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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

ENHANCING CAREER CHOICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SAUDI WOMEN

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

by

Walaa Albahoth

December, 2018

Ronald Stephens, Ed. D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Walaa Albahoth

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful.

I dedicated this dissertation to my wonderful boys, Tamim, Faris, and Omar, for being patient with me throughout my Ph.D. journey. This is an opportunity to express my apologies to my children for all those nights I came home late from the university, and for all the holidays and weekends spent at home because I was busy studying. I am sorry for all the years you had to stay away from your home country, your father, and your extended family because of your mom's study. I promise my children that all of our hard times are gone. I love you and I am so proud of you!

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In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful.

I would like to thank Allah (God) for his mighty blessings that surround me. For the strength and patience, he provided me. Without the help of Allah, I would not be able to tolerate this journey. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my parents Abdulaziz Albahoth and Luluwa Alnahidh for their prayers, encouragement, kindness, and for believing on me. A special thanks to my siblings, my children, my husband for all the support and prayers throughout my academic journey. This was not an easy journey, but you were always there.

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## ABSTRACT

Despite many efforts made by Saudi Arabian government aimed toward providing substantial opportunities to access to higher education and the workforce for Saudi women, women's unemployment remains high. The purpose of this study was to explore the internal factors such as self-concept, personal skills, and career aspirations, and external factors such as social norms, education system, and work environment that affect career choices for Saudi women. In addition, the study sought to examine the most important strategies that support Saudi women in their career choices. A quantitative approach was employed for this study. The data was collected primary through online survey, and the sampling consisted of 467 Saudi female students enrolled in preparatory year at King Saud University in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. The findings of the study indicated that most Saudi females know which majors to choose, but they need more information about what occupations are available to them so they can make better career choices. They deemed that it is important to find jobs that do not affect family responsibilities. The study revealed that most participants seek for increasing the career training and reform Saudi labor laws to support women in their career choices. The study reviewed additional correlation analyses. Furthermore, the researcher found that most factors that affected the participants career choices were aligned with factors found in the literature. Based on the findings, the researcher offered several recommendations for Saudi females, universities, ministries as well as suggestions for future researches.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

The first schools on the Arabian Peninsula can be traced back to the seventh century. Referred to as Kuttab or Katateeb, these were established near mosques and run by Muslim preachers. The functions of these schools were to teach the memorization of the Quran (the holy book of Muslims) and other religious texts, as well as basic principles of mathematics. Children under the age of 6 studied together and the those older than age 6 were segregated by gender (Bubshait, 2008; Rugh, 2002).

The first, formal government schools for general boys' education were established in 1925 when King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud became the first ruler of a unified kingdom. The Directorate of Education was tasked with governing these schools. By 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was formally established as an Islamic Monarchy, upholding Sharia law (legal dictates from the Quran), the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), with Arabic as the official language. Islamic studies remained intact as before (Rugh, 2002).

It wasn't until 1960 that the formal school was established for girls in the Kingdom. This came about with the creation of the General Presidency of Girls Education (GPGE). The GPGE led to the development of K-12 schools and programs, and 11 female colleges in Saudi Arabia. Attendance in the colleges was very low initially, with no more than 100 Saudi girls attending these colleges. Over time, the number of enrolled students increased considerably. In 1997, approximately 140,000 Saudi females were enrolled in colleges across the Kingdom. Today, more than half of the graduates of postsecondary institutions are female. This increase in part, is because in Saudi Arabia, the government subsidizes postsecondary and undergraduate education.

Subsidies cover tuition as well as monthly stipends for enrolled students. As a result, there has been significant growth in the number of students pursuing higher education (Rugh, 2002).

Though the initiative to increase female enrollment in high education has worked well, there are still issues that need to be addressed, including educational options available to female students. In the past, most Saudi females chose to become teachers; these students were instructed mostly by non-Saudi nationals, expatriates from countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Palestine. The teaching methods taught in the classroom were based on each teacher's learning experiences from their countries (Rugh, 2002). A Saleh (1986) research article, titled "Development of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia," showed that the number of Saudi students travelling to study abroad increased. In 1982, the government awarded 11,921 scholarships to students to study outside the Kingdom. This accounted for roughly 20% of all students seeking higher education in the Kingdom. During that time, the government goal was to develop the education system in the Kingdom, which would, in the long run, decrease the need for Saudi students to travel to other countries to be educated. The practice of sending students to study in other countries, including the United States, required the allocation of a great portion of the education budget in the country. Unfortunately, many skills acquired abroad by students were not applicable to the Saudi Arabian labor market (Rugh, 2002). The projected increase in opportunities within the Kingdom and a subsequent decrease in Saudi students traveling abroad made by Saleh (1986) proved to be inaccurate. In 2005, after almost two decades since that study was published, yet another scholarship program, the King Abdullah Scholarship Program, was established for both male and female students to travel abroad for higher education in some of the world's best universities.

Two recent scholarly studies, by Bubshait (2008), titled *Saudi Women's Education: History, Reality, and Challenges*, and by Alsuwaida (2016), titled "Women's Education in Saudi Arabia," indicate that there are still many issues to be addressed in the Saudi education system. For instance, there are issues pertaining to the limited educational options available to Saudi females who are attending colleges and universities within the Kingdom. These issues are thought to arise from the general Saudi view that Saudi women should be predominantly homemakers, regardless of their education, career interests, and qualifications. This has led to female education and career options being restricted to either teaching or social work (Al Rawaf & Simmons, 1991).

According to the Ministry of Education, during the six years between 2010 and 2016, women have sought more active membership in society by making a push to enter other professions. They have shown an interest in helping the economic growth of the country and participating in social and cultural aspects of their country just as much as their male counterparts (Alsuwaida, 2016). Alamri (2011) stated:

Not all degrees are offered in Saudi Arabia for women, which increases the burden on the students who are willing to pursue a higher degree in their field. There are several specialties offered to men only which may interfere with social justice. (p. 90)

Though the first university, the King Saud University, was established in 1957 in the capital city Riyadh, its campus was only open to male students. At that time, the university had the capacity of accommodating 50,000 students (Alkhazim, 2003). This university did not open a campus for women until 22 years later. However, the female campus only offered majors in subjects such as Arabic, English, Geography, and History. Fortunately, in 1980, more departments were added to the curriculum, offering courses in public administration, medicine, dentistry, nursing, and education (Rather, 2016).

During the rule of King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz (2005-2015), 24 public universities and eight private universities were established in 76 cities. The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) established in 2005 made way all for Saudi students, irrespective of gender, to attend foreign universities for higher education (Taylor & Albasri, 2014). The KASP study-abroad program made possible for many Saudi students to pursue educational opportunities. The unique aspect of KASP was that female students were given the same opportunities as male students in the program. This opportunity helped not only train some of the brightest minds in the Kingdom, but also ameliorate the education system within the Kingdom. For example, returning students were given the opportunity to teach and prepare other Saudi students on international standards as well as advise government agencies about educational training trends around the world. This opportunity also made way especially for female graduates to become involved in educational decision-making roles and leaders in government institutions (Taylor & Albasri, 2014).

The growth and development of higher education has been slow in Saudi Arabia primarily due to cultural, traditional, and religious considerations. The challenge for the government now is to implement an educational system that supports the education of Saudi females without upsetting the balance between these necessary social norms in the Kingdom (Alsuwaida, 2016).

### **Present Statistics**

According to the most recent statistics, published by the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2016), Saudi Arabia has 27 registered public universities, 10 private universities and 41 private colleges. These institutions are run by the Ministry of Education and geographically well distributed throughout the Kingdom. They have the necessary capacities to admit both male and female students seeking higher education. In 2015, 105,494 female students graduated with



bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from public universities (MOE, 2016). The latest statistics of KASP showed that in 2015, the total number of students studying abroad was 144,945. This number includes 104,086 males and 40,859 female students who are working toward bachelor's, master's, Ph.D.'s, and medical fellowships in different countries around the world, including the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, China, Australia, and other countries (MOE, 2016).

### **Problem Statement**

There are several issues that need to be addressed in Saudi Arabia's education and labor systems. These are issues regarding the education and employment opportunities available for Saudi females. Thousands of young women are continuing to attend universities to become teachers. This field is a dead-end career choice for females because of the limited positions that are available for them. Unemployment among qualified teachers is very high; there are far too many teachers and not enough teaching positions to accommodate them. For example, in 2015, 105,494 female students graduated with bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from public universities. Of this number, 71,243 females graduated and prepared to be teachers, however, the available teaching positions that were offered by the government in the same year are 5000 teaching jobs across the country (MOE, 2016). Alternatives to training female students as teachers tend to gravitate toward social and religious studies. Thus, these majors are not preparing women for different types of careers. With a marked increase in females entering universities, there is a need to direct the female student population toward studies and training that can be utilized to further the present and future economy of the Kingdom. This will help to bring down the high unemployment rate among educated Saudi females and create new career opportunities for Saudi females wanting to participate in the Kingdom's advancement.

The education of Saudi females has been a slow process and has faced significant challenges, given the unique obstacles rooted in tradition and culture. The overall increase in population has led to an increasing number of young females seeking higher education. Despite many advances and initiatives throughout the years, the predominant area of study and training for females has remained confined to the fields of education and health care. Indeed, 88% of employed Saudi females work in education and healthcare sectors (Al Omran, 2010).

There is a need for female graduates with degrees in the fields of science, academic administration, and decision-making. The rate of enrollment of Saudi female students has always been high. However, the problem lies with the limited career choices accessible to them. These choices simply do not match up with the present objectives and development plans of a kingdom trying to move forward. Young female students need to be advised to think about other majors besides teaching, especially when teachers have a low probability of finding gainful employment after graduation.

**Medicine and nursing.** Saudi Arabia experience nursing shortage especially among Saudi females. There is a need for Saudi women to study medicine to become physicians and specialists. Within the field of medicine are professions that include nursing, radiology, ultrasound technician, pathological technician, and nutritionists. Most nursing jobs are filled by expatriates because Saudi social barriers affecting entering Saudi females into these jobs. El-Gilany & Al-Wehady (2001) conducted a study evaluating the degree of satisfaction among a sample of 233 Saudi nurses. The study revealed that more than 92% of Saudi nurses were satisfied in their work environments; however, Saudi nurses had some issues related to the long and inflexible working hours. These issues will have to be addressed.

Demographically, the majority of Saudi Arabia's population is younger than 25. Therefore, a high number of high school students will soon be heading toward institutions of higher education. As such, programs to help guide this group into the appropriate career paths are necessary to shape this generation into a productive group. Education and training for female students must be brought in line with career paths that can be of use in the Saudi job market. There are many professions, such as medicine and engineering, that need to be further improved within the country. These professions are important and necessary for the future development of the country (Alkhazim, 2003).

**Unemployment.** Upon examining the unemployment rates among Saudi female graduates, it was noted that at least 78% have university degrees (only 17% of unemployed Saudi males have degrees). After completing their degrees, 365,000 Saudi female graduates remain at home as housewives. As a result, the country has the lowest female labor participation at 12% compared to 57.5% in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries (Al Omran, 2010).

This imbalance is a major contributor to unemployment in the country. The General Authority for Statistics (2017) reported 906,552 Saudi job seekers in 2016, with unemployment rate at 12.7%, (722,910 persons). Of the 12.7% unemployed Saudis, 32.8% are females. It must be taken into account that 52.8% of the population includes people who are retired, disable, students, or people who do not want to work by choice. For many years, Saudi Arabia has depended on foreign workers to supplement its labor force. The Kingdom employs approximately 10 million expatriates. The government of Saudi Arabia has come to realize that Saudis can fill these jobs. However, in order for them to participate in the labor force, the Kingdom will need to empower Saudi women through education. This will provide them the

means to participate actively in the overall economy and improve the overall state of Saudi society (Rather, 2016).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between internal factors such as self-concept, skills and abilities, and career aspirations, and external factors such as social norms, education system, and work environment and career choices for Saudi women. Another purpose of the study was to examine the most important strategies that support Saudi women career choices. This is the view of the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (as cited in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030, n.d.), who is working toward this goal. He announced:

Saudi women are yet another great asset. With over fifty percent of our university graduates being female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities, and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy. (para. 3)

It attempted to provide solutions and strategies to reduce the high unemployment rate among Saudi Arabia's educated females. This study was geared toward finding ways to elucidate available career paths for women to help them fully participate in the present and future economic and social progress in the Kingdom.

### **Significance of the Study**

In 2015, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman created Saudi Vision 2030. This vision is also known as the National Transformation Plan for the Kingdom. It aims to diversify the economy of Saudi Arabia from exclusively dependent on oil revenue to fully participating in all other areas of the global economy. Part of this vision also involves improving the education system, health-care services, recreation, tourism, and the general infrastructure of the Kingdom (Khan, 2016).

As far as education and training of the work force is concerned, the emphasis should be placed on educating and training Saudi nationals to reduce the high unemployment rate in the Kingdom. Another aspect of the Saudi Vision 2030 is to improve and empower participation by Saudi female graduates in the work force, which stands at 22% presently and is hoped to be increased to at least 30% by the year 2030 (Khan, 2016).

This study had four aims. The first is to provide additional literature on possible factors that affect career choices for Saudi female students. The second was to bring attention to the career counseling and guidance to help these students make the right choices for their careers. Third was to be a document of communication with education and labor leaders about the high rate of unemployment and underemployment in the female population. Last was to enlighten Saudi society about the necessity of women's education and the benefits of their participation in the economy.

This study presented information that can be of great benefit to Saudi female students who remain undecided about their future careers and/or are looking for information on new career paths that better match their interests and preferences. More importantly, this study sought to inform leaders in public and private sectors about the critical challenges and conditions that continue to impede the full participation of Saudi women in the labor market. This study was also intended to serve as a threshold for further studies on women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia.

### **Research Questions**

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between internal factors such as (self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women?

2. What is the relationship between external factors such as (social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women?
3. What are the most important strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women in their career choices?

### **Limitation**

There were several limitations to this study including:

1. There may exist a lack of willingness to participate in statistical studies. Depending on how the survey is presented to the students, it is unknown what percentage of first-year college students will pay the necessary attention to participate in the survey.
2. There may exist a limit of understanding of the importance of this issue. Young Saudi women may not like to participate in surveys because they have not yet realized the importance of their feedback. To address this limitation, surveyors must clearly explain the purpose of the survey being and emphasize the importance of collecting such data for the future growth of their society.
3. There was a limited population size. Female students in their first year of university (preparatory year) are estimated to 1300 female students.

### **Key Assumptions**

There were several assumptions for this study:

1. The diversification of the Saudi economy is directed primarily toward improvements in agriculture, tourism, health services, education, and infrastructure, so the assumption is that there will be enough female students who will be interested in getting the education and training to fill job positions in these sectors.

2. The government aims to support and supply incentives for both male and female entrepreneurs to start their own businesses and contribute to the economy.
3. There are a great number of Saudi females seeking empowerment and better career choices.

### **Definitions**

For clarification, the researcher presented the definitions of the following terms:

*Kuttab or Katateeb*: Primitive schools used to teach boys and girls reading and writing.

*Quran*: The Islamic sacred book, believed to be the word of God as dictated to Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the archangel Gabriel and written down in Arabic.

*Sharia*: Islamic law based on the teachings of the Koran (Qur'an) and the traditions of the Prophet Hadith and Sunna.

*Saudi Vision 2030*: A vision announced by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman that by the year 2030, Saudi Nationals will hold most of the jobs in Saudi Arabia, thereby reducing the dependence on foreign workers and the overall unemployment rate in the Kingdom. It also is a vision for improvements in educational opportunities for Saudi females, who will participate in the future improvements in Saudi society and economy.

### **Organization**

This dissertation was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 presented brief history of women education in Saudi Arabia, the problem statement, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions, limitations, key assumptions, definitions, and a summary. Chapter 2 presents a summary and review of the published literature on the subject. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology with a restatement of the purpose and research questions, research design, population and sample, validity and reliability, instrumentation, data collection, data

analysis, human subject consideration, and a summary. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study including analyses of the findings. Chapter 5 presents the discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for practice as well as recommendations for further research on the topic.

### **Summary**

Before the establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, all children attended schools known as Katateeb, learning teachings of the Quran, other religious texts, and mathematics. Official education was established in the late 1950's and early 1960's for boys only. General education faced obstacles and challenges in introducing new content for a changing world. This went on for 30 years after the establishment of the Saudi state. While the social and economic conditions were changing, customs and traditions remained intact. It took time for the government to convince religious leaders and the public that education was not going to cause a threat to Islamic ideals and values (Bubshait, 2008). As has been cited, in 1960, the GPGE established 15 government girl's schools. This program first enrolled 5,000 students. By 2003, the number of GPGE schools rose to 13,000 with a student population of 3 million (Bubshait, 2008).

An ongoing problem has been that female students generally chose to be trained as teachers. This created an overload of qualified teachers with not enough jobs. In the 1980s, several scholarships were awarded for Saudi students to study abroad with a hope that soon the infrastructure of Saudi universities would be well established. This was a temporary measure, but the infrastructure was never established. During the reign of King Abdullah in the early 2000s, there were 24 public universities and eight private universities dispersed across the Kingdom in 76 cities. He also created the KASP, which afforded educational opportunities to all Saudi



regardless of their gender. This program was initiated to send students to study abroad and return to share their knowledge with the Saudi students.

The education of Saudi females has been a slow process because of the unique challenges and obstacles rooted mostly in tradition and culture. With the Saudi Vision 2030 in place and to be realized in the next 12 years, there is pressure on universities and colleges to offer a wide variety of courses steering the female student population away from dead-end career choices such as teaching. The kingdom needs good doctors, nurses, and all other health-care specialists from the female population as well as to increase courses in the field of business, such as accounting, finance, economics, marketing, advertising, and business administration.

There is no career guidance and counseling available to students on college and university campuses. Of the student population under the age of 25, 50% is female, thus, female students need to be trained and educated in fields other than teaching. There is high unemployment rate among Saudi nationals because they are not being trained for the jobs available in the labor market.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

When exploring the best career choices for Saudi women, it is necessary first to gain an overview of the status of Saudi educational standards for women and employment opportunities. This chapter is based on the empirical evidence on female education and employment in Saudi Arabia. The chapter addresses current education and career status and opportunities available for women in Saudi Arabia. The chapter summarizes the most important career choices and development theories. It presents a review of the internal and external factors affecting women's career choices. The last portion defines effective strategies that can support Saudi women in their career choices. The goal of this chapter is to provide the reader with an understanding of the realities of employment opportunities available to women in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the literature review enables the researcher to explore the gaps existing in the literature.

