vice dean might indicate that in some cases, managerial experience was not required to be selected for the post. This is especially the case for

the young VDs in their thirties with less managerial and VD experience overall. For example, VD3 has been in management for one and a half years, and was promoted because a Saudi academic was required to fill the position in a college that was mostly staffed by non-Saudis, as she mentioned. In addition, VD5 has worked in management for five years, four of which were her VD position. Both women were offered the position of VD because of the need for Saudi female academics in the college:

VD3: [The Dean] said to me, “I think the Saudi leaders are the ones who should hold the positions in the colleges as they run the work with their new knowledge that came from abroad”.

VD5: After the introduction of a computer sciences faculty and [the promotion of] a dean, they needed a female VD for the college. They searched and I was the closest specialist as possible to the specialisation.

In both cases, the reason for selection was the necessity of a female Saudi academic being in the post as all of the VDs were Saudi. This was also noticed in the HoD data, as all of these women were Saudi as well (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Nationality of the HoDs

Nationality of the HoDs

	Frequency	Percent
Saudi	54	100.0

Although the policy is not explicit about this as a requirement, this indicates that the university favours Saudi women as VDs, although Saudi HE has a considerable number of non-Saudi academics as well. This point will be reviewed in Chapter Five.

The criteria of nationality and specialty were both considered in the selection process. The experiences due to knowledge from a broad area was considered to a useful experience from the dean's perspective regarding the college vice-deanship. However, besides the external experience, nationality was a priority regardless of age and managerial experience, the latter of which was a very short (6 months) for VD3. The dean prioritised being Saudi for such a position as he mentioned "*Saudi leaders are the ones who should hold the positions*". For him, it was this broad knowledge only supporting his selection process. To sum up, management in terms of experience is not essential for selection for the position as much as nationality is.

4.2.5 Academic Rank Advancement

The academic rank for the VDs appears to have a slightly slower progress as shown in Table 4.1. The data in this table indicates that three VDs earned the last rank (two assistant professors and one associate professor) 10 years before the interviews (the interviews were held in 2018). Two earned their rank six years previously and two earned their rank four years previously, which would make them all eligible for promotion. Four were last promoted between two and three years previously. There were two VDs who had been recently promoted in the same interview year (2018), one to the position of professor (the only professor in the study), and the other to the rank of associate professor (there were four associate professors in this study). Most of the participants (eight VDs) hold the rank of assistant professor, while one holds the lowest rank, which is that of

a lecturer. The data reveals that the eight female VDs holding the position of associate professor were eligible for promotion as it had been four years since they received the last upgrade. The gap indicates that there could be reasons for this delay other than the required years, which will be presented in this chapter.

4.3 Influence of Parents on the Career Choices of Vice Deans

The parents' influence on the lives of the female VDs was found to be significant as they were the first factor that impacted these women at the start of their careers. The parents were, as the findings show, influential in relation to the women's success in education which arguably paved their way to an academic career. There were differences between the support and influence of the mothers and fathers. Although most of their mothers were illiterate, they were keen for their daughters to be successful. They provided a great deal of emotional support and general advice. This support can be seen in the following extracts:

VD7: My mother was strictly monitoring her children's learning process, and for that she had a great role in the success we achieved in our education. Although she was illiterate, we thought that she was capable of reading and writing. Because she had a wonderful way in this follow-up by checking our books and examine them. I did not recognise that fact that she does not know how to read and write until I was in secondary school!

VD10: My mother, although she was an uneducated woman, was very careful to provide us with the appropriate atmosphere for studying, especially during exams days."

VD2: I was offered a job to teach in public schools, and although my mother was completely illiterate, she encouraged me to turn the offer down to pursue my higher education”

The mothers of the VDs were not educated even though they were considerate of their daughters' education and wanted it to be successful. Besides the mothers, the fathers also had a role in influencing the female VDs to the point of being described as “affectionate.” Emotional support from her father influenced the career life of VD2:

VD2: My father was very affectionate. I mean, when I was little, he used to put my socks and shoes on for me and carry my bag until I get to my school door. I can still feel his affection even at my workplace, and I still see that every time I leave the college.

Most of the participants expressed the impact of their parents on their careers and how they motivated them and expected them to be successful. This shows that the parents were a key factor, being the first effect on the career paths of the female VDs. This influence did not stop as the women sometimes grew into the career choices given to them or shaped by their parents.

VD12: My parents ...encouraged me to choose the major I wanted to study. When I... wanted to be in the science field, they told me to follow whatever was my passion because it's going to be the thing I do for all my life time.

The choice of profession was a major aspect in determining the future of these women in the world of work, especially considering the role and source of choice, specifically whether it was purely personal or dependent on external factors. Seven of the female VDs mentioned a common experience in that their fathers decided when they were very young that they would be medical doctors as it was the most prestigious job that a woman could aspire to.

VD1: my father always had a great faith that one of his daughters will hold the title of a 'doctor!'"

VD2: you could say that my father planted in my mind the idea of me going to medicine college.

Three of the VDs gave similar examples of how their fathers reinforced their own desire for their daughters to become medical doctors:

VD5: My father, may his soul rest in peace, had always called me 'doctor', although I was a little girl then and didn't realise what it meant.

VD9: [My father] used to call me "doctor".

VD7: since I was young, [my father] would say in front of others "here comes my daughter, the doctor." ... implying me becoming a doctor in medicine one day. And I had that passion to make my father's dream come true

In VD7's experience, her mother was also a tremendous influence on her decision to become a doctor:

my mother, when I was in secondary school, came to one of the parents meeting. After meeting my teachers, she said: "I believe that if you kept being a good student and kept listening to your teachers, you'll become a doctor. You must promise me to do so." And I promised her

However, in most cases, the fathers' influence on the women's career choice reached the extent that they were held responsible for fulfilling this desire against their own wishes.

VD1: I didn't want to study medicine. Yet, I didn't have the courage to tell my father that I do not want to enrol in medicine school, and that I am not even interested in sciences".

VD5: I would not disappoint him. He asked me to be a medical doctor with great importance.

The fathers' desire for the women to be medical doctors stems from stereotypical view of this field being a prestigious career in society. Although the experiences with the fathers asking the VDs to be doctors occurred in the past, this point has been considered recently by the young VD5 who is ten years or more younger than the other ones who had the same experience with their father despite the wider careers choices now available to women. Family influence reached the point of taking responsibility for fulfilling the family's choice of career, especially that of the father. However, some of the women found ways to follow their own desires to study their preferred

choice of specialty that influenced a different career path. This was done by choice and they did not to have to follow what their fathers wished for them.

As mentioned earlier, the results indicate that the choice of specialisation to build their professional path was based on personal choice despite the family desire. Although the women respected and did not want to disappoint their fathers, they had decided on what they desired. This might be because they did not have a desire towards medicine, as they mentioned that they had other wishes. Examples include VD1 who was passionate about the French language, VD5 who wanted to choose a specialty of her choice, and VD9 who thought that her personal inclinations were not towards science but rather literature instead. Their decisions were based on personal interests, and they had the last word when making the decision to choose a major.

However, despite their own personal or familial interests, the findings reveal that most of the VDs experienced certain conditions due to their family and society that influenced their choice of specialisation at college, such as transportation and the availability of the major. Only three of them entered their desired specialisation at university. VD1 stated that she originally had a passion for studying the French language but instead opted for microbiology. She mentioned:

I was like all the girls of my generation; nothing to aspire to become other than a doctor in medicine, or a teacher, because those two fields were the only available fields for women at that time.

For VD3, her choice to become a nurse and an academic was in accordance with the university admission procedures.

This wasn't my orientation, I wanted to be a mathematician... I did not choose anything from the medical specialties, I was placed in a nursing specialty by the secretariat [by mistake].

For VD5, it was not a preferable choice to study early years education:

I wanted to study computer sciences. My mother refused because it was not available where I live. And as you know, in that case it means I need to travel back and forth from my city to another one. So, she totally disagreed."

Due to the lack of availability of her desired specialty and her family's refusal to allow her to travel, she studied early years education.

For VD7, being a doctor of medicine was both her dream and that of her parents. However, the obstacles in her educational path prevented this, and caused her to change her major twice:

I graduated from high school with a grade that qualifies me enough to get me in medicine school and achieve my dream and my father's dream... In order to make this happen, It was a must for me to travel outside ... [the city where my parents reside]. This was difficult, so I just enrolled in school of science.

Family circumstances prevented her from studying medicine or any medical subject:

The different...programmes which follow a credit-based system do not offer the students fixed timetables. That gave my parents a hard time in managing my transportation from home to school and same way around. I ...decided to change my major...because the school timetables were fixed, from morning to afternoon, which made the transportation matter easier for my father.

Family and social circumstances also cast a shadow over VD13's dreams, forcing her to study a scientific specialisation other than medicine even though she was from the same community in which parents wanted their daughters to study medicine. In this case, she was unable to study medicine due to the social conditions which were explained as her family being "conservative".

I was thinking of studying medicine, but as a conservative family, my family were not much supportive to this idea. They were against the idea of working for long hours and working sometimes in night shifts. So, I preferred to study any other major in the field of science.

In another experience, the English language had been a passion for VD14 since her school days, where she helped her classmates to understand English.

English was my passion, and I really wanted to be an English teacher, and thank God, I got in the university to study English language

In the cases that are presented in this study, 10 VDs joined their specialisation for various reasons, either due to their internal convictions (e.g., personal choice) or due to the external influences of various sociocultural barriers (e.g., travel or transportation issues, or conservative families).

One VD was unable to fulfil her desire to study medicine because the required night shifts were deemed unacceptable by her family. On the other hand, for most of the VDs, the situation was the exact opposite as their fathers wished for them to be medical doctors. In VD13's case, her experience shows that the social systems present can prevent women from reaching their career aspirations. This is similar to VD5 and VD7 who had to obey their families and consider studying majors that were considered to be more suitable for their situation.

Some of the VDs (e.g., VD8 and VD10) could have specialised in medicine but turned down the opportunity to do so for various reasons. VD8 refused because of the morgue:

I was not satisfied when I saw the morgue and I fall over when I first saw the scene.

Although her father (VD8) was a religious judge who is specialised in Islamic law and knowledgeable of that, he did not prevent her from traveling and studying medicine. This could be understood from the experience of the other VDs who faced family refusal at the idea of traveling to another city to study. This means that it is a socio-cultural barrier and not religious.

VD10 rejected medicine because she did not want to study away from her family for an extended period, therefore she opted for a four-year course instead of a seven-year one:

I thought that the study of medicine needs no less than six years away from the family and I stopped thinking in this area and I entered the specialty of biology.

To conclude, the effect of the family on the professional path and career choices of the VDs varies but remains profound. This leaves no room for doubt that in the experiences of many female VDs, family has an enormous impact and is an early influence on shaping the career aspirations and futures of the women. However, the bottom line is that this influence stopped at the stage of the career choice as it was to be done according to personal choice and not family choice. However, this may have equally been a case of the default position as a result of the social circumstances rather than due to a design position as a result of personal choice.

4.4 The Role of the Husband in the Career Life of the Vice Deans

One of the themes in the experiences of the female VDs as working women in the university was the impact of their husbands' support on the women's working lives. Most of the women reported that their husbands were great supporters of their careers which worked out as a benefit in terms of their career advancement.

VD3: He [her husband] said, "No, I will support you and you will support me".

VD3 was afraid that her work will affect her marriage. However, her husband offered emotional support and comforted her to provide her support in her career. In addition, VD4 experienced support that might be emotional as she indicated that her husband was a "supporter" of her work in general.

VD4: My husband is a great supporter for me in this career.

This sort of support was not emotional for VD8 as her husband provided her support through actions which was material, such as providing transport or childcare for example.

VD8: My husband did all he could do for me.

However, the degree of support varied in some cases, with some of the husbands “accepting” the work of the VDs and being an assistant in the provision of books and procedures for any paperwork.

VD2: without the support of my husband and children, I wouldn't have been capable of accomplishing what I have accomplished.

VD11: my husband really had an outstanding role in my entire educational career; he drove me to college back and forth, and if there was no man to help you, how can you do it?

This support and the need for it to succeed as the VDs sees might be related to the need to have a male figure assisting the women in terms of driving them from their home to go to their jobs and helping them in the formal process such as the paperwork for their job or when dealing with governmental entities. This included when they had to attend the facilities themselves as they were mainly led by men. This mean that the women were rarely allowed to access the men's facilities in the universities.

On the other hand, the presence of the husband in the life of one of the participants was the exact opposite. Rather than being “a great supporter”, VD5’s ex-husband refused to allow her to work, leading to their separation:

I am separated... I got married after I got my doctorate, but we couldn't agree [on work].

The reason for separation was my work.

VD5 got married after her doctorate, thus her husband had knowledge of her work and they agreed she would continue working. However, after the marriage, her husband broke this agreement, which necessitated their separation. The husband’s impact here was completely negative, so the wife’s choice was not to quit her job and meet the husband’s desire but rather to end the marriage. This was an anomaly since 11 of the female VDs were married and reported that their husbands were supportive. VD5 the only one who made a decision to change their marital life. The other VDs mentioned how the men were “understanding” of their career life in management. To sum up, the impact of the husband on the career lives of the female VDs was generally supportive.

4.5 Institutional Policies and Practices

4.5.1 Academic Career Recruitment

Most of the VDs started their academic careers after graduating from college with a first-class honours degree, enabling them to teach at the tertiary level as teaching assistants. VD3 explained:

“In the middle of the internship... I was nominated because I was one of the most distinguished students in my college, and I was asked by the Dean of the College of Nursing to teach at the college.

VD4 had a similar experience:

I graduated with first-class honours, and I was ranked the first amongst my classmates. And for that, I was nominated to work at the same department and university I graduated from.

Some of the women had the chance to choose between an academic and non-academic job, such as VD2 and VD9. They started their careers in academia, although they were offered a non-academic job. For VD2, she chose to pursue her postgraduate studies and not be a teacher in a school based on the opinion of her mother.

After I graduated from a bachelor’s degree, I was offered a teaching job in schools and even my mother, she is illiterate and does not read or write, she told me no, continue your studies.

R: Aha!! Yes?

VD2: I was in (name of city) and came here. Because at that time, there wasn’t, programmes for Masters’ and PhD, at ...University and Glory to Allah (God) I found that I am a university lecturer.

In the experience of VD9, her decision not to accept the offer of a schoolteacher position was primarily because she had married and moved to another city where she accepted a job in academia.

I was moving [to another city] because I was getting married, and I was nominated as a teacher in a school and after that, I was nominated again as a teaching assistant at the [City Name that she currently lives in] College.

Only two of the female VDs had worked in other fields prior to academia. VD1 was a lab specialist and was offered a job in academia that she accepted on the advice of her mother:

One day, the doctor [the Dean supervising internships in the hospital] said to me, "Give me your paper" ...I asked my father and my mother... [my mother] said to me, "Forget this hospital and go to the university".

Besides her mother's advice, VD1's main reason for joining the university was the chance to engage in postgraduate studies.

VD5 also sought out postgraduate study as an opportunity to change her job and specialisation.

Once I had a job at a private school as a kindergarten teacher, unfortunately I'm the kind of person who cannot bear working with children...and that pushed me ... to think of doing my postgraduate studies... I chose something unrelated to early education.

From the experiences that were revealed in this topic, it appears that the female VDs did not have a pre-conception or plan for working in the academic field. Nonetheless, most of the VDs entered the field by chance or after being nominated by the college. One explanation for this could be the priority for Saudi national academic staff as this is a major reason for academic recruitment at the university.

4.5.2 Nomination for the Position of Vice Deanship

The interview participants were asked how a female academic is selected for the position of VD. They reported that college VDs are selected based on nomination by the dean to the university rector who produces the official appointment. They explained that they were nominated for specific reasons, primarily being a Saudi and a PhD holder. VD1 stated:

The standards are as follows; a PhD holder, certainly must be Saudi to be eligible for this position, has a prior experience in administration,

VD8 also indicated that the process was through nomination by the dean and not application-based:

I didn't pick the position, but I was picked for it.

In some cases, the reason for nomination was a correlation between their specialty and the college, as in the case of VD5. The nomination here occurred on the basis of her specialty in addition to other mentioned criteria, such as having a PhD and managerial experience.

I was recommended by the dean of the previous college to the dean of... because of my area of speciality, I was the most suitable candidate. ... all the faculty members working at the department ...were non-Saudi,

Managerial experience was not required in the case of VD9 who was selected for the post as soon as she earned her PhD:

I held that position [a very short time] after obtaining my PhD, the dean spoke to me and told me that I had been nominated for the vice-deanship.

