

DISSERTATION

ROAD TO LEADERSHIP:  
EXPERIENCES OF SAUDI WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Submitted by

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## ABSTRACT

### ROAD TO LEADERSHIP:

#### EXPERIENCES OF SAUDI WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education. In addition, this study sought to offer Saudi women leaders the opportunity to talk about their social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in their efforts to access and perform their leadership positions in higher education. The two guiding research questions were: (1) what were the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education? and, (2) what social roles and gender stereotypes were these women leaders expected to uphold in the workplace? The sampling consisted of six Saudi women leaders in higher education. Thematic analysis was used as a mean of analyzing the data. The findings of this study indicated that Saudi women leaders accessed leadership positions in higher education after they attained their doctoral degree. For the social roles and gender stereotypes women leaders encountered in the workplace when interacting with men, the emerged themes were men's role, women leader's double bind, and women leaders' feminine characteristics. The result of interacting with women revealed, women leaders being enemies of other women, supportive, or situational actions. Additional findings were discussed. Moreover, some implications and recommendations for further research were discussed.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my daughters, Manar, Mayar, and Lamar. May this dissertation guide and inspire them to reach their goals, the stars, and beyond in the future.

I also dedicate this dissertation to every woman out there, especially in Saudi Arabia, to believe in herself and make her voice heard, regardless of the hardship and challenges she may face. Yet without these challenges, success will be meaningless.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For those of us who live in the 21st century, modernization, civilization, globalization, and concomitant legislation for human rights and equity make the world look simpler, easier, and more democratic for the various domestic and international groups. Still, it is not a perfect world for all groups. Within this world context, countries are facing economic, political, and social challenges to improve situations within their boundaries; they compete with one another to gain success and profits (Mark, 2000). On a more micro level, various groups separated by gender, ethnicity, ability, or religious orientation are fighting their own battles to make their voices heard, and to achieve equity and equality in relation to privileged, dominant group(s) (Howard, 2006; Johnson, 2001).

The focus of this study looked at the ability of women to access leadership positions in higher education within Saudi Arabia's boundaries. Saudi Arabia is located in the Middle East and occupies about eighty percent of the Arabian Peninsula. The country was established by King Abdulaziz Al-Saud in 1932 (Library of Congress, 2006). Since its establishment, and especially after the discovery of oil in 1935, Saudi Arabia has witnessed tremendous cultural, social, educational, and economic development under the five royal kings of Al-Saud (AlMunajjed, 1997; Long, 2005).

One example of this development came in 1960, when King Faisal introduced public education for girls. In the beginning of girls' education in Saudi Arabia, schools and curricula were concerned with teaching girls their religious and domestic roles. The first public university in Saudi Arabia was the University of Riyadh, founded in 1975. At that time, female students were enrolled as non-resident students in the fields of art and commerce in order to fulfill their social roles. The University of King Abdulaziz was established in 1967 as a private university in

Jeddah, a major city in the western region of Saudi Arabia. After the first year of its establishment, female students were able to enroll as resident students (AlMunajjed, 1997). Today, there are 32 public universities and colleges and 28 private institutions in Saudi Arabia. Male and female students have equal access to higher education in the country (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010/2011). Although much progress has been made in higher education, but much more is needed in order to make change a reality for everyone.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many Saudis still view female involvement in the workforce as non-essential and even against cultural values (AlMunajjed, 1997). Many religious leaders, some scholars, some writers, and even some women insist that women play their most significant role as wives and mothers in their own homes. Women who do participate in the workforce are concentrated in certain occupations because of the social structure of segregation between men and women, and the limited access to specializations for women. As a result, work opportunities for women are mainly in the field of education, higher education, medicine, banking, and commerce through owning their own business (AlMunajjed, 1997).

Since the ascendancy of King Abdullah Al-Saud to the throne in 2005, dramatic changes and reforms have improved the lives of Saudi citizens, and Saudi women in particular. For example, on February 14, 2009, King Abdullah assigned the first ever woman to the position of Deputy Minister of Education for Girls' Affairs (AlJazeera, 2009, February). Also, on September 26, 2011, King Abdullah announced that Saudi women have the right to participate in the Shoura (Consulting) Council as members, starting the next term, and to run in municipal/public elections starting in 2015 (Saudi Gazzete, 2011, September). Announcing these changes, he said:

Because we reject the marginalization of women's role in society in every field of work according to Shariah [Islamic Law], and after consulting our Ulema [religious clerks], we have decided the following:

First, women's participation as members of the Shoura Council as of the next session according to Shariah. Second, as of the next session, women will have the right to nominate themselves to become members of municipal councils and they have the right to participate in nominating candidates according to Shariah. (Saudi Gazzete, 2011, September, lines 12–18)

This news had a great impact on Saudi society. Many female and male advocates of social justice have responded positively to the king's decision. History professor and long-time women's rights advocate in Saudi Arabia, Hatoon AlFassi, expressed her feelings about the news by saying, "Excited, excited, and happy. We [women] feel that we are complete citizens for the first time, or at least partly. This is the first recognition for public participation by Saudi women ever" (as cited in Drummond, 2011, September). Ruquiya Al-Othmani, a notable Saudi nutritionist said, "It is a historic moment for Saudi women. There will be more respect for women now and their confidence will grow" (as cited in Masrahi, 2011, September, para. 2).

This decree became a reality on January 12, 2013. King Abdullah reformed the Saudi Consulting Council by assigning thirty Saudi women to be members in the council to make the total 150 members for a new four-year term instead of only 120 male members. He declared that women should have at least twenty percent of seats in the council. The thirty women selected included academics, human rights activists, and two princesses (Saudi Gazette, 2013, January, para. 4). Two of these selected women were Dr. Thuraya Obeid, who served as executive director of the UN Development Program; and Dr. Hayat Sindi, who was the first Saudi woman to attain a PhD in biotechnology and was enlisted in *Newsweek's* "150 women who shake the world" in 2012 (Saudi Gazette, 2013, January, paras. 5-6).

Worldwide, despite all the progress of professional women in gaining access to leadership positions, there is more to be done in acquiring equal access to that which men enjoy (AlMunajjed, 2010; Moghadam, 2004). Many educated professional women, including Saudi women, encounter barriers to positions of leadership in the various sectors (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2008; Reed & Buddeberg-Fischer, 2001; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). For example, men predominantly occupy leadership positions in primary and higher education (Pounder & Coleman, 2002). This discrepancy between the number of employed women in primary and higher education and their unequal access to leadership positions reflects the state of professional women worldwide, as well as in Saudi.

According to the Saudi Central Department of Statistics & Information (2010), the kingdom's population in 2010 was 27,136,977; consisting of 18,707,576 (69%) Saudi citizens and 8,429,401 (31%) foreign residents. Furthermore, the number of male Saudi citizens was 9,527,173 (50.9%), while the number of female Saudi citizens was 9,180,403 (49.1%). However, among the total national student body in higher education, 59% were female students, and 41% were males in 2008 (Mills, 2009). Moreover, the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education's (2010/2011) statistics indicate that 25,182 (31%) male students, in comparison to 56,073 (69%) female students, earned their bachelor's degree for the academic year 2010–2011. Women are earning degrees and attending universities in significantly higher numbers than men each year, yet they do not maintain the significant lead in postgraduate rates.

Many Saudi women pursue their postgraduate studies both within Saudi soil and worldwide. In the 2010–2011 academic year, the number of male and female graduate students who earned their master's or doctorate's degrees was 1,140 and 953, respectively (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010/2011). According to the Deputy Ministry of Higher Education for



Scholarship Affairs in an interview to one of Saudi national newspapers in 2011, he said the Saudi government sponsored 106,065 male and female students. Thirty percent of the sponsored students are in the United States; fifteen percent of students are in the United Kingdom; eleven percent of students are in Canada; eight percent of students are in Australia; six percent of students are in Egypt; and the remaining thirty percent of sponsored students are spread across the remaining world (AlRiyadh, 2011, March, para. 4).

Despite the large numbers of women attending and graduating college, according to a labor survey by the United Nations for International Labor Organizations conducted in 2008, Saudi women occupied only 1,119,592 (12.5%) of available jobs in the workforce, as compared to 7,956,832 (87.5%) jobs that males held (International Labour Organization, 2009). Within the 12.5% of total jobs held by Saudi women, 76.6% of these jobs for women were in the educational sector (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). Among all of the Saudi women employed in education, only 6.1% were in administration and leadership positions, in comparison to 44.4% of Saudi male administrators and leaders in the educational sector (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010).

The above data partially explains why, overall, Saudi Arabia ranked 127 among 135 countries according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2013). This report compared 135 countries on the equality between men and women in four areas. These areas were economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. It ranked countries on gender equality rather than empowerment (The World Economic Forum, 2013).

Al Munajjed (1997; 2010) explained that the significant elevation of one gender over the other is the result of cultural and religious beliefs in Saudi Arabia. Men are considered the

primary family providers, while the expected gender role for women to play, first and foremost, is that of wives and mothers (McIntosh & Islam, 2010). Looking through the traditional Saudi cultural and religious lens, many feel the active engagement and participation of women in the workforce is unnecessary (AlMunajjed, 2010).

According to Moghadam (2004), the reality for professional Arab women is the result of cultural attitudes. These cultural attitudes toward women depend on their social and gender role in the family, where the view of proper and improper occupations must be compatible with that role (Moghadam, 2004). However, the majority of educated Saudi women, who have goals, aspirations, and professional desires to pursue, do not support this common practice or belief (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010).

Despite noticeable indicators of progress in Saudi society, it is critical that the Saudi government and private sector address this discrepancy to balance cultural norms and the ambitions of half of the society's population. Therefore, the Kingdom's Ninth Five-Year Development Plan (from 2010 to 2014) aims at increasing the percentage of women in the Saudi workforce from 12.5% to 27.5% (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). The latest Saudi statistics from 2013 indicated that female participation in the work force has increased to 20.1% (Yaphe, 2013, October, para. 4). However, in 2013, the Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information indicated that the workforce was comprised of 3,951,255 men and only 679,862 women, with a difference of 3,271,393 between the two genders (Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2013).

Clearly, despite being leaders in obtaining education Saudi women leaders are underrepresented in the workplace. On the other hand, they have as significant a role in developing the country as men and their role has been increasing over the past few decades.

However, the literature exploring the stories of Saudi women leaders in accessing leadership positions in higher education is limited. Therefore, this study explored the stories of Saudi women leaders regarding their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education.

### **Significance of the Study**

In higher education in the United States, the typical college president is a 60-year-old white male that moved up the ladder from one position to the other until he reached the presidency (American Council on Education, 2012). The proportion of women who have served as presidents of American colleges and universities has increased from 23% in 2006 to 26% 2011 (American Council on Education, 2012). In addition, studies of other countries reflect similar small numbers of female leaders, such as in the United Kingdom and Australia, where 9% of college presidents were female, and 27% of vice-chancellors were female, respectively (Kloot, 2004; Still, 2006). Although no statistics regarding the number of Saudi women leaders in higher education are available, one can imagine how few there are if only 6.1% of all administrators in the country are female (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). Overall, very little scholarly attention has been paid to the role of Saudi women in leadership and decision-making positions within universities.

Dramatic changes are taking place in Saudi Arabia, especially after King Abdullah's decree to allow women to be members in the Consulting Council and vote in the municipal councils (Drummond, 2011; Masrahi, 2011; *Saudi Gazette*, 2011). After the king's appointment of thirty Saudi women to leading positions in the Consulting Council (*Saudi Gazette*, 2013, January), the time seemed right to explore the journey of Saudi women to leadership positions in higher education. Through exploring their journey to leadership, the study identified the social role and gender stereotypes these women are expected to fulfill in their workplace when they

access these leadership positions. The findings of this study increase the limited literature available about Saudi women and their access to, and experiences in, higher-education leadership positions. It allowed these Saudi women leaders to shed light on their own journey to leadership and their experiences within the leadership context.

Moreover, the stories of these women aimed to help new Saudi women leaders to more successfully navigate access to leadership positions in higher education. Knowing the lived experiences of other women leaders could assist potential leaders to understand the barriers, and the support and opportunities they may encounter, especially in relation to their social role and gender stereotypes. This knowledge could also guide them to overcome such barriers and take advantage of support during their professional pursuit of leadership positions. Additionally, it could enlighten governmental officials, specifically male leaders as well as all Saudis, to hear the previously unheard voices of these Saudi women leaders and the stories of their experiences.

Finally, the above important points are in line with Vecchio's (2007) proposal. According to him, the purpose and significance of research is to help resolve issues between groups of different gender, ethnicity, ability, and/or religious backgrounds in order to increase understanding of one another, and increase the cooperation and unity among diverse groups (Vecchio, 2007). Participants had the opportunity to tell their stories. According to Zemsky (2001), "Telling stories is a way of bringing human experiences into the broader realm of institutional culture" (p. 5). By hearing these stories, the leadership of higher education institutions and the workforce could better recognize the deeply ingrained cultural biases that privilege one gender over the other (Zemsky, 2001).

## **Research Questions**

Holliday (2002) indicated that “research questions in qualitative research can be varied as the topics and scenarios being investigated” (p. 31). Based on the topic and according to current data, Saudi women obtain more bachelor’s degrees than men each year (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010/2011). Therefore, educated Saudi women have a significant role to play in the continued development of the country. They need to have equal access to leadership positions in the various sectors in Saudi Arabia, including higher education, in order to change the narrow, expected social role and gender stereotypes forced upon them. However, Saudi women’s access to leadership and decision-making positions is still much more limited than their male counterparts. Therefore, this study explored two primary research questions: (a) What are Saudi women leaders’ stories about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education? (b) What social roles and gender stereotypes are these women leaders expected to uphold in the workplace?

## **Definition of Terms**

For clarification and to serve the purpose of this study, the terms used are defined as follows:

*Gender roles in a society* are “those shared expectations (about appropriate qualities and behaviors) that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially identified gender” (Eagly, 1987, p. 12).

*A Leader* is:

One or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives. (Winston & Patterson, 2006, p. 7)

*Leadership* is defined as “actions by individuals which serve to direct, control, or influence the groups’ behavior toward collective goals” (Judge & Long, 2012, p. 179).

*Stereotypes* are “a set of attributes ascribed to a group and imputed to its individual members simply because they belong to that group” (Heilman, 1983, p. 271).

### **Delimitations and Assumptions**

This qualitative narrative study focused on the lived stories of Saudi women leaders and the barriers, support, and opportunities they experienced as they accessed leadership positions in public higher-education institutions. The experiences of Saudi women leaders in other economic areas of Saudi Arabia or other disciplines may differ and were not included.

This study was based on the assumption that gender difference impacts women negatively in their ability to access leadership positions in higher education and in performing their leadership responsibilities. It was also assumed that the participants answered questions based on their true experiences rather than on what they thought may have “wanted” to be heard, or answering in a socially acceptable manner. Because this study took a constructivist approach, whereby, the purpose was to reconstruct the world from the participants’ perspective (Buckalew, Konstantinopoulos, Russell, & El-Sherbini, 2012), it was assumed that the learned discoveries reflected the participants’ experiences situated in time, and that any replication of the study would likely produce very different results.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited to the experiences of Saudi women leaders in higher education. This precise limitation fulfilled the purpose and research questions of this project. Another limitation was the sampling selection. Purposeful sampling was used in collecting data. The participants were willing to participate in this study. However, some of the prospective

participants were unable to participate due to the timing of collecting data. Furthermore, six participants were interviewed when conducting this study. Therefore, generalization were not expected because the results reflected the individual experiences of these Saudi women leaders in accessing leadership positions in higher education.

Timing also was considered as a limitation. Data were collected during summer vacation. Many of prospective acquainting participants were unavailable. They were busy with their personal plans and family responsibilities. Finally, the participants viewed their involvement in two interviews as time consuming process since they had busy schedules and family responsibilities. While some participants were so open in sharing their experiences, this constrained the level of participant of few who were direct in answering interview questions.

### **Researcher's Perspective**

I am a proud Saudi woman. I have been privileged my entire life on many levels related to my family, socioeconomic background, education, and professional career and advancement. My personal story with leadership has two parts. The first part is about the influences on my life. Many Muslim, national, and international women leaders have inspired me throughout my life. But the two women who have influenced me the most were my grandmother and mother. My grandmother was a strong female leader in the family. She helped my parents raise my brother and me. She was direct, outspoken, opinionated, and always helpful. My mother inherited these qualities from my grandmother. Also, my mother was a professional woman. She worked as a teacher and elementary principal for 22 years. She was a perfectionistic leader who was firm but passionate with her administrators, teachers, and students. She mentored and helped many of her colleagues to advance and be leaders themselves.

The second part of my personal story with leadership started when I became a professional. I was a leader and a role model to students in my classroom. I also was a leader when I became the deputy academic coordinator at one of the Saudi colleges. I had to explore new meanings of leadership with female colleagues, and especially in my interaction and communication with male colleagues and leaders. Because Saudi education is segregated, male and female students had two separate campuses, and all professional women on the female campus were in one unit. The women supported and nurtured one another in order to serve our students and provide a high-quality education. However, interacting with men was quite challenging for me as a leader. I had to explore my leadership path. I had to identify the strengths and weaknesses of that path to overcome the barriers, to enhance the opportunities, and to gain support for my colleagues and myself. At the same time, my male leaders supported me to specialize in a different academic area, Educational Leadership, rather than Applied Linguistics. This doctorate journey in a new educational environment has been a great experience for me.

I am aware of my biases, perspective, and personal past experiences in relation to leadership in higher education and my role in making decisions. It is my responsibility as a researcher to allow the voices of Saudi female leaders to be heard. When analyzing the collected data, I was conscious of allowing and accepting the themes that emerged to highlight the stories and lived experiences of these Saudi women leader participants, and not my own experience. In their own words, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described the issue when conducting narrative research:

One of the researcher's dilemmas in the composing of research texts is captured by the analogy of living on an edge, trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 147)



## **Summary**

This chapter provided introductory information about the existing issue of women's underrepresentation in accessing leadership positions worldwide, and particularly in Saudi Arabia. This study aimed to examine the stories of Saudi women leaders in accessing leadership positions in higher education. Through conducting a qualitative, narrative study, Saudi women leaders shared the social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in the workplace. Their stories as professional leaders revealed their experiences in decision-making in higher education. Moreover, this chapter stated the research questions and the significance of the study. It included some definitions of important terms to this study. Finally, this chapter concludes with the delimitations, assumptions, limitations, and the researcher's perspective.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although women have gained leadership positions in various arenas worldwide, including Saudi Arabia, they are still underrepresented in playing such roles in comparison to men (AlMunajjed, 2010; Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe, 2009; Buckalew et al., 2012; Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Isaac, Kaatz, & Carnes, 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2010), women represent 47.3% of the entire labor force in the United States. Almost half (51.4%) of those employed women are in management, professional, and related occupations. In other words, only 24.3% of professional women are in leadership positions (U. S. Department of Labor, 2010).

In higher education, the situation is not much better. Although the percentage of women university presidents in the United States has increased from 23% in 2006 to 26% in 2011 (American Council on Education, 2012), the 26% still seems to be small in comparison to the percentage of women in the labor force. In Europe, women make up 10% of leadership positions in organizations (European Commission, 2005, cited in Ryan, Haslam, & Kulich, 2010). The scenario for Saudi women is no better than for women around the world, since only 6.1% out of the total number of professional Saudi women in the workforce are in administration, including leadership positions (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010).

To address the research questions, the following areas in the literature were reviewed: (a) an overview of leadership literature that included power, leadership styles of women and men, and followership; (b) the barriers that women faced in accessing leadership positions, which consisted of glass ceilings, the glass cliff, gender stereotypes, lack of professional networks, lack of effective mentors, family responsibilities, institutional policies and culture, male-dominated academic arenas, and queen bee syndrome; (c) the conceptual framework; and (d) an overview of

Saudi Arabia, which included the culture, primary and higher education, and work opportunities. Having an understanding of the connections among the previous research studies in these four areas shaped the proper stage to conduct this project (see Figure 1).

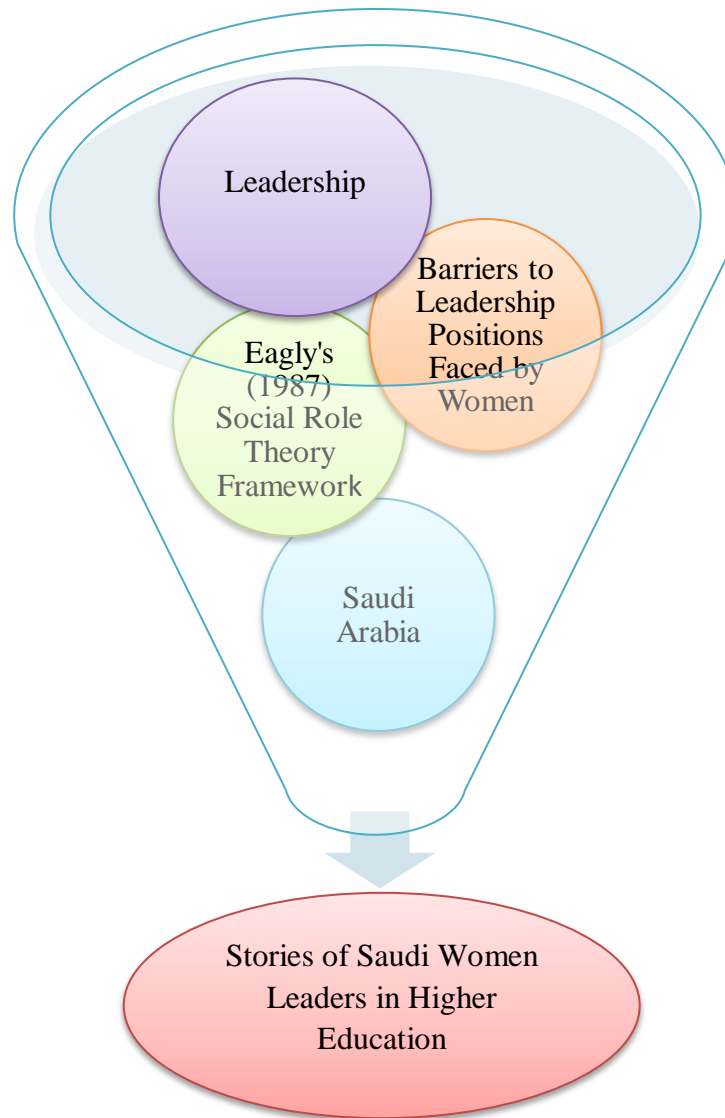


Figure 1. Literature review and focus of this study.

### **Overview of Leadership Literature**

The concept of leadership has been studied since the 1800s (Lord & Dinh, 2012). Many researchers have investigated leadership in various disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology,

political science, and economics) and from numerous theoretical perspectives (e.g., trait, behavioral, contingency, relational, information-processing, transactional, transformational, charismatic, and shared) (Day & Antonakis, 2012). Nye (2008) suggested three elements for leadership: leaders, followers, and context. He explained that the reason for followers to follow someone lies in their need for meaning and belonging to a group in order to get the work done.

Some researchers have studied leadership from an individual perspective in relation to the leaders' traits, characteristics, or styles. Others have focused on the situation or the context of leadership and leaders' behaviors within such contexts. Some studies have investigated leadership concerning organizations, and others have looked at leadership from the followers' perspective (Day & Antonakis, 2012).

When this was proposed in 1800s, one of the first proposed leadership theories was the great man theory (Denmark, 1993). This theory focused on the personal traits of a leader. The great man theory suggested that leadership is an innate ability; it is inborn, not learned, wherein a man has outstanding remarkable qualities that distinguish him from his followers (Denmark, 1993). This theory did not pay attention to female leaders. Research based on this theory merely investigated male leaders and their characteristics, proposing that only men had what it took to be successful leaders (Denmark, 1993; Jogulu & Wood, 2006).

At some point, researchers shifted their emphasis from the traits and characteristics of leaders to the behavior of leaders for effective leadership. Jogulu and Wood (2006) discussed the four main behavior theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first behavioral study proposed three dimensions: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire styles of leadership (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Lewin and Lippitt (1938) created two experimental groups of fifth and sixth graders between the ages of ten and eleven years old. They quantitatively observed the two groups'

interaction with their leaders. They found that the democratic leadership style was the most effective one among the three (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938).

The second behavioral theory was proposed by Ohio State researchers (Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy, & Stogdill, 1974). The Ohio State studies divided leadership into two dimensions: consideration and initiating structure. Kerr et al. (1974) described this behavior theory in the sense that leaders needed to be considerate of the opinions and feelings of their followers. Additionally, leaders should implement the work structure to meet the organization's goals (Kerr et al., 1974).

The third research study was by Kahn and Katz (1953). They were part of researchers at the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan who conducted research related to leadership and organizational behavior through field studies, experiments, and surveys. Kahn and Katz (1953) described two dimensions of behavioral leadership. The first dimension was production-oriented, where leaders focused on the production processes through their organization and coordination of their groups' tasks. The second dimension was employee-oriented, where leaders built supportive personal relationships with their employees to motivate their productivity. They found that employee-oriented leadership led to better results of work motivation, productivity, and satisfaction by employees than production-oriented leadership (Kahn & Katz, 1953).

According to Jogulu and Wood (2006), the fourth main behavioral theory resulted from the study by Blake and Mouton (1964). This research focused on two dimensions of concern—people and production—to evaluate the effectiveness of leadership. Blake and Mouton (1964) identified three universal characteristics for organizations, which they considered to be the managerial grid of purpose, people, and hierarchy.

Blake and Mouton said:

The process of achieving organization purpose through the efforts of several people results in some people attaining authority to supervise others; that is, to exercise the responsibility for planning, controlling, and directing the activities of others through a hierarchal arrangement. (p. 7)

According to Blake and Mouton (1964), the dimensions of the grid rely on the concern for production and the concern for people. Hierarchy, or the manager or leader of that organization, influenced the degree of production and people in an organization, and the interaction and link between the two. They described the aspects that affect the managers and their behaviors. Those aspects were: (a) the *organization* where the person operates/ work, (b) the *situation* that enforced the type of managerial assumptions being employed to deal with it, (c) the *values* of the manager concerning how to interact with people and how to achieve the best results for the organization, (d) the *personality* of the manager and characteristics that guided the preference of choosing one approach over the other in managerial behaviors, and, (e) *chance* where managerial behaviors might shift due to learned lessons, new experiences and situations, and/or incorporating people into production (Blake & Mouton, 1964). All these studies and their subsequent theories represented the behaviors of male leaders since female representation was low and leadership was still viewed as a quality behavior held by men (Jogulu & Wood, 2006).

Another leadership theory presented during the 1960s era was the contingency model (Ayman & Adams, 2012). According to this model, the performance of the group or followers was contingent on, and an outcome of the interaction between the traits and style of the leaders and the situation or context (Fiedler, 1971). Some other versions of this model were proposed related to the leader's actions to the outcome—e.g., normative decision-making, situational leadership, and path-goal (Ayman & Adams, 2012). Ayman and Adams (2012) suggested two types of contingencies in terms of the context of the leadership process. The first type was

related to intrapersonal contingencies, the leader's behavior, gender, and values. The second type of contingencies was related to interpersonal contingencies, wherein the leader's effectiveness depended on the interaction at the group level within the situation (Ayman & Adams, 2012).

According to Grant (1988), the late 1960s also witnessed a huge shift in research with the uprising of feminist movements. Researchers sought equality to increase access to work opportunities and leadership for women. New terms such as androgyny were proposed. Androgyny describes a person with both agentic and communal traits combined, rather than a person who has traits on either opposite end of the spectrum of societal sex differences (Grant, 1988).

The interactions that could take place between the leaders and their followers were classified into two types of leadership: transformational and transactional (Antonakis, 2012). Transactional leadership was based on the concept of the leader's interest in achieving goals. The leader would reward those followers who fulfilled their role in task completion. For followers who failed to complete their responsibilities, their leader would punish them excessively (Bass, 1997). In contrast, transformational leadership sought to motivate followers to achieve organizational goals beyond self-interest, to a more collective prosperity for the group, organization, and/or country (Bass, 1997). The concept of transformational leadership was expanded to include charismatic leadership (Antonakis, 2012). According to Antonaski (2012), leaders' ability to transform and influence their followers for the good of the group or organization is partially due to the leaders': charisma, vision, confidence, unconventional strategies, risk-taking behaviors, and communications skills.

For the past two decades, some scholars have pursued the concept of a new type of leadership (Wassenaar & Pearce, 2012). This type of leadership is shared leadership. According

to Pearce and Conger (2003), shared leadership is “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both” (p. 1). This emphasis changed the focus from a hierarchical, top-down process of decision making by an individual to a more dynamic social process by the group in which making decisions involves all members of the group through rotation (Wassenaar & Pearce, 2012).

Wassenaar and Pearce (2012) have categorized three levels of outcomes from their literature review about shared leadership. These levels of outcomes are (a) individual level, (b) group/team level, and (c) organizational level. For individual-level outcomes, shared leadership enhances individual satisfaction and self-efficacy. Also, shared leadership is positively associated with team confidence, citizenship, and effectiveness for group/team-level outcomes. Finally, leadership can have great effect on organizational-level performance and financial outcomes (Wassenaar & Pearce, 2012).

DeRue (2011) criticized past and new leadership theories. From his point of view, leadership theories have focused on individuals, either leaders or followers, and not on the leadership process. He proposed an adaptive leadership theory to fulfill that missing part of the research (DeRue, 2011). Heifetz (1994) defined leadership from an activity perspective rather than personal characteristics or position of power. According to him, adaptive leadership was the:

Learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behaviors. The exposure and orchestration of conflict—internal contradictions—within individuals and constituencies provide leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways. (Heifetz, 1994, p. 22)



Randall and Coakley (2007) implemented Heifetz's (1994) adaptive leadership model on two case studies. Their findings suggested that the focus of leadership is not on individual leaders. It is rather on the process of paying attention to the needs and demands of the different groups or stakeholders of the academic organizations in order to sustain the organization in today's challenging academic environment (Randall & Coakley, 2007).

## **Power**

Leadership has often been connected to power from the perspective of influence. Cohen (1978) defined power as "the ability of one party of a relationship to influence the behavior of the other party" (p. 36). Bacon (2011) proposed a two-pronged model, each of which has five sources of power for leaders who seek to be effective and influential. The sources of power that were generated from personal traits and characteristics were: (a) knowledge power, (b) expressiveness/eloquence power, (c) relation/history power, (d) attraction power, and (e) character power. For organizational power, the sources were: (a) role power, (b) resource power, (c) information power, (d) network power, and (e) reputation power. The last resource of power Bacon proposed was will power. According to Bacon (2011), every source of power and influence can be a source of drain to a leader, too. He suggested that a leader's ability to lead and influence others is determined and increased through gaining one or more of these sources of power (Bacon, 2011).

Nye (2008) proposed the concept of hard and soft powers. Hard power is an approach leaders can use to achieve their goals through threats, inducement, and coercion. In contrast, soft power is an approach leaders can use to achieve their goals by attracting others. According to Nye (2008), hard and soft powers are connected and overlapping approaches that leaders might implement to change behaviors in order to achieve goals. He also suggested smart power as the

ability to use hard and soft powers effectively. He said leaders need to possess certain skills in order to succeed and use both hard and soft powers. They need to have critical skills such as emotional intelligence, communication, and vision. They also must have organizational skills, political skills, and contextual intelligence (knowing the culture and distribution of power resources in a group) (Nye, 2008).

According to Ridgeway (1992), power can be viewed in the sense of the ability to influence others. The dynamic of power lies in the relationships between the involved individuals, and not in the individuals themselves. Women and men may differ in accessing the same level of power and in using their power, although they may have equal positional power (Ridgeway, 1992). In her research, Ridgeway and her colleagues suggested that, on the individual level, gender affects power because of personal characteristics that distinguish men from women. Gender role influences power on the societal level where men and women's behavior differs based on the situation and their expected gender role in the society. The two genders generally behave based on their respective status in the society, where men possess higher status than women and exercise influence over them.

As a result of these three elements (the differing status between men and women, gender roles, and social expectations), men and women differ in leadership behaviors. Ridgeway reinforced these three elements in connection to Eagly's (1987) social-role theory. She discussed how organizations and occupations are gendered in the sense that men occupy certain occupations because of their gender. For example, men have more access to higher status and leadership positions in organizations because of their gender. Ridgeway and others went further in illustrating that men and women might have identical work; however, they occupy different

titles, and the advantaged titles belonged to men (Ridgeway, 2002, 1992; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

Yoder (2001) explained that leaders' effectiveness in masculine contexts is the result of power and hierarchy. Female leaders face double binds for lacking power as a result of their gender and social status, even though they occupy leadership positions and have the title. She indicated that understanding the relationship between power, status, and gender helps in understanding what female leaders face in masculine settings. Hence, she suggested that this understanding helps women themselves and their organizations to improve these women's situations in minimizing status difference. She addressed the significant role followers play when they understand the credentials of their female leaders (Yoder, 2001).