In a recent article, Islam (2014) stated, "The topic of Saudi women is complex and controversial" (p. 71). Some Western countries evaluate the rights of Saudi women against the ones present in their countries. However, Saudi Arabia is not a Western country, nor does it follow secular law. Alsaleh (2012) stated, "It is obvious through the direct study of the Quran, and the tradition of the Prophet, that men and women in Islam are allowed to have equal access to knowledge" (p. 125). Islam views the role of women as fundamental in all facets of society involving the workforce (Alsaleh, 2012).

Saudi Arabia is a country where Islamic law is the basis for governmental rules and regulations. In its effort to compete on the international stage, Saudi Arabia has started implementing new developmental ideas. So far, most of these ideas have focused on men and their involvement in the societal structure. Economically, two facts remain true of Saudi Arabia: it predominantly is an oil-based economy and all major economic activities are under

government control. However, this is evolving slowly as a result of changes in government control and the labor market to enhance economic growth in a diverse and globally inclusive environment (Naseem & Dhruva, 2017).

Pharaon (2004) described the status of Saudi Arabia in the 21st century as following:

Present-day Saudi Arabia is one of the largest market economies in the Middle East. It is difficult for both Saudis and foreigners to stand back and realize the true extent of infrastructure development in the Kingdom over the last half a century. From virtually nothing, Saudi Arabia now has a world-class infrastructure network. The revenue from oil has been wisely invested into the modernization of the country in all sectors of the economy. However, Saudi Arabia is facing many challenges as it treads into the twenty-first century. The significant growth in its young populations, a substantial decrease in its per capita oil wealth, and its excessive reliance on foreign labor, all contribute to destabilize its impressive development path. (p. 351)

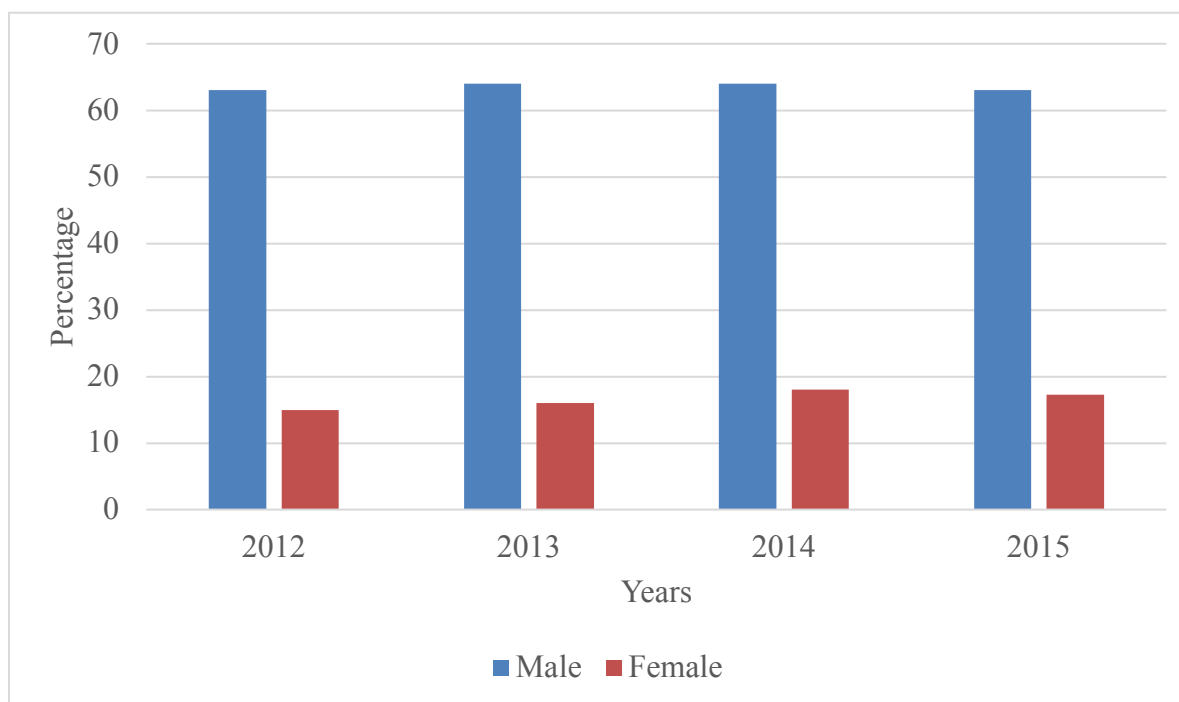
The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (as cited in Mokhtar, 2007), in 2006, there was measurement of the size of gender inequality in four important fields: educational achievement, political empowerment, economic participation, and health and survival. The report found that Saudi Arabia ranked last in a group of 115 countries especially in economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment areas (Mokhtar, 2007).

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (2016), the Kingdom has the largest gender imbalance in labor force among the Group of Twenty countries. There are 13.5 million females in the Kingdom with 9.1 million of working age. Yet, only 20.2% participated in the workforce in 2015, compared with 77.8% of males (Naseem & Dhruva, 2017). The transition of Saudi females from home into the workforce is a relatively new development. Therefore, although jobs have been created to include them in the job market, there is still a long way to go before their contribution to society becomes equal or greater to that of the Saudi male population.

There have been recent government efforts to improve the lives of its citizens. Indeed, the Saudi governors attempt to improve ambitiously and enthusiastically overall Saudi society by

focusing on building the knowledge base of its population. Therefore, they are proactively investing in education by creating plans for future development, establishing international scholarships for younger generations, and focusing on research for the best educational approaches. Their goal is to maintain the Saudi culture and traditions while increasing awareness of globalization (Pavan, 2013).

Saqib, Aggarwal, and Rashid (2016) indicated that there is an essential positive long-standing association between females' empowerment and economic growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Women make up almost 50% of Saudi population; however, their participation to the economic activity is low. Figure 1 clearly shows the labor participation rate for Saudi women, which has increased from 14.7% in 2012 to 17.3% in 2015.



*Figure 1. Labor force participation rates of Saudi Nationals from 2012 to 2015. Adapted from IMF Executive Board Concludes 2016 Article IV Consultation with Saudi Arabia (p. 36), by the International Monetary Fund, 2016, retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2016/12/31/Saudi-Arabia-2016-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-Staff-Report-and-Informational-Annex-44328>. Copyright 2017 by the author. Reprinted with permission.*

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (2016), the Labor market report has found several challenges in the Saudi workforce. There is a lack of satisfying jobs in the private sector. This creates a mismatch between demand and supply of Saudi labor in the country, pushing Saudi nationals to jobs in the public sector. Furthermore, because of globalization, the availability of foreign workers has increased, creating increased challenges in the private sector for Saudi nationals. The increased recruitment of foreign national to Saudi Arabia's private sector has led to an increased percentage in the number of unemployed Saudi young adults. Among the population, 55 % is younger than 29. Young adult unemployment is in danger of further increasing if the labor market and public education do not undergo major reforms. A key issue for this unemployment group is the lack of relevant job skills, which makes the transition from university to work more complicated.

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (2016), the Labor market report indicated that out of the 13.5 million women in Saudi population, 9.1 million are of working age. Although Saudi females are highly educated, the fields available for Saudi female workers are limited, which decreases their participation in the Saudi workforce, especially the private sector (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2016).

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) stated, "Two of the most important influences on women's career development are the educational system and the counseling profession" (p. 53). In the case of Saudi women, the education system has traditionally prepared women to be teachers. This system does not include training in other careers paths. At the moment, there is very little to no job counseling available to Saudi women. This makes it very challenging for Saudi women to learn and cultivate interest in other fields and to know the necessary educational steps they need

to take to participate in those fields, thereby, hindering their potential and limiting their ability to participate in other careers.

The selection of the appropriate college major is critical to prepare students for future careers. Some high school students have predefined majors before entering colleges, others (the majority of students) wait until their first year of college. The importance of majors is seen in how different disciplines map the road for students' future careers. Therefore, the choice of a college major can be one of the most important decisions in a student's life (Alhujaylan, 2014; Porter & Umbach, 2006).

There is a great degree of gender-based difference in regard to fields of study available at Saudi universities. Since universities are gender segregated, the resources available on the all-male campuses are often lacking on the all-female campuses. Though female students make up 63% of the total student population in Saudi Arabia, most of them are enrolled in education, humanities, and social sciences (Onsman, 2011). Scientific areas of studies are still dominated by men in Saudi Arabia (Islam, 2014). Furthermore, because of societal views on female roles, most of the all-female universities invest more resources in training students in fields of education, humanities, and social sciences (Onsman, 2011). An argument can be made that this loop is propagated because Saudi females are not aware of other fields, especially since the presence of role models who are not teachers or social scientists is severely lacking in the Kingdom.

### **Current State of Saudi Women's Education and Employment**

Currently, there are more Saudi females enrolling and graduating from universities and colleges than the amount of occupations obtainable for them. In 2015, Saudi females represented 51% of all graduates in the Kingdom (MOE, 2016). Most of them are struggling to find jobs after

graduation. The gap between Saudi women's educational prowess and their contribution to the economy is substantial (Koyame-Marsh, 2017; Onsman, 2011).

In 2015, 68 % of unemployed Saudi females had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 21% of unemployed males, as indicated in Figure 2 (Koyame-Marsh, 2017).

Although Saudi female contribution is limited, they attain education as do their male counterparts. More than 93% of working females hold either secondary qualifications or university degrees compared to 75 % of employed men (Saqib et al., 2016).

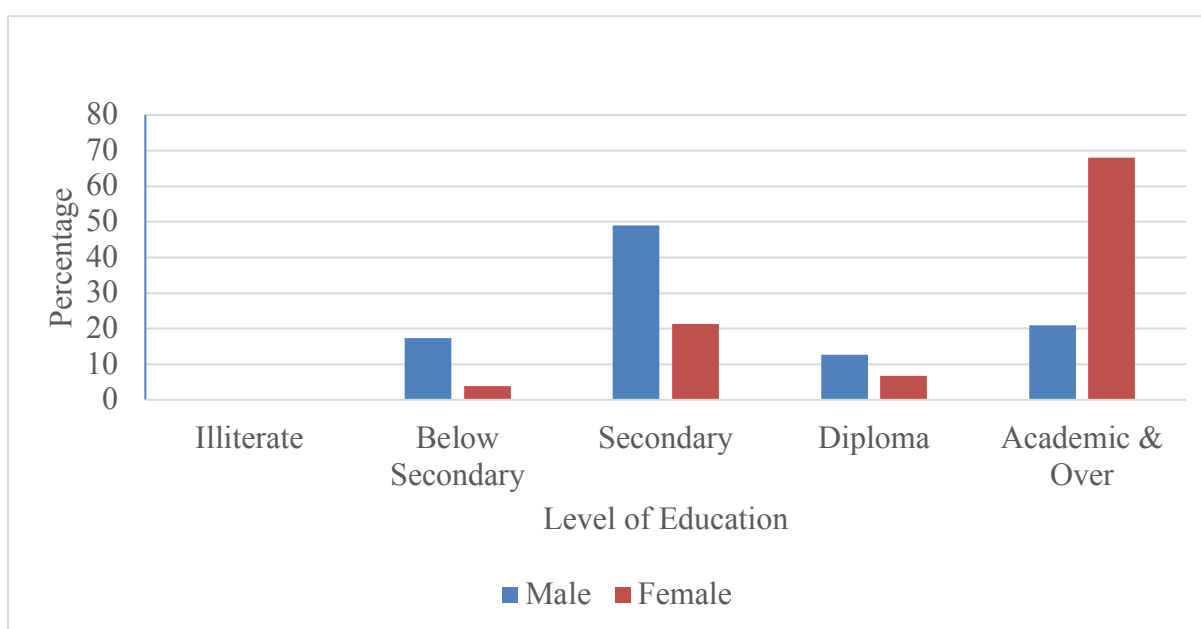


Figure 2. The 2015 percentage of unemployed Saudis by education level and gender. Adapted from *Labor Force Survey 2015*, by General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, retrieved from <https://www.stats.gov.sa/sites/default/files/en-manpower201501.pdf>. Copyright 2017 by the author. Reprinted with permission.

There are several main factors that have contributed to the high unemployment rate among Saudi women (AlMunajjed, 2010; Al-Sayegh, 1998; Damanhori, 2013; Hamdan, 2005; Nieva, 2016; Saqib et al., 2016; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a) these include:

- Women's higher education is not efficient and only focused on preparing students for teaching jobs.

- The lack of leadership and communication skills among female employees.
- The lack of training programs geared toward women.
- The negative cultural perception toward women working certain jobs.
- The lack of coordination between private and public sectors in regard to employing Saudi women.

Saudi Arabia has 27 registered public universities, 10 private universities, and 41 private colleges. The Ministry of Education runs these institutions, and they are geographically well-distributed and cover all the regions of the Kingdom. They have the necessary capacities to admit both male and female students seeking higher education (MOE, 2016). An example of a women-only university is Princess Noura Bint Abdul Rahman University, which was established in Riyadh in 2010. This university is considered the largest female university in the world (Hamdan, 2005; Onsmann, 2011). It offers a more diverse set of educational programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The curriculum at the university spans a variety of fields, from humanities (Education, Arts, Social Services, Languages, and Translation) to sciences (Computer and Information, Business Administration, Arts, and Design) and Medicine (Nursing, Pharmacy, Health and Rehabilitation, Dentistry, and Medicine; Al-Shahrani, 2016).

The high percentage of the female educated population being unemployed is in part because the majority of female Saudi students still graduate with degrees in humanities and social sciences while the availability of jobs in those fields are lacking (Alhujaylan, 2014). During the 2015–2016 academic year, there were 1,622,441 Saudi students enrolled in both public and private universities. Of those, 49% were female students (MOE, 2016). The number of female students who graduated from colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia in 2015 with several degrees, including associate's diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees,



postgraduate certificates, doctorates and fellowships was 105,494 compared to 98,210 male students. Table 1 represents fields of study and the number of female students enrolled in 2015.

Table 1

*Saudi Universities, Number of Female Students Enrolled in Top 10 Fields*

Field of Study	Number of students
Humanities	140,258
Commerce and Business	138,361
Islamic studies	84,097
General Programs	70,135
Health	66,903
Social and behavioral sciences	54,649
Teacher training	52,948
Informatics	40,906
Physics	34,581
Life sciences	19,415

*Note.* Adapted from *General administration for information and performance measurement*, by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Education, 2015, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Web site. Copyright 2017 by the author. Reprinted with permission.

In the hopes of improving the educational conditions of its people, the Saudi government established scholarship programs for male and female students to incorporate knowledge and overseas experience to improve the national workforce (Bukhari & Denman, 2013). In 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia launched KASP, which aims to equip Saudi nationals with the knowledge and skills required to advance the Kingdom's economy. The scholarship program has partnerships with 50 countries worldwide, where it sends both male and female students to be trained in a variety of fields. KASP encourages students to specialize in fields such as medicine, dentistry, medical science, pharmacy, nursing, engineering, computer science, accounting, business management, marketing, and other needed fields for the Kingdom. In 2011, 25,000 Saudi females received KASP scholarships (Bukhari & Denman, 2013; Hamdan, 2005). The number rose to 48,074 in 2016. These students can be found pursuing advanced degrees such as bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees in various programs, and medical

fellowships in different countries around the world (with most located in United States and Europe; MOE, 2016).

Since the current efforts have not yet accomplished the government's goal in overcoming the high rates of women's unemployment in Saudi Arabia, the government allowed several universities to open new fields for female students, which were traditionally reserved for men, such as engineering. Koyame-Marsh (2017) indicated that 23 fields of study were offered to Saudi females in 2013. In 2013, King Abdul-Aziz University started offering new engineering majors for female students such as industrial and electrical engineering. This university was the first Saudi public university to have an engineering division for female students (El-Sherbeeny, 2014). However, the Kingdom still has a long way to go to increase gender equality in the sciences. Currently, the country has almost 462 engineering programs available to male students while only 18 such programs are available to female students. Unfortunately, these engineering programs mostly concentrate on computer science. Programs in challenging engineering fields such as electrical engineering and petroleum are available only to male students (El-Sherbeeny, 2014). Recently, interior design and law programs have been established for female students, with expectations that more females will be able to obtain careers in these areas in the future (Doumato, 2010).

In the Kingdom, the medical needs far exceed the supply (Aldossary, While, & Barriball, 2008; Lamadah & Sayed, 2014). In Saudi Arabia, 38% of doctors are nationals, and females make up one third of all Saudi doctors (Althubaiti & Alkhazim, 2014). According to the statistics of the Ministry of Health (2016), the number of Saudi females working as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professions is 37,178 compared with 45,547 expatriates. The total manpower for both males and females in the Ministry of Health facilities consist of 58% Saudis

and 42% non-Saudis. According to the MOE (2016), female graduates from medical fields have increased from 2,354 in 2010 to 6,944 in 2015. Health care services in Saudi Arabia are developing rapidly with the coordination of government and independent providers (Aldossary et al., 2008).

In the Kingdom, there are stigmas associated with working in certain branches of the medical field. For example, stigmas associated with the nursing occupation include family disagreement, community perceptions, long working hours, and mixed-gender workplaces. It is thought that the shortage of Saudi female nurses is mostly linked to the negative sociocultural views associated with the profession. These stigmas have become a challenge for Saudi female nurses or doctors managing work and family demands (Al-Omar, 2004; Lamadah & Sayed, 2014). Saudi women refrain from entering the medical field from the concern that they might not be able to get married as a result of the profession's demands.

In order to explore the challenges facing Saudi women in the field of medicine, Alwazzan and Rees (2016) interviewed 25 female medical educators from five universities in Saudi Arabia, exploring their perceptions and experiences of gender, career progression, and leadership. The study revealed that career progression and leadership in Saudi Arabia are very much influenced by gender views, and these views greatly affect career stage and work environment, especially for women. Gender inequalities and discrimination are issues most Saudi females face on a regular basis. There are few women represented in leadership roles in the Kingdom. Gender stereotypes and gendered specialties, for instance, greatly influence the subdivisions within the medical field in which women can train. Female medical educators have limited access to training courses and other resources and they are unable to prepare properly their students for the field requirements.

Jobs in the private sector have remained elusive for Saudi women, especially if those jobs are technical and vocational types. According to Calvert and Al-Shetaiwi (2002), there is a clear mismatch between women's current skill levels and technical and vocational jobs available in the Kingdom's private sector. The public sector remains the largest employer of women, with 96% of women employed as educators and 4% employed in administrative, academic, and medical areas. On the other hand, women make up only 5% of Saudi employees in the private sector, with the majority of them in banking and private businesses (Islam, 2014). The researchers presented the most needed jobs for females in the Saudi private sector, which include medicine and medical assistance, computers technician, textiles, childcare, sewing, social services, food preparation, and accountancy (Calvert & Al-Shetaiwi, 2002; Islam, 2014).