The data obtained from the VDs regarding nomination criteria were further explored in the HoD questionnaires to triangulate the data. Most of the VDs held a doctorate degree with the exception of VD12 who still only holds an MA. She reported that she was appointed to the position as she was distinguished in her one-year management position as a HoD. Thus, she was chosen for the post of VD. Likewise, the other criterion of managerial experience was met by most of the VDs, except for VD9 and VD11 who did not have any managerial background prior to their current post. The data obtained from VDs regarding the criteria for nomination was included in the questionnaire sent to the HoDs. The following figures 4.1 - 4.3 show the level of agreement with the statements mentioned by the female VDs in relation to the VD selection criteria.

Figure 4.1. Data from the HoDs about the existence of specific VD selection criteria

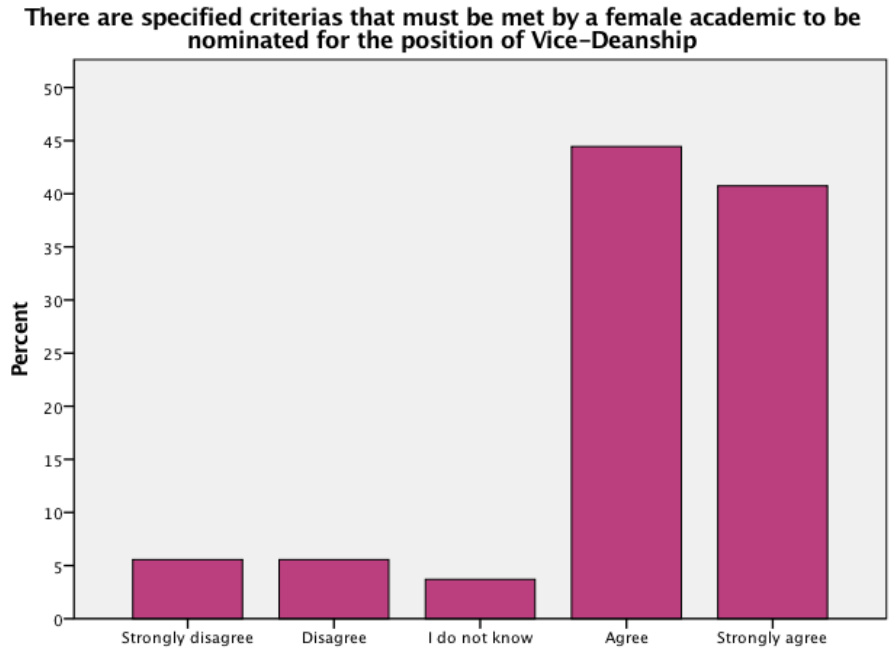
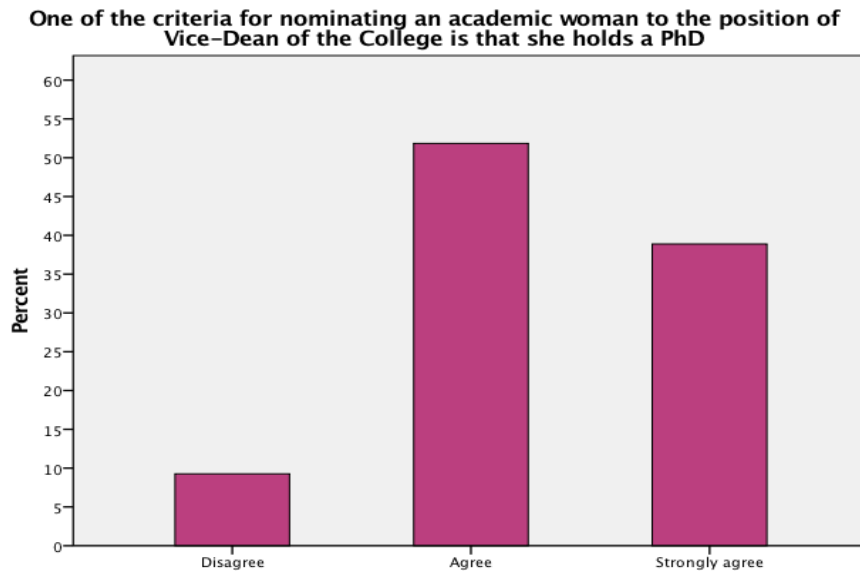


Figure 4.2. Data from the HoDs about the importance of managerial experience in VD selection.



Figure 4.3. Data from the HoDs about the importance of holding a doctorate in relation to VD selection*.



*Although there was 5-point Likert scale used in the questionnaire for this question, the answers were selected by the participants for 3 of the choices only.

Mostly, each aspect was positively approved by the HoDs with their answers ranging between agree and strongly agree. However, the level of agreement differed between agree and strongly agree as the HoDs mainly agreed that holding a doctorate degree was important. This agreement was strong in relation to the necessity of managerial experience. On the other hand, the disagreeing participants might have selected that due to a lack of recognition regarding the criteria, stemming in turn from a lack of knowledge about the related policies (especially for new academics). However, the majority of HoDs agreed that although some of the VDs were not meeting the criteria, the reason for the agreement was due to the institutional legislation documented in this regard.

One of the important points to consider in terms of its relevance to the current study is the rationale for appointing deans and VDs of the colleges and what institutional documents exist on this subject. Another aspect was an interest in understanding the leadership level of women in the university and its dimensions as a factor of professional development. This was sought in light of the search for the role of gender in the institutional culture and understanding the extent of its presence and strength in this institution.

The institutional arrangements for nomination, recruitment, and the topics related to the study, which are addressed in the institutional documents, were examined. The document *Higher Education Council System, 2015* explains that:

the dean of the college or institute shall be appointed from the Saudi faculty members distinguished by scientific and managerial competence by a decision of the Minister of Higher Education upon the nomination of the President for a renewable period of two years. (p. 45).

The document states the authority given to the dean to appoint VDs:

Each college or institute may have a vice dean or more than one of the Saudi faculty members who are distinguished by scientific and managerial competence appointed by the university president for a period of two renewable years upon the nomination of the dean. (p.45)

Accordingly, the mechanism of selection and appointment to fill the VD position for the college is for Saudis who are “distinguished” managerially and scientifically to be appointed by the president of the university after being recommended by the dean. These are the most relevant points in this document for this study. However, there is no clarification regarding what is meant by “distinguished” in terms of managerial and scientific work.

4.5.3 Key Influential Colleague (Mentoring):

The term “key influential colleague” refers to a person in the career lives of the VDs who empowered them in their leadership position. Six female VDs in the study reported the presence of a key colleague in their career life. For these women, this person was the dean or, in some cases, it was a former female VD. These influential individuals helped the women to achieve empowerment in their managerial positions and encouraged them in their managerial performance. For VD1, the dean nominated her without seeking her agreement and authorised her to lead her college with full power:

I worked on it closely with the dean, and he supported me... he told me: “you're most likely going to win this challenge.” That was one of the reasons he told me: “I did not ask you because you have to save your faculty.” This was the word “save the faculty” and we tried to succeed, me and my team.”

VD8 had a similar experience as the dean had a prominent role in encouraging her to hold managerial work. He gave her responsibilities and confidence, which made her feel “at ease”:

One of the things that made me at ease in this place is our dean. Of course, he knows that I have experience in the managerial work in the college, from the first day he said, “one of the most beautiful things that my God has blessed me with in this place is having Dr ____ as a vice dean. I trust her as if she was myself in this place.” He trusted this place with me as if I were him.

The experience of VD3 was that the college had few Saudi staff, therefore she received major support from the dean:

He sat with me and said: “this is your country, this is your college”.

In the career life of VD5, the support received from the dean was not related to the work. Rather, there was an understanding of and encouragement for her research fieldwork for the purpose of promotion.

My dean, who came after I started the phase of field work... gave me the green light to work on applying my study on my sample, and to move around. They were very supportive for me.

Other experiences documented there being support from the former female VD of the college:

VD2: The former school vice dean told me: “you have a very good experience in quality improvement, and you have built a good reputation for yourself and everyone says so. And for that, we really need you.

Similar to the experience of VD2, VD7 was an assistant to the VD and always accompanied her, as she said. The former VD was the pivotal person who trained VD7 managerially, helped her gain managerial experience, and encouraged her.

I was sitting with her [the former VD] and she had a call with the Dean. ...she said, "Congratulations, our new VD!" I said to her, "How?! I don't want vice-deanship responsibility". She said, "It's done! I'm here with you and you will certainly be handling it really well".

These particular experiences indicate that the dean may be the most powerful source of improvements in the career life of the VDs. In addition, the key colleague is sometimes a former female VD, acting as an empowering source.

4.5.4 Academic Promotion of the Vice Deans

Most VDs elucidated that they must have a certain research output to be promoted to a higher academic rank. In addition, they suggested that between each upgrade and beyond, there is a period of no less than four years and that the requirements for promotion are a set of points that must be accomplished. The data obtained from the VDs illustrates their knowledge of these requirements and the need to achieve them. Those policies can be explained as follows.

In The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like document, it extensively explains the promotion requirements, the number

of working hours needed, the quorum for each academic rank, and the requirements and procedures of promotion in academic ranks. For example, the document states the criteria for promotion as involving scientific production, teaching, and university service. Each criterion has a certain number of points on which the applicant is evaluated for promotion (e.g., 60 points for scientific production, 25 points for teaching, and 15 points for university service). The main criterion for promotion is scientific production which includes research papers, books, and innovation that has been approved. However, the legislations that govern the promotion of an academic from one rank to another stipulates that there are a minimum number of scientific productions that should be met for promotion to occur. For example, for promotion from an assistant professor to an associate professor, the minimum scientific production required for promotion is four units published or accepted for publication. After meeting the requirement, the faculty member is promoted scientifically from the date of the decision of the scientific council and is promoted functionally from the date of the executive decision if there is a vacant job. This means that each academic rank is entitled to a separate functional number or space as each rank has a specified salary different from the other ranks.

In the interviews, the VDs clarified the reasons behind the delay in their academic promotion. These reasons were stated to be management responsibilities and a lack of research productivity. They reported lack of productivity as the main cause for the delay in their academic advancement as they understand the policies requiring research production. Some of the VDs explained that being busy with their management responsibilities caused a lack of research productivity. However, others suggested that the main reason was the need for research publications. Most of them were working on research at the time of this study. For example, VD14 has been an assistant

professor for nine years, and she reported obstacles to promotion including a lack of research output, the management workload, and recent issues with her family that were not detailed in the interview:

R: Have you thought of upgrading your academic rank?

VD14: Yes, I have been doing some research, I have been busy with family recently [due to] some circumstances besides my managerial work.

Three of the VDs have not been promoted since 2010 which indicates the vast impact that managerial life can have on research and scientific production. One of them is VD1, who explained the following:

I will apply now for an Associate Professor position, as I have been delayed a bit in my promotion because I couldn't meet all the requirements which are like points for each criterion. So, I couldn't collect all points because I was busy with management.

VD4 and VD9 offered similar managerial reasons as VD1:

VD9: Now I do research, but the problem with research is that it takes a lot of time, and managerial issues also take a large part of our time.

Most of the VDs indicated that they are working on research and planning to apply for a promotion which explains the source of the delay in this issue.

VD7: The person is always ambitious and I am currently working on research and I can after two years become a professor and I will get it.

VD11: I am working on the matter of promotion and I published research and am supposed to have been promoted, but managerial work sometimes prevents us from seeking promotion but now I seek to complete the requirements and will work on that.

VD10: I hope that I get an associate professor position and I'm working on research until I reach this stage.

The last rank achieved by some of the VDs was before they entered the managerial role. For others, it was during this position. Those who were late in the promotion were supposed to be promoted after four years at their current rank. During the gaps between ranks, they can carry out research activities to enhance their research records which will contribute to their promotion. However, for some VDs, their managerial workload might not be preventing research. As evidence of the possibility of conducting research activities and doing managerial work, some of the VDs were able to be promoted during their period of management, such as VD2 and VD5. VD2 was promoted to professorship a few months before the interview in October 2018. The other completed her research and was awaiting the completion of the minimum number of years needed for promotion to the next rank. She has already been promoted during the period of writing this thesis.

Most of the VDs attribute the delay in promotion to the managerial work leaving them with less time for scientific production, even though their teaching hours are eased when the faculty are

assigned to managerial work. The time needed for research productivity was addressed by the HoDs who were asked whether they also experience the same in relation to research production. The outcome revealed that this issue is also experienced by the HoDs as most of them reported a lack of time available for conducting research (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Research production of the HoDs

I have time to conduct research		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	17	31.5
Disagree	23	42.6
I do not know	3	5.6
Agree	10	18.5
Strongly agree	1	1.9
Total	54	100.0

Research productivity is a critical topic for academics as it is a major factor in their promotion. Table 4.5 shows that a large percentage of the HoDs do not find the time to conduct research. This might result in a delay in their academic progression. More than 40% of the HoDs agreed that they do not have time for research with an additional 31.5% strongly agreeing. Over 70% of the HoDs find themselves without the time needed for research productivity. On the other hand, 18% agreed that they do have time to perform research with one participant strongly agreeing. However, overall, the data indicates that the HoDs' management workloads affect their research and academic activities.

4.5.5 Power and Authority of the Vice Deans

The power and authority of the decision-making of the female VDs were both considered in order to address the data related to leadership advancement and the role of gender. After examining the documents associated with the power arrangements and policies in the university (particularly *Higher Education Council System*), as well as the institutional practices experienced by the female VDs in the college, the theme of having the power and authority to make decisions was revealed to be a major factor in the careers of these women.

The power hierarchy in the college starts with the dean who is at the top of the managerial pyramid at the college level and who is in control of its affairs. This is as indicated in the documents and the level of institutional deals in the decision-making in the college. Although the college is divided into a male section and a female section with separated buildings, the male dean is the head of both units. Thus, the head of the female college is under the management of the male dean.

VD4: The decision-making shall be from the men, so mostly, [it is] the Dean who has the authority to [make] decisions. I should go back to him [with] any decision.

According to the interviewed female VDs, their power in the college is limited to writing letters to the dean and forwarding issues on to him.

VD5: My work, of course, as a VD for the Dean, I cannot speak to any outside party. I am only addressing letters to the Dean.

Essentially, the findings show that this factor is one of the biggest challenges in their role that the female VDs face in their managerial work, causing delays in the process of decision-making which is especially problematic in situations that demand immediate action. For example, one of the VDs mentioned that she faced major challenges during her work as the VD of an emerging college that was newly established with limited human resources yet a large number of students. She was facing many difficulties that needed a fast resolution. Nonetheless, most of her authority was restricted to sending letters explaining the problems to the dean and asking him to perform his role in terms of solving the problems raised.

VD5: The building was new and the supplies were simple. If I had executive authority, for example, I would be able to decide who I would employ at that time, and I would have the opportunity to contact agencies.

In another case, VD6 mentioned that during the time of her interview, her college had a power outage that needed an instant solution but she was unable to act immediately. Instead, she had to follow the framework of institutional red tape and report the problem to the dean via letters. The problem not only limited the procedural process but also took a long time to solve. She reported this lack of authority to be an obstacle that she faces in her managerial life.

As you see, we have been having a power outage for three days, and now I am unable to ask a maintenance company to solve the issue. I sent a letter to the dean asking for maintenance and it might take time, I don't know how long. So, these are the types of obstacle I face.

She stressed that procedures must be followed not only for this situation but for others, even if it might be followed only due to the financial responsibilities and other costs required. However, VD6 also explained that her authority is very limited and possibly even non-existent in light of the necessity to refer issues to the dean, even the simplest of matters:

I am not authorised to make any decision, whether it is a simple managerial [one], for example in the establishment of small committees within the college or to solve a simple problem in the college. I need to refer to the dean and he makes the decision.

Most of the VDs touched upon this issue:

R: Okay, do you personally have any authority to change this situation?

VD2: Unfortunately not.

VD10: All decisions are made by the dean but we make suggestions to him for the things we want to do, for example, and he, based on that, reviews which is appropriate or inappropriate and makes decisions.

VD14: I think no, I cannot [make] decisions by myself, as the dean should approve or make the decision...maybe we have some issues inside the college that I should decide myself, like problems with maintenance or problems between students. I think we shouldn't have

to go back to the dean with all these small problems but other than that the work system here is that I issue letters to the dean and he makes the decision.

However, one of the VDs stated that she has the power to make decisions, pointing out that at the same time, the dean is the source of power and that she has the “freedom” to make the decision so long as she consults the Dean. It is possible that she was trying to report that it is not a problematic situation for fear of criticising the institution, while also emphasising that she has the authority as a VD in a high managerial level in the college. However, she remained trapped in the circle of imperative institutional reality as she could not make decisions without consulting the dean. In addition, she clarifies the situation as she presented an example of how her authority is limited and how every issue is referred to the dean.