Carli (2002) proposed that women have a lower level of power and influence than men because of their gender status, especially the power and authority of expertise and legitimacy. People in organizations are more open to male leaders' influence than female leaders' influence. Male followers and subordinates tend to resist female leaders in order to maintain their gender power advantage. Even when female leaders gain some influence over their followers and subordinates, that type of influence is conditional depending on their use of leadership styles that confirm gender stereotypes (Carli, 2002).

Isaac, Behar-Horenstein, and Koro-Ljungberg (2009) interviewed ten female deans from male-dominant and female-dominant colleges; five deans were from each college. They used a feminist post-structuralist approach to deconstruct leadership and the hierarchical relationship between power and knowledge. They indicated that power was an interchangeable term with leadership. Moreover, they introduced the concept of *power over* and *power with*. The participants revealed their preference to use *power with* instead of *power over* since they viewed

leadership from the sense of influence and collaboration rather than authority and control. Some participants connected power with building networks and relationships.

These deans discussed the differences between men and women in using power. They also addressed the challenges they faced, especially those in male-dominant colleges and professions where they had to “survive” (p. 146). The deans working in female-dominant colleges suffered from stereotyping by being described as “male-like” (p. 146). Isaac et al. (2009) suggested that these deans revealed multiple identities depending on the various situations they faced. The complexities that these women faced included losing part of their power and that they were devalued when they either used the collaborative feminine style of leadership or chose a more masculine leadership style (Isaac, Behar-Horenstein, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2009).

### **Leadership Styles of Women and Men**

Some studies were concerned with leadership styles associated with the notion that gender affects leadership style (Pounder & Coleman, 2002). Eagly and her companions did various meta-analyses of previous studies concerning leadership style of the two genders. According to Eagly and Johnson (1990), the results of the meta-analysis of studies between 1961 and 1987, using student participants, suggested that leadership styles were affected by gender stereotypes. The researchers found that women’s leadership styles were democratic and interpersonally oriented, while men’s styles were autocratic and task oriented (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

A meta-analysis (Eagly, Karau, Miner, & Johnson, 1994) of studies concerned with managers’ motivation to manage in a hierarchical traditional style found that men were more competitive, assertive, aggressive, and authoritative than women. Also, women showed less

motivation to impose authority in decision-making scenarios through a command-control style (Eagly et al., 1994).

In Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Van Engen's (2003) meta-analysis, 45 studies were examined to compare the leadership styles of men and women leaders and managers mainly in education and business. For measurement, these studies used the scale of transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles. The comparisons revealed that male leaders were more transactional than women leaders where men implemented agentic styles. In contrast, women leaders were more transformational in the sense that they adopted a more communal, supportive style than men (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003).

Additionally, Eagly (2007) discussed the double bind female leaders encountered. On one hand, women leaders were expected to have a communal style of leadership based on their gender stereotypes and social roles. On the other hand, they were expected to behave in an agentic leadership style to fulfill their leadership role and be effective leaders. As a result, negative attitudes might limit female access to leadership positions, promote preserving the status quo, and increase evaluation biases against women when they gain access to leadership positions (Eagly, 2007).

## **Followership**

Until recently, research investigated leadership from a leader-centric lens (Brown, 2012). Followers were seen as passive components in organizational contexts, situations, or interactions. Within the last forty years, researchers have shifted their focus from leadership only, to include followership influence (Denmark, 1993). Avolio (2007) suggested that researchers should consider the role of followers to measure their leaders' successes, styles, or effectiveness.

According to Denmark (1993), leaders derive their power and “their status from their followers, who may choose to grant it or take it away” (p. 350). Although followers might be passive on certain occasions, they might influence their leaders through the support or objections they give (Kellerman, 2008). Leaders should pay attention to their followers’ needs since part of leaders’ accountability and evaluation is driven by their followers’ perceptions (Denmark, 1993).

In her book, *Followership: How Followers Are Creating Change and Changing Leaders*, Kellerman (2008) discussed leadership through the lens of the followers. She defined followers as “subordinates who have less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors” (p. 240). She focused on the rank and hierarchy between followers and their leaders, and the relationship between the two. She divided followership into individual and group levels, and into good and bad followers. She presented five types of followers based on the level of engagement: Isolaters, Bystanders, Participants, Activists, and Diehards.

Kellerman (2008) raised the question of why do followers follow their leaders. She provided three justifications: (a) the benefits and outcome of the leader’s decision were clear; (b) followers admired and liked their leaders; and (c) there were individual benefits and self-interest for each follower. On the group level, leaders provided their groups of followers with “structure and goal” to achieve and “with instruments of goal of achievement” (p. 59).

Kellerman’s goal (2008) in writing this book was to change followers’ reaction toward their rank, superiors, and situation, and not to empower or change their ranking in their organizations. She suggested that, although followers lack authority, they do not lack influence, which is something leaders should keep in mind. Followers could be part of change in supporting good leaders and preventing bad ones from fulfilling the leadership role (Kellerman, 2008).

### **Barriers to Women in Accessing Leadership Positions**

It is commonly acknowledged that in a male-dominated culture, professional women do not have equal access to leadership positions and related decision-making opportunities (Carli & Eagly, 2012). Yoder (2001) said “leadership itself is gendered” (p. 815). According to her, leadership carries male characteristics and when women access leadership positions, they struggle with their own gender stereotypes to fulfill that role. Additionally, she suggested that the process of leadership takes place in a gendered social setting. Women’s behaviors and decisions of being effective leaders, or not, depends on the context they are in (Yoder, 2001). Furthermore, there are distinctly discernible barriers to female professional development and advancement to such positions and roles of influence in the workforce (Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010; Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004).

Kuk (1994) discussed four elements concerned with gender-related leadership barriers: style, competence, commitment, and career advancement. According to her, organizations need to address these four barriers in leadership faced by women. Higher education institutions have to replace their old male-dominated culture to a new, more inclusive one in order to prosper in the constantly changing diverse demographics (Kuk, 1994).

The majority of studies examining barriers for women leaders have been conducted in Western cultures. The few studies looking at Saudi women leaders have been from the perspective of Saudi women themselves in a few disciplines (Al Munajjed, 1997; Al Munajjed, 2010; Al Tamimi, 2004; Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010; Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). The remainder of this section is an overview of barriers women face in accessing leadership positions. A small portion of these studies specifically looked at Saudi women leaders.

A barrier is defined as a characteristic, event, or phenomenon that hinders or controls access to the advancement of individuals or groups or both in an organization (Chliwniak, 1997). Barriers to access take many forms. In her review, Schwanke (2013) summarized the barriers that women face when seeking top leadership positions. She also discussed women's reaction toward those barriers by either: taking responsibility and blaming herself, by avoiding those leadership positions that women suffer from discrimination and prejudice, or by making sense of the inequality and justify its occurrence (Schwanke, 2013). Some barriers to accessing leadership positions that have been discussed by many researchers, including Schwanke (2013), and that women have confronted in the various fields, including higher education, consist of the following: (a) glass ceilings, (b) glass cliff, (c) gender stereotypes, (d) lack of professional networks, (e) lack of effective mentors, (f) family responsibilities, (g) institutional policies and culture, (h) male-dominated academic arenas, and (i) queen bee syndrome. These barriers are discussed in detail.

### **Glass Ceiling**

The first barrier that helps understanding the gender gap between men and women in accessing leadership positions is what is called the glass ceiling. The term glass ceiling refers to “artificial barriers in the workplace which have served to block the advancement of qualified women” (as defined by Former Senator Robert Dole in Jolls, 2002). Jolls (2002) described the existence of sex and gender discrimination against women in the modern workplace despite affirmative laws that prohibit such actions as a form of the glass ceiling (Goodman, Fields, & Blum, 2003; Jolls, 2002; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). The U.S. Department of Labor (1995) noted that glass ceilings exist as a result of societal barriers, organizational barriers, and governmental barriers. The extent to which glass ceilings bar access



for women to leadership positions frequently depends on the gender distribution among industries. Women are more likely to access top management and leadership positions in predominately female disciplines than in predominately male ones.

Although the glass ceiling is considered a barrier in the corporate world (Kantek & Gezer, 2010), the strength and invisibility of this barrier is evident for women around the globe in various fields, including higher education (Eagly & Karau, 2002; French & Raven, 1959; Gregory-Mina, 2012). Many professional women believe that the root of the glass ceiling is that most institutions and organizations were created by and for men, and are based on males' experiences (Grove & Montgomery, 2000; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Munoz, 2010; Pompper, 2011).

In many countries around the world, the glass ceiling concept is attributed to organizational, cultural, and social barriers that are exercised against women who attempt to access leadership and decision-making positions (Grove & Montgomery, 2000; Schipani, Dworkin, Kwolek-Folland, & Maurer, 2008). One element in maintaining the glass ceiling in accessing leadership positions is in hiring. Hiring often depends on the decision makers' perception of the appropriate candidate to fill the position rather than on the candidate's qualifications (U. S. Department of Labor, 1995). Leaders of organizations reproduce themselves through using their positional power to encourage and promote people who are like them (Grant, 1988).

According to Schmitt, Spoor, Danaher, and Branscombe (2009), the glass ceiling still happens as a result of the barriers to female advancement to leadership positions. Additionally, they suggest that the glass ceiling also occurs because these barriers are so invisible that people cannot acknowledge their presence in our modern time. They suggested a new form of glass

ceiling. They indicated that many organizations and even entire countries create gender egalitarianism due to two factors. The first factor was the result of women tokenism. In other words, nations and organizations use the few women who advance to leadership as a symbol of equal access to leadership even if there is not equal access. The second factor is that people compare the number of en leaders between the past and present, where it is shown as evidence of women's opportunity to leadership. They suggested that these factors play a very significant role, not only in the perception of people in organizations and societies, but also in discouraging women's motivation to support one another and for seeking equal access. They concluded that female tokenism and comparisons with the past might maintain the glass ceiling and interpreted women's advancement to leadership positions as gender egalitarian/equality (Barreto et al., 2009).

Isacc, Kaatz, and Canes (2012) reviewed some empirical studies in academic Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) through a critical lens of social role theory. They proposed a model of six levels of glass ceiling that women face in seeking or dealing with in leadership positions. According to them, the embedded barriers of glass ceiling and gender discrimination were: (a) agentic = success, (b) success  $\neq$  competence, (c) agentic  $\rightarrow$  reactive, (d) parenthood and self-selection, (e) stereotypic threats and identity safety, and (f) equality = greed. They described, agentic = success, as the society's preference of stereotypical male traits over female traits. Success  $\neq$  competence represented the stereotypical notion that men are more competent than women due to their gender abilities. For agentic  $\rightarrow$  reactive, although women who displayed agentic male traits were viewed as competent in leadership positions, they were also viewed as less likeable and hostile than men. Parenthood and self-selection demonstrated through women's self-selection of opting out of mobility to leadership

positions because of their motherhood requirements. The fifth barrier of the glass ceiling was stereotypic threat and identity safety.

According to Isacc et al. (2012), women in STEMM faced constant underestimation of their performance and aspiration. These researchers considered devaluing professional women as a threat due to the stereotypic views of lack of competence and being emotional. The last barrier of the glass ceiling was equality = greed, in the sense that men evaluate their abilities and performance greater than women. They concluded that women leaders faced many challenges. Stereotypical male characteristics were more valued in the society and organizations. It forced women to either adopt such male characteristics to fit in and their abilities appreciated, or to opt out and not seek leadership positions (Isaac et al., 2012).

Moreover, Insch, McIntyre, and Napier (2008) suggested that many organizations have created a second layer of glass ceiling against women in the global environment. Female leaders have less expatriate access to jobs and fewer international experiences in comparison to male leaders. They consider such lack of access to international leadership as a second layer of the glass ceiling and another form of gender bias that forces some women to change their behaviors in order to fit the expatriate international leadership stereotype (Insch, McIntyre, & Napier, 2008).

A study by Pai and Vaidya (2009) examined the existence of the glass ceiling in 257 corporation in Texas. They found that only two women (0.78%) were chief executive officers out of the total sample. They concluded that the glass ceiling still exists for women seeking leadership positions (Pai & Vaidya, 2009). The result of that study was in line with a literature review conducted by Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson (2012). They reviewed 27 manuscripts related to leadership, gender and nationality, where 46% of the articles were from the U.S. and

the remaining papers were from Austria, Brazil, China, Egypt, Georgia, India, Italy, Lebanon, Luxemburg, Nigeria, Sweden, Slovenia, Turkey, and the U.K.

Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson (2012) focused on five themes: (a) leadership characteristics, behavior, and style, (b) perception regarding leaders, their traits, and leadership styles, (c) women barriers toward leadership positions, (d) leadership outcome/results, and (e) the effect of research methods on leader evaluation. For the first theme, they found that women were less likely to move to leadership positions and that country of origin had little effect on this. They found for the second theme that nationality played a role on the perception of a successful leader and that gender stereotypes affected this perception, where successful leadership style was identified as masculine. For the third theme, they found evidence that women seeking leadership positions, regardless of their nationality, face various barriers such as, the glass ceiling, gender stereotypes, and gender discrimination. The results showed no difference between men and women on their managerial efficiency for the fourth theme. Finally, they concluded that evaluation measurements affected the perception of gender and leadership (Snaebjornsson & Edvardsson, 2012).

In Arab societies, regardless of women's positions in the public and private sectors, women are considered inferior and subordinates to men, even if he may have fewer qualifications (Hamdan, 2005). This scenario is strongly replicated in Saudi Arabian leadership positions, and the decision-making roles are predominantly male. Saudi men are in charge of running all sectors in the country, regardless of their qualifications; even though qualified, educated women are available, as well. The highest leadership position a Saudi woman can reach, especially in higher education, is serving as a deputy to her male counterparts. This form of glass ceiling created by the cultural perception of women's roles as assistants to men is

constraining their advancement and professional growth. Until this glass ceiling is unveiled, the status quo for Saudi women will remain the same (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Hamdan, 2005).

### **Glass Cliff**

The second barrier is the ‘glass cliff.’ The glass cliff is the concept of women being promoting to leadership positions when organizations and institutions are associated with a greater risk of failure (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). The authors found a tendency to appoint women to glass-cliff leadership positions in businesses, corporations, medicine, higher education, and in political and social activities. When the situation subsequently fails, accusations are made about, and the emphasis is placed on, women’s inability to succeed in leadership positions; women are frequently seen as “too emotional” to run leadership positions (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). This stereotypical misconception about women stresses the idea of their unsuitability to access and to gain leadership positions.

Moreover, Ryan and Haslam (2008) conducted three experimental studies. Sampling included female and male management graduates, high-school students, and business leaders for the first, second, and third studies, respectively. In the questionnaires, the participants were asked to select a suitable leader for a hypothetical organization when its performance was either successful or failing. In line with their hypotheses, results showed that women were more likely to be selected to leadership positions when the organization was failing. In contrast, men were more likely to be selected to leadership positions when the organization had no such risk. They concluded that the glass cliff phenomenon existed for women seeking leadership positions (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Additionally, through their archival and experimental investigations, Ryan, Haslam, and Kulich (2010) discovered that women in the political arena are more likely to

be selected as candidates to risky, hard-to-win seats. In contrast, men are more likely than women to be appointed to safe seats.

Regardless of the field within which women pursue leadership positions, they still have tremendous obstacles to overcome to prove their capabilities. Male leaders and decision makers, and even some women, will play the “gender card” to reinforce objections over women gaining power (Carli & Eagly, 2012). Saudi Arabia is no different. Women do not have that many opportunities to lead in the country except in the private sector. When Saudi women lead their own businesses and fail, the common perception of their failure is due to being woman. In Saudi Arabia, many believe that being a woman means being a follower, and women need to know their place (Al-Tamimi, 2004; AlMunajjed, 2010; Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010).

Over the years, Ryan and Haslam have continued to investigate with other researchers the concept of the glass cliff. In 2009, Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, Kulich and Wilson-Kovacs (2009), proposed a gender-stress-disidentification model. This model indicated that women are more likely to have access to risky and failing leadership positions. These female leaders experience risky positions and lack the support, resources, and networks, and are more likely to struggle from stress. As a result of their failing experiences, many disidentify themselves from their organizations and resign from the post, if not leaving the entire organization. The researchers concluded that creating healthy experiences when accessing leadership positions is as important as increasing the number of female leaders (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, Kulich, & Wilson-Kovacs, 2009).

### **Gender Stereotypes**

The third existing barrier that addresses the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, especially in the arena of higher education, is gender stereotypes. For years, some

leaders at institutions lacked faith in a woman's ability to lead. In addition, some women lacked faith in themselves to lead. The female style of leadership was viewed as ineffective because leadership often reflects male characteristics (Elmuti, Jia, & Davis, 2009; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Kloot, 2004; Tahiraj, 2010). These leaders did not appreciate the gender differences between men and women in many contexts, including leadership. If these women were selected to leadership positions, they were expected to act, to lead, and to perform like men in order to fit in and prove that they could do it (Kiamba, 2008; Still, 2006).

According to Ridgeway (2002), gender stereotypes establish men's superior position over women in a society and shape the unequal relationship between them. These stereotypes of men and women influence the hierarchical status of the two genders in a society. Not surprisingly, such status affects both one's performance and perceived status, which in this case is higher if they were men and lower if they were women (Cikara & Fiske, 2009; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). When women leaders try to exercise authority outside their gender stereotypes, they face negative reactions and lack support for their violation of gender stereotypes (Ridgeway, 2002; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Therefore, such stereotypes constrain women when they are interacting with men and force them to abide and behave by their own gender stereotypes and preconceptions (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

Eagly and Kuru (2002) suggested a role congruity theory that was an extension of Eagly's social roles theory (1987) where both men and women related to women's expected roles in the society. Later, Carli and Eagly (2012) proposed that possible discrimination and bias against professional women might take place when members of a society hold certain stereotypes that are in contrast with the actual characteristics of these women. These stereotypes can prevent women from achieving their goals because of the expected social roles they have to uphold.

Such environments, which often still exist today, require that women who gain leadership positions adapt to the male or masculine style of leadership to prove their accountability as leaders. Many studies emphasize this ‘think manager-think male’ syndrome. Many men and women strongly believe that for women to succeed in their advancement to leadership positions, they must think and act like men (Schein, Mueller, & Lituchy, 1996). In that sense, women suppress their own typically female behaviors to be suitable for leadership positions (Grant, 1988). When these women display their abilities as directive and assertive leaders, people often dislike them because their behavior does not match the stereotypical image. At the same time, people frequently “consider women unqualified because they lack the stereotypical directive and assertive qualities of good leaders” (Carli & Eagly, 2007, p. 128). As a result, women are faced with double standards where neither choice is appreciated and valued (Carli & Eagly, 2007).

Unfortunately, some studies have shown that many male faculty and colleagues consider women to be a burden. These men believe women are not as qualified as men, especially in medicine, science, technology, engineering, and math (Al-Tamimi, 2004; Moley & Lugg, 2009; Philips, 2000). While others assume men as leaders and women as followers in an organization (Barnett, 2007; U. S. Department of Labor, 1995). One reason for this representation of status and hierarchy was due to the concept of paternalism which is a form of stereotyping (Cikara & Fiske, 2009). Cikara and Fiske (2009) defined paternalism as the common belief shared by members in the society that men have more power than women and should take care of women. This type of stereotyping has allowed men to dominate women in societies and organizations for centuries. Additionally, it perpetuated the higher status possessed by men over women in offering help and protection to women as subordinates (Cikara & Fiske, 2009).



In their research, Hult, Callister, and Sullivan (2005) interviewed 42 current and former female faculty members and 40 male faculty members in science, engineering, and technology colleges about their job satisfaction. The purpose of their study was to discover whether the attitudes of the men differed from those of the women. They found no significant difference between males and females regarding the source of career success and job satisfaction at a university. However, there was significant difference between men and women faculty in four categories of obstacles to success and sources of dissatisfaction.

According to Hult et al.'s (2005) results, female faculty members were more likely to report: (a) negative interactions with colleagues; (b) negative experiences with the process of evaluation, promotion, and tenure; (c) difficulty in balancing work and family life; and (d) overwhelming workloads. These factors were interconnected in that female faculty members typically advise more students and were involved on more committees than male faculty members; but neither of these activities was highly valued for promotion and tenure. Female faculty reported that they felt left out of the collaborations and informal networks of the male faculty, and they received little or no mentoring. All of these barriers and factors negatively impacted their promotion and tenure, as well as the stereotypical gender schemas that continue to affect the expectations of male and female roles in academia (Hult, Callister, & Sullivan, 2005).

In addition, Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) conducted a meta-analysis of previous studies to that point. In their research, they compared the evaluation of male and female leaders. They found that female leaders generally got lower performance evaluations than male leaders. They indicated that these discriminatory evaluations were the result of the stereotypes ascribed to both genders (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992).

These findings were in line with another meta-analysis that Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, and Ristikari (2011) completed, which reflected three paradigms: Schein's (1973) think manager–think male paradigm, Powell and Butterfield's (1979) agency–communion paradigm, and Shinar's (1975) masculinity–femininity paradigm. The results revealed that even though the association between leadership and masculinity has decreased over time, leaders are still considered to be stereotypically masculine. They concluded:

The implications of the masculinity of leader roles for prejudice against female leaders are straightforward: Men fit cultural construal of leadership better than women do and thus have better access to leader roles and face fewer challenges in becoming successful in them. (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011, p. 637)

### **Lack of Professional Networks**

The fourth barrier women face when seeking leadership positions and opportunities relates to access to networks. Some researchers argue that one major barrier to women's advancement to leadership positions is the lack of professional networks (Grove & Montgomery, 2000; Palepu & Herbert, 2002; Schipani et al., 2008; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012; Yedidia & Bickel, 2001). A professional network is a “constellation of developmental relationships that function in various ways but contribute to positive career outcomes” (Schipani et al., 2008, p. 16).

According to Shanmugam, Amaratunga, and Haigh (2008), by looking at various disciplines, and especially higher education, the college presidency is primarily a male-dominated arena. The authors thought this was because men had greater opportunities to build their own professional networks, and thus create access to promotion to leadership positions and sponsorship. Alternatively, most female faculty on their journey to leadership positions are excluded from the different types of networks (Shanmugam, Amaratunga, & Haigh, 2008). Female faculty have to break through the one-gendered pool to reach the top, which can be truly

hard, especially in male-dominated departments such as engineering, science, technology, and math. Hence, the journey for women is more difficult when they try to navigate that path (Brown, 2005; Carli & Eagly, 2012; Rockenstein, 2004).

Research by Munoz (2010) has reinforced previous studies in relation to Latina community college leaders. The participants in her study indicated that the absence of networks for women was monumental. However, the opposite was true for men. They had numerous opportunities to develop networking systems.

Saudi women have the same problem in lacking access to professional networks. They are excluded from the large professional networks that are dominated by men especially because many public sectors, such as primary and higher education, in the country are segregated (AlMohamed, 2008). This segregation adds another layer to the barrier. Because of this segregation, Saudi women are challenged to prove themselves to their male superiors. For example, the dean of the female campus mainly must get approval from the dean of the male campus on major and critical decisions. These decision-making administrative processes take a long time, cost money, and consume energy. To overcome these barriers, a large number of changes such as equal access to leadership, training, and networking should take place countrywide (Al-Tamimi, 2004; AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010).

### **Lack of Effective Mentors**

The fifth barrier in the literature is the lack of effective mentors to women who seek or gain leadership and decision-making positions. In many qualitative and quantitative studies (Al-Tamimi, 2004; Anyaso, 2008; Kloot, 2004; Munoz, 2010; Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012), female leaders who achieved leadership positions in business, law, medicine, politics, and higher-education arenas frequently expressed their disappointment over the lack of

mentoring. These women emphasized that they had to navigate their own way to top leadership positions.

According to Schipani et al. (2008), lack of mentoring opportunities contributes to the underrepresentation of women in business leadership positions. Additionally, they noted a positive relationship between mentors and mentees. They found the presence of effective mentors in individuals' careers can enhance their abilities, provide greater job satisfaction and promotion, increase self-confidence, and provide inside information and networks (Schipani et al., 2008).

Selmer and Leung (2003) surveyed 309 Western male leaders and 79 Western female leaders in Hong Kong about their career-development activities and the mentoring that they received. Their results indicated that women received fewer career-development activities and less mentoring than men. Hence, organizations might unintentionally deprive women through this lack of access to mentoring and career-development activities (Selmer & Leung, 2003).

Furthermore, Brown (2005) surveyed female college presidents to assess the effectiveness of mentoring on these female leaders. More than half (56%) replied that they received mentoring and were willing to play that role to other women who sought access to leadership positions. These college presidents emphasized the important role that mentoring played in their career development.

These studies show that access to effective mentors is a key to female advancement to leadership. The lack of mentoring can hinder women's progress and can divert their time and energy away from leadership positions (Grove & Montgomery, 2000). The situation in Saudi Arabia is complicated. Women can interact only with female mentors, which is helpful in a certain way, but contributes to the lack of larger networking discussed in the previous section.

Female mentors provide valuable information; however, most of the time this information can be a source of help only in a female setting, including higher-education networks (Schipani et al., 2008). This type of mentoring does not intersect the larger setting that is dominated by men. Only when there is greater interaction and appreciation of what both genders bring to the table will there be movement toward professional equity and equality (Carli & Eagly, 2012).

### **Family Responsibilities**

The sixth main barrier that affects women's participation in the workforce generally, and in leadership positions particularly, is taking care of the family. This is especially challenging when women have young children. Many studies have addressed the issue of balancing personal life, children, and job requirements, especially for female leaders. Research has found that organizations and institutions lack support for employees with family responsibilities (Carli & Eagly, 2012; Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2005; Growe & Montgomery, 2000; Guillaume & Pochic, 2009; Liff & Ward, 2001; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004; Zemsky, 2001).

In addition, many women have expressed their concern about the lack of organizational support, information, and policies for their parental role. They also have emphasized their fear to request arrangements that suit their needs and family obligations for fear of losing promotion opportunities to leadership positions. In contrast, male leaders tend to criticize women who try to balance family and work life. They believe that women with children are responsible for their own failure to reach leadership positions because, according to these men, such positions demand childless lives (Liff & Ward, 2001). Moreover, female faculty with children receive less research funding and institutional support than their male counterparts with children (Palepu & Herbert, 2002). Women are more likely to be restricted geographically by their partners'

profession, while that situation rarely occurs for men (Tesch, Wood, Hewling, & Nattinger, 1995).

The barrier of family responsibilities is considered one of the most challenging barriers that women face. Nearly four women out of ten leave the workforce for their family requirements. However, only one man in ten does the same. Additionally, 20% of female professionals are not enrolled in the workforce because of their parental responsibilities; only 5% of men are acting similarly. Approximately, 12% of women choose not to have children to avoid this barrier and advance professionally, compared to only 1% of men (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007).

Furthermore, Schueller-Weidekamm and Kautzky-Willer (2012) interviewed eight female leaders in the medical system in Austria. The focus of the study was about career advancement, female leadership's strengths and weaknesses, and work-life balance. They found that the glass ceiling existed for these women and that gender roles maintained gender discrimination in the medical system. Also, the participants indicated that childcare and education and familial responsibilities were the main barriers to access leadership positions, and was time consuming for those at the top. Female leaders added that lack of mentors and networking also hindered them. They suggested that providing mentors and coaching programs could contribute to work-life balance for these women (Schueller-Weidekamm & Kautzky-Willer, 2012).

According to Carli and Eagly (2012), although men have a greater share of participation in family responsibilities nowadays, women still devote more time to childcare and domestic chores. Women cannot opt out of these responsibilities because they are obligated to perform them whether or not they have a job. Their family responsibilities are typically assigned to their gender by social and cultural norms (Carli & Eagly, 2012).

Although job opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia have expanded, women's roles in the family and beyond typically have not changed. The traditional role of Saudi women is to take care of family work, including raising children and doing household chores; men have less burden in comparison to their female partners in this regard (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Doumato, 1992). The traditional male role of providing money for the family is also perceived as more significant and prestigious (Schipani et al., 2008; Winn, 2004).

### **Institutional Policies and Culture**

Institutional policies and culture makes the seventh barrier. Many studies have addressed the institutional culture that steers organizations' vision, members, and performance (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Liff & Ward, 2001; Marshall, 1996; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Stelter, 2002; U. S. Department of Labor, 1995). These researchers indicate that for women to be promoted and obtain leadership positions, they need to adapt to the male-dominant culture. To demonstrate their ambitions and commitment to work and the organization, women are expected to make the "right choices" in dedicating their time to their work rather than being concerned with their own families and children (Carli & Eagly, 2012).

Chliwaniak (1997) indicated that a gender gap exists in higher education. She argued that gatekeepers and members of higher-education institutions are practicing and reproducing the status quo as a legitimate institutional goal. She added that this gap and status quo reflect a male-dominant set of norms; however, it is possible to pursue the change women desire. As Cumming (1985) suggested, leadership is equated to power, and unless women become more effective power users in higher education, academia will remain a male-dominated system (Leonard & Sigall, 1989).

Chesterman, Ross-Smith, and Peters (2005) interviewed 50 females and 31 males in leadership positions that were deans, directors, or vice chancellors from five Australian universities. The purpose of their study was to identify the attitudes and experiences of women who avoided leadership positions, the associated institutional policies that were implemented relative to family and work policies, and the existing culture for supporting these women in leadership positions. The researchers found that the unwillingness of these women to pursue higher leadership positions was an outcome of discriminatory policies of promotion. In addition, the researchers recognized some common issues for these women, such as: lack of confidence in their abilities, reticence as a result of not being able to get the post, ambivalence around valuing teaching and research more than leadership roles, challenges in balancing work requirements with personal life, and resistance as a result of the increase in on-demand administrative duties (Chesterman et al., 2005).

One reason for the inequity within organizations is that many male leaders hold a certain perspective about women's role as leaders. These men assume that women succeed in leadership positions only when they behave and hold male characteristics (Adler, 1994; Billing, 2011; Kloot, 2004; Tomàs, Lavie, del Mar Duran, & Guillaumon, 2010). Organizations that adopt this perspective evaluate and measure women's performance accordingly (Adler, 1994; Servon & Visser, 2011). Such assumptions force women to assimilate as men in order to be taken seriously and to succeed professionally. Women are forced to dress, think, and behave like men to be seen as successful (Carli & Eagly, 2012).

Women in medicine, including Saudi women, are no better off than women in other disciplines. They have limited access to leadership positions because most of the decision makers are men, and male leaders prefer their own gender in positions of leadership (Reed &



Buddeberg-Fischer, 2001). The institutional culture of medicine reinforces such attitudes toward women in leadership selection. According to Al-Tamimi (2004), Saudi male medical faculty considers their female counterparts as a “burden” and as unproductive members, both professionally and academically. These men believe that they are superior and their cognitive abilities are better than women’s in decision-making situations (Al-Tamimi, 2004). Such beliefs play a major role in women’s limited access to leadership positions. These beliefs force women to adopt the think manager–think male syndrome to fit into such environments (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2008; Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Schein, 2001), or to discard their own ambitions and seek alternative job opportunities (Kloot, 2004).

Ahmed (2011) surveyed 264 registered and unregistered Saudi businesswomen from different parts of Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study indicate that unclear policies, gender and social constraints, and governmental restrictions toward businesswomen were the main barriers these Saudi women encountered as a result of their gender (Ahmad, 2011). Additionally, Sadi and Al-Ghazali (2010) have indicated that Saudi businesswomen face additional barriers related to institutional policies and culture. These are: lack of governmental policies, lack of coordination between the various governmental departments, lack of protective laws, and cultural and social restrictions.

Since women hold less status than men in society and the workplace, many organization and institutions construct policies and culture that perpetuate this status for women (Eagly, 1987; Sabattini & Crosby, 2009). Such institutional policies and culture force female leaders to either speak out or to be passive. Meanwhile, the voices of these women challenge the traditional institutional culture imposed upon them. And, either option, being silenced or heard, still could harm these female leaders (Chan, 2010). Sabattini and Crosby (2009) suggested that

organizations and institutions should implement flexible work-life and family-friendly policies to decrease the gender gap in leadership positions. They proposed: utilizing technologies, career flexibility, work-life programs, leadership support, managers' and employees' training, implementing governmental initiatives, and changing the culture to be more inclusive and supportive (Sabattini & Crosby, 2009).

### **Male-Dominated Academic Arenas**

The last barrier discussed in this literature review is the domination of academic arenas by men. For decades, men have dominated certain academic fields, while women lacked expertise in those fields. On the other side of the issue, some studies suggested that women dominate specific disciplines and job categories typically viewed as feminine. For instance, the University of Kentucky Senate Council (1991) investigated the disciplines and job categories in which women at their university held jobs in the early 1990s. They reported that women dominated only a few disciplines and job categories in relation to their male counterparts. For example, women constituted the majority of the faculty in two of the three academic departments in the College of Home Economics. Women held all faculty positions in the College of Nursing. Women represented 66% of the faculty in the library. More than nine out of ten secretarial and clerical workers were women. In addition, ninety-six percent of the departments with hourly staff had no male hourly staff employees (University of Kentucky, 1991, August 16).

That study illustrated the numerous traditional positions women have held and continue to hold in higher education. In contrast, there are often extremely male-dominated discipline areas such as math, science, medicine, technology, and engineering. The real problem that decision makers in higher education face evolves when colleges look to promote faculty to leadership positions. Frequently, they have to select from academic areas composed primarily of male

candidates because too few women are there. This narrow-minded perception of the suitability of men and women to access leadership positions is the result of two factors: (a) cultural norms, and (b) the profile of a specific industry or discipline in which that discipline is perceived as “masculine” or “feminine” (Bilimoria, Joy, & Liang, 2008; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

For example, Lawrence Summers, the president of Harvard University gave a speech in January 2005. He indicated that women’s underrepresentation in science and math was due to the sex differences of their inherited cognitive abilities (as cited in Zhang, Schmader, & Forbes, 2009). Ryan et al. (2009) also referred to his speech as he said that women’s lack of advancement to leadership positions in those disciplines was due to their lower commitment than men to the post (as cited in Ryan et al., 2009). His limited perception of women’s abilities in accessing and achieving leadership positions in STEM reflect the stereotypes many people believe and behave upon. These stereotypes are deeply rooted in many societies about the natural abilities and innate competence of the two genders. It forces many young women to shy away from male-dominated disciplines and careers to avoid experiencing unjustified discrimination due only to their gender (Zhang et al., 2009).

### **Queen Bee Syndrome**

An additional barrier that should be acknowledged is called the ‘queen bee syndrome.’ Queen bee refers to the desire of successful women, especially in male dominated fields, to oppose other women’s advancement to leadership positions in the same organization. These queen bees do not want to share the glory because they want to be special and appreciated as one-of-a-kind females in their organizations (Cikara & Fiske, 2009).

According to Staines, Tavis, and Jayaratne (1974), queen bee syndrome is a result of the hard work of professional women in a man’s world. These women viewed that if they were able

to do it and reach the top, other women could do it also. To them, there was no discrimination against women from male superiors and colleagues and/or organizations. As a result these queen bees identify themselves with men more than their own gender. Staines et al. (1974) suggested three reasons for queen bees' existence: (a) co-optation, where queen bees assimilated and did not threaten the system that advanced them; (b) excluding the competition, where they try to be the only successful woman in order to preserve their uniqueness; and (c) system rewards, where they were rewarded for looking like women and thinking and acting like men (Staines, Tavis, & Jayaratne, 1974).

In her book, *The invisible woman: Discrimination in the academic profession*, Abramson (1975) discussed the discriminations that professional women face in academia. According to her, one type of discrimination against women was due to the queen bee syndrome. She suggested that women in leadership positions were trapped in the male-dominant culture of their organization. These women rejected other women who failed to demonstrate male-like behaviors like assertiveness and intellectuality. According to these female leaders, since they made it to the top, any woman who could not reach the top or exhibit characteristics for it, then, did not deserve to access leadership positions. As a result, those women viewed as weak did not gain the queen bee's support. In this way, queen bees also mistreated women in academia (Abramson, 1975).

Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, and de Groot (2011) surveyed 63 Dutch female leaders in the police force. They were allocated to either an aware gender-bias group or a non-aware condition group to recollect gender-bias experiences. They administered thirty items to measure queen-bee behaviors in relation to gender identification and gender bias in the workplace. They found that gender bias fueled queen-bee behavior among female leaders with low gender identification in the workplace. These women indicated that they behaved masculine and viewed themselves as

different from their female colleagues, and they underestimated the existence of gender bias in the workplace. On the contrary, women with high gender identification motivated their female subordinates, especially when reminded of gender bias. The researchers argued that the existence of queen bee syndrome was the outcome of successful female leaders in male-dominated organizations to perpetuate gender bias against other women since they identify themselves as more masculine than feminine. This led women to be their own worst enemies, and that competition between women was considered to be a significant barrier to accessing leadership positions (Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, & de Groot, 2011).

The above study supported the findings of another study by the same authors. They recruited 94 women in leadership positions in the Netherlands to answer an online survey. Their results implied that queen bee syndrome was the result of gender discrimination against women when seeking leadership positions. These queen bees experienced gender stereotypes against them during their early way up to leadership. Their social identity was threatened in their male-culture organizations and they had to have *masculine self-presentation* in order to fit in and succeed to leadership positions. As a result, these women leaders became queen bees to the advancement of other women when they viewed them as feminine and less masculine (Derks, Ellemers, van Laar, & de Groot, 2011).

Buchanan, Warning, and Tett (2012) investigated the views of subordinates toward their female leaders, especially by other women. The findings suggested that women subordinates favored women leaders in the beginning of their careers as well as men. However, female subordinates changed their views to more negative ones when they became more experienced and as their female managers got older. Therefore, female subordinates became less preferable of having a female boss over time. The results indicated that this prejudice related to gender and

age was stronger in women than in men. It implied the possibility of male subordinates getting the message of gender diversity in leadership better than women (Buchanan, Warning, & Tett, 2012).

Sheppard and Aquino (2013) recruited 152 adults (47% women and 53% men) from Amazon.com's online participant pool. Each participant was randomly assigned to read one of three scenarios about workplace conflict involving: two women, two men, or one woman and one man. The content of all scenarios was identical. Only the names of the characters involved differed from one condition to the other. Participants viewed female-female conflict as more problematic than male-male and male-female conflicts. This suggested that participants perceived women to be less productive and supportive when working together (Sheppard & Aquino, 2013).

On the other hand, some studies criticized solidarity behaviors—women view other women as their natural allies and/or queen bee syndrome. Researchers implied that solidarity behaviors and queen bee syndrome created some expectations for women in leadership that they might not fulfill. As a result, negative views blamed only women leaders ignoring the reality of these women in working in male-culture organizations (Korabik & Abbondanza, 2004; Mavin, 2006a; Mavin, 2006b; Mavin, 2008).

Furthermore, Carlson (2013) pointed out two views about the reality of women working with women. The first view was related to the existence of the queen bee syndrome. On the contrary, the second view was related to women being supportive of one another and mentoring new talents. She based her discussion on the result of a Catalyst report (Carlson, 2013). According to Lang (2012), president and CEO of Catalyst, the report's results showed that 65% of women who received mentoring played that role for new talents, compared to 56% of men.

Also, 75% of those women were developing other women, compared to 30% of men. Additionally, 64% of those at the leadership positions were mentoring other women. She concluded that such results demolish the idea of the queen bee and that women are not supportive of other women. While the phenomenon may sometimes occur, overall, women are willing to support and mentor other women to leadership (Lang, 2012, June).

### **Conceptual Framework**

To understand the dynamics of gender interactions, this study uses Eagly's (1987) social role theory and her research on gender stereotypes (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 1982; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Koenig et al., 2011). According to Eagly's (1987) theory, gender/sex differences are a "product of the social roles that regulate behavior in adult life" (p. 7). This theory states that the differences between men and women in their behaviors are a result of the different roles the two genders play according to the expectations held by their society (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000).

As a result of this theory, gender roles are the common beliefs that individuals in a society hold and behave accordingly, based on their social identity. The social-role theory illustrates the common gender stereotypes society holds that organize male and female roles. It explains the differences in their behaviors and the division of labor based on stereotypes that are defined as "a set of attributes ascribed to a group and imputed to its individual members simply because they belong to that group" (Heilman, 1983, p. 271).

One notion of Eagly's social role theory and gender stereotypes emphasizes that men are agentic and women are communal. The communal aspect of the gender stereotype in social role theory is that women are believed to be emotional, helpful, affectionate, kind, sympathetic, and concerned with the welfare of others. In contrast, the agentic aspect of the gender stereotype is

that men are believed to be assertive, controlling, forceful, aggressive, ambitious, direct, and independent from other people. These gender-stereotypic aspects divide male and female roles in work and family and are responsible for the differences in their behaviors (Eagly, 1987).

Another notion of this theory is that men and women occupy certain professions according to these gender-stereotypic views. For example, men are more likely than women to occupy roles in military and athletics, construction, business, engineering, and other jobs that demand assertiveness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and physical strength (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Steffen, 1986). On the contrary, women are more likely than men to occupy jobs that require collaboration, helpfulness, and nurturing, such as teaching, nursing, and assistance (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Steffen, 1984).

Eagly's (1987) social role theory suggests that women and men have differential status in society because of their social roles. Men tend to occupy high status in the hierarchy at work and in the family. Therefore, a husband's common stereotypic role has the most power and decision-making authority in family affairs. In contrast, a wife's general role is to carry out domestic chores and childcare, which carries lower status. This division within family boundaries is transferred to the workplace. Men are likely to occupy higher status, with more power, advancement, and influence than women. These gender-stereotypic roles of men and women perpetuate the unequal access to, distribution of, and progression to, power and leadership positions (Eagly, 1987).

Eagly's social role theory evolved through her collaborative work with Karau in developing role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Eagly and Karau (2002) proposed that role congruity theory extended beyond social role theory in the sense of congruity between gender roles and leadership roles to reach the form of prejudice against women. They suggested



that women leaders face two types of prejudice due to the incongruity of women's gender role and the expected leadership role. The first type of prejudice is related to perceiving potential women leaders to be less promising than men due to their stereotypical gender roles, where the leadership role is perceived as masculine-stereotypical traits. The second type occurred through evaluating actual female leaders to be more successful in carrying out their leadership roles as a result of the incongruity between their expected gender role and leadership role. Eagly and Karau (2002) indicated that these two types of prejudice against women created a culture of less access to leadership positions and more obstacles to overcome in order to succeed in leadership roles for women.

Eagly and Sczesny (2009) went further by arguing that the gains and shortcomings that female leaders tackle is manifested in the similarities and differences between the cultural stereotypes of women, men, and leaders. According to them, male and female stereotypes are derived from their own gender. As a result, cultural stereotypes have created two forms of cultural expectations. The first form of expectation is about actual traits of each group, which were called descriptive beliefs. The second form relates to the expectations about what the members of a group have to be like. This form was called perspective beliefs.

These stereotypical beliefs and expectations play a significant role in the society because people carry them, and behave according to them, regardless of the social or organizational contexts. Eagly and Sczesny (2009) suggested that women face a double bind challenge because there is contradiction between their gender stereotypes and social expectations and the stereotypes about leaders. Therefore, women encounter prejudice related to this mismatch between descriptive and perspective beliefs. This prejudice affects women's promotion and access to leadership positions and women leaders' evaluations as effective leaders. Although

Eagly and Sczesny (2009) indicated that there is climate change toward female leaders due to change in leadership stereotypes; still, this change is so minor, especially in male dominated fields, that it continues to perpetuate and hinder women's access to leadership positions (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009).

### Overview of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is located in the Middle East and occupies about 80% of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia has a total of 4,431 kilometers of borders with Iraq and Jordan from the north; United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar from the east; Oman and Yemen from the south; and the Red Sea from the west (see Figure 2) (Library of Congress, 2006; World Atlas).



**Figure 2:** Map of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia was established by King Abdulaziz Al-Saud in 1932. The official language is Arabic, but many Saudis speak English as a second language for educational and commercial

purposes in several sectors of the country (Library of Congress, 2006). Saudi Arabia has a significant role in the entire Islamic world. It contains the two holy cities for Muslims, Makkah (Mecca in Figure 2) and Al Madina (Medina in Figure 2) (Shoult, 2006). Therefore, Islam plays an important role in shaping the everyday life of the entire country (Fallatah, 2012).

The population consists of 69% Saudi citizens and 31% foreigners, and stands at 27,136,977. Male Saudis make up 50.9% of the Saudi population, while female Saudis equal 49.1% (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). The ethnic groups are divided into 90% Arab and 10% Afro-Asian. Islam is the only religion allowed in Saudi.

## **Culture**

Culture is defined as a “set of shared values that are held by members of a collectivity” (Den Hartog & Dickson, 2012, p. 421). According to Den Hartog and Dickson (2012), the cultures of developing countries tend to have highly collectivistic features among their citizens. Relationships among the members of the family, relatives, tribes, and citizens, and networking and connections play significant roles in the culture of these developing countries. Such relationships are considered:

More important than rules and procedures in virtually every aspect of social, political, and economic life of these countries, which sometimes leads to favoritism among in-group members—including relatives, friends, and members of one’s own ethnic or religious group—and to discrimination against and alienation of out-group members. (Den Hartog & Dickson, 2012, p. 413)

As a developing country, Saudi Arabia has a collective culture in which relationships and connections are very important in steering people interactions in all sectors of the society. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is a male-dominant culture (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010). Saudi Arabia is a “proud, closed, and extended family-oriented society” (Long, 2005, p. 37).

## **Primary and Higher Education**

Since its establishment, and especially after the discovery of oil in 1935, Saudi Arabia has witnessed tremendous cultural, social, educational, and economic developments under the five royal kings of Al-Saud (AlMunajjed, 1997; Long, 2005). Some public and private schools have been formalized since the mid-1930s. The Ministry of Education was established in 1953 (Ministry of Education, 2012). In that era, only male students had access to education (AlMunajjed, 1997), where the school structure offered six years of elementary and five years of secondary schooling (Rugh, 2002). However, in 1958, the government changed the structure to six years of elementary, three years of intermediate (middle), and three years of secondary (high) schooling, followed by higher education (Rugh, 2002).

In 1960, King Faisal introduced public primary education for girls through the establishment of the General Presidency of Girls' Education (Rugh, 2002). In the beginning of girls' education, schools and curricula were concerned with teaching religion and domestic roles. The first public university in Saudi Arabia was the University of Riyadh, founded in 1975. Female students were enrolled as external students in the fields of art and commerce in order to fulfill their social role. The University of King Abdulaziz was established in 1967 as a private university in Jeddah, in the western region of Saudi Arabia. After one year of its establishment, female students were able to enroll (AlMunajjed, 1997).

The Saudi government has emphasized the role of education in developing the country through providing "education for all" and devoting a large amount of the annual budget for education (Rugh, 2002, p. 41). For the academic year 2012–13, primary and higher education received approximately \$45,000,000, which comprises almost 25% of the entire annual fiscal budget (AlMohandes, 2012, January 13). Therefore, the total number of students enrolled in

kindergarten, elementary, intermediate, secondary, special education, and adult education (illiterate) schools across the country was 5,146,165 (Ministry of Education, 2010/2011). The total number of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled was 1,021,288 for public and private higher-education institutions for the academic year 2010–2011 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010/2011).

Today, there are 32 public and 28 private universities and colleges in Saudi Arabia. Male and female students have equal access to higher education in the country (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010/2011). Some public universities have many branches across the country (Rugh, 2002). Because of religious and cultural practices, the Saudi government provides separate campuses for male and female students wanting to pursue their higher education. Coeducation is restricted to certain specializations, such as medicine.

Although Saudi women today can pursue many specializations that are offered, female students are still restricted to certain specializations according to the traditional view of their role in the society. However, new efforts by some public and mainly private universities and colleges have established new departments and disciplines such as law, engineering, interior design, journalism, and archaeology for female students (Profanter, Cate, MaestriI, Piacentini, & AlFassi, 2010). Many Saudi women consider education as a stage of their development toward personal autonomy, self-esteem and self-confidence, and empowerment.

### **Work Opportunities**

Saudi female graduates have made the greatest progress in the field of education in Saudi Arabia. Work opportunities for Saudi women with higher-education degrees are mainly in the fields of education, higher education, medicine, nursing, banking, and business (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Rugh, 2002).

In June 2004, the third Saudi national dialogue addressed women's rights and duties in Saudi society (Le Renard, 2008). In this cycle of the Saudi government holding many national dialogues, the dialogue included discussions regarding women's rights and responsibilities, women and work, women and education, and women and society. The participants were educated, professional Saudi women leaders in many arenas. Despite the lack of progress and tangible outcomes, this dialogue gave these women the chance to discuss their own issues publicly (Le Renard, 2008).

Nonetheless, according to a Saudi female professor, Hatoon AlFassi, in her introduction in *Saudi Arabia and Women in Higher Education and Cultural Dialogue: New Perspectives* (with an introduction by Hatoon AlFassi; Crissma working paper):

Leadership positions remain in the hands of men. Financial decisions remain in the hand of men. Opportunities in education and career advancement are wide open to men and limited to women. Discrimination against women as a student, staff, and faculty is still widely practiced through the regulations and institutional interpretations. (Profanter et al., 2010, p. 19)

### **Summary**

Many previous studies about leadership and the barriers that women face in accessing leadership positions were discussed in this chapter. One noticeable element in reviewing the barriers that women face in their access to leadership positions was that these barriers overlap with one another. Women may encounter more than one barrier during their pursuit of leadership positions. Although women have gained some success in terms of their access to leadership positions in various arenas, including higher education, they are still underrepresented and underpaid in comparison to men.

In Saudi Arabia, the situation for women seeking leadership opportunities is similar to women worldwide, but perhaps even more challenging due to religious and cultural norms. This

chapter also provided an overview of Saudi Arabia's culture, primary and higher education, and work opportunities. Eagly's (1987) social role theory was presented as a framework to the current study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the stories of Saudi women leaders regarding their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education. In addition, this study sought to offer Saudi women leaders the opportunity to talk about their social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in their efforts to access leadership positions in higher education. The guiding research questions were:

- I. What were the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education?
- II. What social roles and gender stereotypes were these women leaders expected to uphold in the workplace?

This chapter describes the research method chosen for this study. It discusses the rationale of choosing qualitative research and the qualitative method of narrative inquiry to conduct this research. In addition, this chapter explains the selection of participants, the data collection procedures, data analysis process, and the trustworthiness of this study.

### **Methodological Approach and Rationale**

According to Creswell (2008) and Merriam (2002), the investigated problem plays a major role in the selection of the type of research. To answer the research questions of this research, qualitative inquiry was chosen as the most suitable methodological approach. Qualitative inquiry aims to understand the socially constructed meaning for individuals when they interact with the world (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, the focus of this project was on people's lived experiences, how they viewed the world, and how they interpreted and made sense of their lives (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) said, "Questions of meaning, understanding, and process were appropriate for qualitative research" (Merriam, 2002, p. 19). Because this



qualitative study sought to understand the stories of Saudi women regarding their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education, and the expected social role and gender stereotypes they fulfill, narrative inquiry was the suitable approach.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

One main characteristic of narrative inquiry is storytelling as a mean of investigation (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2002; Riessman, 2008). Merriam (2002) stated, “The story is a basic communicative and meaning-making device pervasive in human experience ... as a source of understanding the human condition” (Merriam, 2002, p. 286). Narrative inquiry encourages individuals to tell their stories about their lived experiences (Merriam, 2002; Riessman, 2008). The narrators play the role of storytellers in inviting the audience to their own worlds (Riessman, 2008). Hence, the involvement of the researcher exceeds the investigator’s position of merely collecting answers to questions, to a more cooperative position of listening and making sense of the experiences of the storyteller or narrator (Riessman, 2008). Additionally, the storytelling process is the result of multiple levels of reconstructions (Riessman, 1993). These levels include: the participants’ recollection of their experiences; the researchers’ transcriptions, analyses, and interpretations of the experiences; and the readers’ reaction to the entire story (Riessman, 1993).

This approach also creates a three-dimensional space in which the interaction between the personal and social life of an individual, and the continuousness of a person’s past, present, and future are all connected with place, or the situation of these individuals (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In other words, the stories of these Saudi female leaders shed light on their past and present experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education and the continuous process into their future.

## **Participants**

Although there are many ways to conduct sampling, purposeful sampling was used to meet the objectives of this study. Two types of purposeful sampling were applied: convenience and snowball (Creswell, 2008, 2009). For convenience sampling, participants were willing and available to share their lived stories (Creswell, 2008). Snowball sampling was also utilized by asking some participants to recommend other individuals for the study (Creswell, 2008).

The participants were six Saudi professional women who have been working in higher education in administrative and academic leadership roles for at least two years. Three were found by convenience sampling, and three were found by snowball sampling. These leaders were deputy head of a department and/or college deans for at least two years at the time of the study. They were willing to share their stories and lived experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education, and the social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in the workplace. The setting for the interviews was determined according to the participants' preference.

## **Data Collection**

The following procedural steps were implemented to conduct this narrative study. First, some prospective participants known to the researcher were called or emailed and invited to participate in the study. The email included information about the researcher and the study to establish rapport. Also, other acquaintances working in higher education were asked for assistance in identifying and suggesting names of Saudi female leaders who might be interested in participating. After receiving the suggested names and information, these female leaders were contacted via email and invited to participate in the study. Next, a convenient time and place was arranged for the interview according to the participants' preference and schedule.

Interviewing was the chosen form of collecting data. Four of the six were interviewed twice; the other two participants did not do a follow-up interview. Each interview was conducted either face-to-face or by phone. When a face-to-face interview took place, the participant had the freedom to choose the setting for the interview that made her feel comfortable and safe. Four participants chose their workplace, one participant chose her home, and the last remaining participant was interviewed by phone. They were also given the freedom to speak either Arabic or English in conducting the interviews. Only one participant chose to speak in English. The other five used Arabic as a medium of communication.

The first interview was approximately sixty to ninety minutes. The second interview was approximately thirty to sixty minutes for follow-up questions, member checking, clarifications, and expansion.

An interview protocol was used to guide the interviewing process. The protocol for the first interview had broad open-ended questions related to the research questions of this study. The second interview protocol had questions that tie and expand the research questions and the literature review. Some of the interview questions on the second interview protocol were adopted from and inspired by Dr. Nancy Colflesh's doctoral study. Dr. Colflesh graciously gave permission to use her interview protocol for this study (Colflesh, 1996). In the second interview, all or some of the questions were asked depending on the stories and lived experiences shared by the participants in the first interview.

During the interviews, notes were taken and a digital-recorder was used to record the interviews. Prompt questions were used when needed. On occasions, I shared some of my work and/or personal experiences to build rapport with the participants when needed during the interview. In addition, the first interview transcription was reviewed with the participant during

the second interview, and the participants were given the opportunity to review the second interview for precision by sending the transcripts to them via email.

After the completion of all interviews, I personally translated and transcribed the entire set of interviews for the participants. The transcriptions were verbatim to what the participants said. Google translate was used to assist in the translation. After the preliminary translation by Google translate, I listened to the interviews, reviewed, and made corrections to the translations and transcripts to ensure accuracy. After the reviewing process, all audio-recorded interviews were deleted, as was indicated to the participants for the sake of their safety. All the documented materials were saved on my computer using secure, protective documents' passwords known only by me. Also, pseudonyms (fictitious names) were used in the study. The only place that included both real names and pseudonyms of the participants was in a password-protected log for my record. Finally, the collected data was ready for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Because the nature of this study was narrative, data analysis focused on the themes that emerged from the collected data (Creswell, 2008). Therefore, thematic analysis was used to accomplish two main goals. First, was the interest to understand what meanings the participants made of their experiences when telling their lived experiences. Second, thematic analysis was used to understand the complexity and multilayered realities of the participants' stories.

According to Riessman (2008), thematic analysis is "concerned with content" or what is said (p. 53), rather than "how, to whom or for what purpose" (p. 54). In addition, the inductive approach was used to build meaning from the participants' stories, since thematic analysis of narrative inquiry is case centered (Riessman, 2008). In other words, the study focused on the story of each participant.

To make sense of meaning, the maxim “develop codes only on the basis of the emerging information” was followed after many repeated readings of the transcripts (Creswell, 2009). The coding of thematic narrative starts with analyzing each interview separately (Riessman, 2008). First, I familiarized myself with each story and the information in the transcripts by reading it many times. Second, the transcripts were divided into fragments and then categorized for each interview. Third, these categories were identified with codes, and then “the overlapped and redundant codes into general broad themes” were examined (Creswell, 2008, p. 51).

After the coding was complete for each interview, the codes were compared and emergent themes were sought among the six participants’ interviews (Riessman, 2008). For this step, Word Document software was used to assist in the comparisons. A table was built for the themes of all participants. After this was done, both transcriptions and the coding tables were printed, and then reviewed and compared to of all the information for the sake of perception and accuracy.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the following strategies were used: (a) member checking, (b) rich, thick description, and (c) researcher’s position (Merriam, 2002, p. 31). After the first interviews, the interview transcript was reviewed with each participant to check the validity and reliability of what they meant to say. Furthermore, a ‘rich, thick description’ was provided in order to present a full picture of the participants’ stories. Throughout the process, a research journal was used to track the different stages of data collection and analysis that added meaning to my interpretations. Lastly, the researcher’s position was laid out in Chapter 1 under “Researcher’s Perspective.”

## **Ethical Considerations**

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized the necessity of paying attention to ethical matters by the researcher throughout the narrative inquiry. Validity of narrative research deals with the story told by the participant and the process of analysis by the researcher (Riessman, 2008).

Since this study used human participants, approval was required and granted by by Colorado State University's Institutional Review Board. As part of that approval, each participant was asked to sign a consent form. The consent form included information related to the study. The participants were told their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any stage and/or they could request the deletion of any part of the transcript if they were uncomfortable sharing that information publically.

For the safety, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants, the names and identities of the participants were changed. The participants and their institutions were given fiction names (pseudonyms) throughout the study. Quoted segments drawn from the transcripts of all participants support the themes found in the study. The purpose of doing so was to assure that the findings were based on the participants' stories and words. They represent their lived experiences as female leaders in higher education.

## **Summary**

The methodology employed in conducting this study was described in this chapter. A narrative study was chosen to explore the stories of Saudi female leaders regarding accessing leadership positions in higher education, and in terms of the social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in the workplace. The Saudi female leaders shared their lived experiences through an open-ended-question interviewing process. Thematic analysis was used

to analyze data. Additionally, applying member checking, using rich, thick descriptions, and making the position of the researcher transparent maximized the trustworthiness. Finally, ethical considerations were kept in mind for the sake of assuring validity of the findings and confidentiality of the participants.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education. Additionally, this study sought to offer Saudi women leaders the opportunity to talk about their social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in their efforts to access and perform their leadership positions in higher education. Travis (1992) stated:

What follows from the way people tell their stories, and how they interpret their challenges and destinies? What images inspire them and which ones restrict them? We develop and shape our identities in the narratives we tell about our lives, and we are influenced by the stories we feel do not apply to us as by those that do. (pp. 306-307)

Therefore, these six Saudi female participants were given the opportunity and voice to express their experiences in leadership positions. By sharing their lived stories, this study aims to reveal what learned lessons can be gained from their journeys to inspire, guide, and inform novice professional women pursuing leadership positions in higher education. Additionally, the study intends to help professionals and officials, both men and women, understand the support and challenges these women encountered during their journey to and during leadership.

### **Demographic Information**

The age of the six female participants ranged between 36 to 52 years old. One woman earned her master's and doctoral degrees from a western university. The other five women earned their entire higher education degrees from Saudi universities. Among the six participants, two held associate professor titles in their institutions; while the other four were assistant professors.

Their working experience in higher education varied between 5 to 32 years. Four of these women held several leadership positions for five years. Two of those female leaders held their



positions for six years. All participants were either deputy heads or heads of their departments on the female campus. The following list of leadership positions were held by the participants without any specifications: Vice Dean of Distance Learning Education, Dean/ Deputy Dean of Student Affairs, Dean/ Deputy Dean of Academic Affairs, Deputy General Supervisor of Non-Resident/ Part-Time Students, Dean /Deputy Dean of Academic Development and Quality Assurance, Deputy Dean of the School of Education, Deputy Head of Curriculum Department, and Deputy Head of Administration and Planning Department. All participants have held more than one leadership position. Some of these female leaders shared the experiences of similar leadership positions. Table 1 describes the participants' professional profiles.

Table 1. Professional Profiles

# of Participant	Name	Professional Title	Years Working in Higher Education	Years in Leadership Positions
1	Rany	Assistant Professor	5	5
2	Hala	Assistant Professor	6	6
3	Manal	Associate Professor	30	5
4	Elham	Associate Professor	32	5
5	Samar	Assistant Professor	30	6
6	Amal	Assistant Professor	10	5

### **Emergent Themes: Answering Research Questions**

This section presents the findings after analyzing the collected data based on thematic analysis, and comparing the participants' narratives to find the common shared stories related to the research questions.

The first research question that guided this study was: what were the stories of Saudi women leaders regarding their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education?

The results showed that accessing leadership positions in higher education for these participants fell into two core themes that each had two sub-themes. These themes for access were: (a) *doctoral degree* and (b) *visibility*.

The second core theme, visibility, was shared among all six participants. According to the data, visibility generated two sub-themes. They were: *hard work and accomplishments*, and *recommendation*. While all participants discussed visibility, the two sub-themes varied between the six women. Some had both sub-themes while others had either one in their journey to leadership. Figure 3 describes the core themes and sub-themes for access.

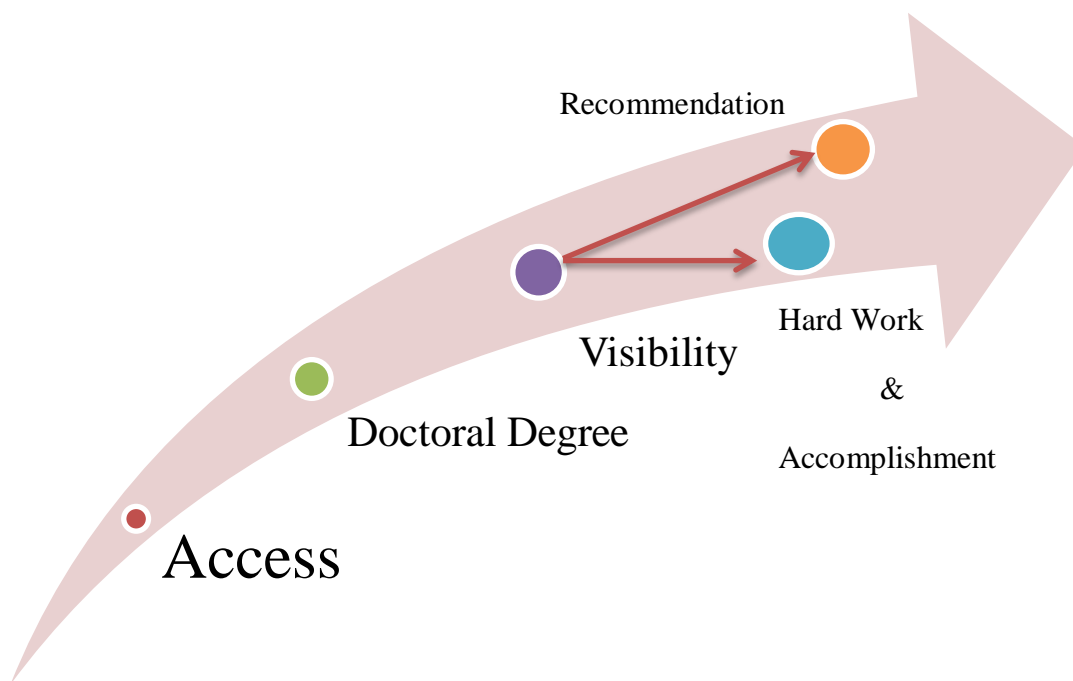


Figure 3. Core themes and sub-themes for access.

### **Women Leaders' Access → Doctoral Degree**

All six participants indicated that attainment of their doctoral degree was the crucial step to access leadership positions. These six participants were divided into two groups. The first group got their first leadership position after getting their doctoral degree while being in their

institutions for a short period of time. According to this group comprising three participants, their access to leadership was “easy” because they had limited experiences after they acquired their doctoral degree. To them, easy meant gaining access to a leadership position in a short period of time because they had a doctoral degree with limited administrative experiences.

Rany indicated that her access to leadership was easy. She explained:

Becoming a leader in my situation was not that hard. I found myself in a leadership position. As I joined the M. E. School at my institution at that time, I found that I had to do things or act in a leadership role and do an administrative part at the school. (...) I was the only female educator at the M.E. School.

From Rany’s experience, accessing leadership was easy because she had her doctoral degree when she joined her institution. Her superiors gave her leadership roles to play even though she had limited experiences. An additional reason that allowed Rany to access a leadership position was being the only female in her school/department. Hence, being the only female in her school gave her an advantage to easily access leadership positions with her limited experiences. It also shows the obvious lack of professional women in the male-dominated academic arenas of Saudi universities.

Samar commented about her access to leadership positions as:

I became a leader after I finished my Ph.D. and became an assistant professor.(...) The usual practice in my institution, like many in Saudi Arabia, is that when you have a doctorate degree and worked hard, it is easy to be recommended for a leadership position. So, there wasn’t any difficulty in getting the position since you are a hardworking qualified professional.

Samar explained the process of accessing leadership positions in higher education institutions. According to her, accessing leadership positions was the result of holding a doctoral degree. Therefore, her access was easy since she held a doctoral degree. Also, Samar pointed out that in addition to having a doctoral degree, being seen as working hard allowed her to be a qualified candidate for leadership.

Moreover, Amal shared the same experience for accessing leadership positions. She illustrated:

To be honest, I was so lucky. I only have ten years of experience, and during these years, I had three different leadership positions. I was promoted by my superiors in my department. And when I proved myself and my potential, I gained higher leading positions in my institution. So, I didn't climb the ladder as you can see.

According to Amal, her access to leadership was easy because she possessed her doctoral degree. She considered herself "lucky" because she had gained not one but three leadership positions in a short period of time. Also, Amal reinforced, like Samar, that having her Ph.D. allowed her to access and gain her first leadership position. After the first access, hard work granted her further access to move to higher levels of leadership positions.