The current governmental effort is to increase women's participation in the private sector. The current initiative aims to train and educate Saudi women to be competitive in the private sector. These efforts include raising the quality and quantity of technical and vocational education. Culturally, prior to 1973, girls were trained by their families to be good wives and mothers. To increase women's participation in the economy, the government established official technical and vocational centers in 1973, to offer practical classes in the field of sewing. In 1995, the Saudi government established three additional technical institutions for women to produce qualified women employees in home economics, textiles, and home management (Calvert & Al-Shetaiwi, 2002).

This initiative has helped to change the community's perception toward technical and vocational education for women. This has helped open societal views on the vital role this kind of education can do to enhance the society and the economy of the Kingdom. There are 16 technical colleges for women across Saudi Arabia, and these colleges are under the supervision

of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation. Technical colleges offer several training programs, including those in administrative technology, computer technology, cosmetology, tailoring, and dressmaking. These programs aim to meet the needs for the Saudi labor market by providing highly skilled female employees. In addition, the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (2017) offers diverse programs and training classes in general management for female employees who work in the public sector (Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (2017)).

The advancement in technology has improved technical and vocational education throughout the Kingdom. The improved curricula are geared toward providing better and relevant training to students both male and female (Calvert & Al-Shetaiwi, 2002). TEVC institutes are facing a few issues as a result of societal norms. Since female students are only taught by female faculty, the TEVC programs are running into a shortage of capable females to staff their institutions. Furthermore, the low coordination between the private and public sectors caused a lack of compatibility between TEVC technical output and the need in the private sector. Moreover, there are no adequate facilities and equipment in TEVC colleges for women, thus affecting the overall goal of the institutes. Although the government is proactively addressing the issues, there is still much that needs to be done to make these initiatives beneficial to the female population in Saudi Arabia (Calvert & Al-Shetaiwi, 2002).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the Arab world's largest economy. Most of its revenues, 90%, stem from oil revenues (Al-Omran, 2016, Pavan, 2013; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a). Since oil is a finite resource, there is a need to build a robust industrial economy, and women's participation would play an essential role in this transition. However, the societal view is that women cannot fit in the manufacturing occupation. Aramco (Saudi-owned oil giant) was the first

Saudi company to hire a female employee in 1964 as a health educator. Today, the company employs more than 500 Saudi women. Although most of these women hold engineering degrees, they are confined to office jobs. There have been recent efforts by the government and some private companies to amend the role of women in Saudi society. Indeed, in recent years, more women have been hired for vital jobs in several factories. For example, Al-Watania Poultry, the largest producer of poultry meat in the Kingdom, provides onsite childcare and transportation to ease the responsibility and commute of its female employees (Al-Omran, 2016).

In the last few years, Saudi females' involvement in civic life has increased throughout the Kingdom. Women have been appointed to high ministry positions, university deanships, and directorships in government civic organizations (Doumato, 2010). The contribution of Saudi females has increased the national economy, enabled competition, and enhanced cultural and civic improvement. Indeed, Saqib et al. (2016) noted that improving the economy involves civic changes that allow females to be more visible and hold high positions in government agencies. For example, the decision to assign females to the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia has a great positive impact on society. It has created much-needed national female role models, which shows the younger generation all the possibilities and career options available to them. It inspires young women to dream of careers beyond the traditional careers allotted women in Saudi society.

Moreover, in 2011, the Ministry of Labor started a new initiative that allows Saudi females to work in the retail sector. To ease the transition to this sector, the ministry provides training courses for females interested in occupations in this sector, including sales, customer service, and cashier. This initiative began by first allowing women to be employed in women dedicated shops, such as lingerie and cosmetic shops. It has expanded to include employment in

mixed-gender retail stores. To promote a fair employment system, the ministry established a minimum wage for working women and pays 50% of their salaries (G20 Turkey 2015, 2014).

Saudi women's role in media has always been vastly restricted because of the social and traditional mores. In this field, women participated as journalists, television presenters, producers, or bloggers (Doumato, 2010). As Hamdan (2005) indicated, there are many highly educated female writers contributing articles to newspapers.

Al-Shahrani (2016) conducted a study that surveyed 338 Saudi female faculty members and 55 Saudi female Shura's Council members to determine their empowerment in the domains of work and qualifications. The study showed a trend for improving women's rights by the Saudi government. More women have become more interested in work. However, qualification issues arise in certain groups of women (divorces, head of household, widows, etc.). The survey participants indicated long working hours and low wages in the private sector, which negatively affected employment views for females outside the education and health sectors. The survey participants proposed many factors that can be addressed to mitigate the current problem. This included creating opportunities that would attract female applicants to the labor force, including growing the community's perception toward working women, empowering decision makers inclined to fulfill women's needs at work, and attempting to reach global trends that create equality between men and women in workplace. Participants also indicated hindering factors such as community resistance to the employment of women in nontraditional fields and the increasing unemployment rate amongst Saudi females.

There were many program initiatives established in the last few years by the Ministry of Labor to address the status of unemployment among Saudi men and women. The main role of these programs is to encourage Saudis' participations in the economy. These programs include

Nitaqat, Hafiz, and Liqaat. Nitaqat is a program created in 2011 that increases the percentage of employed Saudi nationals and reduces the overdependence on foreigners in the labor market. Indeed, some of the initiatives in place provide certain privileges to private companies that hire Saudi employees (Alshanbri, Khalfan, & Maqsood, 2014). Hafiz is unemployment assistance for Saudi men and women who are not able to find jobs. This program is geared toward unemployed people between the ages of 20 and 35 years. It includes the provision of a monthly stipend of approximately \$550 for a period up to 12 months (G20 Turkey 2015, 2014). Studies indicate that 80% of Hafez beneficiaries are women, resulting from their high unemployment rate (Saqib et al., 2016).

Liqaat is a program that provides career fairs to facilitate the nationalization of the job market. It is organized and managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The fairs traditionally facilitate networking among college graduates, employment seekers, and prospective employers. It usually takes place in large cities in the Kingdom such as Riyadh, Makkah, Jeddah, Dammam, and Abha (G20 Turkey 2015, 2014).

It is hard to predict the effectiveness of these governmental programs because there are no current measures in place to assess women's participation in the workforce. Islam (2014) argued that the lack of data creates uncertainty in regard to the future employment of the 50,000 female graduates from Prince Noura University. This does not account for the 130,000 students who will graduate from overseas universities, return to the Kingdom, and find very limited professional careers that fulfill their passion.

### **Theories of Career Choice**

D. Brown (2002) defined the theories as “a description of the nature of reality, pieced together by a single person or a team of persons” (p. 7). The main goal of career theories centers



is on finding a good match between person and job. Career choice and development theories are valuable as long as they can help in describing why people choose and succeed in particular careers. There are several theories of career choices, and the following are considered influential in terms of motivating research.

**Social cognitive career theory.** Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) developed this theory, which focuses on three major points: (a) how basic education and career interests are developed, (b) how educational and career choices are made, and (c) how academic and career successes are achieved. The authors provide three segments for the career development: (a) interest, (b) the process of making a career choice involves choosing a goal, and (c) performance and persistence in career attainment (Lent et al., 1994). These three steps are influenced by a person's self-efficacy and outcome expectations. This career model focuses on the role of self-efficacy as predictor in career development. Self-efficacy is developed through life experience (gender, race, disability, personality, and predispositions). However, external factors can greatly influence a person's career choice. Lent et al. (1994) also proposed that contextual affordances involve (perceived barriers or support) help to clarify why a person may not pursue a major job in which he or she is interested (Lent et al., 1994; Swanson & Fouad, 2010).

**Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environment.** Holland (as cited in Swanson & Fouad, 2010) developed this theory, which is one of the most researched practical theories in career development. His theory postulates that most individuals fit into one of six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional. Holland identifies the key skills and typical work environment that match each personality type. The realistic personality would prefer to use his or her hands at work. This would include jobs that require operating tools, designing, building, or repairing. Therefore, a person with this

personality type would prefer careers such as pilot, farmer, engineer, or computer technologist. The investigative personality is independent, analytical, and curious. People with this personality type are more likely to work as scientists, researchers, or in a medical or health occupation. Artistic personality is self-expressive and uses words, art, and emotions to express ideas. Therefore, this personality tends to work as an artist, photographer, writer, or editor. Social personality is interested in working with people. These people tend to gravitate toward careers that serve, including teaching, training, helping, or curing. People with this personality tend to work as teachers, nurses, counselors, or customer service representatives. Enterprising personality is optimistic, influential, talkative, and ambitious. This personality tends to choose careers in sales, management, politics, or business. Finally, the conventional personality tends to be organized, conservative, practical, and accurate. Therefore, these people prefer to work as receptionists, secretaries, librarians, or any kind of office jobs. In this career theory, career counselors are recommended to help explore each individual's skills, areas of interest, and capabilities, then match them with the type of career and work environment that would be most suitable and fulfilling to the person (Swanson & Fouad, 2010).

**Super's developmental theory.** In 1953, Super (as cited in Swanson & Fouad, 2010) introduced one of the most influential career theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This theory was based on the importance of self-concept of the individual, which changes over time as a result of experience. According to Super, self-concept is generated from the interactions of factors such as mental and physical development, personal experience, and social learning. Super proposed five life stages that people usually go through, and within each stage they develop characteristics. The stages are:

Growth stage (ages 4–13): development of self-concept and attitudes.

Exploration (ages 14–24): gaining skills and experience for making vocational decision.

Establishment (ages 25–44): establishing career and work-life balance that involves stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing in the career path.

Maintenance (ages 45–65): continued advancement in career path.

Disengagement (over age 65): reducing productivity.

The theory also used the concept of career maturity as an indicator of person's ability to fulfill career developmental tasks required at each stage. Super's theory was appealing to international vocational professionals and researchers because it takes into account notions such as developmental stages, career maturity, and life role. Recent developments in the theory focus on the influence of social-cultural norms on individual choice. Cultural values and beliefs are critical to development of self-concept and career preferences (Leung, 2008; Swanson & Fouad, 2010).

### **Internal Factors Affecting Female Career Choices**

For the next few paragraphs, the researcher examines the influence of internal factors such as self-concept, academic self-efficacy, development of individual abilities and skills, and career development and career aspirations on women career choices. Specifically, it is hoped that the results of this focus will assist faculty members, administrators, and counselors to understand better career decision-making strategies as they relate to cultural, traditional, and demographic variables.

Schweitzer, Ng, Lyons, and Kuron (2011) suggested that women are more assertive and willing to change than in previous generations; therefore, the career expectations of these women are fairly comparable to men. Saudi female managers, in general, need to express a high level of

self-confidence to overcome gender stereotypes still prevalent in the male-dominated society. This self-confidence has developed throughout the years because of the family support, work experience, and higher education. Moreover, modern Saudi women see themselves as hard working, goal oriented (contributors), and having the ambition to work in high-power jobs within the public sector (Abalkhail, 2017). Career development is still evolving in Saudi Arabia. Porter and Umbach (2006) indicated that two critical variables, political opinions and personality, influence student career choice. For example, students with progressive views tend to pursue majors in the humanities.

In his study, Al-Sayegh (1998) explored the factors that produce stress among Saudi college students. The findings revealed that there are several factors, including choosing a major or concentration, planning for the future, finding jobs, shortages of resources available in the labor force, and the effects of economic and social status. Although it was not a recent study, it found Saudi students, both male and female, still experience some type of stress in regard to choosing careers and the availability of jobs in the Saudi workforce.

**Individual abilities and self-concept.** D. Brown (2002) identified self-concept as “one’s view of oneself” (p. 88). Wacker (1995) stated, “Students and young adults need to learn about themselves, to have a sense of the world of work, and to set tentative well-informed life and work goals” (p. 1). D. Brown (2002) suggested that appearance, character, capabilities, gender, beliefs, and place in society affect a person’s identity. As Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) asserted, there is a strong association between women’s educational and occupational development and their definition of self. However, one thing remains true, women who are perceived as career oriented and innovative have high self-esteem. Bona, Kelly, and Jung (2010) found that females who pursued occupations in male-dominated fields had high confidence.

Schoon and Polek (2011) found that females' cognitive abilities are sometimes disregarded because of their self-concept of having insufficient abilities and skills to pursue careers that demand math or science.

Damanhori (2013) conducted a study to elucidate the reasons inadequate higher education outputs matched the requirements of the Saudi labor market. This study indicated several possible causal factors, including increased female student enrollment in higher education without effective guidance to direct them to the appropriate specializations needed for the Saudi labor market. Furthermore, there is a strong need for improvements in courses offered to female students in general. Moreover, the lack of practical experience for graduating students and the lack of advanced English language among them has made them poor candidates to fulfill the requirements of the labor market.

**Career aspirations.** Hellenga, Aber, and Rhodes (2002) stated, "Career aspirations provide information about an individual's interest and hopes, unfettered by reality" (p. 201). Career aspirations are affected by several components such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, parents' job and academic level, and parental expectations (Khallad, 2000; Watson, Quatman, & Edler, 2002). Some studies showed that female students were more likely to go further in their education and achieve their professional goals when compared to their male counterparts (Schoon & Polek, 2011).

Wahl and Blackhurst (2000) emphasized the role of school counselors in developing educational and career aspirations. Students at an early age are exposed to information regarding careers paths, which helps them develop aspirations. The role of school counselors is to recognize the positive and negative factors affecting students' aspirations, and to create a plan to guide and assist students in attaining those goals. This guiding plan is to be used as a tool to raise

the students' awareness about their abilities, career paths, and potential jobs that would fit their aspirations. Evans (2009) explained that women, in general, aspire toward higher education, as they believe it will give them better access to middle-class professions and enhance their family's social class.

**Self-efficacy.** According to Byars and Hackett (1998), self-efficacy is “one's confidence in one's academic work and career-related competencies” (p. 255). Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as the beliefs in one's capabilities to think, feel, and make an action or attain a goal. Bandura (1995) suggested that people obtain self-efficacy for a particular task through four resources: vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, performance accomplishment, and emotional status. Self-efficacy plays a critical role in women's career choices (Hackett, 1995).

Hackett and Betz (1981) argued that females who lack strong expectations of self-efficacy in regard to their careers do so, in part, because of their failure to recognize their skills and talents in career progression. Thus, it is necessary to strengthen women's self-efficacy through the support of career counselors and help them make free and favorable occupational choices. Learning experiences and social factors are critical barriers that limit women's range of career selections. B. L. Brown (1999) stated that barriers such as culture, poverty, and language difficulties restrict development of students' self-efficacy. All these factors influence and restrict career choices and development (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Though some of these cannot be overcome completely, effective strategies can be taught in both school-based learning and real-life experiences to deal with these barriers and allow students to attain their full potential. Researchers indicated that work experience is a powerful contributor to the development of personal efficacy (Hackett, 1995).

For Saudi women, the education system and cultural norms predominantly affect their career-related self-efficacy. This restricts them from being highly advanced in certain careers or to advance in or select nontraditional academic majors. Alfrayan (2014) conducted a study exploring self-efficacy of Saudi businesswomen and female advocates at the Saudi Arabian regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The study's findings showed that self-efficacy of Saudi businesswomen is unstructured, which means it was mostly affected by external factors such as having role models and the experience of pursuing higher education outside the Kingdom. In addition, the presence of family-owned businesses helped these women to develop high levels of self-efficacy. Also, they have a high sense of citizenship, a desire to help Saudi women to advance, and they seek to change the negative views of Saudi women outside the Kingdom.

### **External Factors Affecting Female Career Choices**

**Social factors.** Hamdan (2005) stated, "The historical socio-economic and political conditions of Saudi Arabia are an essential aspect of understanding a woman's position in Saudi society" (p. 42). Culture is a major factor influencing gender equality in any society (Alsaleh, 2012). In Saudi society, the key role of women is maintaining the family. The Saudi mothers are mostly responsible of their children informal education; therefore, they reinforce the social and religious traditions to their families (Pharaon, 2004).

In Middle Eastern societies, cultural and social constraints play a great role in interpreting women's rights and roles within society. Although Islam, the major religion in these areas, granted women their rights, cultural norms still dictate how much women are allowed to do within these society (Abalkhail, 2017; Al-Mannai, 2010). Metcalfe (2008) noted that although Islam supports women's advancement in careers, it does not address the many inequalities they

still encounter in the workplace. Unfortunately, human resources management organization policies do not have any rules or regulations in place to help mitigate these issues. Saudi Arabia is considered one of the most conservative countries in the Middle East and the world; thus, it is understandable that the country still has work to do to achieve gender equality (Al-Shahrani, 2016). Pharaon (2004) noted that Saudi women's lives are influenced by political development, cultural environment, and local and international attentions.

For Saudi women, the freedom to choose their careers is circumscribed mostly by social norms. The conservative nature of these norms causes the majority of women to work as teachers in the public sector (Doumato, 2010). Saudi culture strongly influences gender roles and obligations of family members within the family unit. Specifically, there are strong cultural views surrounding the guardianship of women. These cultural limitations affect women's choices in the labor market. For instance, Saudi females may choose not to work in the health sector because of work schedules and mixed-gender workplaces. Moreover, Saudi women must prioritize their children, husbands, and parents, so this significantly restrict the time they can dedicate to work, study, and more (Naseem & Dhruva, 2017; Saqib et al., 2016).

Burlin (1976) stated that both parents' education levels have a great effect on career selections of their daughters. Sellers, Satcher, and Comas (1999) found that elementary-age students do not distinguish between what is masculine or feminine, suggesting that the idea of gender appropriate jobs is taught either in the home or at school. Therefore, the education environment and cultural norms play a crucial role in stifling intellectual growth potential of young girls by pushing them to choose jobs that are appropriate for their gender.

Social background also plays an essential role in forming students' career development. Students from comparatively disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have lower academic



achievement, and lower educational and occupational aspirations (Schoon & Polek, 2011). Saqib et al. (2016) also indicated that these occupational choices are affected by society atmosphere, and social pressure hinders high participation in the labor market for Saudi. In the context of Saudi Arabia, women in urban areas seek for more opportunities that women in rural areas because rural communities are more conservative. Moreover, middle and upper-class women receive more advantages of the country development because they are more educated (Pharaon, 2004).

Furthermore, in Saudi Arabia, religious considerations, culture, and local customs have always had a major impact on the country's economic development. In this religiously conservative nation, Saudi people strongly value family and traditions. Because there is no separation between religion and state, the government struggles to make major decisions in regard to freedoms allowed for women. Specifically, rules that may affect women's roles within society and their family are currently beyond their regulatory abilities. In the past, women were restricted to traditional roles (those of a good wife and mother). As a result of globalization, women's ambitions in the Kingdom have increased. This change became more prominent once Saudi women began participating in the workforce (AlMunajjed, 2010).