VD9: Yes, there are decisions that can be taken, but we have to go back to the dean, but we have freedom, but we have to consult the dean and in circumstances where you would like to have a decision.

Another VD also expressed the challenge of limited authority as her college was a female-only one until it was integrated into a male unit. She therefore experienced the independency of authority and then its retraction:

VD7: Now after the [...] integration of the managerial structure of the male and female colleges under the management of the dean, it [has become] a difficult situation [due to] the lack of independence... the situation is difficult in any simple work or any letter must

be addressed to the dean... The work was going [well when] we had a female-only college but now the situation has become difficult, especially if the dean does not give [us] powers [to make] decisions without him.

On the other hand, one of the VDs referred to this issue as normal and not problematic:

VD3: This is not an obstacle. I expect it as the nature of the work means the university style of such, but if you compare it with the other places, possible say yes, it's an obstacle for example, but I do not see it as an obstacle.

VD3 thinks that the authority process is due to the nature of the college and they do not see it as an obstacle. This statement suggests that some of the women view their subordinate role as normal. VD6 and VD7 reference the recent focus on the required advancement of female empowerment in the country as one of the aims of the introduced 2030 Vision of the state as part of implementing improvements in various fields.

VD6: We are in the 2030 Vision which [is] supposed to be applied to empower women because there should be no differentiating between them and men. I hope that they are given the opportunity, [as VDs] shouldn't depend on the Dean?!

VD7: The most important thing is that empowering women in leadership is more important now. In Vision 2030, women must be empowered even at university, so that we are independent.

The HoDs, as part of the managerial unit in the college, were asked about the restricted decision-making authority given to the VDs. The findings of the question suggest that 33.3% and 25.9% of the HoDs agreed and strongly agreed respectively with this issue (see Table 4.6). More than 58% of the HoDs were of the opinion that the VDs have limited authority.

Table 4.6 Power associated with the VD in the college

The college VD has limited authority in the decision-making process

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	5.6
Disagree	10	18.5
I do not know	9	16.7
Agree	18	33.3
Strongly agree	14	25.9
Total	54	100.0

According to this data, the VDs' authority to manage the college affairs is limited. This lack of authority is represented by the inability to execute a speedy and independent decision-making process. For example, VD9 and VD6 reported difficulties communicating with the dean by only being able to write letters to ask permission to sort matters out. This is a problem when unexpected and urgent problems arise (e.g., evacuations and power cuts), as there is a need to resolve these problems in an immediate manner. To find out whether these difficulties cast a shadow on or affect the leadership of the VDs of this institution, the HoDs were asked for their opinion (Table 4.7)

Table 4.7: Action power of the VD

The VD takes immediate action when needed or when a problem occurs in the college

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	3.7
Disagree	10	18.5
I do not know	4	7.4
Agree	26	48.1
Strongly agree	12	22.2
Total	54	100.0

Based on the represented data, more than half of the HoDs believe that the VDs implement immediate solutions when problems occur, contrary to the VDs' responses. What we can discern here is that the HoDs see the solution without knowing the hidden procedures or implications. In addition, the HoDs might be primarily reflecting on the types of problematic situation that could be sorted internally without approval from the dean.

According to the representative data on authority in the VDs' colleges, power is indeed limited and the dean is the only individual authorised to make decisions. It begs the questions on whether female VDs are merely the coordinators for the female sections of the college, and whether they simply do what they are required to do according to the dean's decisions. According to the female VDs, their managerial position in the college is restricted by the male dean who makes decisions to manage the college in addition to his management of the male-only college. This issue in the working lives of the female VDs is an assumptive matter. However, within the managerial lives of the women, they reported certain challenges.

4.5.6 Challenges in the Leadership Life of the VDs

Some of the challenges were described by the VDs as affecting their managerial life in the college. The main challenges mentioned were unqualified or a lack of administrative staff, a lack of preparation for the VD post, and a limited budget.

4. 4.5.6.1 Issues with Staffing

Some of the VDs reported unqualified and/or a shortage of administrative staff. The staff shortage was a challenge for VD3 and VD5 who described the difficulty and how they tackled this problem.

VD3: I had a shortage of secretaries since last year ... I waited almost a year ago from May until this week, and [finally] they sent me two secretaries.

Researcher: You mean almost a year and four months?

VD 3: Yes, since May 2017 I was doing the secretarial work ... I have secretaries from other departments who were kind [enough] to help me because I am their leader and I evaluate them... but my whole work is in English and the problem is that they are weak in English abilities.

VD5: I had no security officers... I was in charge of 1,000 students... We had no security officers for one term, so I had to make shifts between the faculty members.... We had a problem in the building, because it [the college] was not inside the city, it was far away, so we didn't have an outside guard and we had a problem with security a lot. The emergency exits in the building were broken. Anyone would have been able to open the

door and enter... and no security officers in the presence of 1,000 students. The situation was very difficult.

VD2 and VD9 highlighted their administrative staff's unsatisfactory qualifications:

VD2: Sometimes they select for you employees who are not qualified, the staff who are working for you, mainly you don't have any authority over their nomination and possibly you get some of them who reject development.

VD9: There is a lack of resources but it does not disrupt the work. Difficulties have solutions.

The VDs encounter issues in relation to a lack of qualified staff. This speaks to the wider issue of a lack of support for women in managerial or leadership positions to carry out their work.

5. 4.5.6.2 Financial Challenges.

Among the challenges that the VDs experienced, the lack of financial resources also transpired. Perhaps this could be linked to the power and authority that women VDs have within the colleges, and the observation that they were not expected to make any major decisions. One VD stated that the lack of budget was a major challenge:

VD2: Financial aspects are that we don't have any budget ... “

Although she is emphasising one experience, she is mainly expressing the role of the budget in college achievements. While not many VDs mentioned the need for a budget, it is significant to

mention this point and to highlight that VD2 asked the researcher to mention in the study that budget issues can prove challenging to VDs. The issue of no budget is also seen as being directly related to power and authority, or the lack of it.

4.5.7 Training and Preparation Programmes

6. 4.5.7.1 Lack of Preparation for the Post

Many of the VDs faced difficulties when starting work in the VD position as they had no preparation and induction programme to provide them with the required knowledge for their role and duties. They also noted that there was a lack of mentoring from their female colleagues.

VD3: I was searching for those who were before me ... so I saw her name and searched for her and got her number and contacted her. I said to her, "Give me files, show me the work". She said, "I do not have anything helpful for you. The work will come to you, don't worry because the work is going on not for storing files or something like that".

VD5: I did not have preparation... no one gave me the tasks and I was troubled honestly.

VD6: There are no programmes in the university or workshops offered for a VD specifically, but I sought programmes in leadership and such and registered on them.

According to the above presented experiences, it is evident that most of the VDs did not receive any sort of preparation for the position. In this situation, a personal effort was made to seek out knowledge on the sort of tasks and responsibilities that they would face. This might be time-

consuming, and could be avoided by the establishment of preparation programmes provided for incoming VDs. This training would allow them to focus on the actual work rather than on getting to grips with how to do the work. It also shows that the women were thrown in the deep end.

7. 4.5.7.2 Ongoing Professional Development

Most of the VDs stated that training is available but the ways to access it are different. Some of the VDs mentioned that they must be nominated to attend the training. Some said that they would be invited to the training and others said that they would choose the most appropriate training.

VD1: I have been invited to attend these kinds of workshops or events.

VD5: I would communicate with the dean that I would like to attend this session, I would like to go to that place. So, the advantage was that I was allowed to go.

The documents present the official arrangements for development programme attendance. The official legislation is outlined in *The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like*, which states:

- 8. Participation in conferences and seminars held inside the Kingdom will be based on the recommendation of the relevant council and college councils and the approval of the university president.*
- 9. The University Council shall lay down the organisational and procedural rules for attending conferences and seminars on the recommendation of the Scientific Council. (p.62).*

A possible explanation is that VD5 attended the session following such a procedure which was supervised by the Dean. Another method of attending ongoing professional development opportunities was mentioned by VD3 who acknowledged being nominated to attend the session.

I must be nominated for it. I can't book it myself. I do not know, maybe the Dean didn't get the opportunity to make the nomination or such.

Other ways of attendance were reported by the VDs, including VD13, who said:

Yes, there are workshops we are supposed to go to, which are offered by the Institution of Public Management in collaboration with the university as a public institution.

In addition to being able to attend and participate in conferences and seminars, many other forms of professional programmes are available to the faculty at the university. *The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like* continues:

- The forms of professional development that the university is keen for the faculty member to attend are not limited to conferences and seminars only.
- It also includes, as mentioned in the list, seminars, including programmes, sessions, [and] training sessions.
- It is required that the organisers of conferences and seminars be known with academic, professional or an otherwise specialised nature.

- It is stipulated that the conference or seminar may not be accompanied by the date of the final tests. This is noted in paragraph 17 above so as not to disturb the academic process (p. 63).

According to SHE (2015), Saudi teaching assistants and lecturers are sent by the university to study abroad or inside the Kingdom to obtain masters and doctorates only with the aim of qualifying scientifically and developing their academic and administrative skills. In each university, a special committee considers the conditions of the scholarships, policies, and recommendations of the college councils. They approve the scholarships for teaching assistants and lecturers which follows up on the training and scholarship affairs at the university. This is in addition to the submitting of reports to the university leadership.

Despite the availability of training however, the different methods of advertising and a lack of clear and unified announcement has led to a poor awareness of and thus access to these opportunities. This may mean that not many academics can benefit from them.

At the post-career level, the VDs' aspirations differed between obtaining personal financial independence (e.g., VD1 and VD3, who stated that they were looking to set up their own businesses after retirement) and obtaining an institutional appreciation (e.g., VD8 who wanted to become an advisor in the Ministry of Education after her retirement, and VD11 who desires to participate in the Shura Council or Saudi parliament). These statements by the VDs indicate the development of their aspirations throughout their career experience.

The availability and attendance of training was addressed by the HoDs. The data contradicted the VDs' perceptions as indicated in the following Figures 4.4 and 4.5.

Figure. 4.4: Availability of training in the university for the HoDs

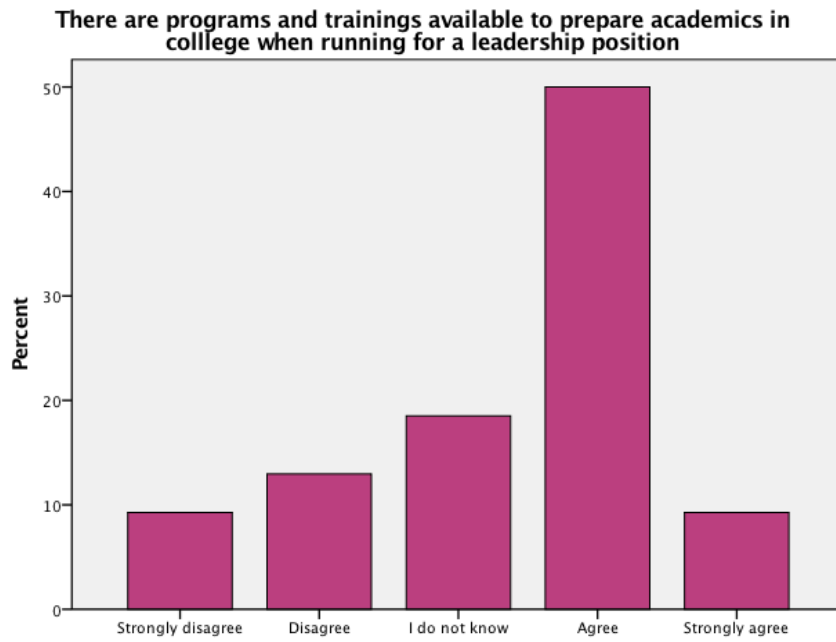
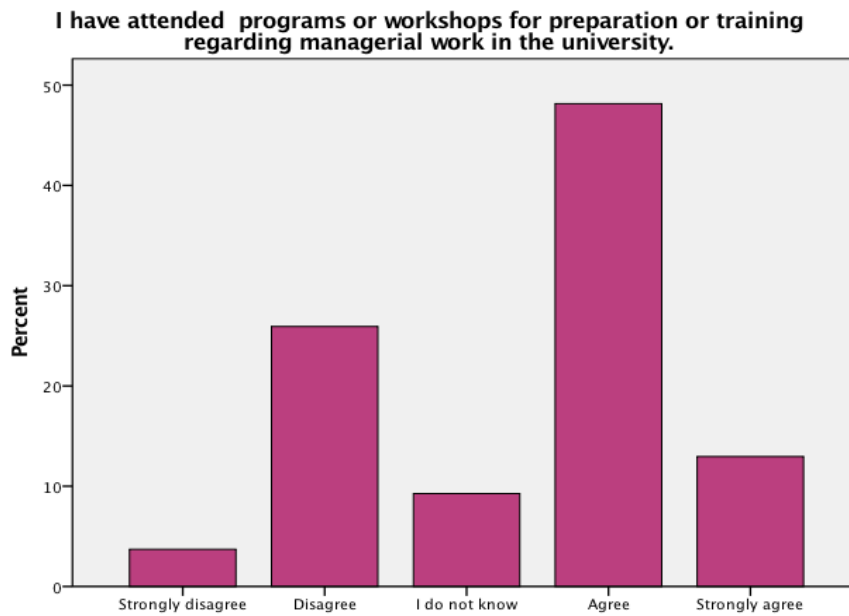


Figure 4.5: Programme and training attendance by the HoDs



Fifty percent of the HoDs agreed regarding the availability of training programmes at the university. Almost the same percentage received training. Despite the attendance of training from almost half of the HoDs who took part in the study, 13% of the HoDs acknowledged that there were no training programmes, while 18% were unsure or did not know if there were training programmes in the first place. In addition, when asked if they attended these programmes, the percentage of those who answered in the negative was more than those who did not know (25%). It is noted that those who answered in the negative had evidently not attended any training, nor were they even aware of the presence of such programmes.

4.5.8 Institutional Policies on Women's Issues

Institutional documents such as *The Regulations Governing the Affairs of Saudi University Employees, Including Faculty Members and the Like* explain the legislations that were reviewed to understand the opportunities provided for academic women and the family-friendly policies. This document contains a list of the legislations related to holidays, leave and their types, as well as their entitlements, duration, and so on. All state employees should follow this list, including academics who work in public universities as they are counted as state employees. They are permitted time off work at weekends, on the National Day Holiday, and on Eid. This is in addition to study leave. They are also entitled to sick leave. Some of the provided leave considers circumstances that might occur in families to allow employees who are also mothers to accompany children under seven years of age for treatment in the case of illness. One of the articles stipulates that working mothers are entitled to maternity leave with a full salary for 60 days. If they wish to take full care of the baby, they are entitled to a single period or sporadic periods of child caring leave up to a maximum of three years during their service in the government institution with a

quarter of their salary (after the maternity leave period) during the first three years of the child's life. The women VDs in the study have confirmed that the family-friendly policy is suitable and considers working mothers.

The regulations not only considered working mothers but also stipulated the possibility of leave to care for orphans by their guardians which would have the same duration as maternity leave. Accordingly, policies are fully understanding of family needs as the policies clarify and consider the different family situations of the mothers. They are provided with three years to care for their babies, and they can decide whether to use this in one period (e.g., in one go for one child) or to split it intermittently for each new baby. The choice is available for mothers depending on their needs and situations. To sum up, the institutional policies in this regard are well framed to support the family responsibilities of female academics in the university. Paternity leave is considered to be one week leave provided for fathers after the birth of their child.

All of the female VDs in the study confirmed the existence and implementation of family-friendly policies. They also explained that the institutional policies related to women took into account their responsibilities, including their family and maternity leave.

VD6: Honestly, all institutional policies consider women. No policy hinders us or causes any impact.

VD7: In terms of institutional policies, I see them as appropriate in providing maternity leave for women in pregnancy, and childcare. Working hours are also suitable for women...

To conclude, according to these outcomes, family friendly policies are strongly presented and suited to the women and their responsibilities outside of the college. However, the consideration of these policies has massively supported the women in their family responsibilities. This is possibly the reason why their family responsibilities did not affect their career. Additionally, it is worth noting the social support that the women receive from their families and those around them, and how it also contributes to the lack of reported implications caused by their family responsibilities and the career of the VDs.