These three participants shared the same experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education. According to them, their access was easy because they did not have a lot of administrative experiences and they did not work for a long period of time in their institutions. To them, despite not having much administrative experiences, the key point that played a significant role in accessing leadership positions with ease was holding a doctoral degree.

Additionally, the other three participants described their access to leadership positions as the result of attaining their doctoral degree. But what distinguished these three participants from the other group was that they started at their institutions as teaching assistants. They gained their graduate degrees, both master's and doctoral, during their working career. In other words, these three participants climbed the ladder. Based on their experiences, climbing the ladder meant starting their professional journey with a bachelor's degree and gaining access to leadership positions only after they finished their doctoral degree, which provided rich academic and administrative experiences during a long course of time.

Hala described her journey in accessing leadership positions as:

After I received my doctorate degree in T.M.M. and I was assigned the leadership position of Deputy Dean of S.A. for two years. Then, I became Deputy to the General Supervisor of N.R.S. After my term, I was appointed as a General Supervisor on S.A. In the same year, I became Deputy Dean of A.D.Q.A. And, the last leadership position that I am currently occupying is Deputy Dean of A.A.

Before I reached all of these positions, I was an active administrator and an energetic [graduate] student during my years of study. From then up-to-now, I have worked actively and my accomplishments are known to everyone. In other words, I have a great reputation of my distinguished work and innovative ideas. Therefore, I became known to leaders and I made a name for myself. And after I finished my Ph.D., I was appointed to my first leadership position as Deputy Dean of S.A.

I believe that my past experiences as an administrator and climbing the leadership ladder step-by-step enriched my experiences and my knowledge in fulfilling my position as a leader. Which sometimes doesn't happen because some leaders, men or women get the position right away [after joining their institutions and holding a Ph.D.] and who lacked the expertise to run the position.

Hala illustrated the various leadership positions that she accessed. She pointed out important factors of her journey to leadership. The first significant factor was accessing leadership positions only after finishing her doctorate studies. The second factor was “her past experiences as an administrator and climbing the ladder step-by-step.” According to Hala, working in the academic and administrative fields in her institution while in graduate school enriched her experiences and prepared her for leadership positions when she was appointed. Like Amal and Samar, Hala said that working hard and making a name for herself allowed her to obtain more leadership positions after her first access.

In addition, Hala differentiated between her step-by-step journey in accessing leadership positions from other leaders who gained their positions “right away” or easily without any administrative experiences. She also compared how her past administrative experiences helped her in fulfilling those leading positions. In contrast to her route to leadership, she felt those that had easy access to leadership positions “lack the expertise to run the position.”

Manal also had to climb the ladder to gain a leadership position. She described her journey to leadership as:

[B]efore I tell you about my access to leadership, let me share with you that I have thirty years of experience as a teaching assistant, lecturer, assistant professor, and now associate professor. The first leadership position I held was four years ago after I finished my Ph.D. (...) And when I was successful in one position and proved myself, I was promoted to a higher position until I reached the one I am holding now. (...) I have held three leadership positions so far in these four years.

Manal indicated that her access to leadership positions was through climbing the ladder, starting as a teaching assistant with a bachelor's degree and moving up until she attained a doctoral degree and became an assistant professor. She accessed her first position four years ago, only after finishing her Ph.D. And when she was successful in that leading position, she had other opportunities to access additional, and higher, leadership positions.

Elham's experiences in accessing leadership were similar to the other two participants in this group. She commented:

I didn't become a leader when I joined my institution. I have been working here for 32 years. So, it was a long road. I started as a teaching assistant. I worked hard and juggled my personal life with family, my work, and my master studies. After I finished my Master's and worked for a few years, I started the doctorate journey. Then, after graduation, I became an assistant professor and then an associate professor, which is my status right now. So, I accessed leadership two times: one in the BG. Department as a Deputy to the male Head of the Department for two years. And the other time, which I am still currently occupying, is Deputy Head of C. Department. So, as you can see, it has been quite a journey of studies and positions that I climbed step-by-step.

Elham's access to leadership positions was the outcome of a long journey that took her 32 years. She started her journey to leadership when she had a bachelor's degree. After a long road of work and studies, she accessed her first leadership position after obtaining her doctoral degree. So, Elham "climbed step-by-step" the institutional structure from one academic title to the next, until she finished her graduate studies and became a leader.

The common experience among the above three women was climbing the ladder to access leadership positions. They had to work and move from one step to the other and gain one title to a higher one until they finished their doctoral degrees, and then, they were allowed to become leaders in their institutions.

### **Women Leaders' Access → Visibility**

The second core theme was *visibility*. All six participants talked about this theme during their journey to accessing leadership positions. Visibility is the capability of being readily noticed (Merriam-Webster). In other words, the participants made themselves noticed and visible through their hard work and accomplishments. As a result, their superiors noticed them and recommended these participants to access leadership positions. Therefore, the second core theme, visibility, included two sub-themes. They were *hard work and accomplishments*, and *recommendation*.

**Hard work and accomplishments.** All participants agreed on the significant role of their hard work and accomplishments in becoming visible to leaders. Rany described her experiences in accessing leadership positions through her hard work and accomplishments. She commented:

I found myself in a position to lead. I worked so hard to prove myself. (...) I was nominated because I have a national reputation in developing a new program that was known across the whole country. So my experience and what I have learned is that I have to do things for myself. I have to accomplish things for myself. I have accomplished things for myself. People in academia will know my name through my achievements. And that is how I got the support. I was known for my work outside my institution because I had a national project and I collaborated with many in the Ministry of Higher Education. So, I was well-known for my accomplishments. Then, I got the job and the leadership position in my institution because of my reputation and accomplishments. So, I got the support due to my accomplishments.

Rany explained that her access to leadership was the result of holding a doctoral degree. By proving herself through her hard work, she was able to access more and higher leadership positions. Additionally, her accomplishments, including the development of a new program known across the country, built a good reputation for her name. Hence, this made her a great candidate to be selected for a leadership position.

Hala illustrated her visibility as:

Before I reached all of these positions, I was an active administrator and an energetic [graduate] student during my years of study. From then up-to-now, I have worked actively and my accomplishments are known to everyone. In other words, I have a great reputation of my distinguished work and innovative ideas. Therefore, I became known to leaders and I made a name for myself.

She started building her reputation in her institution by being actively engaged as an administrator. After Hala got her first leadership position, her hard work, innovative ideas, and reputation distinguished her from others. As a result, her hard work paid off and helped her access further leadership positions. Her remarks were:

After I finished my Ph.D., I was appointed to my first leadership position as Deputy Dean of S.A. During my term, I accomplished the tasks that were given to me with high quality and was actively involved in extra activities that afterward were requested to be applied by many universities across the country.

She went further:

Many female leaders from different universities praised my work. So, my initiative and innovative work provided me with a better opportunity and opened the doors for me in accessing leadership positions.

According to Hala, climbing the ladder by making a name for herself through her hard work and accomplishments provided her “with a better opportunity and opened the doors” for her to access more leadership positions.

Manal’s story was no different. She said:



Mainly my hard work and my longtime experiences helped me in becoming a leader. As you can see, I have been working in higher education for thirty years. Of course, I started when I was a teaching assistant and climbed the ladder until I got my Ph.D. And at last, I had the chance to be a leader and occupy many leadership positions from being Deputy Head of C.D. to Dean of A.A. for the female campus which is a powerful position.

Manal described gaining visibility through her hard work and longtime experiences in higher education. But, it was also not until she earned her doctorate degree as part of her accomplishments that made her eligible to access leadership positions. She went further by saying:

Becoming a leader was natural for me in the sense that it was nurtured by my family, since some were leaders in the Consulting Council. It was also the outcome of my hard work in moving the hierarchal structure step-by-step.

Here, Manal indicated that her hard work during climbing the ladder to leadership positions was one factor. In addition, another factor that she indicated and distinguished her from the other participants was being part of a powerful family, with members in leadership positions themselves. This factor gave her the reputation of possessing a natural ability to lead.

Elham also shared her story to access leadership through her hard work. She stated:

[I]t was a long road. I started as a teaching assistant. I worked hard and juggled my personal life with family, my work, and my master's studies. After I finished my master's and worked for a few years, I started the doctorate journey. Then after graduation, I became an assistant professor and then an associate professor, which is my status right now. So, I accessed leadership two times.

In addition to her hard work, Elham said that she “juggled” her personal life with family, work, and studies, which illustrated her expected roles as a woman until she reached leadership. Her first leadership position was also after she gained her doctoral degree. But she got the second position through her hard work as a leader.

For Samar, her journey to leadership was the outcome of her hard work, research, and networking. She said, “Mostly, it is my hard work, research, and connections that paid off and

allowed me to access leadership positions.” So, Samar also accessed leadership positions by being visible through her hard work and accomplishments.

Moreover, Amal stated:

However, the main support I had was from me. I worked hard to prove myself in a short period of time. I published a well-known book. So, I made a good reputation for myself in this short time.

Amal indicated that her hard work and accomplishments by publishing a book assisted her in accessing higher leadership positions after gaining the first one. She went further by saying, “And when I proved myself and my potentials, I gained a higher leading position in my institution.”

To summarize, all of the above women, regardless of the path they pursued, emphasized the role of their hard work, proving themselves, and accomplishments. Their accomplishments varied between research, publications, networking, and projects. Hence, making a good professional reputation for themselves helped them access higher leadership positions.

**Recommendation.** Five out of the six participants highlighted the role of a recommendation in accessing leadership positions for them. Only one of these five was recommended to leadership by a male leader because her direct superiors were men. In contrast, the other four women were recommended by female leaders to occupy leadership positions because their immediate superiors were women.

Rany described her visibility to be recommended as, “I was working under the supervision of a male professor. He introduced me to different leaders and talked about my accomplishments, which helped me access a leading position easily.” According to Rany, being visible as a hard working leader made her superiors notice her. As a result, her male superior recommended her name to a higher leadership position through mentioning her accomplishments

to other leaders. These leaders had the power to assign her further leading positions when the time came.

Hala indicated the role of recommendation in gaining other leading positions. She stated:

I believe that support comes from within the person him or herself. It depends on their self-sensing and efficacy of their abilities and the importance of their role, what they're doing, and their positions. So, personally I helped myself based on my personal convictions of my role and the change I want to make. I also had some support from some of my female leaders.

Hala pointed out that female leaders recommended her. But, she said the main factor helping her access further leadership positions was herself. She stated, "I helped myself based on my personal convictions of my role and the change I want to make. I also had some support from some of my women leaders." So, according to Hala, being recommended by female leaders played a role, but it was not as important as her own accomplishments that led to be visible gaining leadership positions.

Elham described the usual practice in her institution by commenting:

The usual practice depends on the recommendation of your supervisor to get a leadership position. So, the main support comes from the women leaders. They provide guidance and academic and emotional support to their female staff and faculty. And when the time comes, they nominate you to be in a leading position to the male campus because they are your immediate, direct supervisors who know you personally and who interact and witness your work, unlike men due to segregation.

According to Elham, women leaders had that power over her because she worked under their supervision since education is segregated. Her female leaders nominated her name to the male leadership to be chosen as a leader because men, who were the decision makers, could not see her work personally.

Again, Samar reinforced the usual practice, mentioned by Elham, of women recommending other women to leadership positions. She stated, "The main support I gained was from my female superiors until I was nominated for a leadership position. And since our

education is segregated, based on their recommendation, male leaders select new female leaders for leadership positions.” Samar’s female leaders witnessed her hard work, and when the time came in accessing a leadership position, they were the ones that recommended her name to male leaders to be selected for that position.

Amal also discussed this sub-theme. She indicated that her access to a leadership position was due to the recommendation of her female superiors. She reinforced the support she gained from her female leaders through opening doors to leadership positions through recommending her name to the men doing the hiring:

I was promoted by my superiors in my department. (...) I was lucky and got promoted easily. I didn’t have to work so many years to gain a leading position but I can say that I had support from my female superiors.

These participants shared the same experience in being visible to their superiors to be recommended for leading positions.

### **Social Roles and Gender Stereotypes**

The second question for this study was: what social roles and gender stereotypes were these women leaders expected to uphold in the workplace? In order to find the answer to this question, the participants were asked to talk about their social roles and gender stereotypes in relation to two areas: (a) when interacting with men, and (b) when interacting with women in the workplace.

The following section presents the findings that answer the two areas of the second research question. It relates to the social roles and gender stereotypes that the participants were expected to uphold when interacting with men and with women in the workplace.

#### **Social Roles and Gender Stereotypes When Interacting with Men**

Before discussing the findings related to the second research question, one point needs to be clarified. There is a difference between social roles (behaviors carried by a group of people

according to their society due to being a member in that group) and gender stereotypes (perception of a group of individuals' qualities because they belong to that group). However, that distinction was not made based on the participants' stories since their experiences reflected both. In other words, many expectations were reality and behavior demanded of them.

That being said, to answer the first area of the second research question, three core themes emerged from the inductive analysis of the interviews. They were: *men's roles*, *women's double bind*, and *women's feminine characteristics*. Men's roles generated two sub-themes. They were: *men as leaders* and *men being practical*. For women's double bind, four sub-themes emerged from the data. They were: *female leaders as followers*, *as managers*, *as dependent*, and *as inferior*. Figure 4 summarizes the core and sub-themes.

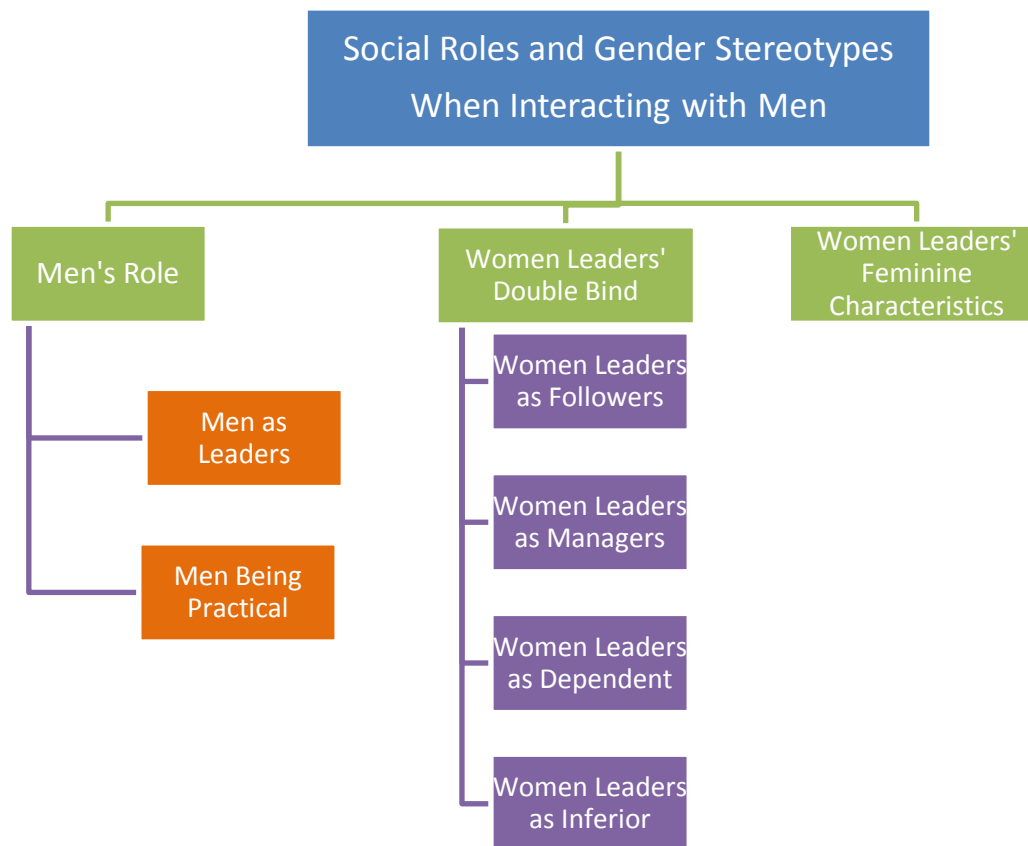


Figure 4. Core themes and sub-themes for social roles and gender stereotypes when interacting with men.

**Men's role.** The first core theme that emerged from the interviews was men's roles.

Although the first area of the second research question focused on the social roles and gender stereotypes women expected to uphold when interacting with men, the participants talked about men's roles when they interacted with them in the workplace. This core theme revealed the dynamics of gender interactions; how the two genders viewed men in the workplace in order to understand the status of men and women working together. As a result, two sub-themes were developed that described men's roles. They were *men as leaders* and *men being practical*.

***Men as leaders.*** The participants indicated that the expected social roles and gender stereotypes when they interacted with men was that men were viewed as leaders. Rany said, "They [men] are leaders. They are the leaders of our society. So, they just play that role." According to Rany, men are leaders of the society; therefore, they are leaders of her institution. That role was expected, played, and granted to men only because of their gender.

Manal agreed with Rany's point of view. She stated, "The society views men as the leaders of our society in the houses with their families, and of course, that power and authority transfer to work." Manal even went further in explaining that the male role of leadership was not only limited in their role in their families, but it was also transferred to the workplace and that this was the norm in the society and institution.

Elham indicated, "Many male colleagues [leaders] consider themselves as the leaders and refuse to share that leadership with their female counterparts." Elahm believed based on her experiences that such roles held by her male colleagues were implemented in their interaction with female leaders by rejecting the idea of sharing their leadership with women leaders.

According to Samar, one main role that differentiated between men and women in Saudi society was that men were considered leaders, and therefore, they enjoyed the pleasure of freedom:

As Saudis, we have wonderful traditions and values that distinguish us from others but at the same time our culture as a male-dominant culture gives the freedom to men and opens the door to them, while women have some restrictions and limited access within those traditions. For example, men are leaders who have the freedom to distribute the budget according to their needs and their campus.

Samar indicated that men roles as leaders of the society “open the doors to them.” In contrast, women had “some restrictions and limited access within those traditions.” Additionally, Samar explained that because men were the leaders of the society and their families, they undertook the leadership positions in the workplace, even when they did not possess the characteristics or expertise to be leaders:

Men give themselves the right to lead, even if they don’t really know how to, because their role in the society is to lead their families and decide for all members in their families.

Amal distinguished between male and female leaders’ expected roles. She pointed out an “image” or view that held the stereotype that men were always the leaders. In contrast, women did not enjoy that privilege:

However, it is not the case with men because according to our role in the society and stereotypes of being women enforce us to fulfill that image when interacting with men. What I mean is that men always are the leaders but women aren’t.

The participants shared the expected role of men when interacting with women. The role was that men were leaders of the society, family, and workplace. The significance of this core theme was in identifying and understanding where men and women were placed when interacting with one another.

***Men being practical.*** Only two participants identified men's role of being practical. Rany stated:

For example, if I called one of them [men] to discuss the collaboration between the two campuses and asked for certain facilities or his agreement on my project, they [men] just hear me and ask me to follow the procedure by writing a letter about my request and send it by fax. He will approve it shortly in ten minutes or in one day. They are practical.

According to Rany, male practicality was the result of doing the work professionally and efficiently with ease. Therefore, men listened to her requests. They asked her to follow the implemented documentation procedures. And then, they approved her request. As a result, Rany viewed this interaction between male leaders and her as a practicality of men's gender stereotypes.

Hala also described men as practical. She claimed, "One quality that men possess is that they are practical. They do things in order, 1, 2, 3, ..., and so on." Hala's point of view in describing male practicality derived from the ease she experienced when interacting with men. Men were organized in following procedures and that was the source of their practicality.

***Women leaders' double bind.*** The second core theme that emerged from the data was *women leaders' double bind*. Here, social roles and gender stereotypes that were expected from women when interacting with men created five minor sub-themes. They were *women leaders as followers, as managers, as dependent, and as inferiors*. The findings that support these sub-themes are discussed below.

***Women leaders as followers.*** The first sub-theme that emerged from the participant's stories was that women leaders were considered as *followers*. Women leaders were expected to follow the common social roles and gender stereotypes carried on in Saudi society when interacting with men in the workplace. All six participants emphasized this sub-theme. For example, Rany stated:



I find that females are just doing things twice. They are really just receiving commands to do things and it's their fault. Sometimes their words/work is not taken because there are two campuses, males and females. It's not just one. I'm on the female [campus] and can't make any leadership decision apart from males. They [men] have certain expectation that women just follow or obey their [men's] orders. So, things have been done twice because women do it and men just approve it or not because it is their decision. So, there is no true leadership for women because they are following what men say.

When analyzing Rany's experience, based on the structure of educational leadership in Saudi, she was expected to follow what men said or decided. A man had to approve of the decisions made even on the female campus. Therefore, her experiences as a female leader forced her to receive commands from men, wait for men's approval, and might have to do administrative work for a second time based on men's decisions. She concluded, "There is no true leadership for women because women are following what men say." That is, women must follow men's decisions and do not have the ability to truly lead. She did not stop there. She expanded by saying:

The stereotypes of how a [male] leader interacts with me. Again, you will be more as a follower. He will say that you are a leader but actually you are following his leadership. So, the stereotypes are that women will be so kind. As a leader, you will follow them [men]; follow your male colleague's orders or instructions. (...) So, men believe that females are supposed to be followers.

Because Rany was a woman, she was expected to be a follower to her "male colleagues' orders or instructions." She even described the double bind for her as a woman leader. She would hear men declare her leadership role. However, in reality, they treated her as a follower and not as an equal leader. Her gender played a major role when she interacted with men because men did not see her as an equal, qualified leader. On the contrary, they viewed her as a woman whose role was to follow them.

Hala also had the same experience in that she was expected to follow men's orders and footsteps. She described her interaction as a leader with a male leader as:

Yes. My first male leader, as much as I respect him because he is a knowledgeable experienced leader, he mistreated me. All his requests and interactions were orders for me to follow. He expected me to be obedient, and do what he ordered me. For example, he said “Do this,” “Don’t,” “No,” “Why did you do this? You’re not supposed to!”

Looking deeply to Hala’s story, she revealed the underlying layers of double bind toward her as a female leader. Although she held a leadership position, she had to follow the orders of her male leader. She was expected to not make any decision by herself. Her decisions were questioned and her male leader interrogated her. These role expectations did not fit her as a woman leader, and she considered it as mistreatment.

For Manal, she identified this sub-theme by saying:

Many men leaders don’t take women [leaders] seriously and think that women are their followers at work just like at home. I want to make sure that I am as much a leader as they are, and not an assistant or a manager that follow their orders.

Here, on one hand, Manal described and knew the role she and other women leaders were expected and required to play. On the other hand, she declared that she did not accept that role and tried her best to take her leadership role and position seriously, regardless of men’s expectations, behaviors, and treatments. She went further, “women are supposed to be followers. (...) Many men in leadership expect women to assist them and follow their orders, and as I told you earlier, I don’t accept that.”

In line with Rany and Hala’s experiences, Elham stated, “They [men] always take the leadership roles and expect women to follow them at homes and at work.” So, her experiences of the double bind as a woman leader and a follower extended from her personal boundaries at home with her male relatives, and transferred to her interactions with her male colleagues in the workplace. Additionally, she indicated, “The common stereotype in the society for the two genders is that men are born to be leaders while women are born to follow men’s footsteps. This common belief is transferred to the workplace.” According to her, the role expectation stayed

regarding men and women when they interacted with one another regardless of the context. In other words, men were expected to behave as leaders while women were expected to behave as followers to men. That expectation was not just a perception. It was a reality to Elham since she behaved accordingly.

Moreover, Samar shared the same experience. She commented, “We are sometimes treated as followers because we don’t have what it takes to lead because of the traditional views that they have about us. (...) So, we are receivers and they are deciders.” Samar justified such expected role as the outcome of the traditional views the society held related to the two genders, especially about women. According to her, her role was a follower and a receiver, while the male role was being leaders and deciders.

Amal differentiated between reality and idealism. Her experience was:

[Y]ou have to understand something, that there are what is expected to be and what is really going on. So, it is expected that I have an equal role and power as to men in running my position. But in reality, I don’t. My power as a leader is limited in comparison to men. I have to take my male leader’s approval and consent on what I want to do here in our campus.

Amal’s experience demonstrated a form of double bind women leaders’ face. Although she had the right to lead because of her position as a female leader, she could not because in reality her role was restricted and had to get male authorization. She had to fulfill her gender role and stereotype rather than her professional role as a leader.

In summary, Amal and all the other participants found that one expected role due to their gender was being *followers* to men. This role contradicted with their professional role as leaders in the workplace and represented the double bind women leaders’ face.

***Women leaders as managers.*** The second sub-theme under double bind was that women leaders were expected to be managers when interacting with men. Rany described how male leaders expected women leaders to be their managers. According to Rany a manager is a task

oriented person who lacks vision and only cares about work efficiency. In addition to this view held by men, Rany indicated that some female leaders viewed themselves as managers to their male counterparts. She commented:

The expectations, actually, are made by males themselves that their female colleagues are managers. And that some female leaders, themselves, believe they are just managers. They say that they are leaders but in reality they are just managers.

She explained such expectations were “because men are leaders. Women are managers. It is hard to find a true leader among females. There is a difference between managers and leaders.” Hence, according to Rany, the society in both personal and professional life expected men to behave as leaders, while women were expected to behave as managers regardless of leadership positions women occupy. This double bind caused confusion to some female leaders.

For Hala, the story was the same as Rany. She described her expected role when interacting with men:

I had two positions under men leaders and my power and authority was so limited. I couldn't make a decision without getting their approval. And at that time, I felt that I was their secretary or manager, just to obey their orders and administrate the work on the female campus.

Hala identified her role as “secretary or manager” when she interacted with men. According to her, she did not have the freedom to make decisions. Not only that, but she had to get men's consent on tasks that she was supposed to make the decisions. Her reality reinforced the double bind she was experiencing.

Manal's situation was a little different. She acknowledged women's expected role as managers or secretaries and was not allowed to make decisions. She even highlighted that this expected role was because of the cultural norms. However, she refused to behave and meet such expectations. She stated:

They [women] manage things but don't make real decisions except on a limited scale. But, if you are asking about my role as a leader, I don't allow anyone to force me to behave according to the general notion applied in the society.

Again, Manal reinforced the double bind women leaders struggle with in having the leadership position but not being able to lead, with their role to only manage what they receive from men. Her comment was, "Male leaders think of us [women] as administrators or secretaries who follow their orders and manage the business on the female campus."

Moreover, Elham pinpointed the hardship of dealing with men. She stated, "[D]ealing with men was very hard. They expect you [women/me] to follow their orders and manage the given tasks." To Elham, the hardship was from the double bind dilemma, of being a leader and a manager at the same time. In that line, Samar addressed the same experience. She said, "Mainly, the leadership on the women's campus is an administrative managing type of leadership to carry on all the decisions that were made by male leaders." So, her expected role was like every other female leader in managing administrative work for decisions made by men.

Amal described the double bind as a woman leader by knowing her boundaries. She commented:

[Y]ou need to know your boundaries when interacting with men by taking your male superior's approval, especially for important issues. Other than that, the minor and daily administrative work is all yours.

On one hand, Amal described a male's role in making significant decisions. On the other hand, her role as a woman leader was to get male approval, manage administrative work, and make minor decisions. All participants were subjected to the double bind of being managers when interacting with men.

***Women leaders as dependent.*** The third sub-theme that *women leaders* faced when interacting with men was being expected and required to be dependent on men in their work.

Rany elaborated on this sub-theme. First, she stated:

I find difficulty on the female campus to work with [female] leaders without contacting the [male] deans themselves. Sometimes I have to contact the [male] dean to get the job done because his female dean doesn't want to perform her leadership and she just wants, in every single step, to check with her [male] dean. She doesn't have any kind of freedom or autonomy at all.

So, women who interacted with Rany were dependent on their male leaders to make the required decisions. Second, Rany described how her male leader treated her as a dependent. She commented:

I find that my [male] dean believes as if he is my big brother, that he needs to protect me from them [other male deans] because they think that without the support of my dean I can't stand by myself, and I am fragile and to be broken easily, which is not true. (...) I noticed this while working. In the beginning you feel it's good that someone cherishes you. Then, you feel that it's breaking your identity and self-image through interfering because it affects how people will view you as a leader, who is dependent on someone. And I noticed that this case is happening to all my female colleagues on the committee. I found that he is defending all of us [women] against anyone who attacks or doesn't agree with our suggestions or performance.

According to Rany, her male leader was protective of her and her female colleagues and considered them as his sisters. He fought for them against other male leaders. In the beginning, Rany appreciated her male leader's protection. But then, she realized how damaging his behavior was to her as a leader by being seen as dependent on a man. She explained this expected social role and gender stereotype related to interaction dynamics between men and women:

I understand that they [men] believe as a female leader I am not strong, and they noticed in different institutions and universities how female leaders have been crossed, and how they are not allowed to do things their way because they are females. So, I have a social understanding of the views about males and females. "You [women] are dependent. You are not a leader. You could be a manager but not a leader." I found that this belief has not been acquired and encouraged by males only, but by females also. They [women] believe

that they can't make it by themselves and they are in need all the time for a male to support them. And they noticed that when they are leaders, they try to be leaders among the community of females. To me, a leader is a leader, respected anywhere. This is the reality.

Rany described the double bind women leaders handled. She indicated although women leaders have the position of leadership, they were expected and required to depend on men, manage administrative tasks, and not to lead. Moreover, she highlighted that this view of dependency was not carried only by men. It was also performed by many women leaders themselves because that was the normal practice.

Hala admitted the existence of "legislations and regulations supporting women." However, she disclosed that the application of these legislations were in the hands of men. Therefore, if a male leader viewed his colleagues as his female relatives; then, he would treat them and expect them to be dependent on him. She illustrated the dilemma:

[A]lthough we have a lot of legislations and regulations that serve women, these legislations and regulations are in the hands of the [male] executive or leader and the level of application of these legislations and regulations depends on the personality, beliefs, and mentality of that [male] leader or executive. And the female leader is connected and reliant on that male leader and his views about women, especially if he believes that she is the same as the ones in his home and he doesn't distinguish between relative women and women in the workplace, specifically women in leadership positions, then he will view all women leaders as dependent.

According to Hala, the double bind dilemma women leaders struggled with was having the position but being treated as dependent. She described that this dilemma was not the outcome of lacking supportive governmental and institutional legislations. It was the outcome of the personality and mentality of male leaders and decision-makers. If those men viewed women leaders as dependent as their female relatives; then, that was what these women leaders had to deal with.

Elham felt the same way and described her situation:

We, as female leaders, are struggling to prove ourselves because on one hand, we have the leadership position and the responsibilities that comes with it; and on the other hand, we are labeled and defined as women, and that being said, we can't get out of the cocoons or the gender role and the stereotypes that come with our gender and we have to ascribe to being assistant to, and dependent on, men according to our society and culture.

Again, Elham's point of view was that she suffered from the double bind of having a leadership position and expected to play the role of dependent and assistant to her male colleagues. She described her experience as if leaders were in "cocoons." She emphasized the gender role that was held by her society and culture forced her to behave this way when interacting with men despite her leadership position.

In accordance with Elham's experience, Samar stated:

[D]ue to the misconceptions that many men hold related to a woman's role as dependent on them and lack the personal characteristics of leadership and the equal intelligence of men, they [men] have this view, which is a big obstacle for women in leadership.

Her experience of the double bind in being expected to be dependent as a result of her gender hindered her as a leader. Samar indicated that this double bind was a "big obstacle for women in leadership."

Although Amal did not express her dependency on men in an obvious form, she indicated how she understood her boundaries and approached men's consent in a very nice, obedient manner. She described her interaction with men and fulfilled her role expectation, "When I talk to men, I have to understand my boundaries and ask things in the form of a request with sweet talk in order to get their approval."

The participants acknowledged the double bind of being expected to be both a leader and dependent on men. They indicated that this view was held not only by many men, but also by some women themselves.



***Women leaders as inferior.*** The last sub-theme under double bind was women leaders as inferior. By analyzing the data, five participants expressed that women leaders felt being inferior when interacting with men. Rany commented:

I was the first to join M.E. Department and after about six months or eight, another woman joined. She also was appointed as a head of another department in the school. So, we are now two. Our role was more as a decoration. I find that we face some kind of resistance from [male] head of departments or counselor board.

There is some kind of a belief that because you are a woman dealing with a male leader that: “You [women] are inferior and not equal to me [man]. They [women] are not able to lead.”

Rany described how being a pioneering first woman in her department pressured her in facing resistance from male colleagues. She described the double bind in the form of being inferior to male leaders. Not only that, but sometimes men underestimated her and made her feel that she lacked the ability to lead.

Manal shared this view. When asked about her thoughts regarding men having an inferior perspective toward women even if they were leaders, she replied, “Yes! It is how our society and the people view the roles of the different genders.” So, Manal recognized this double bind even though she did her best to not allow being mistreated by her male colleagues.

Elham described the double bind of women leaders being inferior as the result of the hierarchal power status that each gender holds in the society. She identified that men had “higher status and power than women,” which made women inferior to men. She commented:

As a Saudi society, we always have to keep in mind the notion related to the different status between men and women. And based on that notion, the two genders have to behave and fulfill that role where men have higher status and power than women.

According to Samar, such superiority of one gender over the other forced women to face many challenges. She claimed:

Due to the misconception that many men hold related to women's roles being dependent on them and lack the personal characteristics of leadership and the equal intelligence of men, they [men] have this view which is a big obstacle for women in leadership.

These challenges that women leaders struggled with were due to gender and not to their professional skills and real ability to lead. Many men underestimated women and looked down upon them because of their status ascribed to them as women. Finally, Amal fell into her expected role by knowing her boundaries and following her gender stereotypes to gain consents from her male leaders. She stated, "When I talk to men I have to understand my boundaries and ask things in the form of a request with sweet talk in order to get their approval." Amal's behavior represented the reality of some female leaders. These women played the inferiority role and status very well by knowing their "boundaries" and using the "form of request" and "sweet talk" with men in order to get their work done.

**Women leaders' feminine characteristics.** The third core theme that was found when women leaders interact with men was grouped as feminine characteristics. To clarify, although these women held leadership positions, they were expected to behave according to their feminine characteristics when interacting with men in the workplace. That is, these women had to fulfill their social roles and gender stereotypes when they were interacting with their male colleagues, even if those roles and characteristics contradicted their leadership role. For example, Rany listed some feminine characteristics that were expected from her when she interacted with men:

Sometimes this kind of expectation for you as a female is different. Sometimes I believe that because you are a female you are supposed to be more concerned and more considerate. That means you are concerned about everyone and considerate and more flexible, just because you are a female.

Rany was supposed to fulfill her feminine characteristics when she interacted with men. Men expected her to be "concerned," "considerate," and "flexible" because she was a woman. Other feminine characteristics Rany described were:

Sometimes I hear something along these lines; some [men] say, “This is a little [young] lady; she wants to impose things on us. This little lady wants us to do things the hard way. This is a little lady who wants us to do things her way.” (...) They find that things are different to be led by a little female; I don’t mean little female in size, but in age, because most of them are professors and they are old and experienced. Again, this is what they have experienced socially for a female, to be dependent. So, they try to find an image that they fit you in, “You are a female. You need our support. You are so soft and so kind and so weak.”

According to Rany, not only was she as a woman viewed as inferior and dependent on men, but also her abilities as a leader were underestimated through calling her a “little [young] lady.” Additionally, men viewed and treated her in the same way they viewed and treated their female relatives as “weak,” in need of their “support,” “soft,” and “kind.” Those expected feminine characteristics interfered with her leadership role. Men also expected her to be “quiet,” “agreeing” with them, and not aggressive. She explained that these feminine characteristics were expected from her because she was a woman, who should follow the footsteps of their female relatives regardless, of her leadership position. Rany added:

Men are dealing with women, expecting women to be quieter, agreeing, and not fighting. Why? Because the usual role in Saudi homes is that the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughter are followers and dependents.

Hala added more feminine characteristics to Rany’s list:

[T]here is a gender stereotype about women that they waste money and spend it without any sense of responsibility. I think this notion is a universal idea toward any woman. So, this view that makes him [her supervisor] perceives women in his family and house and then generalizes it on me, and women in the workplace. He even states it on some occasions by saying, “It’s a splendor/too much. No need for this amount of money. Be practical.” Although I provide bills and spend the budget efficiently. I understand that some women in our society spend money to satisfy their social prestige and that causes men to overgeneralize about women and view them in this stereotype. But, I can assure you that women leaders now have a clear sense of responsibility toward their role and their spending.

Hala experienced a lack of trust in her financial judgment because she was a woman. She believes men doubt women’s sense of responsibility in money spending. Therefore, they

overgeneralized and considered their female colleagues to be like their female relatives. As a result, her supervisor questioned women leaders' budget requests by saying "it's a splendor/too much. No needs for this amount of money." They even asked her to "be practical" because they viewed her money request as nonsensical.

Another feminine characteristic Hala spotted was being "emotional." According to her, men viewed her and other women leaders as overly sentimental and unable to make professional decisions. Consequently, this gender stereotype gave men the excuse to tie women's hands in decision-making. Men obtained power, authority, and decision-making for themselves. They do not allow women to make minor decisions and they draw "redlines" not to cross. They wanted women leaders to refer to them on all decisions due to the views they held about women in general, despite the fact that they were interacting with professional women leaders. Rany further discussed this experience of women as emotional:

One gender stereotype women leader's face is that men think of us as emotional. We are sentimental; therefore our judgment is not as clear and professional as men. "She isn't rationale." This leads to tying women's authority in all levels in decision-making. There are redlines we can't cross as women and the case or issue regarding a female student for example won't be solved here by women but referred to men to solve it.

Elham supported some of Rany's comments about the feminine characteristics. She stated, "Something that may be expected from me as a woman leader, and as the result of the policy I adopted in my interactions, is to be nice and supportive all the time." In addition, she increased that list by adding "loyalty" and "obedient." She said, "They [men] expect us [women] to be loyal and obedient to what they [men] say and ask for." Elham understood how men wanted women leaders to obey them all the time because they were women, which opposed with women's role as leaders.

Samar applied feminine characteristics in her leadership position that are required of her in her personal life. She seemed to accept this role, saying:

From my experience, women need to know their place in the society. Being a woman requires you to listen, obey, and follow what your father, brother, and/or husband say. You have to respect them and comply with their decisions since they know better because of their social status as leaders of our society and our homes. So, I usually don't resist this view and respect my male authority and follow their orders as long as they serve the best interest of the work.

Thus, Samar indicated that she behaved as expected of her as a woman. Her feminine list included: listening, obedience, following, respectfulness, and complying with male decisions because "they know better." She went further in her list:

In order for a woman to succeed in a leadership position, she has to be patient, kind to her colleagues, and ignore any minor issue to get the work done. She has to respect men by knowing her place, but at the same time, be strong in order to avoid any unneeded conflicts.

According to Samar, a woman leader would succeed in a leadership position if she had feminine characteristics like: patience, kindness, ignoring minor issues, respectfulness of men, and knowing her place as a woman when interacting with men.

The last participant, Amal, expanded the list even further, "So, if you look deeply about my social role that I am expected to perform as a woman I have to be helpful, understanding, less affirmative, and use a sweet tongue, especially with men."

To summarize, women leaders encountered a long list of feminine characteristics that were expected from them when interacting with men. Those feminine characteristics fit their gender stereotypes and social roles as women. At the same time, those feminine characteristics contradicted the participants' leadership roles.

## Social Roles and Gender Stereotypes When Interacting With Women

This section covers the second area of the second research question. It focuses on social roles and gender stereotypes that were expected from women leaders to uphold or faced when interacting with other women in the workplace. The participants' stories generated three core themes. The themes are: *women as enemies of other women*, *women as supportive*, and *women leaders' situational actions*. The third core theme of women leaders' situational actions was divided into two sub-themes: *occasional firmness* and *occasional support*. Figure 5 represents the core themes and sub-themes.

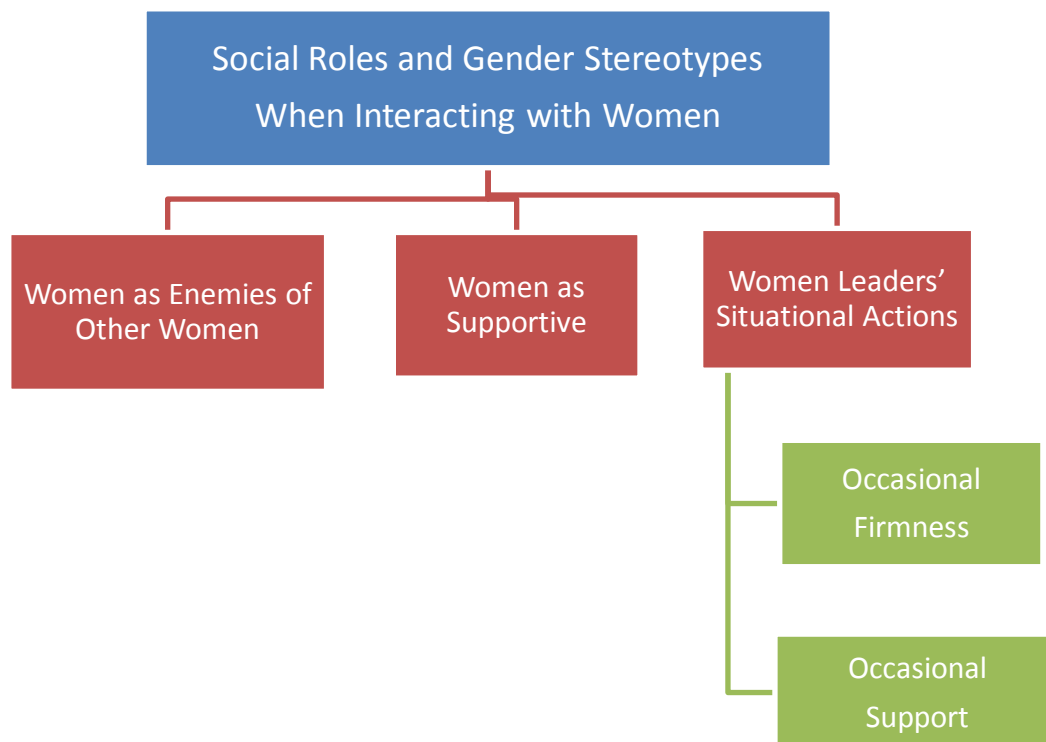


Figure 5. Core themes and sub-themes for social roles and gender stereotypes when interacting with women.

**Women as enemies of other women.** The first theme for social roles and gender stereotypes with other female leaders in the workplace was *women leaders as enemies of other*

women. Two participants out of the six expressed their struggle when interacting with other women leaders. Rany elaborated on this discussion at length:

When I am interacting with a female leader, things get complicated. For example, I asked one of my [female] colleagues [in another department] to give me a facility or do maintenance in my department. She asked me to write a letter. Then she asked for more paper work and time. Then she said that she made a recommendation to her [male] dean. Then she rejected the request, indicating that it is not their job or role to do so and we need to study the budget and make a proposal etc... Oh! It is a very simple task that needs you [the female leader] to make a decision instead of asking your dean to make that decision.

She continued describing her experience when interacting with other female leaders:

I find that the big enemy for female leadership is women themselves. (...) They don't play the role. And they don't let anyone [woman] in the institution to play the role as a leader. There is a female issue. Are they not good enough? Do they not understand the role of leadership? Again, I don't know what is the problem with women! But they just make enemies with other females.

According to Rany, women leaders were the enemy of themselves and other women.

They did not play their role as leaders and at the same time they did not want their female colleagues to thrive as leaders. In other words, they complicated the work for others and themselves by not making decisions, or allowing other female leaders to do so. She even explained:

Women, by nature, are not cooperative with women. (...) Because there is no mutual trust. For example, as I told you, if I have a female leader, a female dean, I am not sure about her objectivity. I am not sure if she wants us [me and my colleagues] to be more of a female stereotyped kind of leaders.

Rany viewed relationships between female leaders as non-cooperative. She indicated this lack of cooperation might be due to lack of trust between one another. It also might be the result of the double binds women face. Rany indicated that when she was interacting with another female leader she was not sure whether that female leader expected her to seriously undertake

her leadership role or whether that female leader wanted her to play the leadership role in accordance with her social roles and gender stereotypes as a woman.

Hala shared the same experience as Rany. According to Hala, she highlighted a very important concept: personalizing the tasks. This concept might help to explain Rany's point of view of women leaders being enemies of one another. Hala discussed her understanding of personalizing the tasks:

I noticed through my interaction with women that one negative stereotype applied by a lot of female leaders, and that they expect you to fall into, is personalizing the tasks. And I mean that many female leaders interact with one another depending on your personality and theirs. So, if she likes you and you are close to her, your work will be smooth and with ease. But if she doesn't like your personality, your work will be delayed or even won't be carried out sometimes just because of your personality. In other words, if the female leader that I am interacting with doesn't like me, then my work will be delayed or not accomplished. But if that leader likes me, then my work with her will be so easy. So, the work won't be professional based on the streamline of the institution to meet its goals. But it will be the opposite of that, where it will be personalized depending on the amount of authority she possesses, even when these tasks are crystal clear.

Hala explained that her work was facilitated or hindered depending on the female leader that she was interacting with and her personality. To elaborate, from Hala's experience, favoritism played a role in women's interactions with each other, where work got done only when the two leaders liked one another. If not, the tasks would not be accomplished.

Additionally, Hala reinforced Rany's comment about women were the enemies of one another.

Her experience was:

Women leaders sometimes create unnecessary obstacles. For example, I suggested establishing a club. All men leaders approved my proposal. But women leaders refused my proposal and complicated things by asking for more paper work and procedures that I had already included in my proposal. Sometimes I feel that women are the enemy of themselves. Because after I did what they asked for, the men said let's start the establishment of the club, but the women, especially one, refused and suggested to make a committee to study the proposal and revise it and get back to us with their recommendations. I think that women on many occasions complicate things more.



These two participants struggled when interacting with women leaders. They both felt that women leaders can be enemies of their female colleagues and themselves and that women could complicate the work. They struggled because, not only did they have to deal with these female leaders, but they were expected to interact in the same way, which they refused to do so.

**Women as supportive.** The second core theme that was identified by two participants was women as supportive. Elham stated:

Well, I follow the policy of ignorance. And I mean by that, that I ignore any unrelated work issues. I only focus on work issues and getting the work done and if any incident that occurs but is not related to work, like personal conflicts [between me and another female leader] or relationships getting in the way, then I just ignore it. Adding to that, something that may be expected from me as a woman leader and as the result of the policy I adopted in my interactions is to be nice and supportive [of other women leaders] all the time.

According to Elham, she was expected to be “nice and supportive all the time” when interacting with other women leaders. She explained that such expectation might be due to her nice personality and her adopted policy of ignorance when interacting with female leaders. Moreover, Elham viewed other female leaders as equal. She even indicated that women leaders were cooperative, which was a counter view to Rany and Hala who viewed female leaders as frequent enemies. Elham commented, “I didn’t encounter problems when interacting with women [leaders] because we are equal and colleagues who work and cooperate to serve our students.”

Elham reinforced that she was supportive, not only of women leaders but also of her female staff. Again, she emphasized ignoring personal issues for the sake of getting the work done. She indicated:

To me, power and influence are represented in a mutual understanding, communication, and cooperation between leadership and the members of the team. The usual practice that

I follow when I interact with my female staff is by being nice and supportive to everyone. And as I told you earlier, I sometimes ignore minor issues or personal disputes for the sake of the work to get done.

Amal also shared the same experience, stating:

It is easier to work with women in general. But you need to know your boundaries when interacting with men. (...) With women leaders, each one of us knows her responsibilities and restrictions. So, we interact professionally as equals. Yes, sometimes we have problems or conflicts because of personalities or opinions. But generally speaking, we are equal and don't have the power to force something unless if one of us has a higher leading position over the others.

So, Amal agreed with Elham that working with other women leaders was "easier." She viewed their relationship as equal to one another, which facilitated the work. In contrast, this equality and ease was not the case when interacting with men, where she had to know her "boundaries" and be inferior to them. She even indicated that:

The case is better with women because we have the same gender. But at the same time, you still have to lead with your feminine characteristics, which sometimes get in the way of getting the job done.

What I mean is that if I was so nice, sometimes my female colleagues consider me weak and don't do their job on time. But if I was rigorous or tough, they will think of my behavior as masculine and that I don't fit among them. And that is why I am supportive and diplomatic with everyone.

Amal explained that being "nice," "supportive," and "diplomatic" with other women leaders might be misunderstood as weakness and hindered performing tasks. However, she was willing to interact with other women following feminine characteristics, rather than being "rigorous or tough," which was considered "masculine" according to her point of view

Amal also described her appreciation of the support she received from her women-leader colleagues, which also differed from Rany and Hala's opinions and experiences. She stated:

I am also grateful to my close female leaders who mentored me and gave me the advice and the academic and emotional support when I needed them in handling some new issues I didn't have any experience with.

However, Amal clarified that the cooperation between women leaders had to occur because any lack of cooperation between them could cause conflict. And, that is why she considered the relationship between her and other female leaders as equal. She commented:

But the situation with women is different. For example, if a woman leader doesn't cooperate with me, she knows that I will do the same to her and then the work will be hindered. So, cooperation is a significant key between women in order to have harmony and our work take place as easy as possible.

**Women leaders' situational actions.** The third core theme was women leaders' situational actions. Manal and Samar were the two participants who described their interactions with other women depending on the situation. Under this core theme, two sub-themes emerged from analyzing the data. They were: occasional firmness and occasional support.

*Occasional firmness.* For this sub-theme, Manal described her firmness with women as strict and following the institution's regulations. She stated:

To be honest, I am a very serious woman. What I mean is that I am so strict with women. I follow the regulation and don't allow any woman to break the rules. For example, the first day of attendance in every new academic year or after a break, I make sure that every single female employee attends and signs the attendance sheet. And if there is someone who is absent, I follow the institution's policy in that regard and punish her. (...) Faculty and staff need to follow the orders of their leaders without any discussion since those orders serve the best interest of the institution.

Samar also provided an example of her experience of being firm with one of her colleagues:

I also treat women so kindly because they are my team members and colleague leaders, We all are on the same boat. However, that doesn't mean that I don't apply my power and influence in certain situations. For women, at an occasion, the director of teachers training and practicum had a shortage of faculty on supervising 700 teacher students and I wasn't informed. When I realized that shortage, I solved the problem right away without discussing the issue with the director. And after the semester ended, I circulated a memorandum about not renewing her to the position.

Samar explained that she tried to be supportive and cooperative as much as she could. However, she emphasized that she sometimes was firm based on the situation itself and the issue she was dealing with, just like the example she provided.

*Occasional support.* The two participants also said they interacted with other women with occasional support. Manal described her experience when interacting with women:

I am supposed to be so nice and caring a lot about women, which in my opinion many times obstructs work. So, I go according to the policies and regulations of the institution. I follow them and don't allow personal relationships to get in the way of doing business. But that doesn't mean I don't support my female colleagues. I do support women when needed and according to the rules because I believe that they are my team members who facilitate the work.

Manal was clear about her support to her colleagues. She indicated that even though she was strict and firm, she occasionally supported other women. Her support had to be in line with the institution's rules and regulations. She viewed her support as part of facilitating the work.

Samar described herself as "diplomatic" with men and women in general. She indicated that her interaction with women was "smoother and easier." Her description was:

I am a very diplomatic person. I respect everyone, especially men, because our religion, traditions, and culture motivate us to behave in our best. So, I try my best to be cooperative and supportive of people around me, but at the same time, be affirmative that the job gets done on time. (...) I don't think that there is a huge difference. But I find with women that as a leader interacting with women is smoother and easier than with men. Although I face problems with women too but I disregard such actions because my goal is to get the work done, regardless of the obstacles or issues that arose during the process.

Additionally, Samar commented, "With women, I don't encounter any problems. We understand one another better and cooperate to serve our students. And as I said earlier, if an issue occurred, I try to solve it in a friendly manner." So, Samar said she did not have problems with women. Their relationship was built on support and cooperation. Her support was based on

her religious beliefs from the Holy Quran. She said, “I work according to this Holy Quran verse:”

قوله تعالى: " وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ "

[The translation of this verse is based on the interpretation by Dr. Mohsin: The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allâh orders the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly), then verily! He, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend (The Holy Quran, 41: 034)]. So, I try to be calm all the time and create a harmonic environment to accomplish our work.

Both participants agreed that they were supportive to other women. However, sometimes they had to be firm and strict with women who did not perform their job well.

### **Additional Emergent Themes Shared by Participants**

According to Riessman (2008), “Narratives often serve different purposes (...) Individuals use the narrative form to remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead an audience” (p. 8). Based on the shared stories by the participants, the findings gave answers to the two research questions for this study. In addition to those findings, the participants shared other stories in their narratives. This section will present those emergent themes.

Although these themes were not part of the initial research questions for this study, they were established from the stories of the participants and provided additional clarity and meaning to the women’s experiences as Saudi women leaders in higher education. These themes also offer insight about these women’s experiences leading up to and during their leadership roles that can provide others with the ability to understand the point of view of these women leaders based on their professional experiences.

Hence, the additional emergent themes addressed women leaders’ experiences are grouped into two main parts. The first part focused on further findings related to women leaders’

experiences when interacting with men in the workplace. For this part, key sub-themes developed around the barriers women leaders faced. Participants shared their reaction toward male mistreatment and expectations. Participants also shared the justification for explaining the reasons for their stories to take such directions. In other words, the answer to the question: Why were these women leaders subjected to social roles and gender stereotype expectations when interacting with men?

The second part of women leader's shared stories was related to their opinions about Saudi women's complete access to leadership positions and decision-making. They also talked about their opinions of whether they would encourage other Saudi women to seek leadership positions. Their opinions shed light on how these participants viewed Saudi women in a leadership context from larger present and futuristic perspectives.

### **Barriers Women Leaders Faced When Interacting with Men**

The first additional core theme emerged from analyzing the data was *barriers women leaders faced when interacting with men*. The participants discussed those barriers as the result of being women and the social roles and gender stereotypes they had to undertake due to their gender when interacting with men regardless of their leadership positions. This theme was divided into four sub-themes. Those sub-themes were *women leaders' lack of true involvement in decision-making, power over resources, shortage of staff or faculty, and segregation between the two genders*. They are discussed in this section. Figure 6 summarizes the core theme barrier and its five sub-themes.

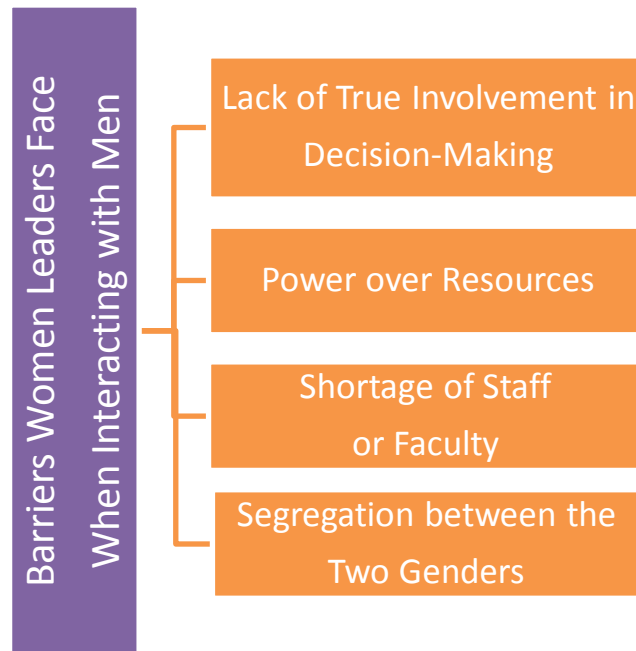


Figure 6. Core theme and sub-themes for barriers women leaders faced when interacting with men.

**Women leaders' lack of true involvement in decision-making.** All six participants considered *their lack of true involvement in decision-making* as a barrier they faced when interacting with men. To illustrate, Rany stated:

Everything between men and women is divided between the two campuses and females are the deputies of the male deans and head of departments. So, their [women's] leadership is more controlled and eliminated because their role is to agree and just say O.K. So, they [women] don't have the power of decision making.

Rany described how women only got leadership positions as deputies to male leaders. From her experience, female leaders' role was restricted to agreeing with men. She viewed this as a barrier that controlled the involvement of women leaders in decision-making. She felt she lacked true involvement in making decisions. She provided two examples related to this sub-theme by saying:

Regarding leadership, to be a true leader, you have a vision and strategies; you train the people working under you. I have two different stories. The first example is that I have a male physician and a medical educator. I am his head of department. It was hard for him to be led by a woman. I didn't care about his reaction. I played my role as a leader. I was determined that he did the tasks I requested from him. And I always reminded him that he reports to me and not to the [male] dean. So, he is supposed to do what I ask him and he is supposed to come to me to discuss it rather than the dean. Because I am insisting, I found that it wasn't comfortable for him to follow me but he had to. The good thing was that when he went to the dean, the dean referred him to me. So, as leaders, we need to be free to make decisions. But what is happening is that we are doing the usual administrative tasks.

Another story is related to working with the [male] deans of eLearning. We are in different campuses. The five deans are responsible for the males and I am responsible for the female students. We have to coordinate everything. And the men want to coordinate and control everything, even my staff. They wanted to interfere in my administrative duties and my lecturers. I said no. I refused. I informed them that I am the one who is responsible for the lectures and the lecturers and the students. So, this is a barrier of control and interference from the men. Again, we need to draw a line. What is your role and what is my role? What are your responsibilities and what are my responsibilities? They are treating me as a secretary. Why? Because of this division and to be honest you are not part of that circle and you don't have access to as much as the other [male] deans. So, your leadership will be some kind of eliminated. In this context, to be honest, it is hard to work. It is difficult.

According to Rany, she suffered with both male leaders and subordinates. The first example with the male subordinate demonstrated how her authority and decision-making was challenged by that male. He resisted following a female leader and challenged her leadership through checking with her male superior. Her superior properly supported her by returning the subordinate to her and not undermining her. The second example proved her struggle to have decision-making power on a higher level. Male leaders viewed her role as a "secretary," who received decisions and followed them. However, in both experiences, Rany refused to play such role and tried to show her ability in making decisions to male colleagues. Nonetheless, it was hard for her to work in such setting, especially when she had the leadership position but she lacked the ability to make significant decisions.



Hala's experience was consistent with Rany. She indicated that female leaders faced two main barriers. They were budget and decision-making. She described how women leaders' hands were "tied" and only allowed to make decisions for insignificant tasks. However, male leaders had the power to make the decisions for both campuses. Then she reinforced that these two barriers were the result of being a woman:

So, in budgeting and in decision-making all the female deputies have limited access to those and their hands are tied. What we have related to decision-making concern simple, few tasks, other than that it is all in the male leaders' hands and they have the power to make the decisions for both campuses. (...) Again, the only barriers I face related to gender and because I am a woman is my limited authority and involvement in decision-making and budget.

Then, Hala gave an example to demonstrate gender inequality in decision-making:

[R]estricting power, authority, and decision-making in the male campus. For example, a college dean may have one to two male deputies on the male campus to assist him. But he would have five female deputies on the female campus to do the same tasks the one to two male leaders do. So, power is distributed among a higher number of women leaders. This restricts their authority and even sometimes causes conflict among these women. It's like not only limiting their power but also *divide to conquer* because there is no clear job description among the five women leaders and either the work is not done properly since each one thinks it's not her responsibility or they fight because each one thinks that the other crossed her jurisdiction. While there are less male leaders in the male campus and their job descriptions are clear. (...) I think it is because men want to minimize the amount of power and authority that each woman leader has. And if one of these women leaders had more power, men resist her authority and sometimes they trigger a war against her because they [men] believe that it is their [men] responsibility to make decisions and women have to follow. Because some male leaders don't believe that they and women leaders are partners in decision making and in sharing the responsibilities of leadership between the two campuses based on their convictions in relation to the differential roles the two genders play in the society.

Hala elaborated on her experience and other female leaders' when interacting with male counterparts. She explained how leadership was divided with a higher number of women on the female campus than men on the male campus. She even used the idiom "divide to conquer" to show the unequal division of power among men and women leaders. From her point of view, this

division was to “conquer” women and limit their power, authority, involvement in leadership, and decision-making. Additionally, she described that if a female leader tried to seek more power, male leaders would resist and target her because of their beliefs related to “the deferential roles the two genders play in the society,” where men make decisions and women follow.

Manal summarized the barriers into two categories: limited resources and decision-making. She said, “When I think about the struggles, I think about the limited resources and involvement in decision making by women.” Moreover, Elham went further in tackling this sub-theme as a barrier faced by women when dealing with men:

You [women] are expected not to be a decision maker or involved in the process whatsoever. They [men] ask you for your opinion and then they do what they want. It’s frustrating that you feel your professional expertise is not appreciated in many occasions. Then, they [men] expect us [women] to be loyal and obedient to what they [men] say and ask for. In other words, men seek to marginalize and disregard the role of women in decision-making and want them to be obedient and loyal at the same time.

Elham described how men asked women leaders for their input then ignored their professional opinions. She felt frustrated to be marginalized in lacking true involvement in decision-making, on one hand; and demanded to be obedient and loyal, on the other hand. She also provided an example of a very dreadful incident to one of her female colleagues who dared to make a decision without men’s consent that Elahm witnessed:

[A]lthough we [women] have leading positions and women became deputy heads of departments and colleges, but to be honest, we have to abide by and comply with what we receive from our male superiors. When I was talking earlier, I meant and witnessed my colleague’s being penalized by her male head of department because she made some decisions related to her female students and faculty without going back to him and taking his approval. The result was terrifying. He took it offensively and he dismissed her from her leading position. Not only that, but all female deputy heads in that college received a text of her dismissal. What a shame?! She was devastated and treated as if she did a crime while she only tried to do her job and fulfill her position as a leader. He went after her in a very unprofessional way. And if you think a little, you will realize that by sending that message to every female leader was not only to dishonor her as a failure, but the main purpose was to warn all leading women to not follow her footsteps or their fate will be like that poor lady.

The above incident revealed the underlying discrimination carried against some female leaders. It showed how women were not allowed to make decisions for their departments or campuses. When a woman tried to practice her right and responsibility in leadership, she was penalized by being dismissed from her leadership position and she was made an example of by her male supervisor so that any future female leader under him would not act independently.

Samar also agreed with Elham. She emphasized how many female leaders felt they must play it safe when interacting with men in order to keep their positions:

[W]hen a woman becomes a leader, she has to deal with this view and mentality held by men. And many women try to play it safe or else they will lose their leadership positions.

Additionally, Samar provided an example of women leaders' lack of true involvement in decision-making when interacting with men. According to Samar, even though a female leader may not want to renew her term in leadership, she had no say in deciding to leave or stay in her position. It was in her male superior's hands. She stated:

In the workplace, if a deputy head or deputy dean [a woman] wants to leave her leadership position during or after the end of her term-as regulations imply-her male head or dean orders the renewal of her position regardless of her desire of continuing or not. And if she refuses to continue, he takes it personally and thinks that she left the position because of him and that may cause more trouble for her if she insisted on rejecting the renewal. So, you see, that sometimes a woman can get the leadership position easily but working as a leader is full of challenges for her due to both what comes with the position and gender. And sometimes unless her [male] boss doesn't want her, it is difficult to get rid of it.

Samar indicated that "sometimes a woman can get the leadership position easily but working as a leader is full of challenges for her due to both what comes with the position and gender." Consequently, gender played a great part in controlling Samar's interactions with men. She illustrated how culture played an important role in the dynamics between men and women:

Coming from a male culture requires that each gender knows their responsibilities, rights, and obligations toward one another. Therefore, women have to understand that when one

gets a leading position that doesn't mean that she has the ultimate power, authority, and decision-making. She has to realize that, although she has some power, but this power doesn't exceed men's power and authority over her, and that is what I meant by knowing her place. (...) So, we are receivers and they are deciders. (...) Another policy is related to limited participation in decision-making by women. Our hands are tied and we need to get the approval from our male counterparts for critical and important decisions.

Samar explained that women need to understand those dynamics and not cross them when they become leaders in the workplace. According to Samar, her gender as a woman labeled her into a certain status that would not exceed men's status, power, authority, and decision-making. That was why she used the expressions "knowing her place" and "our [women] hands are tied" to show women leaders' status in relation to men and how women always are required to seek men's approval, regardless of their leadership positions. It also reinforced how women leaders lacked the true meaning of decision-making.

Finally, Amal highlighted this same barrier of decision-making when interacting with men:

Gender stereotypes are similar to the social roles. But, what frustrates me is that I have the leadership position, but I don't have the full capacity and power to make significant decisions.

She even indicated that even though some male leaders said they gave women power in decision-making, they did not in real life situations:

Even when some [men] say or pretend to be cooperative to give women the power and authority to lead, in reality and application it doesn't happen and he who said that "you have the freedom to lead" will come after you and backlash at you for crossing the line and not getting back to him. It is so confusing.

She continued explaining her limited ability of decision-making by commenting on her role as a female leader. She solved minor issues and did administrative work. On the other hand, men had the total freedom of decision-making, especially important ones. She much expressed

her desire to have more freedom and involvement in decision-making without referring to men.

She illustrated this experience:

Barriers! As a leader I suppose that I can easily have the power to make decisions, however, my role most of the time is to manage the administrative work and solve some minor issues as I told you earlier. But the real decision-making is in the hands of men. So, I think this is the main barrier that I have. (...) Also, I wish that we [women] have more freedom and involvement in decision-making without needing to go back and get the approval from our male superiors.

All the participants expressed their frustration in being leaders but were not able to perform their responsibilities as leaders when interacting with men. They provided some real life experiences related to their role as leaders with the lack of true involvement in decision-making when they interacted with men.

**Power over resources.** The second sub-theme, *power over resources* was identified by all participants as a barrier when dealing with men since they were deputies of male leaders who had the power and authority in distributing the budget and resources. Hala explained the different distribution of budget between male and female campuses. While men enjoyed the leverage of freedom in satisfying all their campus' financial needs, they gave women less than they need. She stated:

For the budget, whatever we spend is way less than the men's budget especially for activities. On the men's campus, they take male students to fieldtrips where sometimes those academic fieldtrips were abroad to countries overseas. On the other hand, there are no fieldtrips for female students and when it happens, which is rarely, only to limited places. The men require certain conditions for those fieldtrips which demand more money; however, they give you [us/me] less than it needs to.

Manal also discussed her struggle with budgets. She indicated how men had complete access to the budget and she did not. From her point of view, women should have equal budgets, if not more, since female students' outnumbered males. She commented:

Budget is another barrier I struggle with on daily bases because I get less than my male counterpart and I make a fight to get more. (...) For example, the female campus has less access to resources, new furniture, and well financial budget than men's campus. From my point of view and experience, men has complete access to the annual fiscal for our institution that they use almost two-thirds of it for their campus and give us the one-third if not less. That is unfair. Although we are two campuses but we represent one institution and female students are outnumbering males. So, it should be at least equal if not the other way round. But since they [men] are the real stakeholders, they are who run and decide for the entire institution and put their interests first and give us [women] the leftovers.

Her comment included "unfair" and "leftovers" which described her experience and how she felt due to her unequal access to the budget as the one enjoyed by her male counterparts.

Elham faced the same dilemma with budgets. She described how she supported her department financially. She said:

I also support my department financially when needed due to lack of resources and financial support by the head because the men only give us [women] the minimum after a long process of administrative work and documentation, I call it torture, to get their [men] approval. (...) The budget is a real constraint where I have to manage the department with limited resources and support.

Elham called the process of administrative work and documentation of getting money from men as "torture." Because of the usual practice embraced by men in giving women less than they need, Elham repeatedly indicated how she supported her department financially from her own money. She considered that as a "burden" but she felt that she was out of options. Her comment was:

Budget is very important but my department, like many on the female campus, gets less than men which forces me to support my department and its activities from my personal salary which is a burden on me. But what other choice do I have?!

Furthermore, Samar agreed with Elahm in supporting her department financially. She stated:

Another struggle is budget. We [women] are always having shortage of financial support. So sometimes we depend on ourselves and our own personal money when needed. (...) For example, men are leaders who have the freedom to distribute the budget according to their needs and their campus. Then, they give their female deputies on the female campus whatever and less than what is required. If we ask for more, then, they either say that we are exaggerating in the budget, we don't need that amount of money, or even sometimes some sick men leaders question our integrity in an indirect way. So, that forces some women leaders to add over the budget from their own pocket rather than have their integrity questioned.

Not only struggling with the budget, but also Samar pointed out how male leaders might disregard their financial requests and/or might interrogate women's financial integrity, which was unacceptable to women leaders. She also indicated that the struggle with the budget was on a daily bases and on special occasions. She claimed:

[B]udget is a very huge problem that we face on a daily bases and on special occasions like departmental and college activities.

Amal also considered budgets as a barrier when interacting with men. She said, "Some of the struggles I have like the budget and shortage of the number of administrative staff." She also wished to have as equal access to the budget as men. She stated, "[B]udget is something I wish I could change by having equal to men since we receive less than the male campus."

Rany's specialization allowed her to work directly with men and women leaders and staff on both campuses. However, she admitted serving female students on the women's campus was the only time that she experienced some constraints on accessing resources. She said, "I have lots of shortage because I am working on the female campus." Rany provided an example of limited resources in not using technology on the female campus to support academic teaching. She considered the current practice as "behind the dream" or outdated. She said:

We have limitation in resources related to female students and male instructors by having network and limited studios, why don't we use technology? So, our policies are still rigid. It is behind the dream [outdated]. It is behind the progression taking place in the society and the world.

Elham tackled two shortages she experienced. The first one related to using technology, especially emails during the interaction between men and women. She identified how her institution still insisted on using snail mail between the two campuses which caused some problems. As a result of this practice, one major problem Elham highlighted was the limited number of mail carriers who spent a long time delivering mail between various campuses of males and females which complicated performing work more. The second shortage Elham described was related to furniture and transportation. She explained how men got the “best in everything” while women got “secondhand,” “cheapest,” or “less quality” just because they were on the female campus. She stated:

One traditional way that we still use and I believe it is unrealistic in this modern technological age is written mail or snail mail. Our institution is still depending on written letters and paperwork for all its transactions which takes long time, un-environmental, and needs hiring a lot of transporters or mail carriers which is not true and not happening, especially for a large institution that has many campuses in different locations like ours. Why can't they use emails?! More convenient, faster, and doesn't need anyone to deliver it. Other policies are related to transportation, furniture, and budget. The female campus, in my opinion, always has a shortage or less access to these things than men. While they have access to the best in everything, we get the secondhand or cheapest, less quality after they satisfy their campus' needs.

All six participants considered the unequal distribution of resources between the two campuses was due to gender. Men had the power over distributing the budget and the resources available for the institution. Therefore, the participants of this study indicated that because they were women, their departments and female students got less money than men and had less quality than the one provided on male campus.



**Shortage of staff or faculty.** For the third sub-theme under the core theme of barriers to working with men, three participants identified *shortage of staff or faculty* as a barrier when interacting with men. . This shortage could be related to the lack of resources mentioned in the previous section.

Rany talked about the shortage in staff she experienced. She said, “I have limited administrative support. (...) I have shortage in staff because I am a new department and it takes time to build the infrastructure.”

Elham also experienced shortage in faculty, commenting:

Another expectation for me as a woman in my campus is to manage teaching the load with the available number of faculty, regardless of if the women, here, are overloaded with teaching and administrative work. So, if our students need more faculty, even as part-time, we won't get that unless we are in crisis situations. However, that case doesn't occur on the men campus.

She highlighted the expectation male leaders held for her as a leader in fulfilling the schedule with the limited number of female faculty she had, which she considered a barrier as a woman leader. She even compared how she had to manage her department with fewer faculty members regardless of their loads while men, on the other hand, would not suffer from this shortage. Moreover, Amal indicated her shortage in administrative staff. She said, “Some of the struggles I have like the budget and shortage of the number of administrative staff.” These three participants expressed how their departmental shortage in administrative staff or faculty was mainly due to gender inequality. Based on their experiences, their suffering was because they were women.

**Segregation between the two genders.** The last sub-theme was *segregation between the two genders*. Rany, Hala, and Elham considered segregation as a barrier when interacting with men in the workplace. Rany commented:

As you know, there are two campuses where women are responsible for women's campus and men are for men's campus in addition to women's. You have all the responsibilities. But instead of doing your job, you have to keep the male leader in the picture all the time. You have to inform him about all your decisions or even don't decide until he agrees.

Rany said her lack of true leadership and decision-making was because of segregation.

She illustrated how men were responsible for both male and female campuses while women were responsible for the female campus. As a result of this segregation, women had to wait for men's approval and decisions rather than her being able to decide for her campus.

Hala indicated that men's segregation resulted in a lack of their direct interaction with women. Therefore, male leaders did not have a full picture of their female counterpart's achievements. In contrast, they have full access to supervise men's work, which gave them the advantage over women. She stated:

Because of segregation, since men are not interacting directly with women, they don't have the full picture of what's going on. For example, when I requested a certain budget for an event or activity, my male leader doesn't comprehend or visualize the need for that money. He thinks it is too much and keeps asking questions and even gives less because he is not involved in the process and can't access and see the event himself. But male leaders won't face that questioning or have an issue because the leader can supervise and attend for himself the event or activity.

Elham elaborated about the segregation between men and women. She described that this segregation caused separation between decision-making done by men and application done by women:

[O]ne main struggle is related to the separation between the leading and decision-making operations, where they take place on the men's campus and the management and administrative tasks that are carried by the women's campus. And I mean by that, that men decide for both campuses and they send those decisions to the women's campus to follow and undertake those decisions which means that we are most of the time like secretaries to male leaders to perform what we have been asked, even when sometimes we have issues that are related to the female campus and we don't need their involvement. But they require us to inform them and tell them what we are going to do and make their approval or denial. And if any female leader tried to make a decision by her own and informed her male superior later, believe me she will regret that and be

penalized if not losing her role as a leader or suspended, she will be interrogated and questioned for her action.

Due to segregation, Elham reinforced women's role as "secretary" to men. She also indicated that a woman would be penalized, interrogated, and/or suspended if she took any decision without her male leader's consent. She went further in her discussion and agreed with Hala in relation to the lack of interaction between men and women. She discussed how segregation caused the two genders to misunderstand one another, especially men, where the only experience they had with women was with their own relative females. She said:

Another struggle that is related to the separation is the segregation between men and women. From my experiences, I believe that this segregation between men and women created a culture of lack of interaction between the two genders and lack of knowing and understanding one another. I believe that half of the success as a leader relates to the immediate contact and interaction between the leader and his/her staff. And because men don't interact with us in one campus, they can't see our work and accomplishment; they don't have any experience in dealing with us as women in a professional manner and only depend on the way they deal and treat their female relatives, which is totally out-of-context. They only rely on paperwork, which is unfair in many cases because written work doesn't represent the actual performance, and also because in some occasions some of the written work may be lost or even hidden purposefully to harm that woman and undermine her hard efforts and performance.

To conclude the barrier section, the participants of this study varied in identifying the barriers they encountered when interacting with men in the workplace. However, regardless of the level of agreement between them, they all shared some type of barriers that hindered their performances as leaders because of their gender. Those constraints were due to these women leaders' social roles and gender stereotypes that forced them to deal with those barriers.

### **Women's Reaction to Male Mistreatment**

The six participants agreed about the double bind they faced when they interacted with men in the workplace. They talked about how they were expected and demanded to interact with men according to their social roles and gender stereotypes, which on many occasions

contradicted with their leadership roles. Therefore, these six leaders described their reaction to male mistreatment and underestimation of their role as leaders. Their reactions fell into one of three themes. The three core themes of reaction that surfaced from their experiences were: *resistance*, *acceptance*, and *diplomacy*. There were two participants of each type of the three core themes. Figure 7 represents the core theme and the sub-themes.

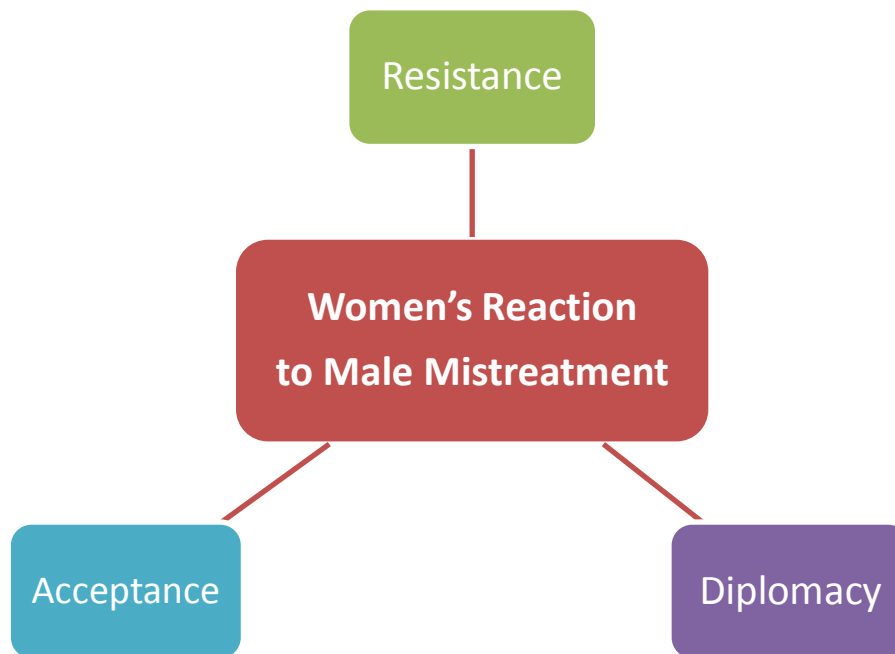


Figure 7. Core them and sub-themes for women's reaction toward male mistreatment.

**Women leaders' resistance.** The participants said that they sometimes *resisted* male mistreatment. Rany's reaction fell into this theme:

There is some kind of a belief that because you are a woman dealing with a male leader that: "You [women] are inferior and not equal to me [man]. They [women] are not able to lead." I don't accept feeling this way. I feel in certain situations that the man in front of me has a problem, social problem. So, I don't accept this problem. (...) But since we [women leaders] don't accept this [male mistreatment], we try to be dealt with as equal partners not to accommodate your [men's] comfort and discomfort zone. A lot of us are not accepting such behaviors and try to take our leadership to the next step.

Rany discussed how men looked at her and other female leaders as inferiors, unequal to men, and unable to lead. She resisted believing this. She even described a male leader with those beliefs as having a “social problem.” She indicated that her colleagues also rejected such beliefs and mistreatment of men. According to Rany, she and her colleagues sought equality. They even tried to “take their leadership to the next step.” In other words, they tried to perform their leadership role and responsibilities regardless of these men’s views and behaviors.

She continued:

I want to be a leader and not a manager. A leader who has a vision, inspires others, and changes their behaviors. Again, yes, it is a social thing but in my heart I believe there is no difference between men and women. Actually, I believe women are better [leaders]. So, on the College Board when I present a presentation or a project I get a lot of resistance. So, I learned my lesson. When I go to the College Board, I support my work with research with previous academic research. But at the College Board when I am so quiet if anyone try to blame [underestimated] me, I have another face where I become harsh and face their blaming.

In her above statements, Rany indicated her desire to perform her leadership responsibilities seriously and not to be a manager to a male leader. She knew that such inequality was due to social and gender expectations. Thus, she expressed her personal convictions related to “no difference between men and women” and she even believed that women were better in leadership than men. She illustrated her behavior and reaction on the College Board when dealing with men. For example, she supported her work with literature review and up-to-date studies. She also indicated that if male leaders blamed or underestimated her, she would be “harsh and face their blaming.” Also, she would show them her other face, which a translation of an Arabic idiom indicating being strong and ugly in defending oneself.

Manal also resisted men’s mistreatment and expectations in her own way. She stated:

I treat women and men equally, but I am harsher with men maybe because I want them to understand that I am equal to them. (...) I fulfill my position instead of the idea of carrying the administrative work for them [men] in running the business. In our society,

men rule everything and they transfer that to work. So, I want them to know that I am equal to them and I know how to get things done the way I want them to be with both men and women. Again, if they don't go by the book sometimes I have to be harsh and face them even if I have to complain and report their actions to a higher authority in the hierarchal chain.

Manal expressed her equal interaction with both genders, but said she could be harsher with men to stand for that equality. Her justification stemmed from her understanding of her society. She knew that women were treated unequally; therefore, she wanted to be clear when dealing with men that she was an equal leader to them and not a manager. One point that helped Manal in her resistance was going "by the book;" in other words, following the institutional regulations and policies. She also clarified that her resistance might take the form of fighting for her rights. She commented:

Male leaders think of us [women] as administrators or secretaries who follow their orders and manage the business on the female campus. But do you know that I do not accept that? I fight for my rights and don't allow them to make me play this role even if that makes me complain to a higher authority on the hierarchal structure of our institution.

Hence, Manal did not accept any mistreatment from men. She even indicated that she might "complain to a higher authority on the hierarchal structure" of her institution in order to be treated equally and not expected to manage or follow men's orders.

**Women leaders' acceptance.** Elham and Amal were the two participants who accepted male mistreatment.

Elham stated:

When I interact with men, I am more conservative than with women. I understand the social and cultural boundaries between men and women that force me to behave upon when interacting with male leaders. I am very cautious in choosing my words when I speak with men. I am formal so my words won't be misinterpreted.

Elham interacted with men differently. She expressed that she was "more conservative," knowing her "social and cultural boundaries," cautious in choosing her words, and "formal." Her

understanding of her social and cultural boundaries made her accept them and participated in sustaining the status quo of female leaders being considered as followers, managers, and dependent on men.

Amal also was aware of those boundaries. She accepted men's mistreatment through her interaction with men. She commented, "When I talk to men I have to understand my boundaries and ask things in the form of request with sweet talk in order to get their approval." Here, Amal described how she was not an equal partner to men in leadership. She was a follower who asked for work related things in the form of a request rather than a directive in order to get men's approval. She even expressed how working with women was easier than men. She stated, "It is easier to work with women in general. But you need to know your boundaries when interacting with men by getting your male superior's approval especially for important issues." Her experience with women differed because female leaders were equal to her and she did not need their approvals, while she needed male leaders' approvals to carry her work.

**Women leaders' diplomacy.** Two participants shared stories that developed the theme of *diplomacy*. For Hala, although there was no direct experience related to her reaction toward male mistreatment, one could infer that she was a diplomatic leader. In other words, she knew how to navigate her way in the system and achieve her goals by maintaining good relations with male leaders. She provided an example that could help in understanding how she was diplomatic when interacting with men even though they mistrusted her financial judgment:

Men aren't familiar with our needs in the workplace. They don't know how to interact professionally because they are used to their female relatives where the relationship between the two genders is mainly power holder for men and followers for women. Also, because of segregation, since men are not interacting directly with women, they don't have the full picture of what's going on. For example, when I requested certain budget for an event or activity, my male leader doesn't comprehend or visualize the need for that money. He thinks it is too much and keep asking questions and even give less because he is not involved in the process and can't access and see the event himself. But male leaders

won't face that questioning or have an issue because the leader can supervise and attend by himself the event or activity. (...) what I implemented in order to overcome this problem was by sending samples, photos, bills of the event or activity so he would be aware of the entire spending and event regardless of his absence from the scene. But it still is a challenge for us.

According to Hala, male interactions were limited to females in their families, where they had power over those female relatives. As a result of this limitation, and because of segregation between the two genders in the workplace, male leaders lacked experience in dealing with professional women. She illustrated with an example where her male leader questioned her financial requests thinking that they were unreasonable; meanwhile, a male leader will not have the same problem. Therefore, Hala provided her male boss with "photos, samples, and bills." Her diplomacy was characterized in her skill in maintaining a good relation with that male leader and clearing her financial judgment to him as her job may have depended on it.

Samar described her diplomacy as a woman leader when interacting with men:

I am a very diplomatic person. I respect everyone, especially men because our religion, traditions, and culture motivate us to behave in our best. So, I try my best to be cooperative and supportive of people around me, but at the same time, be affirmative that the job gets done on time.

Samar understood her beliefs and social norms and abided by them on some situations. However, she was "at the same time affirmative that the job gets done on time." In other words, she was skilled in having a good relation with men and accomplishing her work on time. She continued her reaction toward male treatment:

I am respectful of everyone, especially my male leaders. And sometimes I glorify them when needed because I always keep in my mind that they are the decision makers. However, that doesn't mean that I don't apply my power and influence in certain situations. For example, my [male] dean asked me to research and to present a specific topic. But I wasn't convinced and I informed him in a diplomatic manner that it is a waste of time and resources to do that research. He was convinced and I didn't escalate the situation but solved it in a professional and diplomatic way.



Samar described her ability to be respectful of her male superiors, while still confronting her male superior and refusing to follow his orders when needed. Not only that, but she also convinced him in a diplomatic manner that her point of view was the best.

### **Why were Women Leaders Subjected to Social Roles and Gender Stereotype Expectations?**

The answer to *why were women leaders subjected to social roles and gender stereotype expectations* when they interacted with men generated five core themes. They were: *social and cultural views, religious beliefs, educational system, women leaders not truly playing their leadership roles, and male resistance*. The level of occurrence of these themes and agreement differed among one to all participants. However, the ones that stood out are presented, even if mentioned by only one participant. These themes were presented in the following section. Figure 8 stands for the five core themes identified by the participants.



Figure 8. Core themes for why were women leaders subjected to social roles and gender stereotype expectations.

**Social and cultural views.** For this core theme, all six participants emphasized and elaborated on the role of *social and cultural views* held by their society. Rany said, “Sometimes the society looks down on us because we are women.” Here, Rany described being labeled as a woman directly lowered the status of her as a person. Additionally, when asked about the reasons for her male colleagues calling her “This is a little lady...,” her reply was:

It’s cultural. It’s social. Nobody can blame them. Their minds set that their wives, mothers, and daughters are in need of their support and in need of their help. So, they can’t believe that a woman can stand alone by herself and do things the right way. And actually be led by a female leader, Ok, female in any leadership position.

Rany argued that these male leaders implemented the common social and cultural views held by the society. She explained how men in the society, including her male colleagues, used to interact with their female relatives as dependents who needed support and help. According to her, because of these social and cultural views men held about women, they were not able to see women outside of those views. They disregarded any change or contradiction in those social and cultural views. Therefore, men could not see or treat women leaders as equal and independent. Rany even declared, “Nobody can blame them,” which showed how she understood their behaviors and beliefs. Rany went further and stated:

It’s cultural. (...) The [male] generation who is in the leadership positions now is coming from a different perspective. At that time [in the past], we didn’t have men and women working together. Men used to work and women stayed at home. Their mothers, wives, and daughters depended on them; so, they expected their female colleagues to behave in the same way.

Rany explained that some of these male leaders lacked the experience to interact with female colleagues and leaders because of the old fashioned cultural views. Their interactions with their female colleagues were based on their personal interactions with women in their families. Men were the providers for women while women stayed home to take care of the

children and depended on men financially. Hence, this social and cultural view was implemented in the workplace and was expected from women leaders to behave accordingly.

Hala agreed with Rany and provided a more in depth explanation. She commented:

The difference is because men aren't familiar with our needs in the workplace. They don't know how to interact professionally because they are used to their female relatives where the relationship between the two genders is mainly power holders for men and followers for women.

Hala explained that men lacked the knowledge of professional interactions with female colleagues. Therefore, they interacted with women according to the norms held by the society where men are the power holders and women are the followers. She went into further details:

Because all the rights or authorities are in the hands of men for decision-making, I think it is because of his beliefs and notions about women that derived from the cultural and social views and stereotypes that specify certain roles for each gender, like his traditional view that women are less than men, and makes him underestimate her knowledge and expertise based on the limited Eastern point of view toward women.

According to Hala, this power division between men and women was based on the “cultural and social views and stereotypes that specify certain roles for each gender.” Such views, like men being power holders and women being followers, made male leaders underestimate the knowledge and expertise of their female counterparts. And again, she indicated, “I think there is still some reservations and restriction that women face due to our cultural and social beliefs and roles of both men and women in our society and homes.” Hala highlighted how women still struggle because of those social and cultural beliefs, roles, and status that were expected from the two genders and elevated one gender over the other.

Manal indicated that the reasons for women leaders to be subjected to such social roles and gender stereotypes were “because of the different personalities that we are dealing with and the various environmental, social, and cultural conditions of the society.” And when asked whether these struggles were related to her gender, her reply was:

Definitely because I am a woman. Let me remind you that our society is a male-dominant one. Many families still raise their daughters as a second-class person due to their gender. My family didn't treat me in that way, but there are some who do. This concept is changing because we have many educated women who refuse such undermining of their role in the society. But again, even when she is equal to her brother in her family, when she gets married that equality, most of the time, fades away because the husband is the one who decides for the family regardless of her opinions. Some [husbands] consult their wives but they may or may not take their wives' advice into account.

Manal's explanation reinforced the status of women as "a second-class person" in preferring men over women and allowed men to have all the power while women were powerless. Although, Manal did not suffer from such mistreatment and she was clear that her family did not treat her in that way, she acknowledged the existence of this view that was held by many in the society. She also indicated that even when a female was treated equally to her male siblings, that equality faded away when she got married because husbands were the ones in control of the family. She even spoke out about the consequences of breaking the norms of the social and cultural views, saying:

I am a very proud Saudi woman. That being said, our society is a male society. Therefore, our values, beliefs, and behaviors are guided by this mentality and system. Any woman who tries to break this code will be punished personally or publicly. Some women don't care, but many in our society fear such stigma that ruins their reputations and their families. So, many women just follow the main stream. But, let me tell you that this will not last because the world around us is changing and our society is changing and the new generations will change this view pretty soon.

Manal described the Saudi society as a male one. Therefore, the society's beliefs and values were derived from power holders. She also explained how many women followed the views of the culture because not following them might ruin their reputations and their families by being marked as outliers of the society and their social and cultural views and norms. Thus, she also reinforced that those views were in the process of changing because of the new generation.

Elham's point of view was in accordance with the other participants. Her explanation was:

I believe that our social and cultural heritage in the Arab region and Saudi Arabia give men, whether they are educated or not; whether they are urban or nomadic, the complete right and the full freedom and power to decide. And women are expected to execute and obey their orders and if women participated, they participate in a minimalistic, narrowed boundaries.

Here, Elham expanded those social and cultural views to wider geographical boundaries, to not only include Saudi Arabia, but also the Arab region with unequal views of distributed power and decision-making between the two genders. When asked why she felt that her role was as an assistant or dependent on men, she replied, "Well, it is the result of our historical and cultural heritage and our social norms that being inherited from generation to generation and it is hard to get rid of." According to her, those social and cultural views were passed among generations and were difficult to eliminate.

Elham gave the following example of some struggles a female leader might encounter if she gained an equal power and position to a man due to those social and cultural views:

The fact that the Saudi society is a society of men; and therefore, the values that govern the society are derived from our culture. And, our religion and the veil legally and customarily prevents the emergence of women in international forums domestically and abroad. And even if a woman was assigned a top leading position like a minister or a head in one of the municipal councils or other leading positions, this will cause a dilemma for her because her male guardians may not accept some of her job responsibilities like co-working with men, traveling by herself, and/or communicating with media channels.

Elham's example demonstrated that even if a woman had the ultimate power, her male guardians might object and constrain her to perform job requirements because of those social and cultural views. As a result, that woman might fail not because of lacking the expertise to play the leadership role but because of the social constraints enforced upon her.

Samar's answered the question of why by saying:

[B]ecause of our traditions and culture. Being a man or a woman right away places each gender in a category where he and she need to follow the gender stereotypes of that gender. It is like a mold where men and women have a certain shape enforced on them according to our culture. For example, if a husband desires to divorce his wife, he doesn't consult her. He just does it. But if a woman wants a divorce, she has to consult, ask, and goes through a lot of legal work and psychological suffering until she gets it. So, the social scale is unbalanced. It is in favor of men and gives them power over women.

In her description, Samar used a simile to describe how gender played a major role in specifying one's status in the society. She used "a mold" that shaped male and female positions and roles in the society. She even gave an illustration related to divorce to indicate power differential between men and women. Moreover, Samar discussed how those social and cultural views gave men the power over women:

[W]e are socially and culturally raised in a way that men and women are different and that fathers, husbands, and brothers have more power over their wives, daughters, and sisters. This practice is sometimes transformed to the workplace where male leaders view their power and interaction with their female leaders as they treat their female relatives.

Samar highlighted that such unequal power distribution due to social and cultural views about the two genders were transferred to the workplace. That is, many male leaders treated their female counterparts the same way they treated their female relatives.

Amal's justification matched the other participants. She stated,

Imagine with me if we measure men and women on a scale, his words, knowledge, social status, and power will outweigh and exceed hers. Our society, culture, and traditions give him that authority over women in our homes and in all aspects of life including work. Women may interact with democratic, more liberal men, but the majority [of women] falls into the frame shaped by our society.

Amal compared male and female status and power. She declared that men's position in the society overshadowed women's. She indicated that such views were held by most men. She also pointed out that it was "because of culture and the way we were raised that categorized peoples' status in the society according to their gender." Additionally, Amal used similar

metaphors like Samar to describe women's position and status in the society, including the work environment as "the frame shaped by our society."

When asked whether she believed that the barriers and social roles and gender stereotypes she was expected to uphold were related to her gender, her reply was,

Yes. It looks like it. Why? Again it is the result of how men and women were raised. It is the outcome of genders' status in the family and the society that perpetuated the situation until this day and transformed to all aspects of life.

Amal answered by confirming positively my question. She reinforced the role of social and cultural views in affecting both genders in all life aspects. She even elaborated that,

The construction of our society is that men are the ones who have the ability to lead because they have what it takes in their characteristics and genes. But not all women have it. And those [women] who do, some of them are not sure how to lead; some because of their strict leading style are viewed as vicious; and, some women themselves think that their leadership skills and power must not exceed societal restrictions and the female gender boundaries in order to be accepted.

According to Amal, those views affected the way men and women played their leadership roles. They also distinguished the expected style of leadership between both genders. While male leadership styles were always viewed as being capable leaders, women had a different story. They were either "not sure" how to lead, were aggressive which was not appreciated, or played it safe in accordance with their "female gender boundaries."

All participants had a common view that the Saudi society was a male-dominated culture. They expressed that the reasons for them to be subjected to social roles and gender stereotype expectations, barriers, and experiences were the result of the social and cultural views carried by the society toward women and their role and status, especially when interacting with men.

**Religious beliefs.** Elham was the only participant who referred to the religious beliefs held by the society in general and the people she was interacting with personally. She said:

Many men and some women interpret and use religion to serve their own agendas. Many male colleagues consider themselves as the leaders and refuse to share that leadership with their female counterparts depending on their interpretation of a verse in the Holy Quran:

"الرجال قوامون على النساء"

[Translated as "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women" by Dr. Mohsin; or "Men are caretakers of women" by Mufti Taqi Usmani; or "Men are in charge of women" by Pickthal (The Holy Quran, 4:034)]. So, men use the literal meaning of this verse to serve their best interest because they know how much our religion means to us [Saudis] and how fundamental people carry their daily interactions based on our Islamic beliefs. In that sense, they always take the leadership roles and expect women to follow them at homes and at work.

According to Elham, men used religion to serve their needs and schema in preserving their power in the society over women. This is based on an interpretation of some Holy verses applied in their interaction with women, and some women themselves held the same beliefs and interpretations.

**Educational system.** The third core theme was the Saudi educational system. Two participants identified it as a reason for gender differences in roles, status, and expectations. Rany recognized that the educational system was to be blamed in creating women who could not lead and men who think they cannot. She said, "Females in our institution, who are created by a system, can't play the role of leadership." In addition, she described how this system from a young age until post-graduate reinforced the role of women as managers who were not supposed to be leaders. Her statement was:

You come from one educational system of elementary, high school, university, and Ph.D. and when you become a leader, your focus, vision, and perspective as a leader falls into the same system. You are a manager, for example, managing a high school. Just a small role. I believe they have more to contribute to the educational system. But if we have a



principal with a vision of how to change and improve education then we will have a revolution in education. I don't blame leaders because they are just created by one educational system. They don't play leadership roles. They are managing tasks. That's all.

Hala's opinion was a little different from Rany. She indicated that the educational system and the government provided legislations that served women very well. However, the application of these legislations was lost in translation because men were usually the ones who carried the application. Her comment was:

A woman has been given better work-opportunity and access to leadership positions in King Abdullah's ruling period without any doubt. And she has accomplished a lot where she wasn't able to play during the past era. For example, she gained access to leadership positions in the Saudi Consulting Council, municipal elections, ministries, and in higher education. But, in my opinion, we find that the negative outcome doesn't come from legislation, it is generated from applications. And I mean by that, we have many legislations and regulation that serve the women and even prefer them. But in reality, when it comes to applying these legislations and regulations you will find that either it won't be applied at all, or they were twisted to serve some groups mainly men in power. So, the government allowed and opened the door for women, but whoever are in leadership positions prevent these legislations and regulations because of their mentality, agenda, or fear of change.

Hala elaborated on the opportunities women have accessed, including educational leadership, in the reign of King Abdullah. According to her, the problem was not in creating more and better legislations and regulations for women equality, because they do exist. The real problem was in applying those legislations and regulations because the application is in the hands of men on the top and there is little enforcement or standardization. That is, the government has created much recent legislation to serve women, or as Hala's said, "opened the door" for women. However, the application was at the mercy of men's "mentality, agenda, or fear of change." Therefore, men with power might or might not apply those legislations, or twist those legislations to serve their agendas.

**Women leaders not truly playing their leadership roles.** For the fourth core theme, Rany, Elham and Samar agreed that there were some *women leaders not truly playing their leadership roles*. Rany indicated, “There is no culture here for female leadership; actually, the [women] leaders who are created by the same system. You will find that we don’t have female leadership. They just work as managers.” According to Rany, the educational system produced a culture that did not include women in its account to be prepared for leadership. Therefore, many women leaders did not truly know how to play their leadership roles. She explained:

If you have the leadership position then why aren’t you [women] doing your job and are always seeking men’s approval. The only answer that comes to my mind is that we are actually not leaders and we only perform the paper work for our [male] deans. We [women] are their assistants. So, we don’t believe in ourselves. We want to involve men all the time. Why??!! (...) Because there is no true leadership for women. (...) I don’t think that this issue is related to one man or two because if so then we can solve the problem. I believe the issue is related to the entire society. It is a common issue depending on the dynamic of the relationship between men and women which means that women always involve men in their decision making. You have to make decisions on your own. Why did he choose you as a leader if you are asking him for his approval and consulting him all the time? You are not a consultant; you are a leader. (...) So, women are confident in consulting someone else. They don’t play their role as leaders very well. They understand leadership differently in the sense to be followers of men. Let me tell you something, higher education is connected to the educational system. The principal in a school can play the role of manager to get the work done or a leader to make a change. We are talking about a one fully [completely in charge] female leader in the school. But some are not taking their post as it should be. So, that is transferred in higher education. Women leaders think that they are principals. But that is not true. You are a leader. They don’t understand the true meaning of leadership.

Rany highlighted several points. First, women leaders themselves did not uphold their leadership responsibilities seriously. They transferred their role as an assistant to men in personal life to the workplace. Therefore, they undertook their leadership positions as being assistants to their male counterparts. Second, the society itself created a culture of division between the two genders, where men were considered leaders and women were considered followers. This culture did not prepare women to perform their leadership. As a result, many female leaders lacked the self-confidence and efficacy as leaders because they followed the societal and cultural views

held about their abilities as women. Third, many men and women understood leadership differently from its true meaning, especially women. Rany provided an example of a female principal in a school where she is the complete power holder in the school; however, she plays a managing role rather than a leadership role. That is, she did not truly play her leadership role.

Elham presented the double bind women faced. On one hand, they were expected to play their leadership roles fully. On the other hand, they were expected to behave according to their social roles and gender stereotypes. Her point of view was:

[W]omen in general and working women in our society, especially women in leadership positions are facing a lot of challenges. Institutions want them to be independent, productive members but at the same time they don't want them to step out of their social and gender roles because they will be considered as outsiders and rebellions of our beliefs and our values which could demolish any woman or even man who seeks such untraditional path.

According to Elham, the double bind women leaders faced was the cause for them not playing their leadership roles truly and fully. She indicated the reason was that if a woman sought to be a true leader, she knew that she would be punished by the system because she broke the societal and cultural views and religious beliefs.

Samar added that women leaders did not truly play their leadership roles because of the lack of appreciation of their role as leaders. She commented:

One reason is because of the typical gender stereotype about women. Many people, men and women, don't believe in women's ability to lead. Even there are some who think that her role as a wife and mother is more important and her leadership role will affect her duty as a wife and mother. Therefore, any conflict between her personal role at home and her professional role at work must be avoided by either having a job, but not a leading position, or by even not working at all if it is conflicting with her significant role as a wife and a mother.

Samar pointed out that a common view held by many people in the society was that women could not lead. Women faced the reality that their role as wives and mothers outweighed their role as professionals and leaders. As a result, a female professional might decline a

leadership role. And if she gained one, she might not undertake it fully and truly because of the lack of appreciation of her leadership role; her personal role as a wife and mother is more significant than her professional role as a leader.

**Male resistance.** The last core theme that describes why women leaders were subjected to social roles and gender-stereotype expectations was *male resistance*. Rany indicated:

Another thing is that when I am working with males and females who are under me or they are my staff, I work as a leader for both, but male staff wouldn't take it easily to be supervised by a woman. The female staff is good and works easily with me.

Rany faced resistance from her male subordinates. They rejected the idea of being led by a woman. And she struggled with them in following her as a leader. Therefore, she was subjected to follow her social role and gender stereotypes as a woman who followed men rather than being followed by men. Rany also provided an example of women who had leadership characteristics, but did not get any leadership position due to their strong personalities. She said:

[W]e have some excellent, marvelous [female] leaders but they didn't get any leadership position because sometimes they are stubborn and strongly opinionated. They are so determined, which isn't accepted by men, because they want someone who is easy to work with and lead. So, they [men] tailor the position to fit someone who doesn't have the leadership skill.

She explained that male leaders wanted to work with women who would follow them rather than lead. She used the term "tailor the position" to describe how men wanted women with certain characteristics in order to gain the leadership position. Those characteristics had to abide by female social roles and gender stereotypes. If a professional woman behaved differently from those characteristics, then she would not gain access to a leadership position. In other words, men resisted hiring women in leadership positions who did not comply by their social roles and gender stereotypes.

Also, Rany indicated that this resistance by men was not only experienced by her but it was experienced by other female leaders she knew. She stated:

Some of my female colleagues, when they present something to the College Board, they face some resistance but they say that the resistance is because they are females. So, I face resistance Yes, the resistance I face was because I am a female.

Samar indicated that gender played a role in the interaction between men and women. They have to understand the rights and boundaries came with each gender. Her comment was:

Coming from a male culture requires each gender to know their responsibilities, rights, and obligations toward one another. Therefore, women have to understand that when one gets a leading position that doesn't mean that she has the ultimate power, authority, and decision-making. She has to realize that although she has some power, this power doesn't exceed men's power and authority over her and that is what I meant by knowing her place.

Samar explained that male resistance was one reason for why women were subjected to social roles and gender stereotypes. According to her, women were required to "know their place." Women leaders must understand that although they accessed leadership positions, they do not have the "ultimate power, authority, and decision-making." Because if women leaders tried to be true leaders, the consequences they might face would be resistance and retaliation from men because they did not follow their gender stereotypes. Amal agreed with both Rany and Samar. She indicated that she played the leadership role she was expected to "Because if I was strong and affirmative as a leader I will face a lot of resistance from my colleagues specifically men."

### **Women's Lack of Complete Access to Top Leadership Positions**

One interview question that the participants were asked was whether Saudi women leaders had complete access to top leadership positions. The purpose of this question was to explore the participants' views of whether their gender helped or hindered their complete access to top leadership positions in comparison to the ultimate authority men held. The only emerged

theme that presented their experiences and views about the topic was women's *lack of complete access to top leadership positions*.

All six participants agreed strongly that they did not have complete or even equal access to top leadership positions in comparison to men. For instance, Rany's answer was not surprising at all. She stated, "Do you imagine that one of our Saudi universities will have a female director [president]? No, of course! Not in a thousand years." And when I asked her why she thought in this way, Rany replied, "They [women] won't. They will always be co- or deputies. But as a president, no." Rany had her doubts about Saudi women gaining complete access to top leadership positions.

Hala also shared the same view. She said:

I remember that on an event I met a very powerful female leader. However, when she was asked to give a statement regarding the event, she refused and informed the media that she has to contact her male leader to make the statement. So I was shocked. It wasn't a decision to make; it was a statement about the event to the media. So, to answer your question: no, the Saudi women leaders didn't reach the complete and equal access to leadership. Because I don't believe that if the male leader was in her shoes would ask permission from any one to give his statement.

Hala witnessed an incident where a "very powerful" female leader was not able to share her thoughts about an event without referring to her male leader. According to Hala, a male leader would not have the same reaction and he would have expressed his opinion without the need to refer to someone else. Therefore, Hala's opinion about the incident of her female colleague's refusal to comment on the event was because female leaders lacked equal or complete access to top leadership positions. Manal agreed with both participants. Her view was:

I am sure that you know that women don't occupy higher status of leadership in any institution than men except if she owns the organization. (...) In my opinion, even when Saudi women accessed leadership positions, the road is still long and unpaved.

Manal highlighted the point of view of status division between the two genders. Women always occupied a lower position than men in the hierarchal structure. They assisted men but did

not lead them unless they owned the organization. To Manal, the leadership road was still premature for women because she admitted that the current situation reflected the reality that women lacked complete access to leadership positions.

Elham was so sarcastic when she heard the question. She commented:

[Laughter]. If you are suggesting that women accessed leadership equally to men and have the power to decide for themselves and their campuses, then, you must be joking. Yes, we did access leading positions in higher education but in reality and on the ground that we can't make any real decision for ourselves and our campuses without men's approval except for making decisions for some minor administrative work. So, we are somehow dummies controlled by men and our real role is just to administrate the work.

Elham's reply revealed the underlying treatment many Saudi women leaders experienced. She not only called the question a "joke," but she also pointed out that even her current role as a leader was not as equal or significant as that enjoyed by male counterparts. Her point of view was that Saudi women leaders were "dummies controlled by men" and the boundaries for their leadership were to perform administrative work and make minor decisions. So, her indirect answer reinforced that women lacked complete access to top leadership positions.

Moreover, Samar's answer was in accordance with the other participants. She indicated:

We [women] don't have equal access to leadership positions as much as men or otherwise you would see that we have a minister. But we don't. And even those women who have the leadership position they are managing the administrative work on the female campus and not being able to be true leaders.

According to Samar, lack of a Saudi female minister was clear evidence that Saudi women lacked complete and equal access to top leadership positions. She emphasized Elham's view of women leaders' role being more of an administrative one rather than a decision-making role.

Amal also had the same opinion. She stated, "I know that I got my leadership position in a short time, but I don't think that Saudi women have complete access to top leadership positions in higher education or you would see her in a minister position." Amal, like Samar, thought that

equal and complete access could be evident when women participate on a high level of leadership; which according to her was becoming a minister. However, no Saudi woman has reached this position so far.

### **Encouraging Future Female Candidates to Leadership**

Despite all the challenges related to social roles and gender stereotypes that Saudi women were expected to uphold in their workplace, each one of them confirmed her full support to prospective candidates who were seeking leadership positions. Therefore, one additional core theme that emerged from their stories was *encouraging future female candidates to leadership*. The participants' replies included their support and the qualities or the barriers that those newcomers need to be aware of.

Rany's answer was:

Leadership is very hard. It's really hectic because it takes a lot of your time. Socially, you get the prestigious position in the society but in reality it demands a lot of work, especially for a woman. It's a nice experience but it depends on your own style.

Rany viewed leadership as a "hard" and "hectic" task "especially for a woman" even though it provided social prestige. She also gave some tips for future female candidates:

First, I will advise her to know what her goal in this position is. What will it take from you and what will you give? Second, how are you going to make a difference in two years? What type of change are you going to make? How are you going to measure it? You have to take the leadership position with an agenda. If not, then you are not going to run the position, the position will run you. Third, she is supposed to be herself and reflect on her behaviors and accomplishments in this position. Fourth, she needs to understand who she is dealing with. What are their characteristics, personality? She needs to understand her male superiors: is he a supporter or not? If not a supporter, she is going to be in a lot of battles. One of the barriers she needs to consider in the beginning of gaining the position is that: I am not a leader as a challenge of being a woman means she has to be dependent on men, in other words, her identity as a leader. O.K. Also, her co-workers. She needs to understand her team players and their personalities. If they gave you a lot of paper work that means they transferred you to be a manager. As a leader you have to say no. you have to play your role and not let your dependents play you. She has to be aware of and build clear personal communication and build a network. Who are your lobbyists? It is very important. Also, being reflective is important. To know what you have accomplished and where you are heading.



Rany's tips for future female candidates to leadership included: (a) knowing her goals, (b) defining herself as change agent or not (c) being herself and reflect on her accomplishments, (d) knowing her superiors and team, and (e) building a support network. Another important point of advice was related to gender. She advised the prospective female candidate to know her male superior and his attitudes toward female leaders. Rany indicated that if that male leader was not a supporter; then, that female leader should prepare herself for "a lot of battles." She also highlighted a gender barrier where the new female leader in the early stages of gaining the position should consider her role as a manager and not a leader.

Hala also encouraged future female candidates to leadership. Her answer was full of enthusiasm. She commented, "Of course." She even said that, "I will encourage that woman to know the amount of power, authority, and decision-making that she will have because I don't want her to be shocked with reality. Because a woman mainly has less power than men." Hala expressed one main concern for the new woman leader. She wanted her to understand the power and involvement in decision-making because she did not want her to "be shocked with reality" Her justification for such a shocking dilemma was that women leaders have unequal power and authority and involvement in decision-making in comparison to men.

In accordance to both participants' replies, Manal agreed with them by saying:

Of course I will, because it is an honor to serve our country and be part of its development. However, I would inform her that one obstacle she needs to be aware of is the lack of training to female leaderships, especially in the beginning. She needs to depend on herself and improve herself even if that means she pays for it from her own pocket.

Manal's answer pointed out a barrier that a prospective woman leader might face. That barrier was training. Because according to Manal, women lacked training and mentoring. She advised her to improve herself, especially at early stages of her access to leadership positions, by

paying for her training from her own money if necessary rather than waiting for her institution to support her financially to gain training.

Moreover, Elham was supportive of encouraging future female candidates to seek leadership positions. She stated:

Without any doubt! I will encourage other Saudi women to seek leadership positions because it is our duty to serve our country and help in developing the country. Also, we need to play part in educating young women because if we don't do that who would?! They are the future changers.

Elham had no doubt about her role as a supporter. She viewed her role and other women's role as part of women's involvement in developing the country. She also had a great sense of responsibility in educating young women because "they are the future changers." Elham also pointed out the important role of mentoring for new female leaders in the beginning of their access. However, she indicated that the leader had to support herself professionally and support her department financially because these two would be visible obstacles to her. She commented:

She has to be aware that one barrier she will face is the lack of mentoring and training for women leaders. So, to overcome that she needs to depend and develop herself through attending workshops and training sessions, especially in leadership in order to access leadership positions and be a good candidate. Also, she has to be aware that on many occasions she has to support her department or whatever leading position she is occupying from her own pocket because women leaders lack the proper financial support from the institution. For the qualities, I can't recall anything that may help her except herself as being a strong independent woman.

Samar also agreed with the other participants. She stated:

Yes, I will encourage other Saudi women to become leaders in higher education because it is our obligation to develop our country and our institution, especially the time for change is taking place in all aspects of life and affecting everyone in the country.

Samar's opinion was the same regarding women's involvement as part of developing the country. She drew attention to the changes undertaking that affect everyone and women should play a major role in that change. She even gave some guiding information to the prospective woman leader. She stated:

In my opinion, she has to work hard to prove herself and let her work and research speak for itself. Also, she has to attend workshops and build good relations and a supportive network with colleagues as important qualities she has to have to be successful. And to overcome barriers, I think she has to be diplomatic and knowledgeable about her leading position, the people she is working with, and her [male] superiors.

According to Samar, the new female leader should seek training and build a network.

Additionally, she should work hard to prove herself, be knowledgeable, and be diplomatic when interacting with others, especially her male superiors.

Finally, Amal had the same opinion for future female candidates seeking leadership positions. She said, “Yes of course because it is our duty to be part of building our country especially in this time where it is encountering a lot of changes.” Her reply was not different from the others. She indicated that the country was “encountering a lot of changes.” Therefore, women leaders should push toward more positive change. Amal advised the female candidate of leadership to:

Know her responsibilities and the nature of work because there is no clear vision about our role as women leaders. I will also encourage her to create a network because it will help her a lot, in her position and it will facilitate and open doors for her in doing her job.

In her advice, Amal encouraged future leaders to “know her responsibilities and the nature of work.” According to Amal, institutions lacked the policies and regulations that supported the role of female leaders. It was a culture of marginalization of women’s roles as leaders. In addition, she encouraged her to build a network because it would assist her in accessing leadership positions.

### **Summary**

The stories shared by these women leaders suggested that their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education were because they attained their *doctoral degree*. Some participants accessed leadership positions with limited experiences, while others developed academic and administrative experiences over the course of time until they earned a doctoral

degree and gained leadership access. Additionally, all participants emphasized that their *visibility* was due to their *hard work and accomplishments*. As a result of their hard work, their superiors *recommended* them to access more and higher leadership positions.

Their stories as Saudi women leaders did not end there. Each woman revealed the expected social roles and gender stereotypes she had to uphold in the workplace in relation to two areas: (a) when interacting with men, and (b) when interacting with women in the workplace.

For social roles and gender stereotypes women leaders were expected to uphold when interacting with men in the work place, three core themes emerged. They were: *men's roles*, *women's double bind*, and *women's feminine characteristics*. Men's expected roles generated two sub-themes which were *men as leaders* and *men being practical*. For women's double bind, women were expected to fall into four sub-themes. They were *women leaders as followers*, *as managers*, *as dependent*, and *as inferior*. Women leaders were also expected to hold *feminine characteristics* that abide by their social and cultural norms in running their leadership positions.

These female leaders also discussed the social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold when interacting with women in the workplace. Their experiences varied between *women as enemies of other women*, *women as supportive*, and *women leaders' situational actions* where women were showed *occasional firmness* and *occasional support* depending on what was called for from the situation.

In addition to answering the two research questions, the participants shared stories about their experiences that were grouped into two parts. The first part focused on additional findings related to women leaders' experiences when interacting with men in the workplace. For the second part, participants shared their opinions and views about Saudi women's complete access

to leadership positions and decision-making and whether they would encourage other Saudi women to seek leadership positions.

For the first part, these women disclosed the *barriers* they faced when interacting with men. Those barriers included *leaders' lack of true involvement in decision-making, power over resources, shortage of staff or faculty, and segregation between the two genders*. All of these women reinforced that they were subjected to these barriers only because of their gender and status in the society that transferred to their workplace.

Furthermore, the participants talked about their experiences and views regarding their *reactions to male mistreatment*. Two participants were *resistant* to male mistreatment and expectations. Two fell into the *acceptance* zone. And the last two were *diplomatic* in dealing with men.

These women also provided some justifications for such mistreatment and expectations. They provided five reasons for why they were subjected to social roles and gender-stereotype expectations when interacting with men. The most significant reason shared by all participants was *social and cultural views* toward women. The participants identified four additional reasons. They were *religious beliefs, educational system, women leaders not truly playing their leadership roles, and male resistance*. The participants' point of views varied in the level of reasoning regarding these reasons, or what each one identified meant to her expressively.

Additionally, each one gave her opinion about whether Saudi women have *complete access* to leadership and her opinion about encouraging future female candidates to leadership. All six participants denied the idea that Saudi women leaders had complete and equal access to leadership as much as the one enjoyed by men; that was, *women's lack of complete access to top leadership positions*. Thus, they all agreed on *encouraging future female candidates* to seek

leadership positions in order to be part of developing the country, especially in these critical changing times. They provided some insightful advice related to the barriers and support that those candidates might face when seeking leadership positions.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This narrative study explored the stories of Saudi women leaders regarding their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education. Saudi women leaders talked about their social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in accessing and performing leadership positions in higher education.

The discussion in Chapter four consisted of the findings related to the research questions and other additional themes that surfaced from analyzing the data. Therefore, this chapter discusses the findings based on the themes emerged from the participants' stories and compares the findings to the conceptual framework of this study and the literature review. Additionally, this chapter presents the limitations and challenges of conducting this study. The chapter concludes with implications and recommendations for further research.

### **Discussion**

Creswell (2009) indicated that the discussion of qualitative research involves “stating lessons learned, comparing the findings with the past literature and theory, raising questions, and/or advancing an agenda for reform” (p. 201). Therefore, this chapter will be organized accordingly. The research, conceptual framework, and literature review were guided by the following two questions: (1) what were the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education?; and (2) what social roles and gender stereotypes were these women leaders expected to uphold in the workplace?

### **Unpacking Saudi Women Leaders' Access**

When seeking the answer for the first research question, it was anticipated that the participants of this study would discuss and acknowledge the existence of a glass ceiling. On the contrary, none of the participants referred to the glass ceiling as a barrier to accessing leadership

positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; French & Raven, 1959; Gregory-Mina, 2012). A possible explanation for this is that the participants did not recognize the existence of a glass ceiling because the educational system is segregated in Saudi Arabia. As a result of segregation, there always has been a need for female leaders on women's campuses. This segregation allowed professional women access leadership positions in higher educational institutions as long as they had their doctoral degree regardless of the pathway or the amount of experiences and length of time working in their institutions.

The first emerging theme in relation to accessing leadership positions in higher education indicated that Saudi women leaders had access to leadership because they attained their *doctoral degree*. Three participants described their access to leadership as easy because they had limited experiences after they acquired their doctoral degree but quickly found a position. One described her access as: "Becoming a leader in my situation was not that hard. I found myself in a leadership position." And another one considered herself "lucky" for accessing three leadership positions after gaining her Ph.D. while having limited experiences.

The other three participants identified their access to leadership as the result of getting their doctoral degree while climbing the ladder. For example, one participant indicated that she accessed leadership positions "after I finished my Ph.D." The other two participants had thirty years and thirty-two years of experiences in higher education, respectively. They started as teaching assistants and continued their work and graduate studies during those years. Both of them agreed that they only accessed leadership positions after they attained their doctoral degree.

Regardless of the pathway these six participants experienced, they all shared a very significant key finding in accessing leadership positions in higher education. This key was the participants' attainment of a doctoral degree. Getting a Ph.D. allowed the participants to access



leadership with or without the sufficient professional academic and administrative experiences. It opened doors for them to access leadership positions in higher education. This key finding of doctoral degree attainment shows how the Saudi higher educational system works. Accessing leadership positions requires getting one's Ph.D.

The second key finding that emerged from the stories of the participants in relation to their access to leadership was *visibility*. All of the women leaders interviewed agreed that their visibility helped them in accessing more and higher leadership positions after their first one. They emphasized the role of their hard work, proving themselves, and accomplishments in order to be visible. Their accomplishments varied between research, publication, network, and projects. As a result of their hard work and accomplishments, they made a good professional reputation for themselves and became visible to their superiors who recommended their names to access further leadership positions. Based on these participants' experiences, this finding reinforces the important role of working hard in the advancement to leadership positions in higher education.

The emerged themes for the first research question are in contrast to the current literature in chapter 2. Therefore, additional literature is added that relates to those findings.

Faulconer (1995) conducted a quantitative study by sending a survey to 208 female community college presidents, vice presidents, and deans. The response rate was 72%. One of the findings that related to this study was how the "higher the position a woman holds on the education administration ladder, the more likely she is to have earned her doctorate" (p. 18). She encouraged women to take advantage of the professional development opportunities in their higher educational institutions if they are seeking to climb up their institutional ladder (Faulconer, 1995). Moreover, in a think piece by Duvall (2003), she indicated that many women

considered the attainment of their doctoral degree as the standard for accessing leadership positions in higher education. She explained that this perception comes from the assumption that doctoral degree attainment represents a high level of academic expertise that is needed in fulfilling the leadership position (Duvall, 2003). Both papers reinforced the importance of holding a Ph.D. in helping women access leadership positions in their institutions which is congruent with the current participants' experiences.

In her book, *On becoming a Woman Leader: Learning from the Experiences of University Presidents*, Madsen (2008) interviewed ten university presidents and chancellors to highlight their stories of becoming leaders in education, their experiences, and lessons learned during that journey. She talked about their youth from childhood to the undergraduate stage. Her research findings included the participants' stories about their adulthood experiences, until they became university presidents, and then experiences during their presidency. One part of her book that relates to these findings is pursuing graduate studies. Her participants indicated that they were strongly encouraged by faculty members and researchers to get their doctoral degree in order to access leadership positions. These female presidents reflected on their academic experiences and Ph.D. attainment as a source of preparation to leadership ability and proficiency. Madsen (2008) also discussed career development. Her presidents highlighted the importance of seeking professional development in accepting new academic and nonacademic positions, tasks, and training. Through the various roles these women played, they kept learning and thrived as individuals. Their hard work and accomplishment over time paid off in advancing to leadership positions because their experiences enriched and shaped their leadership competencies (Madsen, 2008). These findings relate to what the participants of this study expressed as part of their experiences in accessing leadership positions.

Barry (2009) interviewed four women leaders of two-year technical colleges for her qualitative study. Her research findings suggest how career pathway and professional development played a major role in accessing leadership positions. She indicated having a doctoral degree allowed her participants to assume the leadership role of presidency in higher educational institutions. She also suggested that academic women seek a non-linear professional career pathway. Her participants did not seek leadership positions right away. They worked hard, proved themselves, and got promoted by their superiors (Barry, 2009). In my study, my six participants described the importance of getting a Ph.D. that allowed them to access leadership positions in their higher educational institutions. They also highlighted that their hard work and accomplishments made them visible to their superiors to recommend them for more and higher leadership positions.

In another study, Carter (2009) interviewed thirteen female college presidents from three selected states. The purpose of the study was to identify these women's pathway and the personal and professional factors that contributed to their successful access to leadership positions. The findings suggested the important role of educational preparation/credentials, professional opportunities/experiences, community service, board service, professional development, professional network, and mentors. Carter's (2009) participants reinforced the significant role of getting a doctoral degree. It qualified them to access leadership position as presidents. Additionally, her participants identified the fruitfulness of their professional experiences and their hard work that ascended them to presidency (Carter, 2009). Both educational preparation/credentials and professional opportunities/experiences of the Carter study correspond with my findings in relation to access.

My findings are also in line with Munoz's (2010) findings. Munoz (2010) examined the career path of Latina presidents of higher educational institutions, the early influences, and external forces that affected their access to leadership. She identified four emerged themes: (a) personal context, (b) professional preparation, (c) professional context, and (d) challenges faced. She found that culture and family affected the participants' value system which informed their decision-making. Additionally, her participants identified the need to change the institutional culture to be more inclusive since leaders tend to hire people who look like them. She also discussed the lack of networks and the role of mentors in accessing leadership positions. The emerged theme of professional preparation relates most to this study. Munoz's (2010) participants highlighted the importance of attaining their doctoral degree in order to advance to leadership. Her participants also emphasized the professional development and training they sought outside their programs and institutions. These professional skills distinguished their work and allowed them to build relationships with trustees and gatekeepers. This relationship with trustees was vital for these Latinas to successfully be recommended and access the presidency of their institutions (Munoz, 2010).

Looking at the literature and my participants' stories, one can see the significant roles educational and professional preparation and opportunities play. The findings help those who have aspirations to leadership positions in higher education understand how other women have navigated the institutional dynamics. The literature and the findings of the current study would suggest that professional women should plan for their access to leadership knowing what pathways to pursue and the vital role of getting a doctoral degree in gaining leadership positions. They also should develop their leadership skills and abilities in seeking professional

opportunities by putting efforts and making their achievements noticeable for others to acknowledge and promote when the time comes.

### **Unpacking Social Roles and Gender Stereotypes**

The answer to the second research question revealed the dynamics that these participants had as leaders. Based on their experiences, their relational interactions in the workplace were divided into interactions with both men and women. The following section provides a discussion about those interactions.

**Social roles and gender stereotypes when interacting with men.** The following part discusses the social roles and gender stereotypes the participants of this study were expected to uphold when they interacted with men in the workplace. It presents how these participants saw men and how they were viewed by men.

***Men's role.*** As noted in Chapter 2, Eagly's (1987) social role theory explained that the differences between men and women in their behaviors are a result of the different roles the two genders play according to the expectations held by their society (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000). This theory indicated that the common gender stereotypes a society holds organize gender roles in their society. The theory explains the differences in their behaviors and the division of labor based on those stereotypes. One of the notions Eagly's (1987) social role theory discussed was the differential status men and women possess in society because of their social roles. The theory suggested that men tend to occupy high status in the hierarchy at work and in the family. For example, husbands' common stereotypic role has the most power and decision-making authority in family affairs. In contrast, the wives' general role is to carry out domestic chores and childcare, and this has lower status. This division within family boundaries is transferred to the

workplace. Men are likely to occupy higher status, with more power, advancement, and influence than women.

Relating to Eagly's (1987) social role theory to the current study, Saudi women leaders in this study discussed the status of men. They referred to men as leaders. One participant said, "They [men] are leaders. They are the leaders of our society." Four other participants also believed that men are the leaders of the society both at home and in the workplace. They indicated that men held more power, had more authority, and involved in decision-making more than women, which relates to Eagly's differential status of the two genders. This finding also aligns with a think piece by Ridgeway (1992). She reinforced what Eagly proposed by suggesting that the two genders behave based on their respective status in the society; men possess higher status and exercise influence over than women. Ridgeway and others went further in demonstrating that men and women might have identical work (just like my participants at some of the leadership positions they occupied); however, they occupy different titles and involvement in decision-making where men have more advantage than women (Ridgeway, 2002, 1992; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

The second finding that emerged under men's role was being practical. Two participants admired the existence of such quality in their male counterparts that they said women lacked. They described men's practicality in the sense of assertiveness and confidence that their female colleagues did not possess. One notion of Eagly's (1987) social role theory relates to this finding. According to the theory, men are agentic and women are communal. The agentic aspect of gender stereotypes is that men are believed to be assertive, controlling, forceful, aggressive, ambitious, direct, and independent from other people. In contrast, the communal aspect for women in social role theory is that women are believed to be emotional, helpful, affectionate,

kind, sympathetic, and concerned with the welfare of others. One can infer that the appreciation these two participants had for men in leadership is due to their perception that the confidence and assertiveness of male leaders helped and eased the work for the participants.

Looking deeper at how women leaders viewed men and talked about those views in their stories reveals the underlying societal structure. It shed light on gender differential status in Saudi society. It reinforces the concept that Saudi society is still a male one, that prefers one gender over the other. For example, one participant described the society as a “male-dominant culture” where the society gives men “freedom,” and in contrast, it constrains women.

***Women leaders’ double bind.*** Many researchers have written about the double bind women leaders face in the workplace when interacting with men (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Yoder, 2001). As noted in Chapter 2, Based on Yoder’s (2001) gender-sensitive model, she suggested that women leaders face double binds for lacking power as a result of their gender and social status, even though they occupy leadership positions and have the title, which can be described as positional leadership. *Positional leadership*, from the participants’ point of view, is professional women occupied leadership positions in public higher education institutions and lacked the power, influence, and true involvement in decision-making because of their gender as females. According to Eagly’s and Sczesny’s (2009) expansion of Eagly’s social role theory, this double bind is because there is contradiction between women’s gender stereotypes and social role expectations and the stereotypes about leaders. Therefore, women encounter prejudice related to this mismatch between their gender role in the society and their leadership role in the organization. The following section discusses the four types of double bind that participants of this study experienced. They discussed how they were expected to be followers, managers, dependent, and inferiors when they interacted with men in the workplace.

*Women leaders as followers.* The six Saudi women leaders in this study illustrated how they were expected to be followers to their male counterparts as one type of the double bind. For instance, a participant expressed the double bind of being a follower as “women just follow or obey” men’s orders. All the other participants referred to their role as followers when interacting with men in the workplace. Another participant went further in her explanation by stating, “The common stereotype in the society for the two genders is that men are born to be leaders while women are born to follow men’s footsteps. This common belief is transferred to the workplace.” These statements by the participants relate to Carli’s (2002) literature review. Based on the findings of the previous research she reviewed, she proposed that female leaders have a lower level of power and influence than men because of their gender status in society. In addition, AlMunajjed (1997, 2010), Al-Tamimi (2004), Barnett (2007), and Sadi and Al-Ghazali (2010) indicated that professional women were considered followers by their male counterparts, which is in line with the findings of this study.

*Women leaders as managers.* The participants described their role as managers when they interacted with men. For example, some of the statements that reflected their experiences of being expected to interact as managers with men were: “female colleagues are managers;” “secretary or manager;” and “manage things but don’t make real decisions.” Additionally, one participant expressed the situation with a stronger phrase, “Know your [her/women] boundaries when interacting with men.”

These statements align with the status of women because of their gender in the society identified in social role theory (Eagly, 1987). They also exemplify the prejudice women leaders bare because of the contradiction between their gender stereotypes and leadership stereotypes as proposed in the congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In addition, those experiences represent



the double bind these participants dealt with when interacting with men in the workplace (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009).

Furthermore, these Saudi women leaders' reality of being expected to be managers for their male colleagues reinforces the concept of the glass ceiling. The highest leadership position a Saudi woman in higher education currently can reach is serving as a deputy to their male counterparts, even if they have the same title. As noted in Chapter 2, this form of glass ceiling, created by the Saudi cultural perception of women's roles as assistants to men, constrains their advancement and professional growth (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Hamdan, 2005).

*Women leaders as dependent.* The double bind was also represented for the participants in that they were leaders but at the same time were expected to behave as dependent on their male counterparts. Some used terms like "dependent" and "reliant" on male leaders. Others used "fragile," "be broken easily," being trapped in a "cocoons," and lacked "personal characteristics of leadership and the equal intelligence to men." The dependency on men, the underestimation of their expertise, the constraints as prisoners in "cocoons" were various forms of discrimination and prejudice these Saudi women leaders experienced when interacting with men.

Hence, Eagly's (1987) social role theory, Eagly and Kuru's (2002) congruity theory, and Eagly and Sczesny's (2009) research on the prejudice women leaders face due to their gender stereotypes, support the findings and experiences of these participants. As mentioned in Chapter 2, one reason for the status and hierarchy women were experiencing was due to the concept of paternalism which is a form of stereotyping (Cikara & Fiske, 2009). Cikara and Fiske (2009) defined paternalism as the common belief shared by members in the society that men have more power than women and should take care of women. This type of stereotyping allowed men to dominate women in societies and organizations. Additionally, it perpetuated the higher status

possessed by men over women in offering help and protection to women as subordinates (Cikara & Fiske, 2009).

*Women leaders as inferior.* The fourth example of double bind these women leaders struggled with was being considered as inferiors to men. Some of the phrases they used were: “Our role was more as a decoration;” “inferior and not equal;” and “men had higher status and power than women.” These underestimating experiences reflect the general perception about women in Arab societies, including Saudi Arabia. They are considered inferior and subordinates to men regardless of women’s positions in the public and private sectors (Hamdan, 2005).

Furthermore, those experiences relate to the conceptual framework of this current study. The findings of this study are in line with research conducted by Isacc, Kaatz, and Canes (2012). They considered that devaluing professional women was due to the stereotypic views of lacking competence and being emotional. Yoder (2001) suggested that understanding the double bind female leaders’ face helps women themselves and their organizations, to improve these women’s situations by minimizing status difference between the two genders.

*Women leaders’ feminine characteristics.* Eagly (1987) indicated in her social role theory that men are considered agentic and women are considered communal. According to her, the communal aspect of gender stereotypes in her theory is that women are believed to be emotional, helpful, affectionate, kind, sympathetic, and concerned with the welfare of others. These communal aspects support the feminine characteristics the participants of this study talked about. The participants elaborated on a long list of feminine characteristics which expected them to be: “concerned,” “considerate,” “flexible,” “weak,” “supportive,” “soft,” “kind,” “quiet,” “agreeing,” “loyal,” “obedient,” “nice,” “respectful,” and not aggressive. Other feminine characteristics that they were expected to have and that hindered their role as leaders when

interacting with men were the notion of lacking trust in their financial judgments, being emotional and sentimental, and not being rationale which affects their decision-making ability.

Some of the literature discussed in Chapter 2 supports the experiences of these participants. They were expected to behave according to their feminine characteristics when interacting with men in the workplace (Carli, 2002; Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Yoder, 2001). These expectations held by male leaders, and by even some female leaders, represent the double bind women tolerate in the workplace. They had to fulfill their social roles and gender stereotypes when they were interacting with their male colleagues even if those roles and characteristics contradicted their leadership role.

**Social roles and gender stereotypes when interacting with women.** These expectations held by male leaders, and by even some female leaders, represent the double bind women tolerate in the workplace. They had to fulfill their social roles and gender stereotypes when they were interacting with their male colleagues even if those roles and characteristics contradicted their leadership role.

According to them, some female colleagues complicated and hindered their work for no reason. For example, one called her relationship with other female leaders as personalizing the task. She indicated that some female colleagues considered her as an enemy only because of an unprofessional personal dislike. Even though these two women leaders did not tackle the true reason for their views about considering other women as enemies in the work, their experiences relate to the literature about the 'queen bee syndrome.' Some researchers suggested that the existence of queen bees was the outcome of successful women leaders in male-dominated organizations. The queen bee syndrome perpetuated gender bias against other women and led

women to be their own worst enemies (Abramson, 1975; Derks, Ellemers, et al., 2011; Derks, Van Laar, et al., 2011).

Moreover, when analyzing the underlying relationship between the two participants and their female colleagues, it can be inferred that their views might be based on one of the reasons suggested by Staines, Tavis, and Jayaratne (1974). They explained three reasons for queen bees' existence. They indicated that: (a) queen bees assimilated and did not threaten the system that advanced them; (b) they try to be the only successful woman in order to preserve their uniqueness; and (c) they were rewarded for looking like women and thinking and acting like men. Therefore, when one participant illustrated:

Women leaders sometimes create unnecessary obstacles. For example, I suggested establishing a club. All men leaders approved my proposal. But women leaders refused my proposal and complicated things by asking for more paper work and procedures that I have already included in my proposal.

She had to deal with women leaders who wanted to complicate work for her due to competitiveness. They saw her innovative work as a threat and wanted to be the only unique female leaders rather than being more inclusive and sharing.

The other two participants indicated how women were supportive of each other. They described their relationship with female leaders and subordinates as being “nice” and “supportive.” They reinforced cooperation between women and ignored personal issues that were unrelated to work. Additionally, they viewed women as “equal” and “share the same gender” which facilitated their interactions. Their views are supported by Carlson’s (2013) work. She suggested that women were being supportive of one another and mentored new talents. In addition, the results mentioned in Chapter 2 about Lang’s (2012) report, about women supporting and mentoring other women demolishes the idea of the queen bee as the typical mode. While there will be instances of a queen bee and competitiveness, it is the exception not

the rule. It highlights the supportive interactions between women and other women. Brown (2005) also found that 56% of the surveyed female leaders in his study were willing to support and mentor other women.

The last two participants described their interactions with other women as *situational actions*. They indicated that the nature of their relationships was occasional firmness and occasional support depending on the situation. An example that shows occasional firmness as stated by the participant is “I am so strict with women.” The other example that demonstrates how the participant was occasionally supportive of other women is “I do support women when needed.”

While there is not straightforward evidence of women leaders’ situational actions interacting with other women in the workplace in the literature review, it is basically the middle ground between the two other themes of enemies or support. Hence, situational actions were also supported by Carlson (2013). She argued that there are two views in relation to professional women working with one another. The first view was related to the existence of queen bees and how they obstruct the advancement and success of each other. The second view was related to women being supportive of one another. They also mentored and supported ambitious women.

### **Unpacking Barriers Women Leaders Faced When Interacting with Men**

For the first barrier, all six participants indicated that they lacked true involvement in decision-making when interacting with men. This barrier reveals the underlying relationship between the two genders in Saudi Arabia. It reinforces the double bind that women leaders encountered when interacting with males in the workplace. On one hand, these Saudi women leaders held various leadership positions. On the other hand, they lacked power, authority, and

the freedom to make decisions. For example, some of their comments were: “[Women] don’t have the power of decision making,” and, “It was hard for him to be led by a woman.”

Furthermore, the participants described the constraints and limitations on decision-making as being involved in managing “the administrative work and solve some minor issues,” and had “limited authority and involvement in decision-making” These phrases relate to Eagly’s social role theory (1987). They highlight the communal aspect of gender stereotypes, where they did not have leadership characteristics, which were perceived as masculine-stereotypical traits. Their experiences also relate to the notion of gender status in society and how women have less status than men in the society, which explains why these participants lacked true involvement in decision-making.

Eagly and Karau’s (2002) role congruity theory support the findings of this study. According to Eagly and Karau (2002), women leaders face prejudice due to the incongruity of women’s gender role and the expected leadership role. Women leaders were viewed to be less promising than men due to their stereotypical gender roles. Therefore, women face a double bind challenge because there was contradiction between their gender stereotypes and social expectations and the stereotypes (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009). The outcome of this double bind is that women leader’s academic expertise and professional administrative skills were not appreciated; hence, this view constrained and tied their abilities in decision-making.

The above barrier can be tied to the other two barriers: *power over resources* and *shortage of staff or faculty*. For power over resources, the participants discussed the unequal distribution of budget between the male and female campuses. While men enjoyed the leverage of freedom in satisfying all their campus’s financial needs, they gave women less than they needed. This forced some of the participants to support their departments from their own pocket.

Moreover, some participants commented on power over resources though the limited resources they had access to. One commented that she had “a lot of shortage” in resources; while the other indicated that men got the “best in everything” while women got “secondhand,” “cheapest,” or “less quality” resources. Furthermore, three participants discussed the shortage they had in their departments in the number of staff or faculty. According to them, they had to carry their work with that shortage while men did not have such issue.

By looking at these barriers, it seems that women leaders did not have power over resources and had shortages of administrative staff or faculty because they had limited power and authority in decision-making. They handled administrative tasks and a few minor decisions while men had all the power, authority, and freedom to decide for both campuses. This lack of true decision-making was the outcome of their gender status as being women in comparison to men's. Since women hold less status than men in the society and the workplace, many organizations and institutions construct policies and culture that perpetuate this status for women (Eagly, 1987; Sabattini & Crosby, 2009).

The last barrier women leaders encountered was segregation between the two genders. Three out of the six participants considered segregation as a barrier. One participant said, “Because of segregation, since men are not interacting directly with women, they don't have the full picture of what's going on.” To these participants segregation obstructed women leaders from playing their role in decision-making. Segregation also hindered women leaders from interacting with men directly in order for men to value women's expertise. This finding of segregation aligns with other studies by Saudi researchers (Al-Tamimi, 2004; AlMohamed, 2008; AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Sadi & Al-Ghazali, 2010). As mentioned in Chapter 2, these researchers indicated that segregation added another level of

exclusion of women leaders from the professional network. It also explains why these women leaders had to face the other four barriers. In other words, all five barriers faced by these Saudi women leaders are interconnected with one another.

### **Unpacking Women's Reaction Toward Male Mistreatment**

The emerged themes about women's reaction toward male mistreatment fell into *resistance, acceptance, or diplomacy*. Each theme had two participants that fit in each group. For the resistance group, the two participants indicated they did not accept feelings of inferiority, inequality to men, or the inability to lead. They emphasized that they seek equality.

Two other participants described their reaction to male mistreatment by accepting that reality. Both participants indicated that they knew their "boundaries" when interacting with men. They accepted being led by men, being seen as inferior, baring the double bind, and so on. These two women leaders relate to Schwanke's work (2013). Schwanke (2013) argued that women make sense of the inequality they face by justifying the occurrence of such barriers and mistreatment. Those justifications were because of the stereotypes that constrain women when interacting with men. They force women leaders to abide and behave by their own gender stereotypes and preconceptions (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

The last two participants dealt with male mistreatment by diplomacy, which could also be seen as in the middle between resistance and acceptance. They reinforced that they were respectful of their male superiors and abided enough of the social norms to fit in. But at the same time, they indicated that they got the work done on time, confronted their male leaders, and were affirmative when needed. In other words, they worked the system as necessary to maintain good relationships with their male counterparts and achieve their work goals, while still resisting mistreatment when necessary. This finding does not relate directly to previous research that



addressed male and female interactions in the workplace. However, one can infer that diplomacy indirectly relates to studies done about women's leadership styles. As noted in Chapter 2, many studies indicated the existing gender difference between male and female leadership styles (Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly et al., 1994). These studies showed that women leaders adopt a different leadership style from men; where male leaders were aggressive, autocratic, authoritative, and transactional, while female leaders were democratic and transformational. Additionally, one can infer that because these previous studies did not directly discuss diplomacy as a leadership style implemented by female leaders, this finding can add to the available literature as a new adopted leadership style women leaders undertake during their interactions with men in the workplace.

### **Unpacking Why Women Leaders Were Subjected to Social Roles and Gender Stereotype Expectations**

The participants discussed five reasons for being subjected to social roles and gender stereotype expectations. All six participants agreed on the first reason: *social and cultural views* that are held by their society. For instance, a participant commented, "It's cultural." Another participant said, "Our society is a male society. Therefore, our values, beliefs, and behaviors are guided by this mentality and system."

These statements align with Eagly's social role theory (1987), where the differences between men and women in their behaviors are a result of the different roles the two genders play according to the expectations held by their society (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000). Therefore, when women leaders try to exercise authority outside their gender stereotypes, they face negative reactions and lack support for their violation of gender stereotypes (Ridgeway, 2002; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

Only one participant referred to *religious beliefs* held by the society in general and the people she was interacting with personally. She stated, “Many men and some women interpret and use religion to serve their own agendas.” Because religion plays a major role in Saudis’ daily lives (Baki, 2004), it is important to discuss this finding. According to the participants, men interpret religion to serve their agenda of their superiority over women and to preserve the role of each gender. According to AlMunajjed (1997, 2010), the elevation of men over women is the result of cultural and religious beliefs in Saudi Arabia. Men are considered the primary family providers, while the expected gender role for women to play first and foremost is that of wives and mothers (McIntosh & Islam, 2010). Looking through the cultural and religious lens, the active engagement and participation of many women in the workforce is unnecessary (AlMunajjed, 2010). Saudi women’s significant role is to take care of family work, including raising children and doing household chores; while men provide for their families (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Doumato, 1992).

Pharaon (2004) highlighted how professional women confront barriers related to social norms which in many cases is usually understood as religious sanctions. She explained that many Saudis confuse religion and traditions. According to her:

In reality, the frequency with which customs, unconnected and sometimes contradictory to religious doctrine, are practiced by communities as supposedly religious, is visible proof that attitudes towards and practices flowing from religion are determined as much by collective memories, existing social structures, and power relations as by doctrines. Most individuals do not, however, distinguish customs, practices, of attitudes from their faith and self-identification. (Pharaon, 2004, p. 362)

The third reason, identified by two participants, was the *educational system* as a reason for gender differences in roles, status, and expectations. One of the two participants blamed the educational system for not preparing women to be able to handle leadership roles. However, the other participant clarified that the educational system and the government are supportive of

women and provided legislations that served women very well. However, the application of these legislations was lost in translation because men were usually the ones who carried out the application.

Both opinions by the participants relate to the literature. AlMunajjed (1997; 2010) and Baki (2004) indicated that the Saudi educational system perpetuates social norms and the status quo against women in two forms. The first form occurs by restricting women to access certain academic fields in order to fulfill her role as a wife and mother. This restriction leads to the other form, which is limited access to certain jobs and even limited access to leadership. According to them, regardless of the government efforts and legislations in pursuing change, the educational system needs to change and cooperates in order to educate and change the mentality of the two genders to achieve equality and be prepared for the global economy in the new era (AlMunajjed, 1997, 2010; Baki, 2004).

Three participants agreed that *women leaders were/are not truly playing their leadership roles*. One described the situation as “There is no culture here about female leadership; actually, the [female] leaders are created by the same system. You will find that we don’t have female leadership.” *Being not truly able to lead* relates to what AlMunajjed (1997; 2010) and Baki (2004) proposed about how the educational system, religious beliefs, and social and cultural views held by the Saudi society fell into one hat. These factors correlate to each other and perpetuate elevating men over women. Failing to prepare women for leadership is in line with the conceptual framework of the study about women’s status in the society, where men had higher status than women and are considered the decision-makers. Additionally, the finding relates to role congruity theory where women face prejudice because of the mismatch between gender role and leadership role (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

The last finding that relates to the reasons for why women leaders were subjected to social roles and gender stereotype expectations was *male resistance*. Three participants considered male resistance as a justification for women leaders being subjected to social roles and gender stereotype expectations. One said, “I work as a leader for both [men and women], but male staff wouldn’t take it easily to be supervised by a woman.” She even explained that male leaders wanted to work with women who would follow them rather than lead.

This finding aligns with Gresham (2009), who indicated that higher education’s bureaucratic system built on male superiority. Men take advantage of their privileged status in the society according to social and gender norms (Gresham, 2009). Therefore, women leaders are devalued for either adopting male characteristics or behaving according to their gender stereotypes. Women leaders face bias, discrimination, and resistance because they are not part of the privileged dominant group (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Gresham, 2009). Moreover, Carli (2002) described how male followers and subordinates tend to resist female leaders, in order to maintain their gender power advantage just like what happened to one of the two participants.

### **Unpacking Women’s Lack of Complete Access to Top Leadership Positions**

The six participants of this study strongly indicated that women leaders do not have complete or even equal access to top leadership positions. For example, one participant stated, “I don’t think that Saudi women have complete access to top leadership positions in higher education or you would see her in a minister position.”

This statement is in line with the literature. As noted in Chapter 2, women leaders are underrepresented in accessing leadership positions in the various sectors worldwide (AlMunajjed, 2010; Barreto et al., 2009; Buckalew et al., 2012; Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Isaac et al., 2012). In higher education, women leaders in the United States have increased from 23% in

2006 to 26% in 2011 out of the total percentage of women working in the education workforce (American Council on Education, 2012). In Europe, women make up 10% of leadership positions in organizations (European Commission, 2005, as cited in Ryan et al., 2010). For Saudi women leaders, only 6.1% out of the total number of professional Saudi women in the workforce are in administration, including leadership positions (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). These statistics support the notion that despite the gains that women have achieved toward leadership equality, more work and change needs to be done.

### **Unpacking Encouraging Future Female Candidates Seeking Leadership**

All six participants emphasized their positive attitude in encouraging future female candidates who are seeking leadership positions in higher education. For instance, these women leaders provided some suggestions for the prospective candidates such as: (a) know her goals, (b) define herself as a change agent (c) be herself and reflect on her accomplishments, (d) know her superiors and team members, (e) build a supporting network, (f) seek mentoring and training, (g) work hard to prove herself, and most importantly, (h) know her responsibilities as a leader by knowing the amount of power, authority, and decision-making she possesses.

Brown (2005) reinforced that, “Academic leadership should reflect the diversity of the students, faculty, staff and administration in the higher education institutions they serve” (p. 664). Therefore, studies and research have done so far about women and leadership encourage and in support of women seeking equal access to leadership positions (Madsen, 2008; Munoz, 2010). Moreover, some researchers encouraged women who are accessing leadership positions to seek mentoring and build professional networks (Brown, 2005; Carli & Eagly, 2012).

## **Summary**

The available literature on accessing and being successful in leadership positions in higher education has often been from a male perspective. Hence, there has been limited research about women's "stories and perspectives about their paths to successful leadership in higher education" (Smith, 2003, p. 6) including Saudi women. Therefore, this narrative study explored the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education. Furthermore, this study sought to offer Saudi women leaders the opportunity to talk about their social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in their efforts to access leadership positions in higher education. The findings from these stories help in leaving footprints behind for other women seeking leadership to follow, guide, and inspire.

## **Limitations**

As it was expected, there were some limitations in conducting this study. One crucial limitation was allocating prospective participants to participate in this project. Although, I had access to Saudi professional women leaders, it was much harder to engage them than was originally anticipated, especially because of the timing of collecting the data. I collected my data during the summer where many of my prospective acquainting participants were unavailable.

For those who were eager to participate, due to their busy schedules and family responsibilities and plans, they expressed their preference of a questionnaire formatting that did not require them to be engaged for face-to-face interaction and availability for two interviews. However, since this was a narrative qualitative study, I informed them that their request was not possible. Some participants were so open and shared their experiences in depth while some answered the interview questions to the point.

## **Implications**

Higher education plays a major role in shaping the quality of leadership in today's society. Today's rapidly changing and diverse global society is mirrored in our institutions of higher education, and presents challenges to how we prepare and educate students today to be the leaders of tomorrow. (Chin, 2011, p. 8)

Higher education faces great challenges in this new era of global economic competitiveness. In order to make a difference, higher education needs to prepare and educate students to be the new leaders of our societies. Hence, some implications are suggested in this section based on the findings of this study. One can suggest providing leadership courses to male and female students in order to equip both genders with the right tools, skills, and self-confidence and efficacy to be leaders of our future.

Gresham (2009) indicated that "one problem, however, with much of the literature about leadership is the distance between the theory and the reality of actually being a leader" (p. 9). Therefore, more research is needed about the experiences of women and men to help in understanding the real perspectives of the two genders. For current leaders, especially women, leadership training and mentoring would play a significant role in promoting for change, equality, and inclusiveness.

Furthermore, there is a necessity to re-evaluate current institutional policies and regulations and the application of legislations. Such evaluation and reform will be the first step in changing institutional culture especially regarding the distribution of power. As a result, it creates a harmonic professional environment for all groups in order to participate in developing the country (Gresham, 2009).

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that there is a need to change some of those social and cultural views held about the role of women in the society. Women themselves have to be involved in pursuing that change through: (a) educating new generations, (b) seeking true

application of governmental legislations that in favor of women and, (c) demanding true involvement in decision-making.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Several recommendations can be made for future research, since this study focused on higher education about the experiences of Saudi women leaders in other fields, e.g. medical and business. Comparisons between the stories and experiences of such female leaders in various fields could provide insights about the more progressive that offers further opportunities and equality for Saudi women to access and have better professional success as leaders.

The study was of a qualitative nature. Conducting a quantitative study in exploring larger number of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education is needed. Due to asking a large number of those leaders about the social roles and gender stereotypes they were expected to uphold in the workplace, the findings could offer a better understanding of social and cultural dynamics that Saudi women leaders were exposed to in their work environments.

Since the participants of this study focused and reflected on their interactions with male leaders intensively, another further research can address the stories of male leaders when interacting with women. Comparison between both gender s' views can identify and resolve the different perspectives that men and women hold about one another as leaders and colleagues.

Conducting studies comparing between the experiences of Saudi women leaders in the private and public sectors in higher education could expand the available body of knowledge about the topic. It could offer new understandings of women's experiences as leaders in higher education.



Finally, conducting studies that compare and contrast between Saudi women leaders and American or Western women leader would shed light on the similarities and differences between the two groups. It could highlight the common experiences women share on a more global and universal level.

### **Epilogue**

I am a very privileged Saudi woman. I had the opportunity to pursue my higher education inside and outside Saudi Arabia's geographic borders. When I chose this topic for my study, I had some doubts at in the beginning of my journey. What encouraged me to continue in this path were two reasons. First, I am witnessing changes and reform that taking place in Saudi Arabia, especially related to women. The government is opening more doors for women to be involved in developing the country. Moreover, educated, professional women have more access to leadership positions and decision-making. Second, identifying what type of message I want to deliver from conducting this study since there is limited research and knowledge about the experiences of Saudi women leaders in accessing leadership positions and performing their responsibilities as leaders. Therefore, my passion was to explore this topic by conducting this study to provide true experiences about women leaders rather than the anecdotes, rumors, and speculations about their experiences.

When I started this journey of conducting a narrative study, I was a really joyful in pursuing this expedition. I had the opportunity to explore the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education in order to understand Saudi women leaders' road to leadership. Moreover, it has been an enlightening journey where comparing these women leaders' experiences with one another helped me

understand the social role and gender stereotypes that were expected from them to uphold in the workplace and guided their interactions with men and women.

As a woman and professional, I can relate to them on many levels. At certain points during data collections and analysis, I had anger, frustration, and sadness because they identified the good, the bad, and the ugly which reminded me of some situations I either was part of or witnessed as an educator and leader. It also made me think of how my colleagues and I can make a difference by changing higher education to be more inclusive and safe for all groups to prosper and by deliberating and collaborating with one another to understand the various point of views to build a better ground for everyone.

The voices of these women leaders can be heard by the Saudi society in general and by professionals in the academia in particular for the sake of social change to be more inclusive and diverse. In other words, this journey revealed the experiences of Saudi women leaders in higher education and the road to leadership they pursued. Finally, I close this narrative study with a poem constructed from some quotes by my participants where the whole or parts can relate to professional women in the academia and me....

Let us tell you about our stories in...

### ***Access***

We became leaders after we got our Ph.D.

We worked so hard to prove ourselves.

We made a great reputation of ourselves.

Our initiatives and innovations provided us...

With better opportunities.

It opened doors for leadership.

We were recommended by our superiors.

We got promoted.

We became leaders.

Let us tell you about our...

***Reality***

Men have higher status and power than women.

Men are the leaders of our society.

Men play that role.

Women can't play that role.

We are different...

Just because we are women.

We're supposed to be more concerned, more considered,

More flexible just because we are women.

We are expected to be nice and kind...

Just because we are women.

Men expect us to follow their footsteps.

So, our reality...

There is no true leadership for women,

Because we are following what men say.

We don't have any freedom or autonomy at all.  
Sometimes our society looks down on us,  
Just because we are women.  
Sometimes we hear between the lines men would say,  
"These women want to impose things on us;"  
"They want us to do things their way."

Oh! Our role is to agree....just to say O.K.  
We have no power to true decision-making.  
We are just their assistance.  
Men expect women to be  
Quiet, to agree, and not to fight.

Men think of us as emotional, as sentimental;  
To them, our judgment is not clear...  
And not professional as they could be.  
We are not rationale...  
And that is our reality.  
These views made men...  
Underestimate our knowledge and expertise.  
Based on the limited views held by our society.  
So many men would say to us...  
"Do this," "Don't," "No,"

“You’re not supposed to!” and “Why?”

Our society is a male-dominant one.

It gives men the complete right,

Full freedom and power to decide.

But women, Oh! No!

We are expected to obey their orders.

Men don’t only limit our power,

They also divide to conquer,

Because they want to minimize our power...our authority.

And if one of us had more power than any man;

Men resist her and trigger a war against her,

Because they believe they are the decision-makers

And women are their followers.

We as women leaders are struggling to prove ourselves...

Because we have the leadership position,

The responsibilities that come with it;

But we are labeled and defined as women,

Who can’t truly be?

We can’t get out of the cocoons,

The gender roles and stereotypes.

We are ascribed to be assistants,  
To be dependent on men,  
And that is our reality.

Why we are treated like that?  
Well, it's our culture.  
It's our social norms....  
Passed from generation to generation....  
That's hard to get rid of.

Nobody can blame men.  
Because their minds are set...  
That their wives, mothers, and daughters are...  
In need of their support and in need of their help.  
So they can't believe women leaders can be independent and free.

But now-a-days, the society is looking up to women  
The society is proud of us.  
Our number gaining higher education is growing.  
Our number accessing leadership positions is increasing.  
We are proud as Saudi women leaders.  
And that is our reality.

Let us tell you about our...

***Reaction***

But we don't accept male mistreatment.

We are equal partners.

Our role not to follow men's orders.

We fight for our rights.

We don't allow them to make us play such role.

We try to take our leadership to the next level.

We know that even when Saudi women accessed leadership positions,

The road is still long and unpaved.

And we are willing to take that road.

Let us tell you about...

***What about us?***

The big enemy for women leadership is women themselves.

We say that we are leaders,

But many women act as managers

Sometimes it is hard to find a true leader among women.

Some women are leaders but don't act as leaders.

They don't truly play the role.

Some women don't let other women play the leadership role.

There is a female issue.

Are they not good enough?

Don't they understand the role of leadership?

We don't know what the problem with women is;

But they just make enemies with other women.

They want to involve men all the time.

Why?!!! Because there is no true leadership for women.

Women are confident in consulting men.

They don't play their role as leaders very well.

They understand leadership differently in the sense to be followers to men.

Let us tell you how much we are...

### ***Optimistic***

It is so promising...

The new generation is coming with a different perspective and passion.

It is a new era for women.

Our government is moving forward,

They made legislations and regulations...

That serves women and opened doors for them.

Without any doubt!

We encourage other Saudi women to seek leadership positions.



Because it is our duty to serve our country,

To educate the youth especially women.

If we don't, who would?!

They are the future changers.

And tomorrow is better than it could be.

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## APPENDIX A:

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

**TITLE OF STUDY:** What is it Like to be a Saudi Woman Leader? A Narrative Study of the Stories of Saudi Women Leaders in Accessing Leadership Positions in Higher Education.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. Sharon K. Anderson, PhD., Associate Professor, School of Education, Colorado State University.

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Suzan Hassan AlDoubi, School of Education, Colorado State University.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?** The purpose of this study is to obtain a better understanding of the experiences of Saudi women leaders in accessing leadership positions in higher education. It also seeks to recognize the social roles and gender stereotypes these Saudi women leaders are expected to uphold when interacting with men in the workplace.

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?** Your participation by sharing your story in accessing leadership position in higher education will be essential to adding to the limited literature available about Saudi women's access to leadership positions in higher education. Through exploring your journey to leadership, the study will recognize the social roles and gender stereotypes you expected to uphold when accessing leadership positions and your role in the workplace.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?** If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a series of questions related to your experiences as a Saudi woman leader in higher education. There will be two interviews. The first interview will be approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The second interview will be approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews will be either face-to-face, phone, or through using a software application (e.g., Skype, WebEx). All interviews will be conducted based on your choice of date and time and you will be asked to choose a fiction name for yourself to be used in the study. If a face-to-face interview takes place, you will have the freedom to choose the setting for the interviews that makes you feel comfortable and safe. Notes will be taken and the interviews will be recorded. The materials will be transcribed by using a transcriber and a translator to those using Arabic as a medium of communication during the interviews. All materials will be indexed by case number and only pseudonyms (fiction names) will be used in the study. The co-investigator will review the first interview transcription with you on the second interview.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?** There are no known risks. However, it is not possible to identify all potential risk in research procedure, but the researcher(s) have taken every reasonable precaution and safeguard to minimize any potential but unknown risks to participants of this study. The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

**ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** There are not any known benefits associated with participating in the study. However, sharing your story about accessing leadership positions in higher education may be helpful to the body of knowledge around the topic and may guide women who seek leadership positions in the future.

**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?** Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?** For this study, we will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. We will assign a pseudonym to your data, so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board Ethics Committee, if necessary.

**Confidentiality:** For this study, you will not be identified nor will your institution. Quotes from the study will use the fictional name you choose. We will keep all research records that identify you confidential, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential. All interview data will be stored in a locked cabinet in a safe location with the co-investigator.

**WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**  
There will be no compensation for participation in this research study.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?** Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to your mind now. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to withdraw, you may do so without loss of benefits or penalty.

Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the co-investigator, Suzan Hassan AlDoubi at the researcher's cell phone or via email: the researcher's email or Sharon Anderson, Ph.D. (+1) 970-491-6861 or Sharon.anderson@colostate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at (+1) 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

**This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on 02/27/2013.**

Your signature below acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

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Name of person agreeing to take part in the study

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Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

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Date

---

Name of person providing information/co-investigator

---

Signature of person providing information/co-investigator

---

Date

## APPENDIX B:

### RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

(This email was my introduction to recruit prospective participants)

Dear Dr. ....

My name is Suzan Hassan AlDoubi. I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University, School of Education. I am currently working on my doctoral studies. My research focuses on exploring the stories of Saudi women leaders about their experiences in accessing leadership positions in higher education. The title of my study is: "What is it like to be a Saudi Woman Leader? A Narrative Study of the Stories of Saudi Women Leaders in Accessing Leadership Positions in Higher Education."

You are being asked to participate in my research because your participation by sharing your story in accessing leadership position in higher education will be essential to adding to the limited literature available about Saudi women's access to leadership positions in higher education. Through exploring your journey to leadership, the study will recognize the social roles and gender stereotypes you expected to uphold when accessing leadership positions and your role in the workplace.

If you agree to participate in this research, you will participate in two interviews to answer questions related to your experiences as a Saudi woman leader in higher education. The interviews will take place either face-to-face, over the telephone, or through an online software application such as Skype or WebEx. The first interview will last about 90 minutes, and the second interview will last less than an hour.

My previous professional experiences were in the field of education. I was an English teacher in intermediate and secondary schools. Then, I moved to higher education and worked as an Applied Linguistics lecturer. At the same time, I held a leadership position as a deputy academic coordinator for the female campus in that Saudi college until I left for my doctoral studies. Upon finishing my doctoral studies, I hope to return to a leadership position in higher education.

If you would like to speak with me about participating in my project, I would welcome a call or an e-mail. My number is: the researcher's cell phone and my e-mail address is: the researcher's email.

Thank you,

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APPENDIX C:  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Probe Questions for First Interview: Details of Leadership Experience**

**Introduction for participant.**

My name is Suzan Aldoubi. I am a Ph.D. student at Colorado State University, School of Education. The focus of my study is about your story in accessing leadership position in higher education and your experiences in that position. So, for this interview, I will ask you few broad questions based on my research questions. I want you to answer these questions and say what you feel comfortable sharing with me.

1. Tell me about your experiences of accessing leadership positions in higher education.
2. Could you describe the social roles you were/are expected to uphold in the workplace?
  - How about your social role when interacting with women? Please provide an example of experience.
  - What about your social role when interacting with men? Can you illustrate with an example?
  - Are there any differences between your interaction with women and men? In what sense?
3. Can you talk about the gender stereotypes that you were/are expected to uphold in the workplace?
  - Tell me about any different experiences you encountered when interacting with male and female superiors and colleagues?
  - What are these differences?
  - Why do you think these differences have taken place?
4. Do you have any other experiences as a Saudi woman leader that you want to share with me before the end of this interview?

During the first interview, in addition to the participant's answers to these questions, I will be listening for the following areas that relate to the literature review: (a) family, (b) mentorship, (c) network, (d) institutional policies and culture, (e) male-dominated academic arenas.

## **Probe Questions for Second Interview: Reflection on the Meaning**

For this second interview, the possibility of asking some of the following questions is based on the participant's response on the first interview.

### **Introduction for participant.**

During this second interview, we will review your previous interview to ensure the validity of the inferred meanings. We also will tie up some loose and unclear endings from the previous interview. In addition, we will explore the meaning that you have made of your lived experiences as a Saudi woman leader in higher education.

1. Given what you have said in the first interview, can you share with me the type of support you have gained when accessing leadership position in higher education?
  - Who helped you to become a leader?
2. Tell me about the barriers or struggles you have encountered when accessing leadership positions in higher education?
  - Do you believe that any of these struggles were related to your gender, in other word being a woman?
  - Why do you feel/believe in this way? Please provide an example of an experience.
3. How did you learn to be a leader in higher education?
  - What kind of leadership training or mentoring have you accessed before or when you became a leader?
  - Can you give me an example of a professional development experience that has had visible impact on how you see and carry out your role as a leader?
4. What was the role of your family when accessing leadership?
  - What about their current role when working as a leader?
5. Can you talk about your institutional culture?
  - Please describe some of the implemented institutional policies.
  - How do you view these polices?
  - If you had a chance to change any, what would you change and why?
6. Share with me your thoughts about Saudi women have complete access to leadership in higher education?
  - Why do you say that?
  - What factors are there, that led you to this belief?



7. Two of the components of leadership are power and influence.
  - How do you define these two terms?
  - What are the processes of power and influence that you implement to get the work done?
  - Is there any difference of power and influence between men and women when you interact with the two genders?
  - In what sense? Please provide an experience that you went through to illustrate this difference?
8. Would you encourage other women to become leaders in higher education? Why?
  - Suppose you know a promising candidate, what would you say to her?
  - What qualities would be important for her to have to be successful?
  - What barriers and challenges should she be prepared to overcome?
9. Where do you see yourself going in the future as a Saudi woman leader?
10. Are there any other experiences as a Saudi woman leader that you want to add to the end of this interview?

(Some of interview questions were adopted and/or inspired by Dr. Nancy Colflesh's doctoral study. I have gained permission from Dr. Colflesh to use her interview protocol).

Colflesh, N. A. (1996). Piece-making: the relationship between women's lives and the patterns and variations that emerge in their talk about school leadership. (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.