Abalkhail (2017) stated, "This segregation is related to the cultural values and religious traditions whereby women's modesty and morality must be preserved" (p. 174). This author also reported a positive and reinforcing reality of the present mind-set of educated men in the kingdom who are increasingly encouraging their wives, sisters, and daughters to get a higher education and training and join the workforce (Abalkhail, 2017). This private reinforcement at home is a key for developing career aspirations in Saudi women.

Hackett and Betz (1981) noted that social and learning experiences are great external factors that can either empower or inhibit women's growth by limiting the range of choices available to them. The authors illustrated that observing other women's success, having role models, or having an educated mother increase the likelihood of women seeking learning experiences and pursuing future careers (Hackett & Betz, 1981). In addition, Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) pointed out that cultural beliefs regarding female roles and abilities have created gender-based psychological characteristics within society that, unfortunately, influence girls' and young females' views on their roles in society. This further hinders their career choices with no consideration to their interests and ambitions.

Another important factor is the gender-related discrimination present in the workforce. Though inadvertent, the lack of effective labor laws protecting the rights of working females fosters unsafe working environments. These in turn create barriers in society, which increase the challenges women have to overcome in order to achieve their dreams. The present labor regulations only addressed childcare, breastfeeding, and sick leave. In addition, transportation is considered a legal constraint since women are not permitted to drive. This hinders their ability to travel to prospective jobs, thereby restricting their contribution to the economy (AlMunajjed, 2010). In addition, there was no legal protection for women against sexual harassment in the workplace. However, in 2008, sexual harassment policies were introduced by the Consultative Council in the government to protect women in education and employment settings (Doumato, 2010).

**Educational factors.** The Saudi education system has played a role in women's low contribution to the Saudi workforce. There is shortage of high quality education and training available to Saudi females. There is a major disconnect between educational training and the

needs of the workforce market. Approximately 90% of students graduating from institutions of higher education are not prepared for the workforce. In addition, Saudi universities do not offer women students enough seats outside education majors. Technological and scientific education is also not at the standard it should be to offer effective training necessary to apply for jobs (AlMunajjed, 2010; Sivakumar & Sarkar, 2012; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013b).

Al-Fawzan (2012) implied that the lack of career options for Saudi women is a result of the vast disconnect between graduates' skills and the jobs available on the labor market. At Saudi universities, the traditional system of teaching, learning, and assessing is not rigorous enough to generate highly qualified graduates who are creative enough to improve the economy (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013b). As a result, all students, including women, end up focusing on rote learning and memorization. This does not foster the development of analytical skills, problem solving, innovation, and communication skills (AlMunajjed, 2010; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013b).

There is also a lack of training opportunities available to females in the areas of information technology and leadership, which are the areas with the most demand in the workplace. Skills such as problem solving, analysis, communication, and creativity are important for the business setting, competitive employment, and career advancement (AlMunajjed, 2010). The available training courses are limited and not particularly aimed at promoting women into higher leadership jobs (Abalkhail, 2017; Metcalfe, 2008).

**Occupational factors.** Because of the segregated environment in the majority of Saudi workplaces, women continue to have fewer opportunities to participate in the labor market. Most women are restricted to female-oriented fields only in the public sector (AlMunajjed, 2010; El-Sherbeeney, 2014). The laws of the country are very strict about premarital relationships;

therefore, mixing between genders is avoided to decrease the occurrence of matters such as sexual harassment (Abalkhail, 2017). Organized infrastructural support for female employees is not available in both private and public-sector jobs. For instance, there are no available childcare facilities, flexible working hours, or dependable transportation (AlMunajjed, 2010).

Because of a lack of transparency and cultural norms, the Saudi labor market does not provide updated statistical data on the overall contributions of Saudi females to the economy, making it hard for researchers to analyze and provide suggestions that will improve the system. It is crucial to have specific techniques, methodologies, indicators, and concepts about women and employment. The lack of complete employment and social data on women impedes the enhancement of their socioeconomic status (AlMunajjed, 2010; Naseem & Dhruva, 2017).

In Saudi Arabia, many obstacles inhibit women from fully participating in entrepreneurship and businesses. These include social, legal, or educational constraints. Social traditions related to family obligations are one of the key constraints for Saudi women. Specifically, as a result of societal norms, when difficulties arise in time management between the business and the family, family takes precedence. This then negatively affects women's productivity in the workplace and further hinders their ability to participate fully in society. Moreover, the legal constraint mainly deals with the bureaucratic system of the Saudi government; for example, Saudi businesswomen must have an authorized male representative to process their businesses in the government organizations. This legal restriction led to many fraud cases and financial loss (Sivakumar & Sarkar, 2012).

### **Strategies That Can Support Saudi Women in Their Career Choices**

Within the Saudi workforce, many public and private sectors are responsible for employing the majority of females seeking work. The Ministry of Civil Service implements an

electronic employment system (Jadarah). This system is designed for Saudi males and females who are looking for jobs in the government sector. The system requires applicants to register their information including personal identification, qualifications, and if they have any work experience. They are allowed to choose their job preferences and locations as well. Then, the documents go through automated nomination system to match an individual's application with the vacant governmental job. The Ministry of Civil Service is responsible for the majority of governmental jobs including:

- General administrative public jobs;
- Educational jobs;
- Health care jobs that belong to public hospitals and medical centers;
- Faculty and staff in public universities and colleges;
- Judicial jobs;
- Diplomatic jobs;
- Public organization jobs;
- Technical and vocational training jobs; and
- Lower class jobs at the government organizations (Ministry of Civil Service, 2017).

Pharaon (2004) stated, "Expanding education and employment opportunities have created a generation of women who are accustomed to working in the formal sector and indeed expect it" (p. 361). To improve Saudi women's education and employment, it is important to have open and clear communication and collaboration across several governmental agencies, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Social Development, Human Resources Development Fund, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and private companies in the Kingdom.

To support such interaction and decrease the unemployment rate in the Kingdom, a National Transformation Plan, also known as Vision 2030, was initiated. In this plan, the government aims to make the Kingdom's economy less dependent on oil revenue. It aims to develop all labor areas within the country to make it a fully participating nation in the global economy. It hopes to create an economy that will provide opportunities for all, male, female, young, and old Saudi nationals. The plan is to place emphasis on lifelong training, seeking to make all Saudi workers realize their full potential by offering a work culture that will inspire exceptional performance. The vision has already acknowledged that Saudi women are one of Kingdom's greatest asset. Of all university graduates, 50% are female; therefore, encouraging the participation of Saudi female graduates in the workforce is essential. The government plans to promote women's talents and empower women to boost their future and contribute to society and economic development. Currently, women make up around 22% of the workforce. Under the Vision 2030 plan, the government hopes to increase this number to at least 30% by the year 2030 (Khan, 2016; Naseem & Dhruva, 2017).

Based on a study of the Saudi economy, McKinsey Global Institute (2015) indicated that within the next 15 years, Saudi Arabia will face an increasingly competitive energy market an increasing number of working-age Saudis. This will require the government and private sectors to create 6 million jobs by 2030 to meet the population expansion. According to the report, eight sectors will generate new jobs for Saudis, including mining and metals, tourism and hospitality, petrochemicals, finance, manufacturing, construction, retail and wholesale, and health care.

AlMunajjed (2010) recommended that the Saudi government must invests in its human capital, especially on the female half of the population. The complete integration of women in the workforce will take time and it is not something that will be accomplished without

challenges. First, leaders must reform education and employment policies to support female participation in the economy. New regulations and strategies will need to be put in place to protect women in the workforce. These regulations should create a system that ensures efficiency. Furthermore, the government should work with communities to change the present status of women and begin a dialogue to address traditions and social obstacles that hinder their growth. Education leaders must modify higher education and vocational training systems to prepare better females interested in areas of technology, science, and management. Both the trainers and the students must work together effectively to focus on gaining the knowledge and building advanced skills to achieve the “knowledge-based economy” (AlMunajjed, 2010, p. 11).

Saqib et al. (2016) suggested that organizations need to build career paths for Saudi women that support and monitor women’s proficiency. Moreover, they should focus on promoting mixed skills and aptitudes among their female employees to foster an environment that enables the exchange of knowledge and experiences. Human resource management plays a key role in establishing policies for female employees and ensuring they are represented at each managerial level to achieve gender equality.

The Saudi government should be working toward enacting these goals by using technology to gather information on the labor market. In addition, because of the emergence of private companies in the last few years, the government has put in place incentives and policies to motivate companies in the private sector to hire the increasing number of Saudi graduates. Public and private organizations should establish supportive work environments and design programs to affirm effectively the role of Saudi females in the labor market. Steps should also be taken to appoint women to leadership positions (Saqib et al., 2016).

According to Article 22 of the Economic Principles in the Kingdom, “Economic and social development shall be achieved in accordance with a systematic and fair plan” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011, p. 1). AlMunajjed (2010) recommended the development of a national plan and specific policies to help better integrate women in the workforce. This recommendation included job creation, career advancement, and training. For better incorporation, the government must consult with private-sector employers in designing and implementing these policies. In addition, the author suggested that the government must establish plans to assess the needs of women in both rural and urban provinces of the Kingdom (AlMunajjed, 2010). This would provide accurate information about their educational and employment needs as well as aspirations and concerns that they may have. This information would help the government get a better picture of the state of women in the Kingdom. This would be a great first step toward solving all issues related to female employment in the Kingdom.

Al-Sayegh (1998) indicated that career training and development is critical to the future of the Saudi workforce. Training is vital to prepare women for the workplace. For example, in Saudi Arabia, there are bank branches dedicated to women customers. Therefore, female mathematics graduates can become bank personnel after attending training programs in business management or computers (Hamdan, 2005). Nieva (2016) found that training and skills development are key issues among Saudi women social entrepreneurs that need to be addressed.

The government invests more in creating separate career paths for both men and women and then it would be supporting women in any career they desire. Increasing the proportion of females in male-dominated occupations can help in balancing the power between both genders, which would have a positive impact on both the economy and culture of the Kingdom (Abalkhail, 2017; Schweitzer et al., 2011).



The ban on driving was an issue for many years and it was an obstacle for many women who hoped to join the workforce. In September 2017, the Saudi King announced the reform in a royal decree and allowed women to apply for drivers' licenses for the first time in the Kingdom. The law will take effect in June 2018. This landmark step certainly will support many females and give them more autonomy. When women are able to drive their own cars to work, they will not have to hire a driver or use other transportation (Chulov, 2017).

**Specific strategies for the Ministry of Labor.** In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Labor is directly responsible of creating policies that affect women's employment. Setting clear and strong legislation will be essential in protecting the working woman's rights as laid out by the United Nations' rules on gender equality in the workplace. The ministry must provide suitable buildings with departments where women work, and consider the availability of schedules with flexible hours. These basic changes will increase female participation and productivity as well as enhancing job satisfaction (AlMunajjed, 2010; Saqib et al., 2016).

Moreover, the Ministry of Labor must review and modify companies' policies that benefit female employees. As Metcalfe (2008) pointed out, human resources management must create policies for women that fit within the Islamic values and social identity such as veiling policies without impinging on women's right to participate in the workforce. Female employees in mixed-gender workplaces should have the right to practice their Islamic principles.

Additionally, AlMunajjed (2010) recommended strong collaboration between the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education. These two agencies can collaborate to establish centers that can function as resources, offering career guidance and counseling for women. These centers can then become important support systems for women interested in advancing their career paths by helping to providing motivation, help clarifying career goals, and investigating

new job opportunities. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Labor must invest in creating research opportunities that can analyze current and future workforce needs. The MOE can then use the results of these studies to make essential, critical changes and improvements in colleges and universities to prepare better the student population to become contributing members of society.

Recently, The Ministry of Labor and Social Development created several strategies in response to the main challenges faced by Saudis mentioned earlier in the chapter. These strategies included increasing the formation of sustainable jobs in private-sector and nonprofit organizations. This can be done by supporting skills acquisition among the Saudi workforce and creating a balance between the number of Saudi and foreign workers hired in the job market. These strategies can also help support Saudi nations through social development, and by creating fundamental policies for an effective labor market (Koyame-Marsh, 2017).

**Specific strategies for the Ministry of Education.** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia acknowledges the need for higher education improvement. The government should allocate an abundant budget to public universities to support their programs as well as their faculties. This would enhance the academic experience for both male and female students. It would also provide the resources needed for them to become highly proficient in their chosen career paths (Hamdan, 2005; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a). Saqib et al. (2016) argued that increasing the proportion of educated Saudi females would lower the reliance on expatriates.

A few years ago, the MOE adopted a mandatory one-year preparatory program for major universities in the Kingdom. This year was to be used to acquire the basic skills needed for students who are planning to enter fields of medicine, business, administration, or computer science. The key advantage of the preparatory year was to reduce the gap between high school

and university education. The preparatory one year offers courses in English, mathematics, computer literacy, science, communication skills, and health awareness (Islam, 2014).

Making improvements in education requires time, discipline, and procedural changes, especially in a conservative culture (Pavan, 2013). Smith and Abouammoh (2013a) emphasized the need for robust and accurate education, and workforce planning in Saudi Arabia. The current universities' curricula are not effectively addressing the needs of the workforce. A change in training would involve addressing three elements: curriculum development, career guidance, and comprehensive statistics of women's education and employment. The curriculum should be developed to reflect the future desires of employment sectors. Career guidance or counseling should work to direct high school or first-year students into programs that lead to genuine employment results. The last element is to provide accurate data for students, and this requires collaboration and clear communication among several government and private departments.

Al-Fawzan (2012) suggested that universities should close some academic departments and offer new majors in line with the labor-market needs. Academic authorities must focus on professions such as medicine, accounting, management, and retail to generate more females for these careers. The MOE must invest on intellectual equity more than fancy buildings. If the government is not solving the issue correctly, it will waste money.

The education base has already been expanded to offer female students courses of study in architecture, engineering, and law. For the first time, Saudi female lawyers were granted certificates to practice law, and there have been an increased number of females working in the retail and hospitality sectors. Great reforms have already been made in the education sector (Naseem & Dhruva 2017). Multi-engineering programs are gradually being embraced and integrated into Saudi female universities. This can be streamlined by constructing an independent

engineering college campus as with any other campus, and it can be led entirely by female professors. Thus, if male instructors are needed because of a lack of qualified female instructors, instruction can be delivered using live broadcast (El-Sherbeeney, 2014).

The new Vision 2030 plan for the Kingdom clearly defines the need for higher education institutions to work in partnership with labor-market demands. Vision 2030 also offers a plan to identify gender disproportions in professions, which require specific skills, talents, education, and training of female candidates. Educational and training programs and initiatives are being created to enhance these areas (Naseem & Dhruva 2017).

In order to keep up effectively with the increasing numbers of students seeking higher education, improvements are needed to optimize the effectiveness of the educational system. The expanding job market within the private sector is in need of highly qualified and well-trained employees (Darandari et al., 2009). AlMunajjed (2010) stated that the role of the MOE is critical for improving the education system for all candidates, including female students. The entire educational process and training system must focus on building communication and leadership skills, including critical thinking and problem solving, and all other pertinent skills (learning foreign languages and global cultural practices). Linking the higher education system more closely to the requirements of organizational needs is vital for the progress of the Kingdom (Alhujaylan, 2014, AlMunajjed, 2010; Metcalfe, 2008).

Universities should increase the autonomy and flexibility of their decision making to be more responsive to students' needs. Although there are many excellent leaders at Saudi universities, many lack proper management skills and are not open to new ideas or changes. Female academic leaders must contribute in curriculum planning and have direct access to the communication lines with deans and the MOE leaders (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a). Majors,

courses, and fields of study offered at exclusively female universities and female colleges need to be revised and enhanced to keep up with the changing economy. Females' education needs to be enriched with skills in special fields such as technology, science, engineering, and vocational competencies (AlMunajjed, 2010). The government should empower the technical education system to improve the public perception of technical learning. The attempt to attract more Saudi females to this type of education will be necessary to provide additional career opportunities (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a). The involvement of female academics is vital in strategic education planning to discuss the ongoing issues related to female students and employees within the education system (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a).

Implementing advanced methods of teaching will enable the use of the Internet and technical libraries as important sources of information. This will increase both the resources available to teach in the classroom and provide resources that can foster and enable independent learning in the student population (Elsemary, Alkhaja, & Hamidou, 2012). Elsemary et al. stressed the importance of creativity and critical thinking for learning. They proposed that those factors would produce a generation that is more aware of internal and external problems that plague their society and maybe provide them the tools to solve those problems (Elsemary et al., 2012). In addition, it is necessary to supply the education system with advance technology equipment to develop students' skills and expertise (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a). Saudi academics should expand the approach of teaching and learning to generate students with effective communication skills.

Career counselors and educational faculty should motivate young females to participate in male-dominated careers, and the government should support females' representation in these fields (Ethington, Smart, & Pascarella, 1988; Schweitzer et al., 2011). Women's achievement in

education and employment will play a significant role in decreasing the overall household poverty, and provide women with resources for better human capital outcomes (Saqib et al., 2016).

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) identified that career counseling facilitates the dissemination of information about jobs and assists in the exploration of a person's interest and capabilities. The key objective of career counseling in Saudi Arabia will be to expand women's perceptions, which will increase their accomplishments and contentment in their chosen career. Saudi universities should provide resources and important information to help students refine their training for future career choices. Academic and career counselors should meet students consistently to assist them in their career choices (Al-Sayegh, 1998). Own and Eddy (1992) mentioned that counseling is significant for Saudi female students during the university stage to provide clear academic guidance with well-defined goals, and offer suitable schedules for medical major students, especially those with children.

Schweitzer et al. (2011) stressed the importance of coordination between employers' associations and education institutions to provide programs that can help women attain the necessary skills after graduation. This interaction will also help develop mentorships between professional women and students. Furthermore, mentors can assist young females to reinforce confidence and self-esteem and teach the skills to negotiate a fair salary when they start their careers. Mentorships will provide role models and advisors to guide students through their chosen career paths. Engaging female college students into leadership activities is imperative to assist them in acquiring leadership skills and becoming successful in the workplace (Ethington et al., 1988).

Naseem and Dhruva (2017) stated, “In its endeavor to increase the attractiveness of nursing and medical support jobs with Saudi nationals, the country must attract between 48,000 and 100,000 female nurses by 2030” (p. 26). Of the total Saudi Arabian population, approximately one third are expatriates residing in the country on foreign worker visas (G20 Turkey 2015, 2014). Therefore, as a part of realizing Vision 2030, the government is working to empower specific and special skills for women to replace the expatriate staff working as nurses.

Universities should increase the available seats for female students in medicine and nursing majors and motivate them to enter these fields. Al-Omar (2004) indicated the importance of increasing the positive knowledge of nursing profession, which is the Saudi health and education decision-makers’ responsibility. In addition, modification of benefits and salaries should be considered to attract more local females to nursing careers. According to Aldossary et al. (2008), shared culture and Arabic language are essential to provide effective health services for Saudi patients.