4.6 Summary of the Findings

The data obtained in this study indicates that VDs have limited powers, and their authority is restricted to communicating with the dean via letter as he has the real authority to make decisions. In addition, a lack of preparation for the management position was regarded as a challenge in the career lives of the women. Many female VDs in this study were considered to be eligible for promotion after more than four years since they received the last promotion. Nonetheless, the interviews clarified the reasons stated for this delay in the upgrade. The reasons for this promotional hindrance were stated to be related to the management responsibilities and the lack of research productivity. Tackling this delay in progression should be achieved by reducing the managerial recruitment renewal times, thus introducing a specific deadline for academics in relation to research production and urging research productivity to overcome difficulties and provide the required support.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the existing literature before extrapolating and offering an interpretation of their possible meaning. The discussion is presented using the themes developed from the research questions as well as the others that emerged from the findings. Through answering the research questions, two broad organising themes (personal/social factors, and organisational factors or career experiences as organisational factors) have been extracted from the summary of the findings and used as a framework to explain the career path experiences of the female VDs. The findings in each thematic section engage with the discussion in the extant literature and inform some of the interpretations.

5.2 Personal/Social Factors Influencing Career Paths of The Vice Deans

The findings show that the parents of the female VDs were key influences in the women's pre-career period. Most of the VDs were raised in middle-class traditional Saudi families where the fathers were educated breadwinners and the mothers were illiterate housewives who took care of the children. These gendered roles for men and women have been traditionally dictated by the conservative Islamic laws that strive to define each role, categorising men as wage earners and women as wives and mothers who stay at home to care for their families (Almunajjed, 1997). Another reason why so many of the VDs had an illiterate mother is that education was made available to all boys in 1953 (Almunajjed,1997), with girls only being permitted access to

education in the 1960s (Hamdan, 2005). This means that many Saudi women who were young at that time did not have the opportunity to be educated. The mothers of the VDs could be part of the generation of uneducated women. However, despite the female VDs coming from traditional families with educated working fathers and uneducated housewife mothers, the education of the daughters was of significant importance as many of the participants reported that they were encouraged to engage in education in order to obtain a prestigious profession.

These women have found themselves in a society that highly privileges men including in education and work. Additionally, it marginalises women so then they are subordinate. The opportunity to educate women did not begin until after that of men for some time. This resulted in the presence of generations of uneducated women who are the mothers of the women VDs who took on the role of women in their lives as housewives. Although introducing education for women began later in the 60s (Hamdan, 2005), the socio-cultural system has played its role by applying gender segregation in educational settings. Being managed by a 'the society of men' has given men authority over women (Profanter, 2014; Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013).

Many of the female VDs in this study received career guidance from their fathers who were particularly interested in their daughters pursuing a career in medicine. Although the parents were not successful at choosing a career for their daughters, the role of the fathers in the lives of the VDs signifies the male influence over women in the Saudi culture. The family structure and patriarchal emphasis in Saudi society (Albahoth, 2018) could explain why the fathers were key figures in this area. As mentioned, the fathers tended to favour a medical career for their daughters

(Olaosebikan and Olusakin, 2014) as the families were keen to have their daughters succeed at a high professional level, which would raise the level of the family social standing.

The female VDs belong to a generation of Saudi women with limited career choices that are constrained to either teaching or becoming a medical doctor (Fakhri, 1993). When comparing the two career choices, it was found to be common to have a large number of women in the teaching profession while the situation was not the same for the medical profession by virtue of the requirement to obtain a very high scientific distinction in order to study and enter the field. Thus, although medicine is an attractive profession for Arab women (al-Qazzat, 2003), this profession was not chosen by the women in this study for a variety of reasons. These reasons include a lack of interest in the specialisation, as well as an aptitude but lack of suitability for the career or the unwillingness to extend the study period away from their family. The findings show that the families prefer their daughters to be with them. This is linked to the socio-cultural gendered norms that dictate the 'protection' of women by men.

Although the influence of the VDs' parents might affect the individual woman's exploration of various career opportunities (Taylor et al., 2004), many female VDs ultimately had to follow their parents' advice to select an option from the limited available specialties in their hometown to obey their families wishes. The inconsistency in these experiences is that although these women belong to the same cultural background and exist within the same social frameworks, the social practices differed within the individual families. This governed what was and was not deemed acceptable in the family at the micro-societal level. Some families did not allow their daughters to study in a city far from the family's home, which may be the result of the social foundations set by this micro-

society. This can stipulate that women are not allowed to travel far from the family. This issue could be associated with the degree of conservativeness which may not be solely based on religious grounds. In other words, the refusal to permit daughters to travel far to study might not be because of the requirement that women travel alongside a male guardian but rather because of previous unsafe travelling conditions such as difficulties that no longer exist nowadays (Engineer, 2008). This means that religious barriers may not have been the issue, as a few VDs were allowed by their families to travel to other cities to study. One of the women permitted to do so is the daughter of a member of the judicial authority in Saudi Arabia which purely follows Sharia law as outlined in the Quran. Even though her father was a Sharia specialist, he allowed his daughter to study away from the family. The reluctance to permit daughters to study far from home appears to be a social gendered practice rather than a religious matter. Further evidence for this conclusion is that the families who initially prevented their daughters from travelling to study did subsequently allow them to do so later on in their working life. This could be the result of the change in women's education in Saudi Arabia where many talented women were sent by the Ministry of Education to study abroad (Hamdan, 2005).

The verity of the socio-cultural barriers within the micro-social level could be interpreted as the extent of the oppression of women in the cultural system differing from one society to another. This outcome supports the statement made by Van der Hoogte and Kingma (2004) that "the way in which cultural diversity intersects with gender relations are complex in theory. In practice, things become even more complex" (p. 50).

As mentioned earlier, Shah (2017) explains that the strength of the societal practices lies in the extent to which the society adheres to the belief system. The societal culture of these women is

shaped by the social laws that have codified the rights of women in relation to the possibility of their decision-making and independence, especially with regard to traveling away from their parents. This means that they have had to obey their parents' desire to stay by their side and not to violate their desires. Saudi society differs due to its conservative culture which isolates women from decision-making and limits their power. However, later on when the women were eased from the obstacle of preventing women from traveling, this was allowed later on. Therefore, this issue might be related to the societal cultural restrictions.

5.2.1. Family Responsibilities

Among the obstacles influencing the career progression of female leaders in HE, the extant literature suggests that family responsibilities exist as a major impediment (e.g., Airini et al., 2011; Fitzgerald, 2014). Nonetheless, in the current study, the female VDs have not encountered challenging experiences regarding their family responsibilities. These findings to some extent reflect those of Alahmadi (2011) and Aldawsari (2016) who also found that the personal challenges (including family challenges) of female leaders were ranked as insignificant. It is remarkable that the majority of the VDs in this present study are married and have children, yet none indicated any encumbrances due to childcare. This inconsistency with the existing literature may be due to the support that the female VDs in this study obtained from their extended family networks, including their own mothers, their mothers-in-law, or the ready availability of domestic support from foreign workers. This is common in Saudi society.

To further illustrate the value of social support, after commencing their academic careers at the university, the women were required to continue their studies and earn postgraduate and doctoral degrees. Studies like those of Maher et al. (2004) and Lenz (1997) have shown that academic

development requires several years of work for women who must produce research and write doctoral theses. This means that women may not be able to compete due to the pressure of their domestic responsibilities (Bain and Cumming, 2000). In contrast, the women in this study were able to get support from their mothers and others in order to devote their time to their postgraduate study before returning to work in HE.

It is in this area of the female VDs' lives that the role of their mothers becomes significant. The mothers were not only the early supervisors of the educational efforts of their daughters, but they were also the providers of more psycho-social support throughout the female VDs' working lives, as the findings have presented. This sort of support from the mothers was also reported in the work of Ginevra et al. (2015) who observed that the mothers continued to provide psycho-social support in connection to the career development of their children. An explanation for this support might be the constructive nature of Arab social collectivism (Buda and Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1998). According to Hofstede (1998), collectivism is defined as individuals who, from birth onwards, live interconnected with groups that are closely related and coherent with each other, especially in the vicinity of their extended families. This includes exchanged cooperation, assistance, protection, and loyalty. A collective culture is one that is "concern about the needs and interests of others" (Darwish and Huber, 2003, p. 49). The female VDs in this study were used to receiving support that alleviated their family responsibilities, so it is unsurprising that they did not find their family obligations to be an obstacle to their career progress within the collective Saudi society. Social cohesion and strong support from their family in Saudi Arabia helps to alleviate the family responsibilities of the female VDs.

The inconsistency among the experiences relating to the differences in family responsibility loads is aligned with what has been presented by the work of Airini et al. (2008) and Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016). This might be attributed to financial or legislative factors. For example, families in Saudi Arabia, especially those of the middle and upper classes, are able to afford the expense of hiring a domestic worker (Silvey, 2006). According to Tjldens et al. (2003), domestic help is affordable for most working women in countries like the Netherlands, particularly those on a high income. The same is true for Saudi Arabia. In this case, financial requirements might not be the reason for this disparity in the experiences associated with domestic support. Another possible thing to consider is the legislations that make it easy for working mothers in Saudi Arabia to outsource their domestic duties to external agencies.

Another family-related factor discussed in the findings was that some VDs mentioned the need for a male family supporter to succeed, as stated by VD2 and VD1. This outcome matches what was previously mentioned in the work of Abalkhail (2017) and AlAhmadi (2011) on the importance of the presence of a man in the woman's family being the key to her success. This presence was a positive factor behind the woman achieving success for reasons including the man assisting in work to be done outside of the female college such as accessing the main facilities led by men and driving the women to work procedures or to study. This is because women did not used to drive before late 2017. This is in addition to the social framework of the patriarchal system that should be followed by women in Saudi Arabia where they need the man's permission to work or study (Alhareth et al., 2015).

To sum up, the social support provided to the VDs helps to ease the burden of childcare and further allows the VDs to progress in their careers. However, outside of the homes of the female VDs, challenges exist within the university setting as will be addressed in the next section.

5.3 Organisational Factors

5.3.1 Recruitment/Selection for the Position

The findings of this study indicate that the VD selection process is based on “nomination” by the dean. Although the regulations stipulate that the position must be occupied by Saudi nationals only, ones with academic and administrative competence, the findings indicate that there are different patterns in the appointment of VDs.

Official appointments such as the hiring of a VD are made by the university rector upon the recommendation of the dean, who is the key individual in the nomination process. The outcomes of this study did not reveal any sort of examination, competition or selection according to several candidates. These experiences are completely different from those presented in other studies that have examined recruitment in HE, such as in the work of Loomes et al. (2019) who observed that the academic recruitment process in Australian universities includes the use of “executive search firms” to select the right candidate.

However, in the scope of HE in Saudi Arabia, it is an experience that may be unique. It is subject to several regulations that were previously explained in the scientific and managerial distinctions. The deans should consider, in their nomination, whether the recruit has scientific and managerial competence. Nonetheless, the data in this study indicates that these standards are not followed

literally with the exception of the requirement for a VD to be Saudi. Consequently, there are exceptions to the competency criteria. This issue could disadvantage female academics as the staffing authority of the dean could result in nepotism. This is where “a patron vested with power pushes forward a favourite or nepot to move up the career ladder irrespective [of] their experience, knowledge, services and advances” (Safina, 2015, p. 631). This is a major disadvantage of the current VD selection method as only one person’s view of a candidate governs the promotion process. Thus, it cannot be categorically guaranteed that the decision to promote an individual to the position of VD is free of any favouritism, bias, or similar. This also generates conflicts of interest if the person in power makes the wrong decision based on their personal interests, which in turn destabilises the confidence in the institution (Gyimah-Boadi, 2000). To overcome such consequences, the existence of a transparent recruitment system for applicants is vital in order to avoid any sort of nepotism. Benschop and Brouns (2003) argue that involving transparency, social responsibility, and great accountability would enhance the lives of women in academia.

Another pattern revealed in the findings is that all of the VDs in this study hold a PhD qualification, except for VD12 (see Table 4.1). Her advancement without this degree might be an exemption due to the requirement that the position is occupied solely by Saudi women. In the absence of an alternate candidate, VD12 was hired. This was also deduced by the relatively high number of female HoDs with a master’s degree (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3). The data on Saudi female academics was reviewed by the Centre for Education Statistics (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia) to ascertain the number of Saudi and non-Saudi faculty members in an attempt to find any pattern that could explain this justification. The data in Table 5.1 below confirms that the percentage of

Saudi women faculty members with a PhD is lower than that of non-Saudis. This indicates the shortage of female Saudis in the top academic ranks.

At the lowest rank of PhD holders (assistant professor), the gap between Saudi and non-Saudi women is illustrated where only 39% of female assistant professors across the country are Saudis, whereas 60% are non-Saudi. On the contrary, the data reveals that there are more Saudi female faculty than non-Saudi women who have master's degrees, like lecturers for example. Therefore, the criteria for selecting a doctorate holder for the position of VD was not a high priority for the deans who could instead fill the positions with a Saudi academic with a master's degree in order to bridge the gap created by the relatively low number of Saudi women with PhDs.

Table 5.1: Female faculty in Saudi universities (2017-2018)

Academic Rank	Saudi		Non-Saudi	
Professor	291	45%	347	54%
Associate Professor	853	47%	941	52%
Assistant Professor	3,512	39%	5,456	60%
Lecturer	7,128	69%	3,056	30%
Teaching Assistant	10,455	97%	228	2%
Instructor	1,528	59%	1,027	40%

Source: Centre for Education Statistics (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia).

Thus, the selection of Saudi female academics is more highly considered than non-Saudis considering the priority of the post for national human resources according to what was mentioned by the dean of VD3:

VD3: *[The Dean] said to me, "I think the Saudi leaders are the ones who should hold the positions in the colleges*

This might help the academic women to be selected for the position regardless of their academic status and managerial experience.

There are similarities between the attitudes expressed in this study and those described by Van den Brink (2014). They observed that "Academics in key positions of influence engage in gatekeeping when they are actively involved in the recruitment of candidates" (p. 464). In the current study, the dean is the "gatekeeper" for the position of VD as it is only filled as a result of his recommendation. This is despite the fact that he is not directly engaged with the abilities of the female academics in the college. This is part of building a base of knowledge to produce the judgment required to nominate. These procedures remain within the absolute preference of the person governing the selection in which there is no well-defined selection criteria to follow. This means that what the Dean perceives is the only factor which, as mentioned earlier, might disadvantage women who are not well-known to the dean, particularly in gender-segregated work settings. The question raised here is whether senior officials in the university guarantee that these procedures will not be marred by any kind of injustice such as ignoring someone who is more suitable than others but who does not have a stronger managerial reputation.

However, in some cases, influential leaders have helped the VDs to attain empowerment in the managerial positions such as VD3 and VD7. Although studies on women's underrepresentation have mainly debated the bias against women, showing the persistent gender gap at the top-level

academic positions (Gedminiene and Kaminskiene, 2016; Gerzema and D'Antonio, 2013; Lantara, 2015; Siddique et al., 2011), the situation for the women in this study is that not only are the top-level hierarchical positions gendered but also the men are controlling the selection of women to the position. There are the university vice deanships levels and the college deanship, which is above college vice deanship. At the moment, the vice dean position is the highest level of leadership that women have been able to access in large numbers.

From the data obtained in this study, the selection process was found to be mainly based on a “nomination” by the dean with no formal applying process for the post. The selection of the candidate is made from a pool of applicants. The process in cases where the university under study has no applicants is where there is a nomination put forward to any Saudi academics in the college. The existing literature has discussed that the recruitment process for the position is mainly considered to be gendered. (Ryan and Haslam, 2007; Van den Brink, 2010; Bagilhole and Goode 2001). In the current study, the deans are the “gatekeeper” for the position as it is occupied only through a recommendation from the dean. Although the nomination criteria are mostly known organisational-wide, the specific patterns behind the selection are hidden, especially in a situation where several women academics have met the criteria.

The findings show that the research site is highly gendered and that the “inequality regime” is severe, even with respect to the process of appointing a woman to a top position. The institution is patriarchal and powered to exclude women’s voices, while lessening their desire to apply for leadership positions. As Acker (2006) notes, “These regimes are linked to inequality in the surrounding society, its politics, history, and culture” (p. 443). The discrimination suffered by

Saudi women is extreme because the cultural system of Saudi society maximises the oppression of women. As a result, institutional practices entrench inequality, with women being excluded from junior positions and the selection process. Cultural non-acceptance is a key reason behind women's underrepresentation in higher leadership positions (Alsubaie and Jones, 2017).

However, in contrast to the work of Alsubaie and Jones (2017), legislation is not a significant factor preventing women from accessing leadership posts. There was no stated policy preventing women from achieving leadership positions. Indeed, the pronouns used in the document such as "he" and "his" could refer to both genders since "the generic or 'neutral' masculine is found in a range of occupational and other human agent nouns which contain the controversial free morpheme –man, e.g. fisherman, chairman, fireman" (Damanhour, 2015, p. 41). For example, Norah Al-Fyez, who was the first Saudi women vice minister in the Ministry of Education as mentioned earlier, was addressed in the official Twitter account of the Ministry of Education (February 5th, 2014) in Arabic as "نائب وزير" "nayeb wazeer". This is a masculine 'neutral' term equivalent to vice minister instead of the feminine terminology of "نائبة" "naybat". In addition, all policies are presented using masculine 'neutral' nouns and their associated pronouns. For example, the policies on the appointment of an academic job use a masculine neutral language as both genders are welcome to be appointed to an academic position. However, in the institutional practice, the degree of discrimination of women increases to presenting as a lack of opportunity to seek out a higher position. The women's lack of authority in the current study might be attributed to the stereotype of being incapable of holding managerial power and being engaged in decision-making (Allison, 2021).

Many studies attributed an appointment due to networking with colleagues as a crucial factor in career development and leadership position recruitment (Šadl, 2009; Van den Brink, 2011; Ismail and Rasdi, 2007). In the current study, networking is not observed in the experiences. However, according to the fundamental element of selection, it might seem to be a key to a raise their presence in the college, especially when it comes to building a reputation which can shed a light on their “distinguished management,” as VD12 reported. The result of this would be the knowledge provided to the dean and the selection being made based on that. This procedure remains rooted in the absolute objectivity of the person governing the selection in which there is no well-defined criteria to follow in the selection process. Nonetheless, it is completely left down to what the dean perceives. The question raised here is how the senior officials at the university guarantee that the procedures will not be marred by any kind of injustice. This can refer to someone who has the capacity for the job more than others but who has not obtained a stronger managerial reputation.

The delay in the achievement of an academic rank by the VDs was elucidated in the findings and reported to be due to the managerial responsibilities. This is as well as the lack of research productivity as a main requirement for upgrading their academic rank in the university. The rank advancement of women faculty in academia has been considered in the literature and it is much more associated with productivity compared to gender disparities (Farber, 1977; Ward, 2001; Long et al., 1993). The criteria for promotion is almost similar to what was obtained by the criteria in this study with differences in that it links to the low salary of working women as an influencing factor (Euwalsa and Wardb, 2005). The literature discusses the gender disparities in academic recruitment and promotion, thus elucidating the factors affecting the women’s career path and hindering their career development in academia such as the bureaucratic procedures, gender

discrimination, and social and organisational arrangements, as well as their family responsibilities (Roth and Sonnert, 2011; Bagilhole and Goode 2001; Smart, 1991). In addition, mentoring and networking for academic women has been evidence of the career progression that has produced support for accelerating their research output to assisted them in achieving a promotion (Gardiner et al., 2007).

Academic mentorship and influential colleagues feature primarily in orientation, assisting a new membership of the faculty in the transition phase from an academic role towards a higher level of career development. The reforms and turnover in HE has been high in the past two decades, especially for the women who face discrimination in HE. The present study reflects that the academic promotion of VDs is influenced by inadequate mentoring. Limited mentorship is provided to the female academics, and this is compounded by the continuing inadequate female representation in the HE. The women's faculty cannot make positive changes in terms of strategic planning, developing their teaching experience, engaging in professional decision-making, and receiving academic guidance in the absence of a mentor. The efficacy of mentorship increases with the presence of a supportive relationship that women cannot develop due to the inadequate mentoring, preparation, and induction present. The efficacy of mentorship increases with the supportive relationship that women cannot develop due to the inadequate mentoring, poor mentor value and lack of respect that the mentee experiences as a professional. This limits their development of an independent academic identity. Mentoring is not only necessary for high ranked professionals but also for the lower-ranked faculty in the same department. The question remains as to where the mentors for the vice deans are supposed to come from when there are hardly any women in the position of deanship or higher.

The present study was specially conducted to focus on the female VDs who mostly held a doctorate and high managerial experience. Many women spend around 20 years in management and then get a chance to be promoted to the VD position. It is not a single case as there are multiple VDs who were promoted after years of working in the management field. This reflects the evident barriers to women's promotion to a leadership position. Many women achieved their status around the age of 45, after being married and having more than two children. After spending a major part of their life working, they are entitled to the VD position. Many VDs started their career after graduating from college, teaching at the tertiary level as teaching assistants. Both this speciality and college are important for nomination to the VD position. The university president appoints the selected employee to the position and engages the selection mechanism to fill the VD position. The study did not find there to be any variation between managerial and scientific work, but clear discrimination has been seen in women's role in relation to leadership positions.

In this study, gender discrimination in relation to promotions was not observed due to policy consolidations. Everyone who has fulfilled the requirements is entitled to promotion regardless of gender but the reason for a lack of promotion is internal in connection to the personal efforts of the VDs. The major factor for the under-presentation in the top academic ranks of women is associated with their lack of research output as mentioned earlier.

5.3.2 Lack of Authority

One of the most significant findings in this study is the lack of power in decision-making possessed by the female college VDs in managerial positions. The college, as it has been indicated, is headed

by a male dean in charge of both the male and female colleges. The female VDs stated that they must refer to the dean on any college issue so then he can make a decision. This limited decision-making ability reported in the current study confirms what has already been observed in the Saudi context (Alahmadi, 2011; Al-Eisa, 2011). However, in the HE context, this study determines the experience in the position of the vice deanship as the most occupied position for women in Saudi HE. In addition, the study explains how the female VDs' power is limited to writing letters to the dean to seek assistance. In the current study, the VDs expressed their needs and highlighted the challenges that they experience. The lack of decision-making power for women is a consequence of the lack of women in senior positions in HE (Morley, 2013). The experiences of female VDs divested of power might be related to the gendered structure of the HEI that demands cultural change, as "changing women's position in universities require changes to a gendered culture where 'women's place' is defined by men and it is a subordinate one" (O'Connor, 2015, p. 305).

An indication from the findings of the VDs' lack of authority might relate to the gendered construction and role induced by the Saudi socio-cultural factors, as addressed by Abalkhail (2017). This lack of VD authority could be the result of the gender constructions influenced by Saudi culture and society (Abalkhail, 2017). The socio-cultural foundation of the belief system in the country constrains the advancement of the women's careers (Morley, 2014; Morley and Crossouard, 2015).

Likewise, this gendered managerial culture was also observed by Kloot (2004) who suggested that women encounter related challenges even after reaching senior positions. Therefore, top-ranked women do not necessarily have the power associated with the high leadership role required for the position. Chesterman et al. (2003) indicated that, "Despite the significant gains for women in

senior positions in these institutions ambiguities remain, and were recognised by some as relating especially to the acceptance and the legitimacy of women in these positions” (2003, p. 431). The present research reflects that VDs have no authority to take independent decisions.

The power dynamic in the organisation has been found to be highly patriarchal. Males are established in the top positions in the university, codifying the positions that women can obtain in positions that directly relate to women’s affairs, such as the vice deans of the colleges-girls section. Besides, the authority of women in this position is controlled by the dean who is a man. The intersection of the two main systems of power and oppression in the lives of the women VDs interact similarly in the domain of the socio-cultural practices (Mareck, 2016). Discrimination practices against women like in the Western context of the challenges faced by Black women is in some studies seen of as “micro-practices” of discrimination (Essed,1991). The power system and social identity construction in the current study could be comprehended through the lives of the women vice deans as they are living unique experiences consisting of an extensive level of severe inequality making them encounter subordination and discrimination in the institutional practices. This includes a lack of access to recruitment opportunities and a lack of executive power. As Carastathis (2014) explains, oppression is more than one singular interrelating converging oppressive system. It is a cultural system as well as a gender-based system. Gender and cultural systems grounded in the experiences of the women VDs regarding their authority shows the extent to which there is a lack of empowerment for women in a leadership post (Fuller, 2018). There was no existence of empowerment for the women VDs in the current study. Thus, women’s rights and empowerment in organisations is not currently practiced (Bassel and Emejulu, 2014). For example, there are also the socio-cultural grounds of the inequality practiced in the organisation to consider.

The women VDs are living in a society where there is a patriarchal system. This results in the traditional perception that women should be ruled by men, including in the institution (Ghane and Nojournian, 2021). This is the biggest challenge facing Saudi women (Alfawzan, 2017). For women in the current Saudi institutions, male superiority is not limited to their family. It goes beyond this to the fact that men in Saudi HE institutions are superior to women by default. They must be the ones to make the decisions even in the affairs of women.

In contrast with Shah (2015), women heads of colleges prioritise their gendered roles as wives compared to their “positional power” in the institutions. This is due to the socially constructed role of women in Pakistan. The women vice deans in the current study were demanding power and not considering themselves according to their traditional role of subordination and being housewives. In addition, this study supports the work of Hamzah et al. (2016) that examined Malaysian female academics who were found to be underpowered as an effect of their personal lives in an Islamic society. Women’s marginalisation in terms of their careers is associated with the belief systems of society (Tariq and Syed, 2017).

The educational institutes are unaware of the associated benefits of women’s participation in the decision-making process. Even in leadership positions, women are prohibited from making independent decisions that reflect the discriminatory practices against women in higher education. Just like the male leaders, the females’ VDs must be allowed to make frequent independent decisions and they should be equally allowed to utilise their assigned role in the HE. It is shown that teachers have an active degree of participation in the school management process. This participation provides opportunities to VDs for professional development in the decision-making

process but the professional development of women leaders is undermined in the HE. This means that they are not motivated to make independent decisions.

Independent involvement in the decision-making process is a proactive approach to information sharing among the staff. The VDs are mostly neglected when it comes to the decisions that decline their academic promotions. VDs can implement their expertise in the decision-making process that maximises efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity by improving the ability of a college to rapidly respond to the opportunities and problems in their environment.

The women in HE are mostly neglected when it comes to taking part in the decision-making process both at the lower- and higher end of the scale. Women face complications in leadership positions and they have been suffering for years. This discriminatory atmosphere has been prevailing for years, and it has not changed yet. The present research on female VDs in a leadership position shows that women are still not permitted to make independent decisions in leadership positions. Women's empowerment is highly important to increase their motivation and morale. The male leaders cannot make influential decisions as they are not with the people in the institution. The best outcomes can be gained by the women involved in the decision-making process. A shared decision-making process is not utilised in the educational institutes that push educational decisions at a higher level and apply the female leaders' expertise.

The VDs were not allowed to make an independent decision in HE as it is assumed that their decision-making can be threatening for the staff members. This can include the risk of an early

confrontation. It can also slow down the process of reaching a decision. It can maximise the stress and workload for all leaders and create a sense of work alienation and frustration for the educators. VDs have limited authority when it comes to making independent decisions to set directions, generate visions, and encourage others to attain the college's objectives. The VDs focus on improving the academic environment inclusive of learning, teaching, research, and scholarship (Bolman and Gallos, 2011; Ramsden, 1998).

In the interviews, the VDs reflected that academic leadership has shown the unique nature of the HEIs and that the faculty must adapt to the leadership position even if they work in the faculty or are full-time managers. This relates to when they get the opportunity for academic leadership. It is difficult for women leaders to attain leadership positions due to the male-dominated environment. This study argues that the VDs attained the vice deanship positions after recognition by the dean, even though their role is affected by restricted managerial authority. The women leaders reflected that they are provided with multiple and complex responsibilities and intellectually, physically, and emotionally demanding tasks. The nature of authority has formulated the complexity of leadership within academic institutions. In contrast, leadership mostly depends on the individuals famous for their expertise and professional recognition. They reported that the academic leadership in the university is male dominated, therefore males make decisions in the majority of cases.

Gender equality has been raised as one of the development goals necessary to be fulfilled by the end of 2030. Unfortunately, the educational department lags behind establishing equality between men and women in the academic leadership position. It is quite complex to alter the male-dominated perception in the educational institutes that only they can make the best decision for the college's productivity and effectiveness. Within the academic leadership, the issue is linked

with the university's internal demands and the demands outside of the university premises (O'Conner, 2014; Davis et al., 2007).

There are well-defined limits that stop the power of authority in the top management at HE. The VDs in the present study reflected that women are the most demotivated to work in a leadership position. Additionally, when they reach a leadership position with the effort and help of some influential leaders, they do not get decision-making power. In contrast, males in a leadership position enjoy all forms of power and even exercise such in the university. Women leaders also possess an eagerness to learn new things and adapt to changes. Women VDs like continuous learning as it is the most evident area that helps to grow academic leaders. According to the research data, the VDs' authority to manage college affairs is limited. This lack of authority is represented by their inability to perform a speedy and independent decision-making process.

Although some studies (e.g., Ramsden, 1998; Rowley and Sherman, 2003; Rich, 2005; Bolman and Gallos, 2011) have addressed the academic leadership process as a combination of management, teaching, and research activities, the findings of the current study reveal that the VDs mainly focus on their managerial work. This affects their research activities which in turn limits their academic progression as discussed in the next section.

The issues around women in leadership are highly defined by gender many times. Empowerment has an interesting role in women's life. Empowerment is highly important when it comes to women working in a leadership position. This is based on high degrees of enablement and trust. The development has been taking place in everyone's life and it aims to better the quality of life of all

people regardless of colour, gender, and caste. This development is more effective if men and women are equally involved in the decision-making process. Women are considered to be a marginalised group in the world that contribute little to the development process. This is not the case as women contribute equally to men in all domains of life. The study reflected that the ratio of women in HE positions increases but equally that women are facing challenges. They hold the least senior administrative position due to biases in the educational institutes.

Cased et al. (2021) opted for a solution-oriented approach with a focus on not only identifying the problems which hindered the success trajectory of women in academic careers but also suggested solutions to the identified challenges. According to the researchers, the factors which contributed to increasing the gender inequalities for women in the STEM fields include stereotypes, lacking the ability to develop, and needing to cater to effective social networks and an unsupportive working environment. The researchers further suggested solutions to the identified hindering factors and for the academic institutions to ensure the provision of effective mentoring opportunities along with creating a professional environment for them which enhances their networking capacity and facilitates mutual encouragement (Gasser and Shaffer, 2014; Ceci et al., 2015; Pautasso, 2015; Laver et al., 2018; Lewiss et al., 2020). Furthermore, it was suggested for the academic institutions to define a pre-decided quota for the hiring of women who possess the skills and competencies to excel in their academic careers. However, an improved working environment and the improved behaviour of both male and female colleagues is identified to be the primary pre-requisite and key influence (Casad, et al., 2021).

Women executives are kept in specific areas that seldom promote them to leadership positions. In most cases, men in decision-making roles look for male colleagues to fill the firm's managerial positions. Instead of similar educational attainments, ambitions, commitment, and higher-status positions, men get higher promotions, compensations, and higher-status positions. According to the VDs, it is difficult for women to acquire leadership positions even though they are experienced and knowledgeable.

5.3.3 Academic Advancement

Most of the VDs in this study were assistant professors, although a few were associate or full professors (see Table 4.1). This confirms the previous studies' under-representation of women in high academic ranks, including full professorships (e.g., Gangone and Lennon, 2014; White, 2003; Austen, 2004; Santos and Dang Van Phu, 2019). According to Bain and Cummings (2000), the greatest reason for the lack of professional rank progress is the lack of research productivity.

As the findings in this study show, management workloads delay academic progression. Many VDs reported that they do not have time for research. This does not differ from what the extant studies mentioned in terms of the limited research output by women in general. This leads to delays in their promotion compared to men (Park, 1996; Hesli and Lee, 2011). These results match those observed in Abramo et al.'s (2011) earlier study which found that the highest ranked faculty members were more productive. Accordingly, it is concluded that the reason for delayed promotions is because of the limited scientific production of research as an essential requirement for promotion. Some of the extant literature has addressed teaching loads as the reason for the insufficient research activity of women (Sax et al., 2002; Hesli and Lee, 2011; Fox, 1992; Bellas

and Toutkoushian, 1999). The present study found the management workload to be responsible. Regardless, heavy workloads, whether teaching or managerial, seem to be responsible. There is an acknowledgment among the female VDs of the problems surrounding their need for academic advancement as most of them are hindered in their research production due to administrative work. In light of the VDs capacity to publish and progress without major obstacles, it is necessary to motivate academics in order to help them develop professionally.

Many VDs stated that having a research output is necessary to be promoted to a higher academic rank. In addition, they suggested that between each upgrade and beyond, there are no less than four years and the requirements for a promotion are a set of the point that must be accomplished. The data obtained from the VDs illustrates their knowledge of the requirements and the need to achieve them.

The greatest reason for the lack of progress in professional rank is the lack of production of a sufficient amount of research that supports the measuring progress. Some studies have found that the most scientifically productive academics have a strong interest in research to begin with (Sax et al, 2002; Fox 1992). The motivation and interest differs between women and men (Klout,2004). Women intend to spend more time producing research than men as they intend to have more of a teaching load and service duties (Bellas and Toutkoushian, 1999). In addition, women were found to prefer teaching over research as gender was found to contribute to the increased interest in teaching by women (Forest, 2002). However, Creamer (1998) explains that the presence of white men to a large percentage and the lack of women among the most productive scholars is an extension of a series of factors that pass through their professional path from the nature of the

professional path itself and publishing through to its requirements and ease of access to resources and the like. In addition, Creamer (1998) indicates that the main reason for observing the lack of women in research production is their decrease in number among the total of the high profiled scholars in general. Although the academic profession revolves around the centrality of research and its essence as an important basis in this profession, which must be present strongly, it is, as I mentioned, punctuated by the weakness in research production in many aspects.

In light of the presence of a sample capable of publishing and progressing without any major obstacles hindering their progress, whether institutional or otherwise, it is necessary to motivate academics who need motivation and pressure to extract from them the best that can be presented regarding the production of research and the development of their professional level. This will certainly be raised by the level of university research. Saudi universities need to work according to the plans set by the Ministry of Education to achieve the required research development in Saudi universities. This is one of the development plans used in the country (Al-Ohali and Shin, 2013). The VDs in academic leadership positions face a management workload. They have a lot of responsibilities as a part of their job that they have to accomplish. They do not get flexible hours to dedicate time to their research work. Research is highly important when it comes to promotions. Female leaders cannot get a promotion only a few years after their previous promotion because of their research being unpublished. It is evident that if they are busy in school or college and cannot get time to select a research topic and get time to work on it, they will not get a promotion. Having lots of managerial work to do is the most complex issue that women are facing in the educational department. It is expected from women leaders that they can complete managerial work and research work simultaneously without the provision of flexible hours. This finding supports the

outcome of the studies of Shah et al. (2020) and Amatullah, (2018) on women leaders in HE who reported issues to do with their workload and lack of knowledge of the work challenges. A similar issue was stated by the women in this study in that management workloads have been a challenging factor when producing research to achieve a higher rank.

Everyone knows that research needs time and dedication. Women leaders are quite busy with managerial tasks to the point that they cannot dedicate time to research. Due to this, their academic promotion hinders them, and they cannot move on in their career. It is necessary to enable relaxation to help the women leaders also perform their other duties in a timely manner. Their scientific production is undermined, and the male leaders assume that they cannot be in leadership positions as a result. The male leaders can work on their research by finding the time at home. They can explore the literature and do research side by side with their managerial work at college because they get flexible hours at home. Women leaders cannot blur the gap between their professional and private life as they have other responsibilities at home that they must complete as well.

The family element is linked with the responsibilities that are a significant obstacle in a female leaders' career life in relation to HE. Family responsibilities are the most influential factor in their career path that causes them to delay their career development, such as scientific research productivity. It does not mean they are not capable as they are capable enough and manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously and perform equally to the men. The female leaders have the responsibility of family care that is a crucial issue in the women's work, primarily in the domain of the career development that may influence their access to the leadership position. Through this,

a male-dominated society gets the chance to reduce the women's ratio in a leadership position. Even after their hard work and dedication, women get less opportunity to be in a leadership position. After years of effort, they get the chance to become an academic leader and there is thus some reference to existing female leaders. Women have more responsibilities in their life compared to men.

The research productivity of women is limited because of their role in dealing with the labour force as an external function, as well as being a mother or wife as an internal function. Women are capable enough to manage all of these types of roles without showing two-sided negligence. Women face the complexity of dividing the duties as a wife with that of a career woman. They are capable of working in the research field too, and no work is impossible. Women appear differently in a formal leadership position than men. Their skills and achievements have broken down the judgement present.

5.3.4 Professional Development Programmes

Among the results obtained is the importance of offering training programmes and announcing their existence to raise awareness. This will provide individuals with the opportunity to grow professionally, and it will also facilitate the development of managerial skills for university academics. Although the VDs explained that they received certain training, differences exist between the methods used to access this training. This problem was evident at the lower administrative level as the questionnaires distributed to HoDs revealed that a large percentage of them did not undergo any managerial training. Others were not aware of the existence of training programmes at all. In the same context, Hornyak and Page (2004) suggest that faculty leadership

development programmes are a significant tool to establishing change and development in an institution. In addition, Madsen (2012) attributes the lack of well-prepared leaders to the weak representation of women in leadership positions.

As the findings of this current study show, all female VDs mentioned the lack of preparatory programmes for such a position, as well as a lack of access to suitable programmes. Some of them are, at the time of writing, early on in their managerial careers which may mean that the problem will worsen as they may still need to invest significant time and effort into learning their role. This problem is also further aggravated as the female VDs exist under the umbrella of the dean's authority. This exacerbates the challenges between learning, working, and constraining authority. The women VDs work in a cycle of managerial doubt of the nature of the task by learning alongside the need to succeed. It is thus an interconnected series of challenges that the VDs face in their managerial life which in turn inhibits their leadership progression.

Holzweiss et al. (2019) outlined five key topics for new faculty who need professional training. These topics are summarised as “foundations of the job, self-management, institutional culture, personnel management, and decision-making” (p.65). The main aspect reported by the female VDs is that there needs to be establishment of developmental programmes that cover the foundations of the job to prepare and develop these leaders for their new roles. This in turn will contribute greatly to improving their leadership performance and assist in the production of effective trained faculty leaders who will raise the level of knowledge of the job and improve their performance. This could then be passed on to the next generation as a sustainable change.

The present study reflected that the women's leadership is undermined in higher education merely because of the inadequate preparation programs offered to the women professionals. The institutes need to emphasise content knowledge and create professional development schools and innovative training programs for career switchers. The educational institutes are inadequate and uneven in term of the provision of teacher-induction programs. The new teachers get the most challenging classes and schools with less supervision and support. Many teachers leave the profession because of a lack of preparation and training in schools. This study reflects that the teachers must be paid in the form of adequate and early support when assigned to the demanding school environment. Coaching and mentoring are critical to the successful development of women in leadership positions. The induction program develops opportunities for novice teachers to learn from their best practices and enables them to reflect on their teaching.

Many of the VDs faced difficulties when starting work in the VD position as they had no preparation programme to provide them with the required knowledge for their role and duties. The present study conducted on VDs reflects that they do not get adequate preparation training, therefore they lag behind the leadership positions. The VDs reported that they attained a leadership position after many years following their recruitment and due to the reference of an existing women working in a leadership position. Primarily, professional development is the relevant, ongoing, and collaborative process with an opportunity for reflection. There are many different training types from state-mandated safety training to subject-specific training by grade level. The present study reflects that all these types of training are inadequate for female leadership. The study outcomes are supported by empirical evidence (Alcalde and Subramaniam, 2020; Christman, 2003; Gerzema and D'Antonio, 2013).

Many studies have addressed the significance of the mentoring tool to implement guiding and encouragement for career progression for women in the academic field (Chandler, 1996; Gardiner et al., 2007). The presences of a mentor to advance career progression for some of the VDs in the current study was reported by VD1, VD3, and VD7. This male mentor is one person engaged in all 14 experiences. This persons' views and skills was used by those women. The question here is why was it mainly one person mentoring, guiding, and supporting the two women VDs? What about the other dean who could provide similar support to women leaders in the university which might enhance the empowerment of women in the university overall?

The academic promotion of VDs and women professionals in HE can be improved by providing adequate facilities for mentoring. Mentoring is important for female professionals because it helps their career develop through valuable professional growth and increases the women's careers. Mentorship provides a structured procedure for career planning and professional development. It promotes the facilitated opportunities to improve their visibility and exposure. Mentoring enables women to achieve their academic career goals, which is conducive to their academic success and promotion. The women working in the lower academic ranks perceive mentoring as highly crucial for their career development in general as it helps them to get more chances for promotion. In contrast, women in higher roles consider mentoring important when planning their career paths. Mentoring is suggested because it is highly important for women more so than it is for men in career development as reported by VDs in the present study. There is a need for mentoring and preparatory programmes for the female VDs as they get appointed and thrown into the role without any sort of background or training to prepare them for the post.

Therefore, the university must put in place a specific, clear, and simple mechanism that announces the training programmes available to the target groups in need of said programmes. Additionally, as the VDs indicated that they did not obtain the needed preparation before occupying the current position resulting in time-consuming attempts to learn the work, it is recommended that female candidates for the position of VD be enrolled on a preparatory programme. This should occur before they obtain the position to provide the necessary knowledge and to raise the professional level of the managerial performance of the VDs from their first days in the position.

5.4 Gendered institution, Culture, and Intersectionality

The practices and meanings in the institution are interconnected and intertwined, creating class, sexuality, and a *regime of inequality*. The severity of these disparities differs from one organisation to another, initially from the establishment process of the organisation through to the gendered substructure (Acker, 2006; Acker, 2012). The current institution has a large degree of *systemic disparities* in relation to gender and the varying degrees of authority that men and women possess. This is as well as there being a system of inequality stemming from the cultural background that privileges men over women when it comes to positions of power. Although Richardson and Loubier (2008) illustrate that leadership attitudes are reflected by the identities of the leader, the identities of the VDs in this study are constructed as subordinate to the male deans.

Acker (1990) and Connell (2006) mention that power in institutions, especially in high-bureaucratic societies, is linked to men even in a power structure or hierarchy. The institution under study is associated with the power of men in a male society where men have the dominant authority in the higher managerial structure. They have the power to appoint women to a position

and the authority to make decisions. Thus, women VDs in Saudi higher education may appear to be making progress in leadership by occupying middle management positions but they are still powerless as the men above them still make decisions for them. Moreover, they still hit the accepted glass ceiling as the vice deanship is still the highest managerial position that can be occupied by women.

Gender disparity in the workplace is highly determined in the VDs' lives as they reside and work in Saudi Arabia, a gendered society (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). The glass ceiling has been a challenge for them when it comes to entering positions higher than vice deans. The VDs demonstrated a significant understanding of their isolation as women, addressing the challenges they face and citing the need for female empowerment. The construction here is not only at the personal level. It is also and mainly socio-cultural in that it is fundamentally linked to the social construction of the VDs (Acker, 1990). They had a complete understanding of the desires of their parents within a conservative society formed on the basis of both Islamic and Arab cultural norms (Pharaon, 2004).

In the experiences of Saudi women, gender and social status are deeply interrelated as each identity plays a part in constructing the other. These identities not only intersect but also combine to the extent that they are hard to isolate (Read and Eagle, 2014). In this study, women in Saudi society, including those working in educational institutions, are considered to be second-class. As a result, they do not tend to occupy the highest leadership positions but rather are subordinate to the leading men (Hamdan, 2005). This marginalisation has further discouraged any professionally ambitious

women from striving to reach the highest positions available, and to have the opportunity for development.

The silencing and marginalisation of these women has been a substantial practice shaping the career life of the women VDs. These factors are associated with gender which has led to the deep capturing their experiences (Simein, 2007). Identities are shaped based on systems of privileges, advantages, disadvantages, and different levels of power (Garran and Rozas, 2013). The identities of the women participants in this study matter in the daily practices in academia (Shelton et al., 2018). Although Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) argue that the intersectionality of identity can help when striving to make a successful impact on the path of leadership, nonetheless, the problem here is not in the intersectionality of identities only, but also in the formation of the gender role. This relates to the way that society has reflected the VDs' role in the institution as an echo of its role in society in general. Eckstrand et al. (2016) indicates the role of intersectionality when developing the experiences of people in an academic environment. In this study, interpreting the experiences of the women VDs through intersectionality was crucial in providing an in-depth understanding of several socio-cultural aspects that have shaped the career experiences of the women vice deans.

5.5 Summary

Briefly, the career experiences of the female VDs in the study are similar in some ways to the international context (e.g., the under-representation of women in leadership positions and academic ranks). However, in other ways, the Saudi women's situation is unique due to societal factors such as family support and gender segregation, both of which are seen of as natural in their

institutional structure. As a result of the issues raised in this chapter, Saudi universities nationwide should strive to improve the career experiences and progress of female VDs, and to meet the standards of female empowerment adopted in the country and promoted by Vision 2030.

The challenges associated with the women's lack of performance in HE differs in severity from the Western context to the Saudi context. Despite women around the world facing these challenges, Saudi women work in the light of the strong cultural foundations that have formed the workplace culture in Saudi institutions. This in turn has produced challenges in their career path. These challenges are distinguished by the degree of their severity, which has made them more difficult to confront and overcome. On a large scale, the women have confronted the challenge of the power struggle arising from the fact that men are leaders. On the other hand, however, they benefit from the socio-cultural foundations present in the social support provided to them to reduce the burden of their personal and family responsibilities. However, this does not contribute to their academic professional development as managerial burdens prevent them from spending sufficient time on research activities. This is in contrast with the women in other countries who are encountering responsibilities inhibiting their research activities as one reason for this.

These are the most important factors that affect the formation of the career path of these women. As I have shown, these factors are similar in some ways to the experiences of women in other countries, but they are unique to the presence of the strong socio-cultural factors that have created this unilateralism. The state is now trying to empower women in various fields to dismantle these obstacles with the support of the highest levels of officials. The evidence is what comes out of the decision to appoint women to high positions. I believe that every Saudi HEI needs to work in

earnest towards this empowerment and to create a corresponding state of competition between universities. By doing so, they will be able to support the appropriate competencies and create a motivational environment, one that firmly pushes the wheel of female empowerment in universities.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter recapitulates upon and concludes this thesis with the responses to the research questions addressed. Subsequently, it will present recommendations for policy makers followed by suggestions for further research in the field. The chapter will also highlight the contribution and significance of the current study, while acknowledging and recognising the various limitations.

6.2 RQ1: What factors shape and influence women vice deans career choices and experiences?

The study identified factors associated with the female VDs' personal and/or family lives address the elements that shaped their route into academia due to the choices available to them as Saudi women. The life experiences of the female VDs in this study were mainly shaped by both cultural and social substances. Socio-cultural factors played a role in many stages of the VDs' working lives, such as their choice of college, their area of study, and their subsequent career opportunities and practices. Because their specialisations were the first step to their future career, some of the social factors in their pre-career experiences include the female VDs' parents being keen for their daughters to become medical doctors and thus to enrol in medical college. However, the participants did not desire a career in medicine and entered specialisations that more closely aligned with their own preferences. These choices arose either from personal interest or were based on the courses available in their hometown colleges. One of the socio-cultural factors that some of

the women encountered was the family pressure for them to remain in their hometown, thus preventing them from travelling to study in other cities or countries. This forced them to shift their choice of specialisation to one that was available locally. Their specialisation was the gateway to their career based on their distinctive academic outcome following their college studies.

The social factors in connection to the role of female VDs is summarised in two aspects. Firstly, identifying their specialisation was a route to educational success which in turn led to the women working in their current profession. In this aspect, it was observed that the women's families were a prominent factor in their daughters' lives, especially in the pre-career period. For example, families were observed to influence or even control the decisions of their daughters, many of whom consulted their parents when making career decisions. The family was thus found to be of great importance when making decisions, including career-related ones. Secondly, the family was present as a supporting factor in the professional lives of the female VDs as their mothers provided assistance in terms of bearing the VDs' family burdens, allowing the academics to devote themselves to their work.

6.3 RQ2 What institutional policies exist to support women's career paths and how do these policies support or inhibit women's advancement to vice deanship and beyond?

This study has found that there is one supporting factor of women's career advancement, and that it is mainly associated with policies rather than practices.

6.3.1 Supporting Factors

A factor that stimulates professional development is the institutional policy of setting a deadline for the growth of academics after their appointment. This aligns with the need to engage in postgraduate study at a certain time or having the individuals transferred to non-academic positions due to a lack of continuous academic progress. This is represented in a policy that demands that recently appointed teaching assistants must begin their postgraduate studies within a maximum period of three years from the date of appointment. This has greatly contributed to the existence of large numbers of HoDs with PhDs in their thirties. As a consequence, the policy has affected career progress by pressuring new faculty towards doctoral studies which in turn has assisted both teaching assistants and lecturers to reach the rank of assistant professor. In contrast to this supporting policy, the findings illustrate some of the institutional practices that have affected the female VDs' progress, summarised as four main themes: recruitment patterns, delayed professional development, the absence of authority, and the demand for developmental training and preparation programmes.

Almost all these factors inhibit career advancement, except for the arrangements associated with the appointment process that can be categorised between inhibiting and supporting. They enable the VDs to reach the position without strict adherence to the standards. On the other hand, the VDs are deprived of these appointment patterns as the mechanism does not give everyone equal opportunity to compete for the position. Instead, selection occurs without any advertisement of the competition for the post. This theme both stimulates and disincentivises at the same time. Accordingly, it has been categorised separately.