El-Sherbeeney (2014) recommended that Saudi authorities should play a key role in encouraging Saudi females to engage in STEM education and careers. For example, more needs to be done to increase the participation of Saudi females in social media and the Internet. This can be done efficiently by highlighting the role of successful female models in these fields. Doumato (2010) suggested that Saudi universities should conduct in-depth research on issues Saudi women face in the workplace such as discrimination, economic activities, and women’s laws.

**Strategies for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.** Saudi women are highly educated; the issue is that they are focusing on education and skills that are not viable for the private-sector employers (Naseem & Dhruva, 2017). The Ministry of Commerce and Industry

has the authority to integrate more women into the workforce by utilizing the private sectors to support women's contributions to the economy. Professions and careers in the business world can play a fundamental role in improving businesswomen's participation by allowing them to become independent participants in the economic progression of the Kingdom. The private sector can maximize its efforts in encouraging women's business initiatives and self-employment efforts by offering funds or grants for small-business development. Motivating women to enter into entrepreneurship can effectively promote the economy. These strategies would help Saudi females become powerful and successful in their careers (AlMunajjed, 2010).

Sivakumar and Sarkar (2012) stressed the importance of women's entrepreneurship as a valuable source for economic growth. Female entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others. Since the roles of women in the Kingdom are going through improvements in many areas (social, public, and economic), some women have begun to enter the business world by establishing small enterprises. At the moment, most entrepreneurship is being seen in the areas of trade, service providers, and provision of services. Nieva (2016) suggested that the Saudi government should create a business center for Saudi women entrepreneurs where they can introduce new products and make trade negotiations, and facilitate communication for investors, customers, and trainees. In the context of social entrepreneurship, Nieva also mentioned that Saudi women who work as social entrepreneurs show improvement in their socioeconomic status and skills-development training. The role of universities, government, and private sectors are crucial to foster women's social entrepreneurship. The government should coordinate with other Arabian companies to provide assistance to Saudi social women entrepreneurs. Additionally, Damanhori (2013) suggested having strong coordination between higher education institutions and the private sector to stay abreast of the skills and specialties for business.



## Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the current state of Saudi women's education and employment. Moreover, this chapter briefly presented several theories about career choices and development. The chapter discussed the major internal and external factors that affect women's career choices, particularly among Saudi women, including individual's abilities, self-efficacy, and career aspirations. Social and educational systems were considered major factors affecting women's career choices and the low participation in the labor market. In the last section, the researcher provided strategies that support Saudi women's career choices and development.

A woman who has a successful career will find her position in society and she will be recognized by her career choice. Traditionally, the first step that individuals take toward choosing the future career is choosing their field of study. Saudi women express more strengths and energy to pursue their education; therefore, as it is easy to observe many Saudi women serving as successful doctors, teachers, and administrators, it is important to see them also as physicists, engineers, lawyers, and entrepreneurs (Islam, 2014). The Saudi government is promising female's full contribution to the labor market by planning and implementing diverse strategies and programs. There are social, educational, legislative, and occupational constraints that hinder Saudi females from completely participating in the labor market. Thus, there is a need for extensive reforms, including the educational system, labor market, and labor laws; for instance, promoting gender equality and a family-friendly work environment (Saqib et al., 2016). Implementing the strategies that mentioned in the literature is necessary to reinforce Saudi women's profession life and eliminate many obstacles they have encountered for long period of time.

### Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research methodology is a tool that supports the researcher in answering the research questions (Butin, 2010). Most educational dissertations are empirical; therefore, the researcher discovers the data in the field. The main goal of this study was to enhance career opportunities and choices for Saudi women. The primary purpose of the study was to explore the relationships among internal and external factors and career choices among Saudi women. Additionally, the study sought to explore the important strategies that support career choice of these women.

This chapter deals primarily with the methodology and procedures that were used to conduct the study. The chapter begins with an overview of the study, restatement of the purpose, and the research questions. It then discussed the research design, the population, the instrumentation to be used in data collection, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the data collection process, a plan of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), ethical consideration, limitation, and summary.

#### Restatement of the Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between internal factors such as (self-concept, personal skills, and career aspirations), and external factors such as (social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women. Another purpose of the study was to examine the most important strategies that support Saudi women career choices. It attempted to provide solutions and strategies to reduce the high unemployment rate among Saudi Arabia's educated females. This study was geared toward finding ways to elucidate available career paths for women to help them fully participate in the present and future economic and social progress in the Kingdom.

### **Restatement of the Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of female Saudi students on the factors that influencing their career choices. Moreover, the study examined the strategies that may be used to provide the appropriate support to aid Saudi women make the best career choices. In quantitative studies, the research questions are formed to focus on the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009). To address the overlying goal of this study, the researcher focused on the following three questions:

1. What is the relationship between internal factors such as (self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women?
2. What is the relationship between external factors such as (social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women?
3. What are the most important strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women in their career choices?

This research was intended to study this exclusive cohort of students (first-year in college) to explore what factors influence Saudi women's career decision making.

### **Research Design**

Creswell (2009) defined research designs as “types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study” (p. 295). Based on the research questions that the researcher generated, the study was designed as a nonexperimental quantitative research in order to explore factors affecting Saudi women career choices. In nonexperimental quantitative research, it is important to address the issue of interest by understanding what factors or variables may affect the result (Creswell,

2009). Quantitative methods collect the data containing attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, or values (Dörnyei, 2003).

This study was intended to investigate the significant factors that affect Saudi women's career choices. To gather the necessary data, the study utilized a survey questionnaire that is specifically designed to address the three main questions of the study. The questionnaire was designed based on the assumptions that first year of college is the best time for Saudi female students to pave the way for their career choice. They are at the stage where students usually determine their professional field that aligned with their skills and interests. The self-administered questionnaire was developed to measure female students' perceptions of the: (a) internal factors affecting their career choice, (b) external factors affecting their career choice, and (c) the best strategies to support female students' career choices.

### **Population and Sample**

The research population consists of Saudi female students in their first year at one public university in Saudi Arabia. Alaqeli (2014) stressed that the preparatory year is deemed one of the key successful practices in higher education in Saudi Arabia. Thus, selecting this type of population provides a unique view into female students' perspectives of their potential and goals. This study conducted in Saudi Arabia. The study was conducted in one public institution: King Saudi University (see APPENDIX A for site approval). Because the study was interested in Saudi Arabia's cultural norms and their possible effect on its female population choice of career, the researcher proposed to only enroll full-time Saudi nationals in the study. Therefore, non-Saudi students and correspondence students were excluded from the study.

Creswell (2009) recommended selecting a random sample, called a systematic sample, in which each individual has an equal chance to participate in the study. Once the colleges were

selected, the survey link sent by email to all Saudi female students who are currently registered at preparatory year at King Saud University. Participants of this study were volunteer to complete the survey. Sample size for a Spearman correlation was determined using power analysis. The power analysis was conducted in G-POWER using an alpha of 0.05, a power of 0.80, and a medium effect size ( $\rho = 0.3$ ) for a two-tailed test. Because Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is computationally identical to Pearson product-moment coefficient, power analysis was conducted using software for estimating power of a Pearson's correlation. Based on the aforementioned assumptions, the minimum sample size was determined to be 100 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009).

### **Survey Instruments**

Kumar (2011) stated, "The construction of a research instrument is the most important of any research endeavor as it determines the nature and quality of the information" (p. 155). Creswell (2009) explained that the survey design provides numeric description of attitudes or opinions of the targeted population. This study employed a survey instrument; therefore, it is easy to use, distribute, gather, and analyze the data from hundreds or thousands of participants (Butin, 2010). The survey was developed by the researcher in order to measure the effect of the above-mentioned factors on participant's career choices. The survey was titled *Factors Affecting Saudi Women Career Choices*. The survey consisted of three sections: section one included the demographic information, and section two involved three parts, the internal factors, the external factors, and the strategies, and section three contained one open-ended question and it was an optional question for participants (see APPENDIX B).

The first section of the survey, questions 1 through 6, addressed the general information. These questions are multiple-choice questions and aimed at determining basic information,

specifically on the age, marital status, current semester, the degree level that students plan to achieve, career goals options and the researcher added *other, please indicate* option to expand responses that not listed, and where they would prefer to work. They may later be used to define bins during the analysis portion of the study.

The second section of the survey consisted of three parts utilized a 5-point Likert agreement scale, which was developed for the purpose of this study. The Likert scale measured the participant's opinions using on 5 points: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The first part of this section intended to measure the participants' opinions regarding the internal factors affecting their career choices. The second part proposed to measure the external factors that influence their career choices. The third part focused on the strategies that participants believe can support them in their future career choices.

The last section of the survey which is section three contained one open-ended question intended to ask the participants about educational and/or employment strategies they think should be implemented to help women to achieve their professional goals. This question was optional for participants to express their opinions in sentence or paragraph.

The survey was first developed in English. Since the participants are Arabic speakers, a qualified linguist center at King Saud University was used to translate the survey from English to Arabic (see APPENDIX C). The Arabic version is easier and more convenient for Saudi participants. To ensure the accuracy of the translation, several individuals who are highly proficient in both languages were used to revise the survey before it was finalized.

For this study, the researcher decided to use a Web-based e-survey to collect information from participants. Through many types of e-surveys are available to use, including e-mail-based or Point of Contact, the researcher thought the Web-based survey is more appropriate for this

study. It helps the researcher to reach a large sample and remove bias by being automated.

According to Jansen, Corley & Jansen (2007) there are certain benefits and drawbacks of using

Web-based surveys:

Benefits:

- Turnaround time (quick delivery and easy return);
- Ease to reach large numbers of respondents;
- The researcher can use several question formats;
- Data quality checking;
- Ease of ensuring confidentiality;
- Can provide customized delivery of items; and
- Can capture data directly in database.

Drawbacks:

- Time-consuming development;
- Potential for limited access within target population;
- Potential for technology problems to decrease return rate ;
- Security issues may threaten validity or decrease return rate;
- Lack of control over sample (applies only to unsolicited surveys); and
- Potential for bias in sample (applies only to unsolicited surveys; Jansen et al., 2007, p. 4).

To minimize the drawbacks of online survey, the researcher employed a well-known online survey Web site called SurveyMonkey. The layout of this survey was simple and flexible.

In addition, participants can fill out the survey within 10 minutes. Each participant received the

survey link through her university e-mail account. For the security concerns, SurveyMonkey is strict in privacy and security.

### **Variables of the Study**

The study aimed to enhance career choices for Saudi women by investigating the relationship among internal and external factors and career decision making. The dependent variable of the study was career choice for Saudi women. The independent variables of the study were internal factors such as self-concept, personal skills, and career aspirations, external factors such as social norms, education system, and work environment, and strategies that can influence a career choice. The independent variables were derived from the literature review presented in Chapter 2. Creswell (2009) indicates that it is useful to relate the variables, the particular research questions, and the items presented on the survey so it makes it easy for the reader to understand how the data collection linked to the variables and research questions.

It is critical for the instrument developer to align the questionnaire items with the research questions to ensure that all the study variables are addressed in the questionnaire (Creswell, 2009; Roberts, 2010). The first section of the survey contained five questions; questions 1 and 2 relate to personal information, questions 3, 4, and 5 are correlated to the research questions. Table 2 shows the matrix that aligns the research questions and questionnaire items, including the references of each item.

Table 2

#### *Questionnaire Items Aimed to Answer the Research Questions*

Research Questions	Survey Questions and Items
Q1: What is the relationship between internal factors such as (self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women?	Items 1 & 3: Byars & Hackett (1998) Item 2: Betz & Fitzgerald (1987) Items 4, 5, 6, & 7: Hellenga et al. (2002) Item 8: Wahl & Blackhurst (2000).

(continued)



Research Questions	Survey Questions and Items
Q2: What is the relationship between external factors such as (social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women?	Item 9: Burlin (1976) Item 10: Doumato (2010) Item 11: Ethington et al. (1988) Item 12: Hamdan, (2005); Smith & Abouammoh (2013) Item 13: AlMunajjed (2010) Item 14: Al-Fawzan (2012) Item 15: Naseem & Dhruva (2017); Saqib et al. (2016) Item 16 & 17: AlMunajjed (2010); EL-Sherbeeny (2014)
Q3: What are the most important strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women in their career choices?	Items 18 & 19: Al-Fawzan (2012) Item 20: Elsemary et al. (2012) Item 21: Ethington et al. (1988); Betz & Fitzgerald (1987) Item 22: Al-Sayegh (1998); Nieva (2016) Item 23: Saqib et al. (2016) Item 24: AlMunajjed (2010)

### Validity and Reliability of the Survey Instrument

Validity is used to test the accuracy and quality of the research instrument to demonstrate that it is finding out what the instrument designed to discover (Kumar, 2011). To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher implemented face and content validity, which is one of the types of validity Kumar presented. This validity method focuses on the logical link between research questions, questionnaire items, and the issue or the study being measured. Thus, the researcher confirmed that the designed questionnaire is aligned and addressed the research questions (Kumar, 2011).

After constructing the questionnaire instrument, the researcher sent a copy of the questionnaire along with the research questions by e-mail to a group of experts who are familiar with the topic of the study, to assess the validity of the instrument questions. This group consisted of nine people, seven members, who hold doctoral degrees in similar fields, and two members with master's degrees. The researcher sought their proficiency to evaluate the clarity

and length of questions and the instructions, check the relevance to the subject matter, and review if there were any difficult or ambiguous questions. Their feedback and comments were considered in modifying the questionnaire to the final version.

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the research instrument (Kumar, 2011). To ensure the reliability, the researcher checked the clarity and simplicity of the questions and statements to avoid misinterpretation among the participants. In addition, after designing the survey, the researcher conducted a pilot study using five individuals as sample size. The pilot study helped the researcher to determine if the survey questions were easy to understand. The results of the pilot study confirmed that all the questions were clear and easy to understand.

### **Data Collection**

Information is collected from a group of people that is considered as primary source through the use of questionnaires (Kumar, 2011). For this study, the necessary data was gathered from Saudi females who are first-year students at one large public university (King Saud University). The data was collected through a self-administered survey instrument using SurveyMonkey. Using the survey, the following information was obtained from each participant: basic information about participants' educational and employment goals, variables that may have an effect on the participants' career choices, and strategies that can support them on their career choices.

It is essential to consider the availability of the population, which affects the response rate (Roberts, 2010). Data for this study was collected from female students who are enrolled for the preparatory year (first year) in one large public university in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. Since the study took place in educational institutions, the research conducted during the spring semester of 2018. The researcher contacted the postgraduates and scientific research

departments in the university to get the permission to conduct the study. Furthermore, since the researcher was not able to attend and administer the survey at the institution at that time, the researcher communicated with a coordinator, who works at King Saud University, to smooth the process of distributing the survey. After getting the permission from the postgraduates and scientific department, the coordinator contacted the information technology office at King Saud University to send the consent form and the survey link by email to student's emails. The online survey began with an introductory page about the researcher with brief of the study. Then, the participants had the chance to go through the consent form and decide to participate or withdraw. The survey link was sent to 1,300 female students who were enrolled in the preparatory year. Students who sign the consent form by clicking on agree to participate icon were directly linked to the Web-based electronic survey called SurveyMonkey.

To maximize participation, the survey link was active for two weeks after the day the e-mail link was sent. The researcher proposed that if the responses did not reach 100, the researcher will extend the duration of the survey link for two more weeks. Fortunately, 470 students completed the survey within two weeks of distributing the surveys.

### **Data Analysis**

Kumar (2011) indicated that the analysis of quantitative responses can be processed either manually or by computers to transform the information to numerical values “codes” (p. 229). In quantitative research, the information is gathered through predetermined questions and then processed through statistical procedures. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) indicated descriptive statistics “transform a set of numbers or observations into indices that describe or characterize the data” (p. 163).

Once the researcher received the responses, the data was entered into a computer and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). This is the best commonly known software for analyzing data in educational research, which offers descriptive and inferential statistics and graphical presentation of data (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014). To answer the three research questions (internal factors, external factors, and career strategies), descriptive statistics were used (means and standard deviations) to measure the amount of agreement that the respondents have to each statement. As an additional set of analyses, Spearman correlations were utilized to examine the relationships between the respondent's level of agreement with their demographic characteristics. Spearman correlations were chosen instead of the more popular Pearson correlations due to the ordinal nature of the rating scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

### **Human Subject Consideration**

The purpose of the IRB is to protect the participants of the study from harm (Roberts, 2010). Pepperdine's Graduate School of Psychology IRB Policy (2018). Web site clearly states:

The primary goal of Graduate and Professional Schools' Institutional Review Board is to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in research activities conducted under the auspices of Pepperdine University. Applications submitted to GPS IRB generally encompass social, behavioral, and educational research and are usually considered medically non-invasive. (para. 1)

Since the study includes human subjects, the researcher was required to submit an IRB application to the IRB office at Pepperdine University. This is important step before conducting the study (Roberts, 2010). First, the researcher completed an online training course from CITI Human Subjects Training and received a certificate of completion (see APPENDIX D). Then, the researcher submitted an application to the IRB office at Pepperdine University. After the IRB

application was approved (see APPENDIX G), the researcher contacted the selected university (King Saud University) to get their final approval to conduct the study at their campus.

The participation for the survey was voluntary, and the participants were also given the choice to withdraw from the survey at any time. All participants were required to sign letters of consent before participating on the survey. The researcher informed the participants that the study is led by a doctoral student and they will be given the expected time for data gathering, which was approximately 10 minutes. The survey did not request participants' names or personal information. In addition, participants were informed that their responses will remain very confidential. The researcher used the survey data only for the purpose of the study. Later, after completing the study, a summary of the findings will be available to the participants upon request. The researcher will delete the data after three years of completing the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Roberts (2010) stated, "Ethical issues arise in all aspects of conducting research" (p. 31). It involves areas related to human rights, data collection and analysis, writing, and publishing the study. Participation was voluntary, and no one was pressured to participate in this study. Moreover, participants had the right to opt out of answering the survey questions at any time. The researcher presented adequate clear information about the survey to the participants (Dörnyei, 2003). All students who participate were required to read and sign the consent form attached to the survey before participating in the survey (see APPENDIX E and APPENDIX F). The surveys were anonymous and did not require names, thus the researcher will maintain confidentiality (Dörnyei, 2003).

## Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology utilized for the study, including the process of selecting population, survey design, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Moreover, it provided information about the nature of the questionnaire that was designed for the study. The chapter also presented the importance of human subjects and ethical considerations.

## Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationships among internal factors such as self-concept, personal skills, career aspirations, and external factors such as social norms, education system, work environment, and career choices for Saudi women. Moreover, the study explored the strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women career choices. Survey data were gathered from 467 first-year female students at a large public university to complete the study. This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between internal factors such as (self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women?
2. What is the relationship between external factors such as (social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women?
3. What are the most important strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women in their career choices?

### Description of the Sample

This study surveyed 467 students. All students' demographic data can be found in Table 3. Students' age ranged from 18 to 50 with a mean ( $M$ ) of 22.88 years ( $SD = 4.00$ ). Most were single (83.3%), while 69 were married (14.8%). Almost all students were in their second semester (98.1%), with 40.9% seeking a bachelor's degree and the rest roughly divided between wanting a master's degree (30.4%) and/or a doctorate (28.7%). Most participants preferred to work in the public sector (63.4%), with administration jobs as the most common career goal (31.9%) and teaching the second most common (18.4%). The career goal question included *other* as a response, and (21.91%) selected *other* as career goals. This allowed the participants the chance to write in their career goal if their option was not included in the list. The most preferred

careers choices mentioned by participants were researchers (27%), lawyers (26%), IT technicians (20%), translators (10%), and the rest included engineers, consultants, writers, and designers.

Table 3 has the frequency counts for the demographic variables in the study. Table 4 has the ratings of the internal factors items sorted by highest mean. Table 5 has the ratings of the external factors items sorted by highest mean. Table 6 has the ratings of the career strategies items sorted by highest mean. Tables 7 and 8 have the Spearman correlations for the internal factors items with the students' preferred sectors to answer Research Question 1. Tables 9 and 10 have the Spearman correlations for the external factors items with the students' preferred sectors to answer Research Question 2. Tables 11 and 12 showed the Spearman correlations for the career strategies with the students' preferred sectors to answer Research Question 3. As additional findings, Table 13 has the Spearman correlations for the internal factors items with the students' age, marital status, and degree objective. Table 14 has the Spearman correlations for the external factors items with the students' age, marital status, and degree objective, and Table 15 has the Spearman correlations for the career strategies with the students' age, marital status, and degree objective.

Table 3

*Frequency Counts for Selected Variables*

Variable	Category	<i>N</i>	%
Age <sup>a</sup>	18 to 20	130	27.9
	21 to 24	234	50.1
	25 to 29	67	14.3
	30 to 50	36	7.7
Marital Status	Single	389	83.3
	Married	69	14.8
	Other	9	1.9

(continued)



Variable	Category	<i>N</i>	%
Semester	First semester	9	1.9
	Second semester	458	98.1
Degree to Achieve	Bachelor's	191	40.9
	Master's	142	30.4
	Doctorate	134	28.7
Preferred Sector	Not planning to work	5	1.1
	Public	296	63.4
	Private	98	21.0
	Nonprofit	9	1.9
	Self-employed	59	12.6
Career Goal	Other	103	22.1
	None	26	5.6
	Teaching	86	18.4
	Administration	149	31.9
	Social service	50	10.7
	Doctor or nurse	53	11.3

Note. *N* = 467.

<sup>a</sup>*M* = 22.88 years, *SD* = 4.00.

Table 4 has the ratings of the internal factors items sorted by highest mean. These ratings were given using a 5-point metric: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The highest ratings of agreement were given to “I need more information about what occupations are available before I make a career choice” (*M* = 4.31, *SD* = 0.79), “I know which specialization I will choose to study” (*M* = 4.06, *SD* = 0.90), and “The specialization I will choose is-will be aligned with my interests” (*M* = 4.03, *SD* = 0.94). The lowest ratings of agreement were given to “I have always known what I want to do in the future” (*M* = 3.49, *SD* = 1.02) and “I have a clear vision of what my future career will be” (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = 1.01).

Table 4

*Ratings of Internal Factors Items Sorted by Highest Mean*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I need more information about what occupations are available before I make a career choice.	4.31	0.79
I know which specialization I will choose to study.	4.06	0.90
The specialization I will choose is/will be aligned with my interests.	4.03	0.94
I am aware of my skills and abilities	3.98	0.87
The subject I will specialize in is aligned to the career I would like to have.	3.94	0.95
I feel that I will be able to choose a career that is related to my interests	3.91	0.88
I have a clear vision of what my future career will be	3.50	1.01
I have always known what I want to do in the future	3.49	1.02

*Note.*  $N = 467$ . Ratings based on a five-point metric: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 5 has the ratings of the external factors items sorted by highest mean. These ratings were given using a 5-point metric: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The highest ratings of agreement were given to “Job opportunities affect my career choice” ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ), “It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities” ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ), and “The limited college majors for women affect my career choice” ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ). The lowest ratings of agreement were given to “I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice” ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ) and “The university provides important resources that will help me determine my career” ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ).

Table 5

*Ratings of External Factors Items Sorted by Highest Mean*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Job opportunities affect my career choice	4.07	0.96
It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities.	3.90	1.05
The limited college majors for women affect my career choice.	3.60	1.23
I prefer to work in a female-only workplace.	3.51	1.31
I will be able to work in a mixed-gender workplace.	3.47	1.23
My social norms have a strong influence over the career I will choose	3.35	1.24

(continued)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
My parents have a strong influence over the career I will choose.	3.12	1.25
The university provides important resources that will help me determine my career.	2.64	1.10
I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice.	2.50	0.99

*Note.* Ratings based on a 5-point metric: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 6 has the ratings of the career strategies items sorted by highest mean. These ratings were given using a 5-point metric: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The highest ratings of agreement were given to “Increase career training can help me choose my future career” ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ), “Labor law improvements can support women’s career choices” ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), and “Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs” ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ). The lowest ratings of agreement were given to “Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices” ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) and “Academic-Career counseling can support my career choice” ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ).

Table 6

*Ratings of Career Strategies Items Sorted by Highest Mean*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Increase career training can help me choose my future career.	4.37	0.72
Labor law improvements can support women’s career choices.	4.29	0.75
Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs.	4.24	0.74
Open new majors for women in universities can support my career choice.	4.13	0.93
The education system can prepare me for better career choice by focusing on interpersonal skills.	4.10	0.83
Academic-Career counseling can support my career choice.	3.37	1.12
Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices.	3.12	1.12

*Note.* Ratings based on a 5-point metric: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

### Answering the Research Questions

**Research question 1.** To determine whether there was a correlation between internal factors and Saudi women’s career choice, the following question was asked by the researcher:

What is the relationship between internal factors (such as self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women? To answer this question, Table 7 displays the Spearman correlations comparing the eight internal factors items with the public, private, and self-employed preferred sectors. Of the 24 correlations, none was significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 7

*Correlations for Internal Factors Items With Public, Private, and Self-Employed Preferred Sector*

Variable	Public <sup>a</sup>	Private <sup>a</sup>	Self-Employed <sup>a</sup>
I have a clear vision of what my future career will be	.04	-.07	.01
I have always known what I want to do in the future	.05	-.07	-.02
I am aware of my skills and abilities	-.01	-.02	.03
I feel that I will be able to choose a career that is related to my interests	.07	-.08	.01
I know which specialization I will choose to study.	-.07	.03	.04
The specialization I will choose is-will be aligned with my interests.	-.04	.03	-.03
The subject I will specialize in is aligned to the career I would like to have.	.01	.02	-.06
I need more information about what occupations are available before I make a career choice.	.02	-.04	.02

Table 8 shows the same correlational analysis, using Spearman correlation, to determine whether correlations existed among the eight internal factors items and career goals such as teaching, administration, social service, and medical. Of the 32 correlations, four interactions showed significant correlation at the  $p < .05$  level. The highest significant was found for “I have a clear vision of what my future career will be” for those interested in teaching ( $r_s = .14, p = .003$ ), and with medical ( $r_s = .09, p = .04$ ). Also, those interested in teaching had more agreement with “I have always known what I want to do in the future” ( $r_s = .10, p = .02$ ). Finally, a significant negative correlation was observed between “I have a clear vision of what my future career will be” and those interested in administration ( $r_s = -.11, p = .02$ ).

Table 8

*Correlations for Internal Factors Items With Career Goal*

Variable	Teaching <sup>a</sup>	Admin <sup>a</sup>	Social Service <sup>a</sup>	Medical <sup>a</sup>
I have a clear vision of what my future career will be	.14***	-.11*	-.05	.09*
I have always known what I want to do in the future	.10*	-.01	.01	.05
I am aware of my skills and abilities	.03	.01	.05	-.04
I feel that I will be able to choose a career that is related to my interests	.09	-.08	.01	-.05
I know which specialization I will choose to study.	.04	.02	-.05	-.04
The specialization I will choose is-will be aligned with my interests.	.03	-.05	-.04	.02
The subject I will specialize in is aligned to the career I would like to have.	.00	-.03	-.02	.08
I need more information about what occupations are available before I make a career choice.	-.07	.05	-.03	.01

Note.  $N = 467$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes.

**Research question 2.** To determine the correlation between external factors and Saudi women's career choices, the researcher asked the following question: What is the relationship between external factors (such as social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women? To answer this, Table 9 presented the Spearman correlations to compare the nine external factors items with the public, private, and self-employed preferred sectors. Of the 27 correlations, three showed significant correlation at the  $p < .05$  level. Highest significance was found for "I prefer to work in a female-only workplace" with those wanting to be in the public sector ( $r_s = .10$ ,  $p = .03$ ), and negative correlation for those interested in the

private sector ( $r_s = -.12, p = .01$ ). Lower agreement was found for “Job opportunities affect my career choice” among those interested in self-employment ( $r_s = -.09, p = .05$ ).

Table 9

*Correlations for External Factors Items With Public, Private, and Self-Employed Preferred Sector*

Variable	Public <sup>a</sup>	Private <sup>a</sup>	Self-Employed <sup>a</sup>
My parents have a strong influence over the career I will choose.	.04	.02	-.07
My social norms have a strong influence over the career I will choose	.03	-.02	-.04
I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice.	.01	-.02	.01
The university provides important resources that will help me determine my career.	-.02	-.02	.06
The limited college majors for women affect my career choice.	-.02	.06	-.02
Job opportunities affect my career choice	.06	.04	-.09*
It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities.	.01	-.08	.05
I prefer to work in a female-only workplace.	.10*	-.12**	-.02
I will be able to work in a mixed-gender workplace.	-.04	.08	-.02

Note.  $N = 467$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes.

In addition, Table 10 has the Spearman correlations for the nine external factors and career goals like teaching, administration, social service, and medical. Of the 36 correlations analysis conducted, eight showed significant correlation at the  $p < .05$  level. Higher significance was found for “I prefer to work in a female-only workplace” among those interested in teaching ( $r_s = .19, p < .001$ ) but not with medical ( $r_s = -.22, p < .001$ ). Higher significance was found for “I will be able to work in a mixed-gender workplace” with medical ( $r_s = .17, p < .001$ ) but not with teaching ( $r_s = -.15, p = .002$ ), and not with administration ( $r_s = -.10, p = .03$ ). Higher

significance was found for “I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice” among those interested in social service ( $r_s = .12, p = .009$ ). Higher agreement was found for “It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities” among those interested in teaching ( $r_s = .12, p = .01$ ). Also, those interested in medical had less agreement for “My social norms have a strong influence over the career I will choose” ( $r_s = -.12, p = .009$ ).

Table 10

*Correlations for External Factors Items With Career Goal*

Variable	Teaching <sup>a</sup>	Admin <sup>a</sup>	Social Service <sup>a</sup>	Medical <sup>a</sup>
My parents have a strong influence over the career I will choose.	.03	.03	.02	-.08
My social norms have a strong influence over the career I will choose	.09	.04	.06	-.12**
I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice.	-.06	.02	.12**	-.04
The university provides important resources that will help me determine my career.	.00	.03	.04	.00
The limited college majors for women affect my career choice.	.03	.08	-.01	-.08
Job opportunities affect my career choice	.05	.08	.01	-.08
It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities.	.12**	.01	.02	-.06
I prefer to work in a female-only workplace.	.19** **	.09	.00	- .22****
I will be able to work in a mixed-gender workplace.	-.15****	-.10*	.01	.17* ***

Note.  $N = 467$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes.

**Research question 3.** Research question 3 asked: What are the most important strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women in their career choices? To answer this, Table 11

has the Spearman correlations for the seven career strategies items with the public, private, and self-employed preferred sectors. Of the 21 correlations, none were significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 11

*Correlations for Career Strategies Items With Public, Private, and Self-Employed Preferred Sector*

Variable	Public <sup>a</sup>	Private <sup>a</sup>	Self-Employed <sup>a</sup>
Open new majors for women in universities can support my career choice.	-.03	.04	.01
Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices.	.06	-.02	-.08
The education system can prepare me for better career choice by focusing on interpersonal skills.	-.04	.07	-.03
Academic-Career counseling can support my career choice.	.04	.00	-.05
Increase career training can help me choose my future career.	-.02	.04	-.05
Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs.	-.02	.07	-.02
Labor law improvements can support women career choices.	-.02	.05	-.02

Note.  $N = 467$ .

In addition, Table 12 contains the results of the statistical analysis among the seven career strategies and the career goals such as teaching, administration, social service, and medical. Of the 28 correlations analyzed, three were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Higher agreement for “Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices” was found for medical ( $r_s = .12, p = .01$ ) but not with administration ( $r_s = -.11, p = .02$ ). Also, “Academic-Career counseling can support my career choice” was higher for those interested in social service ( $r_s = .11, p = .02$ ).



Table 12

*Correlations for Career Strategies Items With Career Goal*

Variable	Teaching <sup>a</sup>	Admin <sup>a</sup>	Social Service <sup>a</sup>	Medical <sup>a</sup>
Open new majors for women in universities can support my career choice.	-.02	.02	.03	-.07
Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices.	.02	-.11*	.08	.12**
The education system can prepare me for better career choice by focusing on interpersonal skills.	.04	.06	.04	-.08
Academic-Career counseling can support my career choice.	-.02	-.01	.11*	-.06
Increase career training can help me choose my future career.	-.04	-.04	.02	.01
Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs.	.01	-.06	.08	-.09
Labor law improvements can support women career choices.	.02	-.03	.03	-.04

Note.  $N = 467$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes.

### Additional Findings

To determine whether students' demographics played a role in their choices of career, correlation analyses were conducted among internal factors items and the students' age, marital status, and degree to be achieved (Table 13). Of the 24 correlations, two were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Higher agreement for "I am aware of my skills and abilities" was found with older students ( $r_s = .09, p = .04$ ), and "I need more information about what occupations are available before I make a career choice" with younger age ( $r_s = -.10, p = .03$ ).

Table 13

*Correlations for Internal Factors Items With Age, Marital Status, and Degree to Achieve*

Variable	Age	Married <sup>a</sup>	Degree <sup>b</sup>
I have a clear vision of what my future career will be	.06	.05	.08
I have always known what I want to do in the future	.08	.07	.07
I am aware of my skills and abilities	.09*	.09	.02
I feel that I will be able to choose a career that is related to my interests	-.01	.08	.08
I know which specialization I will choose to study.	.06	.08	.04
The specialization I will choose is-will be aligned with my interests.	-.01	.01	.07
The subject I will specialize in is aligned to the career I would like to have.	.00	.05	.09
I need more information about what occupations are available before I make a career choice.	-.10*	-.06	.00

Note.  $N = 467$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes.

<sup>b</sup> Coding: 1 = Bachelor's 2 = Master's 3 = Doctorate

Table 14 presents the Spearman correlations for the external factors items and students' age, marital status, and degree to achieve. Of the 27 correlations, seven were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. There was higher agreement for "I prefer to work in a female-only workplace" with older age ( $r_s = .18, p < .001$ ) and with married students ( $r_s = .15, p = .001$ ). There was higher agreement for "It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities" with married students ( $r_s = .17, p < .001$ ) and with older students ( $r_s = .11, p = .02$ ). There was higher agreement for "I will be able to work in a mixed-gender workplace" with younger age ( $r_s = -.17, p < .001$ ) and not with married students ( $r_s = -.15, p = .002$ ). In addition, agreement for "I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice" was related to younger students ( $r_s = -.18, p < .001$ ).

Table 14

*Correlations for External Factors Items With Age, Marital Status, and Degree to Achieve*

Variable	Age	Married <sup>a</sup>	Degree <sup>b</sup>
My parents have a strong influence over the career I will choose.	.00	-.06	-.06
My social norms have a strong influence over the career I will choose	.08	.05	-.07
I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice.	-.18****	-.06	-.05
The university provides important resources that will help me determine my career.	-.09	.01	-.02
The limited college majors for women affect my career choice.	-.03	.01	-.05
Job opportunities affect my career choice	.03	.03	.01
It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities.	.11*	.17****	-.07
I prefer to work in a female-only workplace.	.18****	.15****	-.07
I will be able to work in a mixed-gender workplace.	-.17****	-.15****	.08

Note.  $N = 467$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Coding: 0 = No 1 = Yes.

<sup>b</sup> Coding: 1 = Bachelor's 2 = Master's 3 = Doctorate

Table 15 has the Spearman correlations for the career strategies items with the students' age, being married, and degree to achieve. Of the 21 correlations, none were significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 15

*Correlations for Career Strategies Items With Age, Marital Status, and Degree to Achieve*

Variable	Age	Married <sup>a</sup>	Degree <sup>b</sup>
Open new majors for women in universities can support my career choice.	-.04	.04	.03
Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices.	.03	.02	-.01
The education system can prepare me for better career choice by focusing on interpersonal skills.	.04	.06	.05
Academic-Career counseling can support my career choice.	-.05	-.04	.04
Increase career training can help me choose my future career.	-.08	.01	.02

(continued)

Variable	Age	Married <sup>a</sup>	Degree <sup>b</sup>
Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs.	.05	.00	.07
Labor law improvements can support women career choices.	.01	-.02	.03

*Note.*  $N = 467$ .

Section three of the survey included open-ended question: what educational and/or employment strategies do you think should be implemented to help women in achieving professional goals? This was a write-in optional question for participants to help express their opinions freely in sentences or paragraphs. As results, 353 participants answered this voluntary question and shared their opinions. Almost two thirds of the participants focused on the need for training during college years or after graduating immediately. Participants wanted increase science majors, education activities, workshops and conferences for students, as well as part-time jobs for college students. They seek for improvement in the learning system. Specifically, they desire the education to focus on its relationship to real-life experiences and have more of a focus on the English language. They also wish for more updated information about jobs and wages available for women.

### Summary

This chapter sought to analyze the data from the survey. The study gathered responses from 467 female Saudi students to explore the relationships among internal factors (such as self-concept, personal skills, and career aspirations), external factors (such as social norms, education system, and work environment), and career choices. Key findings showed that participants want more information about what occupations are available to them so they can make better career choices. They deemed it important to find jobs that do not affect family responsibilities. They also wanted increased career training to facilitate the process of choosing a career. In Chapter 5,

the findings are compared to the literature, then conclusions and implications drawn and recommendations are proposed.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Study Overview**

This chapter began by restating the purpose of the study, research questions, and study methodology. This is followed by presenting the findings. Then, the results of the study were compared to what is already published in the literature review. The chapter also addressed the implications of the results. Finally, this chapter ended with recommendations for future research on the subject matter.

### **Problem Statement**

There are several issues that need to be addressed in Saudi Arabia's education and labor systems. These are issues regarding the education and employment opportunities available for Saudi females. Thousands of young women are continuing to attend universities to become teachers. However, unemployment among qualified teachers is very high, in part, because there are far too many teachers and not enough teaching positions to accommodate them. With a marked increase in females entering universities, there is a need to direct the female student population toward studies and training that can be utilized to further the present and future Kingdom's economy. In addition, Saudi Arabia is currently experiencing a shortage of nurses.

### **Statement of Purpose**

This study aimed to explore the relationships among internal factors (such as self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women. Moreover, it intended to explore the relationships among external factors (such as work environment, social norms, and education system) and career choices for Saudi women. In addition, the study sought to examine and determine the most effective strategies that can and will support women's career choices.

## Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between internal factors such as (self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women?
2. What is the relationship between external factors such as (social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women?
3. What are the most important strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women in their career choices?

## Methodology

Based on the research questions that the researcher generated, a quantitative research was conducted in order to explore factors affecting Saudi women career choices. The survey was developed by the researcher in order to measure the effect of the above-mentioned factors on each participant's career choices. The survey was titled *Factors Affecting Saudi Women Career Choices*. The survey comprised four sections: a demographic section, internal and external factors sections, and a strategies section. For this study, the necessary data were collected from Saudi females who were first-year students at one of Saudi Arabia's largest public university: King Saud University in Riyadh (the capital city of Saudi Arabia). The survey was administrated using the online survey site SurveyMonkey. A link to the survey was sent via e-mail to students. Within two weeks of distribution, 467 complete responses were received.

After receiving the responses, the data were entered into a computer and analyzed by using the statistical software SPSS. SPSS was chosen because it offers descriptive and inferential statistics as well as graphical representation of the data (Ary et al., 2014). To answer the three research questions (internal factors, external factors, and career strategies), descriptive statistics

were used (means and standard deviations) to measure the amount of agreement that the respondents have to each statement. In addition, Spearman correlations were utilized to examine the relationships between the respondent's level of agreement and their demographic characteristics.

### **Discussion of Key Findings**

In this section, the discussion of the key findings is divided into three categories according to the research questions. The results of the survey questions are compared to the literature review presented in Chapter 2 to find out whether the findings of the present study are in agreement with previous studies. This chapter ends by making possible recommendations to help increase Saudi women training and participations to the labor force.

**Demographic sample.** For this study, 467 students completed the survey questions. Ages of the students ranged from 18 to 50 with  $M = 22.88$  years ( $SD = 4.00$ ). Most were single (83.3%), while 69 were married (14.8%). Almost all were in their second semester (98.1%), with 40.9% seeking a bachelor's degree and the rest roughly divided between wanting a master's degree (30.4%) and/or a doctorate (28.7%). Most participants preferred to work in the public sector (63.4%), with administration as the most common career goal (31.9%) and teaching (18.4%).

**Research question 1.** Research question 1 asked: What is the relationship between internal factors such as (self-concept, personal skills, and career aspiration) and career choices for Saudi women? To answer this, Table 7 in Chapter 4 presented the Spearman correlations for the eight internal factors items with the preferred sectors (public, private, or self-employed). Of the 24 correlations, none were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. This reflects that internal factors related to participants' personalities do not necessarily affect their preferred working sectors.



In addition, Table 8 in Chapter 4 showed the Spearman correlations for the eight internal factors items with the career goals (teaching, administration, social service, or medical). Of the 32 correlations, four were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Higher agreement was found for “I have a clear vision of what my future career will be” for those interested in teaching ( $r_s = .14, p = .003$ ), and with medical ( $r_s = .09, p = .04$ ). In addition, those who are interested in teaching had more agreement to “I have always known what I want to do in the future ( $r_s = .10, p = .02$ )”. According to the literature, most women who enter humanities, Islamic studies, or a general program plan to be teachers. Not surprising, because the higher education system, most fields prepare students for the teaching positions. These findings agreed with what was noted in the literature that women’s higher education in Saudi Arabia mostly focused on preparing students for teaching jobs and working for the public sector (AlMunajjed, 2010; Al-Sayegh, 1998; Damanhori, 2013; Hamdan, 2005; Nieva, 2016; Saqib et al., 2016; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a).

**Research question 2.** Research question 2 asked: What is the relationship between external factors such as (social norms, education system, and work environment) and career choices for Saudi women? To answer this, Table 9 in Chapter 4 showed the Spearman correlations for the nine external factors items with the public, private, and self-employed preferred sectors. Of the 27 correlations, three were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Higher agreement was found for “I prefer to work in a female-only workplace” with those wanting the public sector ( $r_s = .10, p = .03$ ), but not with those interested in the private sector ( $r_s = -.12, p = .01$ ). Since most of the departments in the public sector provide female-only workplaces, women continue looking for jobs in the public sector. Most women are restricted to female dominated fields only in the public sector (AlMunajjed, 2010; El-Sherbeeney, 2014).

The second correlation was found that lower agreement for “Job opportunities affect my career choice” among those interested in self-employment ( $r_s = -.09, p = .05$ ). There was a negative correlation between women who are interested in working for their own business and the availability of jobs in the labor market. This factor does not have an impact on their career plan, therefore, they already plan to establish their own businesses or work for a family business.

In addition, Table 10 in Chapter 4 presented the Spearman correlations for the nine external factors items with the career goals teaching, administration, social service, and medical. Of the 36 correlations, eight were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Higher agreement was found for “I prefer to work in a female-only workplace” among those interested in teaching ( $r_s = .19, p < .001$ ), but not with medical ( $r_s = -.22, p < .001$ ). This matched the previous findings by Islam (2014) that most participants preferred to work as teachers for the public sector. The public sector remains the largest employer of women, with 96% of women employed as educators and 4% employed in administrative, academic, and medical areas (Islam, 2014).

The other higher agreement was found for “I will be able to work in a mixed-gender workplace” with medical ( $r_s = .17, p < .001$ ), but not with teaching ( $r_s = -.15, p = .002$ ), and not with administration ( $r_s = -.10, p = .03$ ). Most participants who showed the willingness to work in a mixed-gender workplace chose medical careers as career goals. The literature reported that female graduates from medical fields have increased from 2,354 in 2010 to 6,944 in 2015 (MOE, 2016). Though there are increased numbers of female graduates in the medical fields, this factor plays an important role in determining career choices for women. According to the findings, the lowest career goal was giving to “doctor or nurse” 11.3%, so this social factor is significant.

Additionally, higher agreement was found for “I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice” among those interested in social service ( $r_s =$

.12,  $p = .009$ ). This finding agreed with what Calvert and Al-Shetaiwi (2002) mentioned and as did Islam (2014), who highlighted the importance of the academic advisors-counselors, especially for choosing jobs such as social service, which is one of the most needed jobs for females in the Saudi private sector.

Higher agreement was found for “It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities” among those interested in teaching ( $r_s = .12, p = .01$ ). Teaching jobs are the most popular and flexible careers for females in Saudi Arabia in terms of working hours, and this type of job typically does not affect family responsibilities. Job security is one of the main advantages that led women to choose teaching in public sector as career choice. In addition, the average working hours for teachers is seven, which is convenient for women, particularly working mothers. The literature indicated that for Saudi women, the freedom to choose their careers is circumscribed mostly by social norms. The conservative nature of these norms causes the majority of women to work as teachers in the public sector (Doumato, 2010).

Also, those interested in medical had less agreement for “My social norms have a strong influence over the career I will choose” ( $r_s = -.12, p = .009$ ). Most women who chose to enter the medical field have to overcome the social norms, especially in Saudi culture. In the literature, Saqib et al. (2016) indicated that these occupational choices are affected by society atmosphere, and social pressure hinders high participation in the labor market for Saudi women. This factor is important for Saudi women where family responsibilities are strongly valued. Since the Saudi culture is conservative, women prefer to maintain the social norms and traditions (AlMunajjed, 2010).

**Research question 3.** Research question 3 asked: What are the most important strategies that can be put in place to support Saudi women in their career choices? To answer this, Table 11

in Chapter 4 presented the Spearman correlations for the seven career strategies items with the public, private, and self-employed preferred sectors. Of the 21 correlations, none was significant at the  $p < .05$  level. This reflect that none of the strategies influenced students to choose to work in specific sector.

In addition, Table 12 in Chapter 4 showed the Spearman correlations for the seven career strategies items with the career goals teaching, administration, social service, and medical. Of the 28 correlations, three were significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Higher agreement for “Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices” was found for medical ( $r_s = .12, p = .01$ ), but not with administration ( $r_s = -.11, p = .02$ ). The findings alluded to some of the problems illustrated in the literature regarding the state of the labor system in Saudi Arabia. Take the medical field for instance. Naseem and Dhruva (2017) stated, “In its endeavor to increase the attractiveness of nursing and medical support jobs with Saudi nationals, the country must attract between 48,000 and 100,000 female nurses by 2030” (p. 26). In the Kingdom, the need of the medical field far exceeds the labor supply (Aldossary, While, & Barriball, 2008; Lamadah & Sayed, 2014). To increase the availability of medical staff in the country, not only should universities increase the available seats for female students in medicine and nursing majors, but also motivate them to break from the cultural norms and enter these fields. Al-Omar (2004) indicated the importance of increasing the positive knowledge of nursing profession, which is the Saudi health and education decision-makers’ responsibility. In addition, modification of benefits and salaries should be used as a means to attract more local females to nursing careers.

Those who interested in social services expressed the need for “Academic-Career counseling can support my career choice” ( $r_s = .11, p = .02$ ). Participants expressed the need for more guidance at Saudi universities, which will provide them important information to help

refine their training for future chosen careers. The availability of these mentors should not be the only aspect of change. Both academic and career counselors are important to assess their students regularly to assess their progress, guide and assist them in their formations, and help narrow their career choices based on student's aptitudes and interest (Al-Sayegh, 1998). Own and Eddy (1992) mentioned that counseling is significant for Saudi female students during the university stage to provide clear academic guidance with well-defined goals, and offer suitable schedules for medical major students, especially those with children. The availability of career and academic guidance or counseling is especially critical to the guidance of both graduating high school seniors and first-year students into programs that may lead them to becoming productive and contributing members of Saudi society (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013a).

### **Other Findings**

The researcher used descriptive statistics to rate the most important internal factors affecting women career choices. The responses were measured by using a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Table 4 in Chapter 4 presented the rating of internal factors items sorted by highest mean. The study found that the highest level of agreement was given to "I need more information about what occupation are available before I make a career choice" ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ). This finding resonated with previous published studies. Indeed, it was demonstrated by Al-Sayegh (1998) who stated that one of the major stressors among Saudi college students is the lack of available resources regarding the labor force.

The second highest item was "I know which specialization I will choose to study" ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ). This reflects the high degree of self-confidence that young women express and demonstrates the ambitions toward achieving a higher education. This usually contributes to the effort they exert in order to achieve their goals of attaining high-power jobs (Abalkhail, 2017).

Table 5 in Chapter 4 presented the rating of external factors items sorted by highest mean. The study found that the highest level of agreement was given to “Job opportunities affect my career choice” ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ). This statement agreed with the factor presented in the literature that showed there were shortage of jobs available for Saudi women and most of the jobs are limited to teaching positions (Abalkhail, 2017; AlMunajjed, 2010; Naseem & Dhruva, 2017).

The second highest external factor that affects women’s career choices was “It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities” ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). This factor is important for Saudi women where family responsibilities are strongly valued. Since the Saudi culture is conservative, women are taught to maintain the social norms and traditions (AlMunajjed, 2010). This finding stress that Saudi women usually prioritize their children, husbands, and parents, so this significantly restricts the time they can dedicate to work, study, and more (Naseem & Dhruva, 2017; Saqib et al., 2016).

In addition, the item “The limited college majors for women affect my career choice” ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ). was rated as third highest factor affecting women career choice. This statement agreed with what was mentioned in the previous studies that Saudi universities do not offer females enough seats outside education majors (AlMunajjed, 2010; Sivakumar & Sarkar, 2012; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013b).

Table 6 in Chapter 4 presented the rating of strategies to support career-choice items sorted by highest mean. The study found that the highest level of agreement was given to “Increase career training can help me choose my future career” ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ). The statement agreed with what was presented in the literature, which was training is vital to prepare women for the workplace. In Saudi Arabia, there are bank branches dedicated only to women

customers. Therefore, it is necessary to have women trained as bank personnel to fill positions at those banks. Training programs in business management or computers can develop the needed skills to fill these jobs (Hamdan, 2005). Nieva (2016) found that training and skills development are key issues among Saudi women social entrepreneurs that need to be addressed.

The second major strategy that was highly rated by participants is “Labor law improvements can support women career choices” ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ). One of the labor laws that needs to be addressed is gender-based discrimination present in the Saudi workforce. Though inadvertent, the lack of effective labor laws protecting the rights of working females fosters unsafe working environments. These in turn create barriers in society, which increase the challenges women have to overcome in order to achieve their dreams. The present labor regulations only addressed childcare, breastfeeding, and sick leave. In addition, transportation is considered a legal constraint since women are not permitted to drive. This hinders their ability to travel to prospective jobs, thereby restricting their contribution to the economy (AlMunajjed, 2010).

The third highest rated strategy was “Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs” ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ). This finding was consistent with the suggestion made by Saqib et al. (2016), who indicated that because of the emergence of private companies in the last few years, the government has to put in place incentives and policies to motivate companies in the private sector to hire the increasing number of Saudi graduates. These strategies included increasing the formation of sustainable jobs in private-sector and nonprofit organizations. This can be done by supporting skills acquisition among the Saudi workforce and creating a balance between the number of Saudi and foreign workers hired in the job market (Koyame-Marsh, 2017).

### **Additional Key Points**

The majority of participants took the time to express their opinions in the open-ended questions. Here is a summary of major points:

- Interest in other types of jobs including jobs as lawyers, researchers, consultants, translators, engineers, bankers, writers, IT technicians, and designers;
- The need for increased training, especially during college years or right after graduation;
- Interest in need for increased science majors available for women, the possibility to attend conferences and workshops for student during college years;
- Strong interest in the need to be proficient in the English language during college years; and
- Emphasis on the importance of providing updated information about jobs that are available for women and detailed about requirements and wages associated with those jobs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are the areas over which the researcher has no control. These limitations can involve the study's sample size, response rate, or other constraints during the methodology process (Roberts, 2010). For this study, the limitations depend on how the survey is presented to the students. One of the limitations of the study was unknown what percentage of first-year college students will participate in the survey. Thus, to address this limitation, the researcher hired voluntary coordinators, who works at the selected university, to work closely with the informational technology department to distribute the survey.



Another limitation was that may exist a limited of understanding of the importance of this issue among young Saudis. Young women may not like to participate in surveys because they have not yet realized the importance of their feedback. To address this limitation, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the survey being and placed emphasis on the importance of collecting such data for the future growth of society. To overcome response rate limitation, there are many techniques can help in increasing the responses rates including; shorten the survey to consider the respondents' time, explain clearly the purpose of the survey and the importance of their response, make the survey anonymously, limit the open-ended questions, make the words easy to comprehend, and organize the questions items (DeFranzo, 2014). Dörnyei (2003) stressed communicating the purpose of the study to the participants and clarifying the possible implications of the results of the study. For this study, the researcher was communicating effectively with the coordinator via email and phone calls to ensure that all process went well.

There was a limited population size. The study was conducted at only one public university in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, so the results cannot be generalized to the whole Saudi female students in other universities in the Kingdom. Therefore, the results of this study will inform future researcher in this topic to involve larger population size from different universities and regions of Saudi Arabia.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The research provided a chance to explore the relationships among internal factors, such as self-concept, personal skills and career aspirations, and career choices. The study also sought to explore the relationships among external factors such as work environment, social norms, and educational system, and career choices. In addition, the study examined the most important strategies that can support Saudi women career choices. This chapter discussed the survey results

from 467 female Saudi students who participated in the online survey. The recommendations for Saudi women, policy makers, and educators were highlighted as well as recommendations for future research.

The study found that the most of the students who have clear vision about future careers are interested in working as teachers in the public sector. Therefore, students who are not interested in teaching are not sure about their career futures because of the shortage of information and resources available to them. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between students who prefer the medical field as a career goal and their willingness to work in mixed-gender workplace. The study concluded that the majority of students selected “Increase career training can help me choose my future career,” “Labor law improvements can support women career choices,” and “Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs” as the significant strategies that can support them in their career choices.

The study affirmed that there is a significant gap between education outcomes and labor market opportunities. This gap resulted from several factors such as the lack of academic guidance in directing students during the college years, the lack of practical experience, and the low number of female students entering medical or engineering fields. The key findings of the study should assist Saudi government officials in paying more attention to the current status of women’s education and employment and improve the current policies related to them.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher presented the following recommendations to be considered:

- Changing public perceptions of women working in medical fields and increase the awareness of the importance of Saudi women participation in these fields. This can be

- done by ignoring the old taboos about female doctors or nurses. Also, realize that these female doctors or nurses would serve mostly female patients.
- It is crucial to focus on the preparatory year (the first year of the university) by helping students choose suitable majors and plan their careers strategically. This can be done by providing mandatory counselors, attending workshops, or meeting with successful working women.
  - It is recommended to utilize personality assessments during college years or after graduating. For example, Holland's theory of vocational personality is one well-known assessment that can help in identifying individuals' characteristics and type of jobs that match each personality type. This theory proposed that most people have one of the six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional. This theory asserts that matching the personality with the job characteristic helps to achieve best career objectives (Swanson & Fouad, 2010).
  - Since the admission to Saudi universities depends mainly on the high school performance, most students need to be taught early of the requirements of different colleges and majors for admission into their programs. It is recommended to have specific programs to provide accurate and sufficient information about different colleges and majors to guide high school students toward choosing major that is appropriate for them.
  - Saudi women should not limit themselves to teaching as a career goal. Most Saudi women with a teaching degree have to wait to be hired for teaching jobs. This waiting period can take years, due to the limited number of positions available across the country. So, they spend years waiting for these jobs, which makes the unemployment

- rate high. It is recommended that training women in other fields may help increase their chance of gaining employment in different occupations.
- Some Saudi women avoid working in the private sector because it is mostly composed of mixed-gender workplaces. It is recommended that the Ministry of Labor and Social Development improve its regulations regarding working females in the private sector to provide good environments for these females, including providing independent female buildings, offering satisfactory salaries, and proposing feasible working hours.
  - One of the Vision 2030 goals is to create new commissions and companies under each ministry, which will generate new job opportunities for the Saudi population. Women should be kept in mind for those developments. Having available positions for women in these companies will help young Saudi women see other careers as viable choices for their future.
  - Provide training programs to empower women with personal skills and experience. These programs are significant to prepare women to enhance career choices. This could be done during the last year of college, after graduating, or during on-the-job training, and should be provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

After conducting the study and presenting the findings, the researcher suggested several recommendations for future research, including:

- The study took place in one university in one region of Saudi Arabia, so the researcher suggests that the study can be replicated on a larger scale in different

- universities in other regions of the country in order to obtain a broader view of the issue at hand.
- In this study, the researcher analyzed internal and external factors that may affect career choices. A new direction for future study could focus on the challenges that affect career choices for Saudi women, and then find strategies to support them.
  - The study used quantitative methods to survey only female students. It might be useful to use qualitative research and interviews on different participants, for example, educators, policy makers, and parents, to explore deeper insights on important strategies that can support women's career choices. This approach can investigate not only in academic setting but also the society setting.
  - Other studies could explore the perceptions of different generations and the factors that influenced their career choices. This may highlight how certain generation dealt with and overcame obstacles that were present in Saudi society during their training years.