6.3.2 Recruitment Patterns

The study revealed that the mechanism for appointing a VD is not via the application and selection process but rather by direct nomination by the dean to the university rector. The most important point here is that the policies lack a clear description regarding the definition of who (from among those with the appropriate scientific and administrative competence) is qualified to occupy a position. There is no clear criteria.

The nomination by the dean does not appear to be supported by any criteria stipulated in the documents of scientific and managerial competence as the findings indicate that there is a disparity in the VDs compliance with the descriptions written in the policies. The managerial and academic backgrounds of the VDs differed as some had more than ten years managerial experience, sometimes up to twenty years, while others were appointed with no management experience at all. However, regarding qualifications, it appears that the possession of a doctorate is a requirement as the vast majority of the VDs had such qualifications. This was with the exception of one who was appointed based on the lack of Saudi faculty in a small city college.

Although the institutional documents specify that nominated VDs must be Saudi nationals, alongside the requirements of experience and academic work, they did not prioritise any of the criteria. However, the findings reflected that nationality was in fact prioritised over all other requirements. This was affirmed by the HoDs who were all Saudi nationals. To sum up, position appointments are mainly based on the dean's decision as he will select one of the Saudi academics in the faculty to be nominated for the position. In addition, the policies lacked an elaborate or

comprehensively designed description regarding the definition of who among those with academic and managerial competence is qualified to occupy the position of VD.

6.3.3 Inhibiting Factors

6.3.3.1 Absence of Authority

One of the most significant inhibiting factors to the female VDs' career advancement appeared to be the lack of decision-making powers since this was a major factor affecting the managerial performance of the VDs in the colleges. Although they are organisationally positioned at the head of the female college, overseeing students, faculty, and administrative staff, they are solely assigned to raising recommendations and writing letters to the dean. Regardless of the female VDs' managerial and educational backgrounds, all of them agreed that they encounter in their managerial experience a lack of decision-making responsibility. Obtaining authority in their management of the college was their only concern in relation to exceeding the limiting procedures associated with the male section, particularly in urgent situations when the need to implement decisions quickly is paramount. They are completely deprived of authority which is assigned exclusively to the dean, although both the VD and the dean manage the faculty, administrators, and students. The experiences of some VDs have shown how difficult this challenge is, especially in cases that require more efficiency and velocity when managing the daily operations of the faculty.

6.3.3.2 Delayed Academic Development

Academic promotion is the only type of promotion to apply for in Saudi HE. One of the more significant findings that emerged from this study is the delay of the academic promotion of the VDs who experienced delays of between four and five years after reaching the stage at which they

should have been eligible (four years after obtaining the last rank to stay in the current rank for six to eight years). Besides, female VDs who are supposed to have completed the requirements for promotion and applied for it have been slightly delayed for one or two years after the four-year requirement. Most of the VDs delayed for promotion explained that they are still working on research by virtue of the fact that research is the most essential requirement for the promotion. In addition to the major requirement of having a research output, the remaining points are calculated according to their teaching and university service. Nonetheless, in this study, research is reported as a major hindrance to promotion which the VDs attributed to being preoccupied with managerial loads, itself an impediment to obtaining sufficient time to conduct research and advance their current rank. In terms of managerial load, many VDs have been in office for a long time, being thus preoccupied. This has caused the deferral of professional advancement. The appointment duration for a management role is two years subject to extension according to the regulations yet the tenure extension in certain experiences did not advantage the college VDs, preventing them from devoting time to teaching and working on research projects.

6.3.3.3 Issues with Professional and Preparation Programmes

This study elucidated the lack of leadership preparatory programmes for the VDs which has created a slow learning process for work while they are in the position. Some of the VDs mentioned that they had spent a long time learning the role since they were not provided with any training in this regard. This means that for a long period, their work was blighted by errors and the need for corrections. Despite the lack of preparatory programmes, ongoing professional development programmes are reported to be available.

However, the mechanism for accessing development programmes is flawed and contains defects. The VDs under study did not agree on a particular way of accessing the training programmes since some relied on networks and others sought training themselves. Access was further complicated because the registration mechanism is via the dean, and also because the VDs lack knowledge about available programmes. There is thus a degree of dispersion in the methods of providing and obtaining training.

In addition to the experiences of the VDs in this regard, most of the HoDs participating in the study acknowledged the existence of training programmes and attended some. In contrast, others did not acknowledge this and did not attend such programmes. Overall, the university has provided ongoing professional programmes with the exception of preparatory ones. However, those available are not advertised in a proper manner and thus fail to reach all academics.

6.4 RQ3: In what ways can the career experiences or career paths of female Vice Deans in Saudi HE be improved?

To achieve the required career improvement, according to the outcomes of the presented experiences, many methods can be adopted to implement female VDs' career advancement. Women's career experiences can be advanced through leadership empowerment.

6.4.1 Advancing Leadership Experiences

To advance female academics' experiences in their respective leadership positions, there are two main aspects to consider. First, prior to their work in the post, future VDs could join a programme that prepares them for work and raises their level of leadership performance. However, the

importance of activating empowerment for female leaders is crucial which in turn will develop the managerial life of the VDs and create a space for her in terms of building leadership skills and a reputation that may qualify her for bigger positions within the university. In this aspect, it is possible to develop the administrative life of women by trying to accelerate the pace of their empowerment in universities. This could be achieved by issuing decisions that give women the right to compete for all positions regardless of the hierarchical order in the university with selection based on competence regardless of gender.

During the writing of this thesis, female dean appointments were made in select Saudi HEIs. The appointment of the first female dean of a college in 2017 was in the Faculty of Medicine at Taif University. She remained the only woman in such a position until King Saud University in Riyadh appointed its first female dean in 2018 in the Faculty of Nursing. In August 2019, there was the first woman dean established of Human Resources in Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (not at college level). A month later, Umm al-Qura University in Mecca appointed its first female dean of the university, and also its first female dean of the Faculty of Nursing. These three examples are the only cases that have thus far occurred across the country.

The adoption of Vision 2030 has implemented a tremendous change for women in the country. One of the most important points addressed by the vision is to raise the level of women's empowerment and to create opportunities for them to enhance their future. This in turn will be reflected in the empowerment of women in higher education. One of the most important results of the vision is the current social change which has jumped in the field of involving women in areas in which they were not previously able to participate. For example, we see them now working in

many places where we did not see them previously such as working in the security and economic fields. Wherever, you go, women are seen working in a place where they did not used to.

At a high level, the adoption of this vision has contributed to raising the level of women's political empowerment at high levels. We now see them as ambassadors, such as the Saudi ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Rima bint Bandar Al Saud, in addition to the presence of Saudi women currently as ambassadors in European countries, such as Ambassador Amal Al-Mouallimi, the Saudi ambassador to Norway, and Ambassador Enas Al-Shahwan as the ambassador to Sweden and Iceland.

6.4.2 Academic Rank Advancement

The findings of this study elucidated that the problem with delaying career progression is the lack of research productivity. The VDs acknowledged that they need to produce research to rise above their current rank. Consequently, the development of the level of professional rank is done through the acceleration of work on research and research productivity. In addition, women must work on research projects on a continuous basis to ensure the constant development of their professional life which does not stop at a certain rank for a long time.

6.5 Contribution of the study

The study contributes to knowledge empirically, theoretically and methodologically. From an empirical perspective, the current study constitutes one of the first attempts to understand the dearth of female Saudi vice deans, their life experiences and their career aspirations. It has analysed their journeys since they joined their academic field, considering both their academic progress and their path to leadership in light of institutional policies and practices. The experiences of Saudi

women are worth studying just as much as the experiences of women elsewhere. Although the study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, its findings have relevance for other contexts, particularly those that share a similar Arab and/or Islamic heritage. From a theoretical perspective, the current study contributes to the field of female leadership in Higher Education, particularly with respect to how individuals and marginalised groups experience the interplay between institutional policies and practices. Three theories have been used in combination, namely, intersectionality, gendered organisations theory and gender arrangements in organisations, in order to generate theoretical insights from the lived experiences of women vice deans in Saudi Higher Education. From a methodological perspective, this study has significant value because it has included data not only from the female vice deans, themselves, but also from the HoDs working with them and those who expect to be VDs in the future. Not many studies achieve such extensive participant triangulation.

6.6 Recommendations for Policy Makers

Policy makers should consider the following when implementing improvements in the career experiences of female VDs:

- Women leaders must be recognised as strategic, intentional, deliberate, intelligent, focused, goal-driven, accomplished, ambitious, and successful. Women's leadership in future development will open up key positions in the economic, political, religious, and sociocultural development of the nation.
- One of the most important recommendations of this study is that the powers of the VDs should be expanded to enable them to make decisions. This would ease the restrictions entrusted to their work, and in turn contribute to raising the level of the leadership role and

enable the female VDs to perform tasks with independent powers. It will also prevent conflicts in a VD's work with that of the dean as the senior college official.

- The dean should be selected from a pool of qualified academics of both genders, and not be a position dominated by men.
- One of the ways to prompt the female academics' research output is to motivate them to participate in joint research projects. This may enhance professional networking, encourage the exchange of research experiences, and continuously stimulate research production.
- It is essential for universities to initiate a series of development programmes to prepare individuals for recruitment and to increase their leadership and vital academic research skills. These programmes should be announced in a specific way (e.g., via email or departmental circulations) to ensure access to all academics in the institution.
- The university should introduce a specific deadline for academics to produce research. Such regulations would stimulate the work on research which, in turn, would improve the career advancement of academics, specifically women.

6.7 Recommendations for Further Research

Women's career experiences in oppressive systems are constructed through identities of gender and culture which produce practices of exclusion and discrimination. The practices might be similar in some way such as the patriarchal power in decision-making. However, on the micro level of the experiences, it differs in relation to the context and oppression severity in the day-to-day life experiences even though policies have not enormously been a key player in making the desired change. However, considerably more work will need to be done to consider the following:

- Researchers should examine opportunities for female academics to progress towards deanship in terms of university perception.
- In the Saudi context, researchers should investigate any possibilities for other colleges to follow the few institutions that have already appointed female deans.
- Further studies should be conducted in a different position to involve the perception of women academics recently appointed deans to explore how their experiences has been changed.

6.8 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to practitioners and policy makers. Even the female VDs participating asked for access to the research upon its completion, stressing that they want to make their voices heard by the decision-makers through this study. An important aspect of the project is that it will provide knowledge for future VDs regarding the experiences of women formerly in these positions and the challenges they encounter. This can help to avoid certain problems such as the lack of preparatory programmes. This study provides recommendations for those responsible for training and professional programmes at the HE level, and it also emphasises the need to engage more academics in training, as well as how to address the issues surrounding access.

The study provides recommendations for policy makers (see Section 6.6) in an attempt to contribute to the knowledge of what VDs endure under problematic situations. The hope is that these policy makers can recognise that female VDs face problems as a result of negative interactions with the dean, and also because of the lack of the authority they hold in the position. Overall, this study identified the difficulties that female VDs endure and contribute to

developments aimed at providing them with information needed to implement better working lives by stimulating their empowerment.

6.9 Limitations

- It would be valuable to include the views of male deans on the career lives of their subordinate female VDs, especially since the value would be added to the study in accordance with their perspectives of the VDs selection to the position. This study was limited by a lack of response from male deans who were invited but declined to participate in the study. No responses were received from the male deans contacted. Another attempt was made to involve them in the study via the dissemination of questionnaires but again, no responses were received after three attempts. Their lack of response itself is an indication of their views on the matter – that men do not view these women and their experiences as worthy of their consideration.
- Although universities in Saudi Arabia are centralised, the findings in this study are not generalisable to the other colleges in Saudi universities. This is because there is a female university that is led by women only.

To sum up, this study provides insights into the experiences that have shaped the professional life of academic VDs in Saudi HE, and whether they are connected to either the social or institutional life aspects. The importance of the project is furthered because it studied institutional regulations and assessed how institutional practices interact with these regulations, along with the extent of their positives and negatives in the lives of these women.

6.10 Personal Reflections

My journey in this study has greatly expanded my knowledge and refined my research skills. Despite the difficulties encountered, I was able to search for information, find solutions, and understand and revise my work. In addition, I have been able to develop my thinking skills while researching and writing in a language that is not my mother tongue, a strength that will benefit me in my academic life. My work in this study had a great impact on my fieldwork training and while working on research substances in an organised and ethical manner. Although the study was on my own community, it has nevertheless contributed to my knowledge and enabled me to address the questions that led me to this topic. This project is the most significant experience of my life as it has taught me so much, both scientifically and socially.

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Appendix A: Ethical Approval Form of the Study



Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees

(PhD, EdD, MA by research)

Student number: U1690556

Student name: Amal Alfageeh

PhD EdD MA by research

Project title:

Examining the Career Paths of Female Academic Leaders in Saudi Arabia Higher Education

Supervisor: Dr. Pontso Moorosi

Funding body (if relevant):

Please ensure you have read the Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research available in the handbook.

Methodology

Please outline the methodology, e.g. observation, individual interviews, focus groups, group testing etc.

The study will examine experiences and practices that shaped the construction of the career paths of women Vice Deans (VDs) in a Saudi university. For this propose, the study will apply the approach of a single case study, where semi-structured interviews with women VDs in the university and documentary analysis will be conducted. The case study university will be identified as the institution as a Saudi university comprising a managerial structure of both genders and one of them is the university that I work in which will be the

Consent

How will prior informed consent be obtained from the following?

From participants:

Emails will be sent to all women Vice Deans in the university asking for their participation. Participant will be only Vice Deans who replied of agreement to participate in the study.

From others:

An email containing a letter will be sent to the university (Deanship of Graduate studies and Scientific Research) asking for permission to conduct the study. This stage will be in prior the stage of sending emails to participants.

If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:

Prior informed consent will be obtained.

Will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status?

Yes, in the emails that they will receive, my status and information will be included.

Competence

How will you ensure that all methods used are undertaken with the necessary competence?

I will be able to assess my use to the appropriate methods and all the process will be under the supervision of Dr. Moorosi.

Protection of participants

How will participants' safety and well-being be safeguarded?

Interviews will be taken in the VDs' offices at the university. As some campuses are in towns and the main campus is in a city, I will travel to each campus and conduct the interviews there.

Child protection

Will a CRB check be needed? Yes No (If yes, please attach a copy.)

Addressing dilemmas

Even well planned research can produce ethical dilemmas. How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research?

As the research will examine human experience, I might face a dilemma of the disclosure of some personal experiences specially in the context of the family experiences. Due to the conservatism of the Saudi society, limitation of the interview dialogue might occur in this case. I have the respect to the sensitivity of this issue which I will leave the participants to speak about their experiences freely without the obligation to delve too deeply into the narrative of family/personal details; as well as the commitment to a person's freedom not to answer questions that may be considered as a private matter that Saudi women may not wish to disclose to a strange person.

Misuse of research

How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

Data will be used under the legal requirements in storing and using personal data. The storage of the confidential data will be on personal access by researcher only.

Support for research participants

What action is proposed if sensitive issues are raised or a participant becomes upset?

Interviewees will be informed prior to the interview of the freedom to withdraw from the interview or recording process at any time. If any sensitive issue arises and participants gets upset, the interview will be stopped and the participant will be given the chance to reject answering any sensitive matters or to stop the interview process. The choice will be respected.

Integrity

How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others?

Any false information or fabrication will never be reported; fairness will be applied to all participant, no one will be excluded based on discrimination and no one will be forced to participate; all individuals will be respected. Interview transcripts will be shared with the participants to verify that their accounts are accurately captured.

What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?

No agreement has been made with supervisor, but authorship will be discussed.

Other issues

Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.

No other issues that have not been discussed.

Signed:	
Student: 	Date: 30-1-2018
Supervisor: 	Date: 30/01/2018


Please submit this form to the Research Office (Donna Jay, Room B1.43)

Office use only

Action taken:

- Approved
- Approved with modification or conditions – see below
- Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

Name: Michael Wyness

Signature: 

Date: 8/2/18

Stamped:

**Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL**

Notes of Action:

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Examining the Career Paths of Female Vice-Deans in Saudi Arabia Higher Education

- 1- Introduction of the researcher and the researcher's information.
 - 2- Research title (as mentioned above).
 - 3- Propose: The study seeks to explore the experiences of Saudi women throughout their careers toward a leadership position.
 - 4- Research aim: To examine the practices and experiences that have affected the construction of the career paths of Saudi female higher education leaders.
 - 5- Description of the interview process:
 - a. I seek to explore the experiences and practices that have occurred that have shaped the path of Saudi women leaders in higher education.
 - b. The interview will be recorded if the interviewee agrees.
 - c. Personal information will be confidential and the data will be treated anonymously.
 - d. The interview will take around one hour.
-

Background Questions:

1 Let's talk about yourself and your life. Tell me about your childhood. How was it?

- Prompt:
- How was your life with your family, parents, brothers, and sisters?

2. Talk to me about your family, and your parents. How do they affect your life?

- Prompt:
- Did they affect your education? Career choice? Career life?

3- What about your own family? What is your marital status?

- Prompt:
- Do you have children? What are their ages?

4- Being a mother and wife, how has this affected your profession?

- Prompts:
- How can you manage your family responsibilities and work?

5- Tell me about your school experience.

- Prompt:
- How did the school help you to develop your personality and career orientation?

6- What about your experience in terms of your university studies? What did you want to be at that time?

- Prompts:
- What was your major? How did you make this choice?
- Desired college?
- Study and work at the same time?

Career

7- What was your first job?

- Prompts:
- What was your role?

- How did you feel about it? Was it your most sought-after career rank? Desired location?

8- Did you get your PhD at that time?

- Prompts:
- What was your academic qualification at the time?

9- Have you applied to upgrade your academic rank since then? If yes, what was your motivation to do so?

- Prompts:
- What is your current academic rank?

10. (For those under a professor) Are you seeking to upgrade your academic rank? If not, why? If yes, when?

12- Is there anyone around you, whether at home or at work, who has an influence on your life or career?

- Prompts:
- Have you received any kind of support throughout your career?
- From a colleague? Family member?

Managerial Experiences:

13- What was your first managerial position? When?

14- Could you please describe your journey from your first managerial post until your current position?

- Prompt:
- What was the managerial position you occupied before this post?

15- What was your selection process for your current position?

- Prompt:
- Did you apply for the position? Or what?

16- How did you prepare yourself to work in this managerial position?

- Prompts:
- Have you had any sort of preparatory training? Programmes? Mentoring?

17- Do you feel empowered to make all decisions? Are there areas where you feel inadequate / need more development?

- Prompt:
- Can you describe the decision-making process in the college?

18- What are the challenges you face when performing your role as a college vice dean?

- Prompts:
- What challenges do you face in particular?
- Can you give some examples of a how you deal with said challenges?

19- Are there any development programmes or training provided to you as a college vice dean? If yes, please clarify.

- Prompts:
- Have you attended any sort of developmental programmes in the university?
- How can you apply for training or workshops in the university?

20- What are the university's institutional policies that consider women's responsibilities such as their family?

- Prompts:
- Are the working hours suitable for women and their families?
- Family-friendly policies?

21- Tell me where do you see yourself in the next five to ten years?

22- Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

Appendix C: HoDs' Questionnaire

Dear Head of Department,

I am Amal Alfageeh, a research student at the Centre for Education Studies at the University of Warwick in the UK. I am conducting a study entitled "Examining the Career Paths of Female Vice-Deans in Saudi Arabia Higher Education" for the fulfilment of a PhD program. The study seeks to explore the factors that play a role in shaping the career paths of college women vice-deans.

You are kindly requested to participate in the questionnaire of this study. Your views as a female HoD are absolutely crucial.

The expected time to answer the questionnaire will be around 5-7 minutes. All responses given by you will be kept strictly confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Your participation is appreciated.

My contact details: A.Alfageeh@warwick.ac.uk

ahfageeh@uqu.edu.sa

Section 1: Demographic information:

What is your age?

Less than 30:

30-34

35-39

40-44

45-49

50-54

55 and above

Nationality:

Saudi

Non-Saudi

What is your current qualification?

PhD

Master

Bachelor

How long have you been in your current role as a Head of Department?

Less than one month

1-6 months

less than 1 year

1 -2 Years

More than 2 years

Please state your level of agreement regarding the following statements by selecting one of the following options:

Unlikely agree

Highly agree

• Strongly disagree • Disagree • I do not know • Agree • Strongly agree.

Section 2: Criteria for a female vice dean:

There are specified criteria that must be met by a female academic to be selected for the position of vice-deanship.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

I do not know

Agree

Strongly agree

Managerial experience being held by the woman faculty member is an essential factor to be nominated to the vice-deanship position.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

I do not know

Agree

Strongly agree

One of the criteria for nominating an academic woman to the position of vice-deanship of the college is that she holds a PhD.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

I do not know

Agree

Strongly agree

Is there anything you would like to add?

Section 3: Powers and authority of the vice dean:

The VD takes immediate action when needed or when a problem occurs in the college.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

I do not know

Agree

Strongly agree

The college VD has limited authority in the decision-making process.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

I do not know

Agree

Strongly agree

Is there anything you would like to add?

Section 4: Preparation programs and training courses:

There are programs and trainings available to prepare academics in college when running for a leadership position.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

I do not know

Agree

Strongly agree

I have attended programs or workshops for preparation or training regarding managerial work in the university.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

I do not know

Agree

Strongly agree

Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix D: Sample of Participant Consent Form

نموذج موافقة للمشاركة في دراسة

Participant Consent Form to Take a Part in a Study

بعنوان: دراسة المسار المهني لوكيلات الكليات في التعليم العالي بالمملكة العربية السعودية

Examining the Career Paths of Female Vice Deans in Saudi Arabia

Higher Education

اتطوع للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة.....انا.....

- I... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

أتفهم أنه حتى لو وافقت على المشاركة الآن، يمكنني الانسحاب في أي وقت أو الرد للإجابة على أي سؤال دون أي عواقب من أي نوع.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

أتفهم أنه يمكنني سحب الإذن لاستخدام البيانات من مقابلي خلال أسبوعين بعد المقابلة، وفي هذه الحالة سيتم حذف المادة.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

تم الايضاح لي بالغرض من الدراسة وطبيعتها، وقد أتاحت لي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة حول الدراسة.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

أتفهم أنني لن أستفيد بشكل مباشر من المشاركة في هذا البحث.

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

أوافق على أن تكون المقابلة مسجلة صوتياً وسيستخدم التسجيل للأغراض العلمية فقط. وسيكون سري لن يتم التعامل معه إلا من قبل الباحثة فقط لا غير.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded and that it will be used for academic purposes only.

It will only be treated by the researcher only.

أفهم أنه سيتم التعامل مع جميع المعلومات التي أقدمها لهذه الدراسة بسرية تامة.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

أفهم أنه في أي تقرير حول نتائج هذا البحث ستبقى هويتي مجهولة. وسيتم ذلك عن طريق تغيير اسمي وتمويه أي تفاصيل عن

المقابلة التي قد تكشف هويتي أو هوية الأشخاص الذين أتحدث عنهم.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous.

This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.

أتفهم أنه يمكن اقتباس المقتطفات المقنعة المأخوذة من مقابلاتي من خلال الأطروحة، وعروض المؤتمرات، والأوراق المنشورة، وما إلى ذلك.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation, conference presentations, published papers etc.

أتفهم أنه سيتم الاحتفاظ بنماذج الموافقة الموقعة والتسجيلات الصوتية الأصلية من الباحث وستستخدم للأغراض العلمية فقط.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained by the researcher and will be used for academic purposes only.

أفهم أنه بموجب قانون حرية المعلومات، يحق لي الوصول إلى المعلومات التي قدمتها في أي وقت أثناء التخزين.

- I understand that under the freedom of information legalisation, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage.

أتفهم أن لي حرية الاتصال بأي من الأشخاص المشاركين في البحث للحصول على مزيد من التوضيح والمعلومات.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

توقيع المشارك في الدراسة

Signature of the research participant

التاريخ

Date

الباحثة: امل حسن الفقيه، باحثة دكتوراه في مركز الدراسات التربوية بجامعة وارنك ببريطانيا.

Researcher: Amal Alfageeh, a research student at the Centre for Education Studies, Warwick University, UK.

اتفهم بان المشارك في المقابلة اعطى الموافقة على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة

I believe that the participant has given me their informed consent to participate in this study.

توقيع الباحثة

Signature of the researcher

التاريخ

Date

Appendix E: Approval Letter from the University

الموضوع: بشأن تسهيل مهمة الباحثة/ أمل الفقيه

تعميم

لأصحاب الفضيلة والسعادة عمداء الكليات والمعاهد العلمية بالجامعة

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد:

نفيدكم بأن الطالبة/ أمل بنت حسن إبراهيم الفقيه - [REDACTED] - والمبتعثه بجامعة وارنك (بريطانيا)، بصدد تطبيق أداة الدراسة والتي بعنوان: "دراسة المسار المهني للقيادات الأكاديمية النسائية في التعليم العالي بالمملكة العربية السعودية" وذلك استكمالاً لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه.

نأمل من سعادتكم التكرم بالاطلاع والإيعاز لمن يلزم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة في تطبيق أداة الدراسة على العينة (وكليات الكليات بالجامعة "مقابلات شخصية" وعمداء الكليات "استبانة بحثية").
(مرفق بطيه نسخة من أداة الدراسة).

بيانات التواصل مع الباحث

<https://goo.gl/forms/DINes19yj7aBb0tp1>

الرابط الإلكتروني:

البريد الإلكتروني:

رقم الجوال:

شاكرين لكم كريم تعاونكم وصادق تجاوبكم

وتقبلوا خالص تحياتي،،،

وكيل الجامعة

للدراستات العليا والبحث العلمي

*Redaction of information has been applied to protect confidentiality of identities.

Appendix F: Sample of Translated Transcripts

R: How did you prepare yourself for your current position?

VD 12: Look, I have a background on the headship of the department, but not the college vice-deanship, the vice-deanship of the college as a whole, follow-up members who are located in the department and retract the tasks not at the level of a department, but on a broader and more comprehensive in the college. Working at the college is very cumbersome, but for me, a bit lesser, because I do not have external duties outside work. I live alone here. I do my work at home.

R: Okay, do you feel that you are authorised to make decisions, are there places where you feel insufficient and need to develop?

VD 12: Of course, look, it's true that I'm a vice-dean, but the decision is preferable to be taking collectively. I mean that you cannot make a decision, unless you go back to the dean. We feel that we are connected to the males there. There is no full independency. This is very negative. we are supposed to be an independent college. I'm not saying to you that we differ but at least the we supposed to be authorized. Because we are inside the problem and inside the building. This is one of the negatives that I see honestly.

R: Okay, are there any obstacles that you face in your role as a college vice-dean?

VD 12: The first obstacle that I faced maybe the authorities are lack. All of it is depended on males, ok, what is our role? After what I have occupying it, explicitly all the powers we need in the females' section to work easy. There are things done not through electronic transactions. There are things needed to be solved urgently fast. When the paperwork goes, and returns incomplete if It's in ahead of me, it would be immediately solved instead of the amended and return there to the section of males.

Appendix G: Sample of Coding Process

Interview 1 Coding

R: We start the interview with participant # 1. Firstly, tell me about yourself, your childhood, how was it?

VD1: I am [...] I have been here since I earned my PhD degree about eight years ago because I graduated in 2010 and I am glad that we came back after we gained knowledge and we try to build it for future generations and continue the march of people who preceded us and give the torch as they say, God willing, to people who are like you when you earn your doctorate degree.

My childhood was an ordinary childhood, for child that grew up in [the city name], I am a middle-class daughter in a relatively large family, we are 7 brothers and sisters and the father was a man of education, we grew up as a middleclass family, a civil servant, my father worked in education and we had no other privileges other than that at this time.

R: Nice, tell me more about your family, and your parents How did they affect your life?

VD1: My father and mother influenced me in my life, It was from the beginning to encourage and motivate me in my education. This was not surprising because, as I told you, the father was an educator and my mother was a housewife, but she was keen that we complete our study all of us boys and girls regardless our desired subject, she believed that future means study and education. So, that that is the nature of life that we grow up in. My mum did not know how to read and write, but she could not help us in studying sciences, like mathematics and scientific subjects, however, she was keen to fulfil our homework, she was very keen to do so. My father was very interested in two courses who is the Arabic language and the religion.

R: Ok, what about your own family, what is your social status?

VD1: I am not married, so I don't have family obligations of my own like a husband or a son

Comment [a1]: EDUCATION 1

Comment [a2]: CHILDHOOD 2

Comment [a3]: CLASS 3

Comment [a4]: FAMILY 4

Comment [a5]: INFLUENTIAL PARENTS 5

Comment [a6]: MARITAL STATUS 6

Appendix H: Sample of Coded Transcription

Code (basic theme)	Category	Participant number	Quote
AUTHORITY – 90	Institutional factors	VD2	<p>R: Okay, do you personally have any authority to change this situation? VD2: unfortunately not.”</p>
		VD4	<p>“The decision-making shall be from the men, so mostly, the dean who have the authority to take decision, I should go back to him in any decision.</p>
		VD5	<p>“the building was new and the supplies were simple. If I had an executive authority, for example, I would be able to decide that I would employ at that time, that I would have the opportunity to contact agencies. My work, of course, as a vice-dean for the dean, I cannot speak to any outside party. I am only addressing to the dean</p>
		VD6	<p>“I am not authorized to make any decision, whether it is simple administrative even for example in the establishment of small committees within the college or to solve a simple problem in the college I need to go back to the dean and he makes the decision.</p>

Appendix I: Sample of Transcript Translation

وكيلة ٨: طبعا مو انا اللي اختار المنصب، بل أرشح.

Vd8 “I didn’t pick the position, but I was picked for it.”

وكيلة ٥: تم اختياري من قبل العميد في الكلية السابقة رشحتي للعميد حق كلية الحاسب الالي لانه انا اكثر وحدة تخصصي قريب من الحاسب وعلى أساس ذا الشيء اختاروني

Vd5 “I was recommended by the Dean of the previous college to the Dean of the Faculty of Computer sciences. That is, because of my area of speciality, I was the most suitable candidate chosen.”

وكيلة ٥: انا تخصصي تقنيات تعليم وطبعا قسم الحاسب الالي ما كان فيه أي دكتوراه سعودية وحتى المحاضرات الموجودات كانوا كلهم أجنبي ما كان في سعوديات ابدا

“My major is education technology, and back then, all the faculty members working at the department of computer sciences were non-Saudi, even including the MSc holders.

وكيلة ٩: . بعد مارجعت من الدكتوراه بشهرين اخذت المنصب طبعا كلمني العميد وبلغني أنني رشحت للوكالة.

VD9: “I held that position two months after obtaining my PhD, the Dean spoke to me and told me that I had been nominated for the vice-deanship.

Appendix J: Sample of Coded Document Analysis

Code	Category	Theme	Meaning Unit (Quote)
Promotion	Rank advancement policy	Academic promotion criteria	The candidate's application for promotion shall be evaluated on a 100 point scale as follows:- Sixty (60) points for professional and academic Achievement.-Twenty-five (25) points for teaching.- Fifteen (15) points for university and community service.
Research production	Rank advancement policy	Academic promotion criteria	The minimum number of academic achievement points needed for the staff member's promotion shall include the following: 1. Published research papers or accepted for publication in refereed journals The University Council sets the acceptance criteria for the refereed journals. 2. A maximum of one research is accepted from refereed researches, whether published or accepted for publication, presented in specialized international conferences and symposia . . .
Promotion procedures	Rank advancement policy	Academic promotion procedures	The staff member applying for promotion shall submit an application to the Department Council including the following: a) Statement of professional and academic qualifications in addition to the candidate's job hierarchy. b) Statement of teaching activities. c) Statement of activities regarding university and community service...

Appendix K: Sample of Document Analysis

Notes:-

- male Pronouns?
- Selectin Process by nomination from dean to the rector for V.D. chair.
- ~~No stated~~ Criteria is academic and administrative **COMPETENCE**
- what Competence and how?!
- two-year renewable.

Resolutions of the council shall be considered operative unless the rector objects to them within fifteen days from the date he receives them. If the rector objects to resolutions, he shall return them to the council along with his viewpoint for a restudy; if the council's opinion remains unchanged, the resolutions under objection shall be referred to the university council, which shall study them in its first subsequent ordinary or extraordinary session. The university council may approve, amend or reject the resolutions and its decisions in this regard are final.

The council may form standing or *ad hoc* committees from within or outside its membership.

THE DEANS AND VICE-DEANS

Article Thirty Six

By a decision of the Minister of Higher Education, based upon nomination by the rector of the university, the dean of a college or institute shall be appointed from Saudi faculty members distinguished by academic and administrative competence. The appointment shall be for a two-year renewable term.

Article Thirty Seven

The dean of the college or institute shall undertake the management of the academic, administrative, and financial affairs of his college or institute within the limits of this Statute and its bylaws. At the end of each academic year, the dean shall submit to the rector of the university a report on academic affairs and all other activities of the college or institute.

Article Thirty Eight -

By a decision of the rector of the university, based upon nomination by the dean, each college or institute may have one or

→ Pronouns

Nomination

Dean's role

Nomination

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