### **Summary**

Despite the Vision 2030 initiative in Saudi Arabia and the positive progress toward women's education and employment, there is a long way to go in order to acquire equal gender representation in the workforce. Enhancing career choices for Saudi women will need strong collaboration among different agencies, including the community, the government, private sector, and universities.

The real wealth of any country is its people and the ability to employ human resources for the country's development. Fortunately, young Saudi women are exposed to diverse educational experiences and social constructs. Saudi women are becoming more enthusiastic and active than

ever. They are more mindful of the significant role they can play in changing and improving their society. Even though there are several barriers in their paths, it is just a matter of time before they succeed and fulfill their potential. It is the researcher's desire that this study provides valuable perspectives on the factors affecting Saudi women in their career choices. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that Saudi women, educators, and policy makers take into consideration the important strategies that were evaluated in this research in order to assist these women in identifying and achieving their career goals.

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## APPENDIX A

## Site Approval

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عمادة البحث العلمي

Ref No : KSU- HE-18-24

Ms. Walaah Abdulaziz Albahoth,

Shaqra University

Subject: Research Project No. E-18-24

Project Title: "Enhancing career choices and opportunities for Saudi women"

Dear Ms. Albahoth,

With reference to the approval of the Institutional Review Board (Humanitarian Ethics Committee) on 19.02.2018 regarding the above mentioned subject, please be informed that the Institutional Review Board of King Saud University has confirmed the approval of your project.

We wish you the best of success with your research endeavors.

Thank you

Sincerely yours,



Prof. Khalid Ibrahim Alhumaizi

Dean of Scientific Research

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B

## Survey Questionnaire

Dear Sister:

The following questionnaire is designed to help me, the researcher, in my study that about enhancing career choices and opportunities for Saudi women. The survey aims to explore factors that affecting Saudi women career choices, and identify the best strategies to support women in their career choices. The questionnaire is an important part of completing the doctoral degree. Therefore, for my doctorate, I have decided to reach out to the Saudi women on their educational journey to tell me about what they believe may help them achieve their goals. I hope you will agree to participate in the study.

Please take some time to answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. The survey should only take about 10-15 minutes. All of your answers are confidential, and will be used only for the research purpose. Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu).

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Walaa Albahoth  
Doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University  
California, USA



**Factors Affecting Saudi Women Career Choice Survey**

**The first section: Demographic**

**1- How old are you?**

.....Years old

**2- What is your marital status?**

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorce
- d. Widowed

**3- What degree would you like to achieve?**

- a. Bachelor's
- b. Master's
- c. Doctorate

**4- If you are planning to work, in which sector would you prefer?**

- a. I am not planning to work after completing my education
- b. Public
- c. Private
- d. Non-profit
- e. Self-employed

**5- What is your career goal?**

- a. None
- b. Teaching
- c. Administration
- d. Social services
- e. Doctor/nurse
- f. Others (please indicate,.....)

**Second section:**

Please choose the answer that you think accurately describes your opinion. (1) Strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

<b>Part one: Internal factors affect career choice:</b>	<b>1 Strongly disagree</b>	<b>2 disagree</b>	<b>3 neutral</b>	<b>4 agree</b>	<b>5 strongly agree</b>
1. I have a clear vision of what my future career will be					
2. I have always known what I want to do in the future					
3. I am aware of my skills and abilities					
4. I feel that I will be able to choose a career that is related to my interests					
5. I know which specialization I will choose to study.					
6. The specialization I will choose is/will be aligned with my interests.					
7. The subject I will specialize in is aligned to the career I would like to have.					
8. I need more information about what occupations are available before I make a career choice.					

<b>Part Two: External factors affect career choice:</b>	<b>1 Strongly disagree</b>	<b>2 disagree</b>	<b>3 neutral</b>	<b>4 agree</b>	<b>5 strongly agree</b>
9. My parents have a strong influence over the career I will choose.					
10. My social norms have a strong influence over the career I will					

choose					
11. I will have an academic advisor at the university who will assist me with career choice.					
12. The university provides important resources that will help me determine my career.					
13. The limited college majors for women affect my career choice.					
14. Job opportunities affect my career choice					
15. It is important to have a job that does not affect my family responsibilities.					
16. I prefer to work in a female-only workplace.					
17. I will be able to work in a mix-gender workplace.					

<b>Part Three: Strategies to support women career choices:</b>	<b>1 Strongly disagree</b>	<b>2 disagree</b>	<b>3 neutral</b>	<b>4 agree</b>	<b>5 strongly agree</b>
18. Open new majors for women in universities can support my career choice.					
19. Increasing the admission to medicine education can enhance my career choices.					
20. The education system can prepare me for better career choice by focusing on interpersonal skills.					
21. Academic/Career counseling can support my career choice.					
22. Increase career training can help me choose my future career.					

23. Private sector can support women career choice by creating new jobs.					
24. Labor law improvements can support women career choices.					

## APPENDIX C

## Survey Questionnaire—Arabic Version

## رسالة التوظيف

أختي العزيزة:

صممت هذه الاستبانة لمساعدة الباحثة في دراستها لتحسين الخيارات والفرص الوظيفية للمرأة السعودية، حيث تهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن العوامل المؤثرة في الخيارات الوظيفية لها، وتحديد أفضل الاستراتيجيات لدعمها في خياراتها هذه. تعد هذه الاستبانة جزءاً مهماً لنيل درجة الدكتوراه. ولذلك قررت التواصل مع النساء السعوديات اللواتي ما زلن على راس عملهن ليخبرنني بما قد يساعدن في تحقيق أهدافهن. أمل التكرم بالموافقة على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

يرجى أخذ الوقت الكافي للإجابة عن أسئلة الدراسة من وجهة نظركن حيث تستغرق الاستجابة حوالي ١٠-١٥ دقيقة فقط، وسيتم التعامل مع جميع إجاباتكن بسرية تامة، وستستخدم لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط. أقدر مشاركتكن جل التقدير، وأمل إن كان هناك أي أسئلة أو استفسارات التواصل معي عبر البريد الإلكتروني التالي:

[Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu)

أشركن مقدماً.

تحياتي،

ولاء الباحوث

طالبة دكتوراه في جامعة بيبرداين

كاليفورنيا، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية



العوامل المؤثرة على الخيارات الوظيفية للمرأة السعودية

القسم الأول: البيانات الديموغرافية

١- كم عمرك؟

..... سنة

٢- ما هي حالتك الاجتماعية؟

أ. عزباء

ب. متزوجة

ج. مطلقة

د. أرملة

٣- ما الدرجة العلمية التي ترغبين بتحصيلها؟

أ. البكالوريوس

ب. الماجستير

ج. الدكتوراه

٤- إذا كنت تخططين للعمل، ما قطاع العمل الذي تفضلينه؟

أ. أنا لا أعتزم العمل بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة.

ب. الحكومي

ج. الخاص (الأهلي)

د. غير الربحي

هـ. التشغيل الذاتي (العمل لحسابي الشخصي)

٥- ما هدفك الوظيفي؟

أ. لا يوجد

ب. التدريس

ج. الإدارة

د. الخدمات الاجتماعية

هـ. الطب / التمريض

و. غير ذلك (يرجى كتابته، .....

**القسم الثاني:**  
يرجى اختيار الإجابة التي تعتقد أنها تصف رأيك بدقة. (١) أعارض بشدة، (٢) لا أوافق، (٣) لا رأي، (٤) أوافق، و (٥) أوافق بشدة.

٥ أوافق بشدة	٤ أوافق	٣ لا رأي	٢ لا أوافق	١ أعارض بشدة	الجزء الأول: العوامل الداخلية المؤثرة على اختيار المهنة:
					١- لدي رؤية واضحة لوظيفتي في المستقبل.
					٢- أعرف دائماً ما أريد القيام به في المستقبل.
					٣- أنا مدركة لمهاراتي وقدراتي.
					٤- أشعر أنني سوف أكون قادرة على اختيار الوظيفة التي تتوافق مع اهتماماتي.
					٥- أعرف التخصص الذي سوف اختاره للدراسة.
					٦- التخصص الذي سأختاره سيكون متفق مع اهتماماتي.
					٧- المادة الدراسية التي سوف أتخصص بها تتفق مع الوظيفة التي أرغبها.
					٨- أحتاج إلى مزيد من المعلومات حول الوظائف المتاحة قبل أن أقوم باختيار الوظيفة.

٥ أوافق بشدة	٤ أوافق	٣ لا رأي	٢ لا أوافق	١ أعارض بشدة	الجزء الثاني: العوامل الخارجية المؤثرة على اختياري للمهنة:
					٩- لوالدي تأثير قوي في اختياري للوظيفة.
					١٠- مبادئ الاجتماعية لها تأثير قوي في اختياري للوظيفة.
					١١- سيكون لدي مستشارة مهنية في الجامعة تساعدني في اختيار الوظيفة.
					١٢- توفر لي الجامعة مصادر هامة وستساعدني في تحديد وظيفتي.
					١٣- تؤثر التخصصات المحدودة للنساء على اختياري للوظيفة.
					١٤- تؤثر فرص العمل على اختياري للوظيفة.
					١٥- المهم أن يكون لدي عمل لا يؤثر على مسؤولياتي العائلية.

					١٦- أفضل العمل في منطقة عمل مخصصة للنساء فقط.
					١٧- باستطاعتي العمل في بيئة عمل مختلطة من الجنسين.

٥ أوافق بشدة	٤ أوافق	٣ لا رأي	٢ لا أوافق	١ أعارض بشدة	الجزء الثالث: استراتيجيات دعم الخيارات الوظيفية للمرأة:
					١٨- فتح تخصصات جديدة للنساء في الجامعات التي يمكن أن تدعم اختياري الوظيفي.
					١٩- زيادة معدلات القبول في التعليم الطبي يمكن أن تعزز خياراتي الوظيفية.
					٢٠- يمكن للنظام التعليمي أن يُعدني لاختيار الوظيفة بشكل أفضل عبر التركيز على مهارات التعامل مع الآخرين.
					٢١- يمكن للاستشارة الوظيفية أن تدعم اختياري للوظيفية.
					٢٢- يمكن لزيادة التدريب الوظيفي أن يساعدني على اختيار وظيفتي في المستقبل.
					٢٣- يمكن للقطاع الخاص أن يدعم اختيار المرأة الوظيفي عبر خلق فرص عمل جديدة.
					٢٤- يمكن لتحسينات في قانون العمل أن تدعم الخيارات الوظيفية للمرأة.



## APPENDIX D

## CITI Program Certificate

		<p>Completion Date 17-Jan-2018          Expiration Date 16-Jan-2021          Record ID 25836318</p>
<p>This is to certify that:</p>		
<p><b>walaa albahoth</b></p>		
<p>Has completed the following CITI Program course:</p>		
<p><b>Graduate &amp; Professional Schools HSR</b>  <b>Graduate &amp; Professional Schools - Business, Law and Public Policy Students Human</b>  <b>Subjects Training</b>  <b>1 - Basic Course</b></p>	<p>(Curriculum Group)          (Course Learner Group)          (Stage)</p>	
<p>Under requirements set by:</p>		
<p><b>Pepperdine University</b></p>		
		
<p>Verify at <a href="http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?waeb099fc-1bff-4fef-a228-ad3a6ebd43b5-25836318">www.citiprogram.org/verify/?waeb099fc-1bff-4fef-a228-ad3a6ebd43b5-25836318</a></p>		

## APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

**PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY***Walaa Albahoth***CONSENT FORM FOR THE PREPARTORY YEAR STUDENTS**

Enhancing Career Choices &amp; Opportunities for Saudi Women

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Walaa Albahoth at Pepperdine University, because you are a student who enrolls in the preparatory year. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read this document. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to identify the most important internal and external factors that affect Saudi women career choices. Also, the study aims to investigate the most important strategies to support Saudi women career choices.

**PARTICIPATION INVOLVEMENT**

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey, which is anticipated to take 10 minutes. You do not have to answer any questions you do not know or if you do not want.

**PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

**ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

Your alternative is to not participate. Your relationships with the instructor will not be affected whether you participate or not in the study.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects. Your name, address or other identifiable information will not be collected. The data will be stored on a password protected computer in the principal investigators place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years after completing the study, then the data will be destroyed.

### **INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Walaa Albahoth via email at [Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu). You can also, contact the Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Ronald Stephens via email at [rstephen@pepperdine.edu](mailto:rstephen@pepperdine.edu), if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

**By clicking on the link to the survey questions, you are acknowledging you have read the study information. You also understand that you may end your participation at end time, for any reason without penalty.**

- You Agree to Participate
- You Do Not Wish to Participate

## APPENDIX F

## Informed Consent Form—Arabic Version

جامعة بيبرداين  
كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية وعلم النفس

## عنوان الدراسة: تحسين الخيارات الوظيفية والفرص المتاحة للمرأة السعودية

أنتم مدعون للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية تجريها ولاء بنت عبد العزيز الباحث، طالبة دكتوراه في جامعة بيبرداين، التي تشمل عينة الدراسة طالبات السنة التحضيرية في جامعة الملك سعود، مشاركتكم طوعية. يجب عليكم قراءة المعلومات ادناه، وطرح الأسئلة حول أي شيء لم يفهم، قبل اتخاذ قرار بشأن المشاركة. يرجى اخذ الوقت اللازم لقراءة هذه الوثيقة. ويحق لك ان لك ان تقرر ايضا مناقشة المشاركة مع عائلتك او اصدقائك

## الغرض من الدراسة

الغرض من الدراسة هو معرفة العوامل الداخلية والخارجية التي تؤثر على اتخاذ القرار الوظيفي للمرأة السعودية وايضا معرفة اهم الاستراتيجيات التي من الممكن ان تساعد المرأة على الاختيار الوظيفي.

## المشاركة في الاستبيان

إذا وافقت على المشاركة الطوعية في هذه الدراسة، سيطلب منك إكمال استبيان عبر الإنترنت، والذي من المتوقع أن يستغرق 10 دقائق.

## المشاركة والانسحاب

مشاركتكم طوعية. ورفضك للمشاركة لن ينطوي على أي عقوبة أو فقدان المزايا التي يحق لك خلاف ذلك. يجوز لك سحب موافقتك في أي وقت ووقف المشاركة بدون عقوبة. أنت لا تتنازل عن أي مطالبات أو حقوق أو تعويضات قانونية بسبب مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة البحثية.

## البدائل للمشاركة الكاملة

البديل الخاص بك هو عدم المشاركة. لن تتأثر علاقاتك مع الدكتورة. سواء كنت تشارك أم لا في الدراسة.

## السرية

سأبقي سجلاتكم لهذه الدراسة سرية بقدر ما يسمح به القانون. ومع ذلك، إذا كان مطلوباً مني أن أفعل ذلك بموجب القانون، قد يطلب مني الكشف عن المعلومات التي تم جمعها عنك. ومن الأمثلة على أنواع المسائل التي قد تتطلب مني كسر السرية هي إذا كنت تخبرني عن حالات إساءة معاملة الأطفال وإساءة معاملة المسنين. كما يمكن لبرنامج حماية المواد البشرية التابع لجامعة Pepperdine الوصول إلى البيانات التي يتم جمعها. ويستعرض هذا البرنامج أحيانا الدراسات البحثية ويرصدها لحماي. لن يتم جمع اسمك أو عنوانك أو معلوماتك الأخرى القابلة للتحديد. سيتم تخزين البيانات على جهاز كمبيوتر محمي بكلمة مرور في مكان إقامة الباحث الرئيسي. سيتم تخزين البيانات لمدة لا تقل عن ثلاث سنوات بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة، ثم سيتم التخلص من البيانات.

### معلومات جهة الاتصال الخاصة بالمحقق

وأنا أفهم أن الباحث مستعد للإجابة على أي استفسارات قد تكون لدي بشأن البحث الوارد وصفه هنا. أنا أفهم أنني قد اتصلت بالباحث ولقاء الباحث عبر البريد الإلكتروني في [Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Walaa.albahoth@pepperdine.edu). يمكنك أيضا الاتصال بالمشرف على رسالة الدكتوراه، الدكتور رونالد ستيفنس عبر البريد الإلكتروني في [rstephen@pepperdine.edu](mailto:rstephen@pepperdine.edu)، إذا كان لدي أي أسئلة أو استفسارات أخرى حول هذا البحث.

### حقوق المشاركة في البحث - معلومات الاتصال بالجامعة

إذا كان لديك أسئلة أو مخاوف أو شكاوى حول حقوقك كمشارك بحثي أو عن البحث بشكل عام يرجى الاتصال الدكتور جودي هو، رئيس مجلس مراجعة الدراسات العليا والمهنية مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية في جامعة بييرداين 6100 مركز دريف جناح 500 لوس أنجلوس، كاليفورنيا 90045، 310-568-5753 أو [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

بالنقر على الرابط لأسئلة المسح، فإنك تقر بأنك قرأت معلومات الدراسة. كما أنك تدرك أنك قد تنهي مشاركتك في نهاية الوقت، لأي سبب من الأسباب دون عقوبة.

أنت توافق على المشاركة

أنت لا ترغب في المشاركة

## APPENDIX G

## Approval for Human Research



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

## NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: April 04, 2018

Protocol Investigator Name: Walaa Albahoth

Protocol #: 18-02-739

Project Title: Enhancing career choices and opportunities for Saudi women

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Walaa Albahoth:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

Page: 1



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist