

The Challenges Associated with Women Career Development at the State Universities in Saudi Arabia: A Ground Theory Approach

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the challenges affecting women career development at the state universities in Saudi Arabia. Primary data was collected through interviews that were conducted with forty participants at the state universities in Saudi Arabia. As the data were analyzed using the constructivist grounded theory approach. The results showed there were seven factors affecting women's career development that are cultural, family, individual, organizational, geographical, economic, legal and constitutional. This paper recommends that the need to support women's access to leadership positions through the political decision, and gradually raising the share of women in leadership positions to benefit from women's competencies in enhancing the development of movement in KSA in all fields. It is also recommended that a time frame should be put in place to strengthen the representation of women in leadership positions, so universities should recognize the contribution and the important role of women.

Keywords: Women's Career Development, Women's Challenges, Leadership Positions, Women's Support, Ground Theory Approach.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Today, the organizations are working under such factors of continuous change, whether these factors are political, economic, social or technological, which have led to the emergence of the phenomenon of globalization, resulting in trade openness and market competition that faced by operating organizations in different markets (Goryakin et al., 2015). This has led to great pressure on these organizations of different sizes, or nature of their activity and ownership, as it must adapt to such factors in order to survive and continue. In the light of this situation, all departments within an organization have rushed to develop and respond to all modern situations through continuous attempts to further modify and develop objectives, means and methods, and tangible and intangible elements in order to improve performance, develop working methods and increase production efficiency (Bombuwela & Alwis, 2013). Although administrations in the present organizations are making the most efforts to bring about change, these efforts are being wasted due to several factors, the most important of which is employee resistance to change. This resistance often undermines and frustrates meaningful change in programs (Al Ariss, 2010).

Enhancing the role of women and maximizing their contribution to development stems from a firm belief that improving the status of Arab working women is a fundamental pillar of community development. The changes that have taken place in the world, followed by globalization and public policy, global trade liberalization, structural adjustment programs, economic stabilization, and the development of ICTs have posed new challenges for Arab women, which require a sharp increase in awareness of their issues and the importance of their role in promoting society. Women have an active role in the progress of society (Vossenbergh, 2013). This role depends on the extent to which women have a decent social status, job opportunities and the ability to express their opinions.

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This helps them to shape their personality, increase their awareness of the problems of the society and maximize their contribution in development and change. In spite of the radical changes related to women, the factors that qualify them for work, include education, rehabilitation and legislation, the increase in the number of female workers, the positive change in the attitudes of society towards their work and status as well as the results of research and studies that indicate women's merit, efficiency and sometimes superiority over men (Stotsky, 2016). The gap is still wide between the potential of women, their ability, and what they aspire to, on the one hand, and what embodied in the practical reality institutionally and administratively on the other hand. The unequal representation of women in senior management positions in whether public or private institutions and business organizations remains dominant. (Oláh, Richter & Kotowska, 2014).

That gender-based discrimination continues to impede women's formal participation in decision-making. Till now, women in any countries worldwide do not enjoy equality with men in political status or in the power of political influence. Although we are now in the twenty-first century, most of the decisions that affect the fate of our planet continue to be made without the participation of half of its population, that is, women. Thus, enhancing the role of women and their contribution to development must be based on a firm belief that improving status of working women is a fundamental pillar of community development, which requires the urgent need to raise awareness of women's issues and the importance of their role in the progress of society (Cook & Glass, 2014).

1.2 Research Context

In the Arab and Islamic countries, the share of women in the labor force is the lowest in the world. According to the Central Department of Statistics and Information, in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, women account for only 15% of the workforce, this proportion falls to 12% in Qatar, making it the lowest country in terms of women's participation in the workforce. Also, the indicators show that the proportion of students' in general secondary education tends to favor females, while the illiteracy rate for females was 9.92% and for males 3.75. With reference to statistics of the Ministry of Education concerning education of Saudi women in higher education, women represent 51.8% of the number of students enrolled in Saudi universities. In the same context, the number of postgraduate students in public universities reached 6356 students, in the Masters (16,221) students, in doctoral degree (1,744) students, in the fellowship program there were 177 students and those in the national universities for higher diploma (2,771) students. In addition, the total number of female faculty members during the year 2013 was 15,032, of whom 132 were professors, 631 associate professors, 2,174 assistant professors, 3,547 lecturers.

Furthermore, McDonald & Westphal (2013) indicated the percentage of women employed in business organizations accounted for more than 40% of total employment, but the percentage of women holding senior positions was only 3% in the United States and not exceeding 6% in the UK. In developing countries, the phenomenon of unequal representation is still more widespread, not at the higher administrative level, but also at all levels of the middle and supervisory levels. As there are some attempts to inhibit women, the loss of their opportunities, recognition of their abilities and performance to fill the administrative positions giving them low salaries or routine administrative functions in order to reduce the level of career. In addition to promoting the belief that women are very emotional by nature, more interested in their personal lives than work, and do not have the creativity and innovation to give the best. These beliefs cause problems and difficulties against women's advancement and development which has led to a decline in the percentage of women giving priority to higher administrative positions (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2012).

1.3 Aim and Objectives

This paper aims at identifying the key challenges associated with women career development at the state universities in Saudi Arabia. It is also trying to clarify those challenges that contribute to reducing the participation of Saudi women and impedes their access to leadership positions including cultural, family, individual, organizational, and environmental challenges in order to formulate better strategies to empower Saudi women to participate in community decision-making.

2. Problem Statement

Women represent half of the world's population, but their participation in decision-making and receive leadership positions are still very limited. This is due to laws and traditions that have kept Saudi women out of the workplace.

According to the UN's 2011 statistics, 60 percent of Saudi university graduates are women, yet barely 15 percent of those entering the labor market. In addition, the percentage of women in senior positions reached only 1.27%. Moreover, most employers do not provide nurseries near the workplaces for the working women who have children that impede the working mothers to go through. In addition, some employers violate the work regulations by requiring the consent of the working woman's guardian, which may hinder her work if her guardian rejects the idea or wants to extort it. Furthermore, In addition, some women are deprived of the opportunity to complete their education, receive advanced training courses or join educational programs outside KSA offered by their employers because of the difficulty to get travel documents (passport, etc.) also, they can't do that without the approval of the guardian. This study is considered one of the few studies that discuss the challenges facing the advancement of Saudi women in the general career development as well as the cultural, individual, family and organizational factors that prevent their progress despite the presence of qualified staff to reach the highest level of employment (Oláh et al., 2014).

The number of Saudi women in leadership positions is very limited. As equal and fair opportunities for all are almost missing in our society because male culture prevails in most employers, especially if the employer does not believe in women's capabilities and does not trust them as leaders, which does not allow them to take leadership positions, even though women are the most worthy, which frustrates many women, and hinders their professional progress. Therefore, this study provides an opportunity for critical review of theories dealing with women in the labor market by examining the extent to which these theories explain the social reality in Saudi Arabia. Also, this study reflects a new approach in the studies related to women in Saudi Arabia, which is the transition from studying issues that deal with women isolated from the social environment to issues that support their participation in community building and decision-making. In addition, the study contributes to enriching the theoretical heritage in the field of sociology of women and organizational sociology. Finally, it contributes to the test of the bias theory towards female leaders resulting from the lack of harmony of the role, which was not used in the Arabic studies.

It is worth mentioning that the high enrollment of Saudi women in higher education has represented a huge shift in the quality of the labor force of women and increasing their numbers in the Saudi labor market, which has more than tripled since 1992 according to the World Bank (Al Alhareth, Al Dighrir & Al Alhareth, 2015). However, this expansion remains horizontal and does not rise vertically. This is one of the factors that increase the importance of this study, in order to identify the most important challenges of women's access to leadership positions, and then find solutions to overcome them. The discussion in this study of women's opportunities to leadership positions and to overcome social obstacles and breaking the glass ceiling does not in any way mean forcibly pushing women into these positions, nor does it make them inefficient. It does not mean inviting women to leave their families in order to attain such senior positions. It was presented here to reveal the challenges that prevent access of the competent women to these positions, overcome these challenges, and to give equal opportunity to all those who deserve to prove its worth and entitlement without discrimination on the basis of gender, which is the problem of this study.

3. Background of Women Work

The previous studies discussed the obstacles of women's access to leadership positions from several perspectives and dealt with the social, organizational and environmental aspects, reflecting the researchers' interest in this subject with the presence of women in all Arab countries in government and parliamentary representation. Duberley & Carrigan (2013) aimed to shed light on the reality of women in their practice of administrative and leadership work, and the most important trends and motivations that drive women to assume the leading position. As they focused on the characteristics that must be available in women to help practice their leadership as well as the extent to which equality in the occupation of leadership positions between men and women was achieved. While Johns (2013) illustrated that women face many obstacles to career development than men; the most important are exclusion from important positions, a limited number of leading women models, and a negative stereotype of women. Women in senior positions did not make sacrifices in their personal and family life more than women in lower level positions.

Human and economic development are central to the advancement of women, as providing basic requirements such as education, literacy and reproductive health are the most important in countries with low participation of women in leadership positions (Duflo, 2012). Moreover, Sundström et al. (2017) concluded that political and economic freedoms and women's empowerment policies have a significant role in increasing the number of women leaders in all fields.

In addition to that, Nelson (2013) found that there are factors that have a significant negative impact on women's leading position such as the negative view of the official leadership of women, women's conditions and challenges of work, negative perception of the society for women's work, gender discrimination in the occupation of leadership positions, weak women's ability to assume leadership responsibilities, low financial incentives for women's leadership positions, and nominations for leadership positions are not based on objective grounds, as men are often chosen for leadership positions rather than women.

4. A Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach

A constructivist grounded theory approach, founded by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, was used to analyze the data that extracted from interviews. A grounded theory is one of the qualitative research methodologies that may have a strong effect in producing scientific research of value and importance. The grounded theory is not intended to prove a theory rather to discover a theory. This theory may be an explanation of a phenomenon, suggestion of a framework, model or application to solve a particular problem (Stevens, Ross & Chandler, 2015). The grounded theory is based on the development of a set of categories and classifications that are interrelated to form an integrated framework for interpreting or predicting a phenomenon. This theory is a scientific method; its procedures have been designed in such a way as to make it a way that standards must be applied to perform good scientific work, provided that these procedures are carried out accurately and attention. These standards are importance, theoretical notes, ability to generalize, stability and reproducibility, accuracy, strictness, and the possibility of verifying their validity. This framework is achieved through collecting and handling of qualitative data in an organized manner as well as devising the concepts found in those qualitative data. The researcher's creativity is considered an essential element in the use of the grounded theory. Creative thinking is a way that will lead the researcher to invent the theory. The researcher always needs to think about all the possible options during the data collection, analysis and selection of the sample that will depend on, which requires a deep understanding and motivation to continue (Hall, Griffiths & McKenna, 2013).

The introduction of the grounded theory is one of the qualitative research methods that use a set of systematic measures to develop a theory that is abstracted in an inductive manner about a phenomenon. The results of this type of research consist of a theoretical formulation of the studied reality rather than a set of numbers or subjects that are loosely linked. Through this methodology, the concepts and relationships between them are not only generated and arising from the research process but also subject to examination and testing. The procedures of this approach are multiple, yet specific. The purpose of this theory is to construct an honest theory of the phenomena that revolve around it, and researchers in the field of abstract theory aspire that their theories will ultimately be related to other theories in their own disciplines in a cumulative manner and that the theoretical implications have practical benefits. According to Nagel et al. (2015), there are many forms of scientific research methods through the grounded theory, but in general the methodology of the grounded theory is composed in the following stages:

- 1- Problem identification: researchers should initially have an idea about the phenomenon or problem to know exactly what the scope of the subject they will deal with, as target subject is not general and large, but specific and clear.
- 2- Data collection: researcher collects data related to the phenomenon being studied through the use of interviews, observations, and documents as tools for research. This may take a long time and may take years depending on the nature of the research. The researchers here written their observations during the research, which represent the data that they collect and will be studied later, therefore do not rely on statistical data or digital.
- 3- Data analysis: researchers analyze the notes collected in a textual analysis in order to derive the symbols and keywords contained in those observations to be compared to each other for the purpose of extracting the basic types or categories, such as the Core Category. The notes are then analyzed through their arrangement and compilation to device classifications. These classifications are what the researchers will rely on within their theory.

5. Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was used to identify challenges associated with women career development. A descriptive research design is a form of systematic scientific analysis and interpretation; to describe a specific phenomenon and quantify it by collecting and disaggregating data and information on the phenomenon or problem, as it contains a deep interpretation of a particular phenomenon or idea without the use of quantitative figures and statistics.

Descriptive research is considered the most difficult research because it uses narration and elaboration of ideas, where the question in descriptive research is an open-ended question and is more concerned with process and meaning than with cause and effect. This research consists of interviews, as interview is a meeting between two or more person where question are asked and answers are obtained. Interview success depends mostly on personality, degree of focus and specific information (Dana, Dawes & Peterson, 2013). Interviews were used to gather data from women who work at the state universities in Saudi Arabia to solicit their views about factors that have effected their career development, challenges that have experienced in their career, and environmental factors that influenced their career development. Interviews contain three questions which are comprehensive and integrated for research purposes. In this study Interviews were conducted with forty participants, as the sample was selected randomly. All data were analyzed using the constructivist grounded theory approach.

6. Results' Analysis

6.1 Respondants' Demographic Variables

A random sample of forty (40) respondents selected from the state universities In Saudi Arabia, Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Regarding age of the respondents, 42.50% (n= 17) were 28-35, 32.50% (n= 13) of 36-45, 20.00% (n= 8) 46-55, and 5.00% (n= 2) 56 and above. The academic rank of the respondents was 47.50% (n= 19) of lecturer, 30.00% (n= 12) of assistant professor, 15.00% (n= 6) of associate professor, and 7.50% (n= 3) of professor. Regarding years of experience, 47.50% (n= 19) of the respondents were 5 years or loss, 32.50% (n= 13) of 6-10 years, 15.00% (n= 6) 11-15 years, and 5.00% (n= 2) 16 years and more. Also, the current position of the respondents was 87.5% (n= 35) of faculty member, 2.50% (n= 1) of head of department, 10.0% (n= 4) of other, and 00.00% (n= 0) of dean of faculty. Regarding the question (Have you ever received higher level position), the answers of respondents were 77.50% (n= 31) of No, and 22.5% (n= 9) of Yes.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the Respondents (N= 40).

Variable	N (%)
Age	
28-35	17 (42.5%)
36-45	13 (32.5%)
46-55	8 (20.0%)
56 and Above	2 (5.0%)
Academic Rank	
Professor	3 (7.5%)
Associate Professor	6 (15.0%)
Assistant Professor	12 (30.0%)
Lecturer	19 (47.5%)
Years of Experience	
5 Years or Less	19 (47.5%)
6-10 Years	13 (32.5%)
11-15 Years	6 (15.0%)
16 Years and More	2 (5.0%)
Current Position	
Dean of Faculty	0 (00.0%)
Head of Department	1 (2.5%)
Faculty Member	35 (87.5%)
Other	4 (10%)
Have you ever received higher level position	
Yes	9 (22.5%)
No	31 (77.5%)

Data from the tables indicate that more than half of the sample (52.5%) was between the ages of 36 and 55 years and that 5% of them were between the ages of 56 and above. These age groups represent the stage of maturity and psychological stability, which helps to give the women leaders the ability to distinguish between error and right and the possibility to predict positive and negative results. As many studies indicate that the individual, whether a woman or a man must spend many years in the field of employment, which will gain the experience and knowledge so that they can reach the leading position. The data show that the vast majority of women surveyed had many years of work of more than 5 year. This indicates that women have sufficient experience and skills to hold leadership positions. However, only 22.5% have received higher level position.

6.2 Factors Affect Women's Career Development

The challenges and problems facing women in their field of work vary, which often lead women to moving away from the leadership position. Regarding the first question, this aims to find out the real factors that affect women's career development in Saudi Arabia. Based on literature review and studies in Saudi Arabia. The researcher concluded that there were four main factors that play a key role in affecting career development, which are: cultural, family, individual, and organizational factors. The table 1 illustrates the sequence of these challenges and problems according to their importance and impact.

Table 2: The most important factors that have affected women's career development from the researcher's point of view and their ratio (respondents' answers)

Factor	Ratio (%)
Cultural factor	27.5
Family factor	22.5
Individual factor	17.5
Organizational factor	32.5

Table 2 shows the most influenced factors that have effected women's career development. It is observed that the ratios were fairly close to each other. As that there was a slight increase in organizational factor (32.5%, n= 13) with compared to cultural factor (27.5%, n= 11), family factor (32.5%, n= 13), and individual factor (32.5%, n= 13). Where the researcher noted that there is considerable confusion by respondents when answering this question due to the importance of each factor and its role in hindering development career. This does not mean that there are no other factors influencing career development. It is clear from the answer to the second and third questions of interview (will be discussed later) that there are other factors that play an important role such as geographic factors, economic factor, political factors and technological factors, but with ratio that is less than the factors mentioned above.

6.2.1 Cultural Factor

The cultural factors have a large impact on women's career development. The identification of a woman with the characteristics of weakness and a man in terms of power, known as gender stereotyping, is one of the most important obstacles to women's access to leadership positions, since members of the society keep a certain stereotypical picture about women as mentally deficient, emotional, irrational, and incapable of coping with difficulties. This picture is inconsistent with the characteristics and attributes that are believed to be necessary for success in the leadership position. This may produce a kind of disparity between the usual picture of women and its role in the leadership position, this leads to undermine its assessment as a candidate for a leadership position or a potential concern for this position. Prejudice against women leaders is shown through the general trend towards the preference for a man leader over a woman leader. As well as the difficulty of recognizing the merit of women and their efficiency in the leadership position; because a woman's proof of her merit and entitlement to such positions may be classified as a defect in her gender identity or lack of femininity as clarified by one respondent:

"Some believes that the tough opinions of some decision-makers are the main reason why women do not receive leadership positions. Decision-makers believe women cannot hold jobs of men and cannot afford to do that".

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

"During my career I experienced some challenges that may have affected my progress in work such as the vision of the society towards women: in spite of working hard, women always aren't qualified. Men are better than them, the lack of facilities inside the institution, training courses and workshops and that women can't participate in international conferences".

The society's view of women's work is one of the main challenges that prevent women from career advancement. As Family traditions and social customs often encourage women to do traditional work and rely on the man in taking their decisions. So women face discouragement, dissatisfaction and opposition by all who surround them when they want to develop their career, which entitles them to reach advanced position in work especially leading position. Some of these were illustrated by one respondent:

"Of course the cultural factors, as traditions, values and beliefs prevalent in society, where the role of women was associated with maternity and family care while the traditional roles of men were associated with work and activities outside the home, as well as family commitments that make women retreat from positions".

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

"During my work in the Saudi universities, there were a number of challenges for women, perhaps the most prominent nature of culture and their lack of acceptance of women's work because of traditions, customs and tribalism in Saudi Arabia".

Family nurture for men and women is actively involved in determining the effectiveness of women on the occupation of top leadership positions. As women are made to be housewives and men for work in all spheres of life. The reality of the division of social work upon gender as a result of the social, cultural, economic and legislative changes in our Arab society have not been fundamentally changed, as its effects remained in our social reality, as one respondent described:

"Challenges can be found in the way female section is organized. No doubt, male section controls the financial support, makes basic decision as well as provides guidance on staff job description and assessment. All these factors cause weakness in the female division role and thus neglect their contributions".

Moreover, discrimination in dealing between men and women has a significant impact on women's career development, as it is a major cause of women's loss of leadership position, as well as the lack of having equal opportunities for working compared with men in the case of similar conditions. Although official laws and government legislation do not discriminate between men and women, the actual reality reveals a discrimination in favor of men in terms of taking leadership positions, which is considered necessary for women's participation in decision-making. Despite women have the qualifications that needed to develop their career in terms of degree, actual experience and efficiency, but their proportion of participation in administrative and leadership positions compared with men is low or not at the anticipated level because of the relative advantage enjoyed by men in taking the career development, as one respondent explained:

"The most important obstacles facing the working women are the functional obstacles represented in discrimination and inequality with their male colleagues in the workplace, their role in leadership positions, their lack of participation in decision-making, and training courses that increase their efficiency, develop their capabilities and provide them with different managerial and leadership skills".

One of the most important problems that hinder the development of working women in Saudi Arabia is the problem of mingling, as they will mingle with their male colleagues, especially in conferences, workshops or meetings. It is necessary to know that not all mingling is (religiously banned), as long as men and women preserve the limits of legitimacy in every place and time that God wants, there is no problem of mingling. Islam has clarified that men and women must maintain the legal boundaries between them. As clarified by one respondent:

"I have faced many challenges during my work at the university. The most important challenges affecting my career are the lack of acceptance by the Saudi society of women's work in places where there is mingling with men. Culture in Saudi society prevents women to work in men's places of residence. In addition, the university and its employees do not accept the presence of a woman whom is responsible for in any administrative place, and I noticed that the Saudi society does not support the access of women to high positions as well as their participation in activity".

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

"Being under the direction of men section and separated from them at the same time makes it too difficult to follow up whenever you needed to".

6.2.2 Family Factor

One of the main reasons why women do not receive leadership positions is the difficulty for women to reconcile between career and the household chores, which increases the burden on women and reduces their ambition and aspiration to occupy leadership positions. On the other hand, she must take care of herself so that she can keep fitness to continue working. As for working women and to achieve a balance between work and home affairs, they must plan properly and deal rationally with complex situations. As one respondent said:

"I think that reconciliation between work and home depends on the nature of the woman herself and her psychological ability to withstand the pressures. A woman who is strong and able to withstand the pressure of work so as not to reflect on her psychological state within the family is not as the woman whose work is reflected on her home and relationship with her husband and children"

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

"There are many challenges facing women in professional life, the most important of which is the absence of laws and legislations that support women, in addition to the challenges of the difficulty of coordinating their working life and social life due to long working hours".

Arab society has not reached the conviction of changing roles and dividing them between women and men within the family, woman remains engaged by the responsibilities of the house. Combining the position and the responsibilities of the household is beyond her capacity and hinders women from taking full responsibility for the position. So they choose their domestic responsibilities and take care of the family rather than leadership positions as long as there is no cooperation required, whether from their family or society, by providing alternatives to children such as safe custody or women-friendly employment policies, as one respondent explained:

"I think that there are a set of challenges behind that such as family circumstances and burdens that the husbands overload on us, self-confidence as a result of socialization nurture, and fear of failure. In addition to a lack of motivation and desire to assume a higher position, and lack of interest in educating women".

6.2.3 Individual Factor

Women themselves create many constraints that are directly related to them, which may be most important in their lack of leadership positions. Individual challenges are the obstacles related to the personality of women and their psychology, abilities, qualifications and scientific skills that prevent them practice leadership behavior. Many women prefer routine work, part-time jobs and less advanced career paths. Making it easier for them to combine their careers and household tasks, especially with the scarcity of social institutions such as nurseries, clubs and even public parks, which increases the burden on working women and reduces their ambition and aspiration to occupy leadership positions. Therefore, training and rehabilitation are often secondary to working women, which cut off time that they basically chose a routine job to spend with their family. Some of these were illustrated by one respondent:

"The weak qualification of women technically and scientifically to work in general and leadership work in particular is one of the most important disadvantages for Saudi women, especially in leadership positions".

The nature of women characters is the possible reason behind that, as women are not decisive in decision-making, emotional in their decisions and cannot work long hours. In addition women do not continue in the same work, but will leave after a while, and does not have sufficient experience to deal with problems. As one respondent mentioned:

"One of the most difficult obstacles facing women and prevent them from exercising the leadership role is their personal conviction because of social upbringing, their weak potential, and their inability to assume leadership positions. This is reflected negatively on their behavior and ambition, in addition to their lack of confidence and the family conditions faced by family burdens, especially married women, so women are always under pressure from fathers and husbands to leave work and to be devoted to her house".

Many women are afraid to compete with male colleagues and rise up the career ladder for their fear of criticism or men do not accept to bear responsibility for women such as managers or heads of department. Thus, they relinquish their rights to reach higher positions and participate in decision-making, and decide to withdraw and escape a confrontation, preferring to stay in the back lines of job sites, as one respondent explained:

"Lack of self-confidence as a result of wrong socialization in female education generates a complex fear of permanent failure to progress and development and enters into new areas of work".

To help women overcome these fears, they must strengthen their self-confidence, develop their own awareness, know their personality strengths and weaknesses, and try to make them positive. To achieve this, women must know their real potential as well as jobs that fit their own capabilities in which areas they outperform their colleagues within the overall framework so that they can achieve greater success and excellence.

6.2.4 Organizational Factor

One of the main reasons preventing women take over an active role in leadership positions is the attitudes of the administrative leader towards women's work. Administrative leaders often view women's work as substandard due to their poor efficiency, lack of interest in development, their many vacations, their preoccupation with small matters in their relationships with colleagues, their poor understanding of orders and instructions issued, etc. All of these aspects represent the deep-rooted misconception of the administrative leaders as a result of the deposition of past conditions, as one respondent was described:

"Due to my experience, I think that the organizational challenge stands as a barrier to women's development, this is due to the view of the administrative leader to women's work, the lack of conviction and confidence in their decisions and opinions, prior knowledge of women's inability to assume leadership responsibility, and limited qualifications and managerial experience".

Respondents' answers confirmed that the lack of conviction and confidence in the decisions and opinions of women have a significant impact on their distance from these sites, This is due to the belief of administrators that women are unable to make the best decision, because they are often emotional and affected by others and family problems, hence that make their decisions and opinions irrational and inappropriate. On the other hand, the lack of conviction and confidence may also reflect the subordinates that women deal with, which generate sensitivity towards woman leading them. This may lead to opposition on their opinions and decisions and sometimes failure to implement them. This makes them feel frustrated, disappointed and nervous, which may lead to the withdrawal of women from the leadership position and escape from confrontation to prove their worth and efficiency, as one respondent explained:

"The most important challenges facing women leaders are the contradiction between their roles as leaders and their traditional roles in society, which is related to prevailing social values and expectations".

From the above, it can be concluded that the lack of advancement of women in decision-making positions in universities is a reflection of the situation of Saudi women in all sectors, but the circumstances become much worse, although Saudi women have been in a job for quite some time, but they have not had the opportunity to enter the world of decision-making, except in rare cases and obtained for exceptional circumstances and reasons. Some of these were illustrated by one respondent:

"In cases where a woman has been appointed to a leadership position, the appointment was the result of an exceptional circumstance, so she does not continue to serve for a long time".

There are administrative obstacles that limit the progress of women in senior positions, as men neither recognize women's abilities nor accepting them in the administrative leadership rather than the fear and reluctance of some women leaders of responsibility and opinion, as one respondent explained:

"Women in academic positions cannot make decisions without a male overlooking them. We can only suggest actions even if they are regarding female students concerns".

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

"Organizational structures and strategies in our university do not favor the increased contribution and participation of women, as recruitment, promotion, and salary and incentives policies is in favor of men over women".

6.3 Environmental Factors Affecting Women's Career Development

In addition to the factors above, environmental factors play a key role in preventing women career development, as it covers all the circumstances and external factors in which women live and affect their work. According to respondents' answers, there are many environmental challenges affecting women development such as legal, constitutional, technological, geographical and economic.

At the legal level, although the basic law of Saudi Arabia does not contain any provisions that prevent women from holding leadership positions, rules and regulations still show bias against women leaders through the general trend towards preference of male leaders' over female leaders, as well as the difficulty of recognizing women's merit and competence in leadership positions, as one respondent explained:

“Legal factor, Saudi legislation does not support the excellence of women, despite the burdens and the large role they bear, but the laws discriminate against them”.

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

“The most important environmental factor that faced me in the work is the political factors, where The policy of work requires the presence of a an unmarriageable kin with whom marriage would be considered illegally banned in Islam(mabram) while traveling outside the Kingdom study or attend conferences and seminars, which would reduce the possibility of my presence in those countries, I also faced the geographical challenge including mobility to the University for the different nature of acceptance of some areas for the presence of a woman responsible for the work of some males”.

The working woman faces a number of problems in going to the workplace because of the different working hours of the husband or guardian, as well as the lack of public transportation in cities such as the metro, forcing them to use drivers, either from those in KSA or those with visas from outside the Kingdom. These problems include the lack of proficiency in the Arabic language, the ignorance of streets of the city in which they work, and ignorance of the rules of driving cars. Women also face other problems, as they cant accommodate the driver close to their homes, especially those who live in apartments, forcing them to rent houses for drivers away from family housing, in addition, these drivers practice many bad behaviors. Some of these were illustrated by one respondent:

“The geographical and regulations of the institution have affected the development of my career. Transportation was also a challenge since my work is far away from the area I’m living in. So for safety issues I need to share someone with the same car which caused me to waste a lot of time. In addition to that, the dispersion of the faculty member with too much unrelated work contributes in slowing the development down and takes him/ her away from what he/ she should focus on like researching or teaching”.

Another respondent confirmed that as she said:

“The geographical elements: The nature of the place and the ways people dealing affect the career development. I can't travel inside the country alone to buy any books or attend any workshop or conference”.

Many women use public means of transport such as cars or buses due to inability to afford expenses for private car and driver. Bearing in mind those factors such as mobility and lack of transport, family and community restrictions on women's travel diminishes their opportunities in education and training, as one respondent described:

“Transportation is one of the main factors that affect any women career in Saudi Arabia, because although driving cars has been permitted for women, some of us are not able to drive and having a driver is quite expensive nowadays. Also, some women can't travel to attend a conference without a male guardian or his approval in some cases”.

The economic factor creates large impact on career progression of women, as they indicated that the current position and salary does not match their specialization, experience or desire, and sometimes it does not suit their academic qualifications, which limits women's long-term employment, especially with low economic feasibility of their work. In addition to that, the current economic situation has led many women in leadership positions to leave their jobs because the salary no longer meets the needs of the family, as one respondent explained:

“Economic problems such as salary are not commensurate with efforts, lack of rewards and incentives, and Lack of adequate working conditions”.

One of the biggest challenges facing the development of Saudi women is the technological challenge, which includes women's ignorance of modern technology, modern devices, internet access, appropriate environment for the application of such modern technologies and failure to implement appropriate training courses for women in order to properly use these techniques, as one respondent described:

“The Technological elements: sometimes the internet isn't available or too slow so I can't download materials. There are no qualified specialists in technology. The technological facilities need maintenance that isn't available. The lack of using the technological elements in my career work”.

Based on respondents' opinions, there were seven types of challenges facing women's career development in Saudi Arabia as shown in figure 1, which are: cultural, family, individual, organizational, geographical, economic, and

legal and constitutional. To clarify the problem, figure 2 shows Fish Bone Diagram for the main and micro challenges that influence women’s career development.

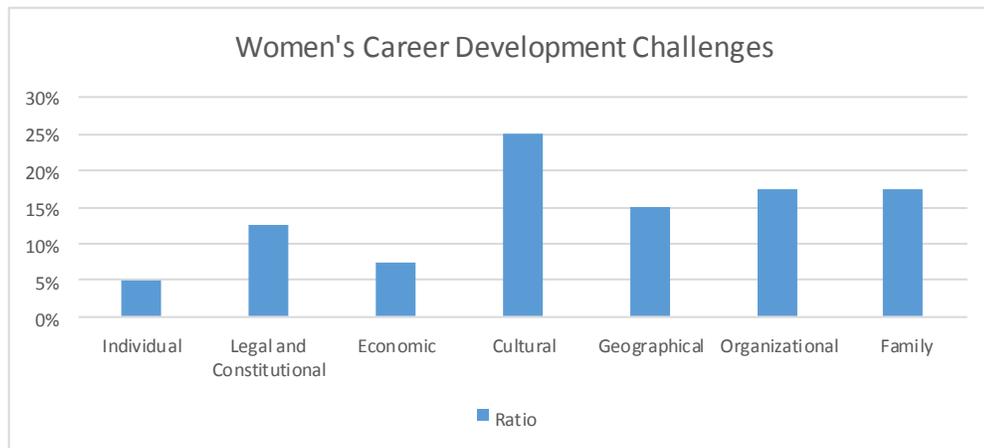


Figure 1: The ratios of the most important factors that have affected women’s career development from the respondents’ point of view.

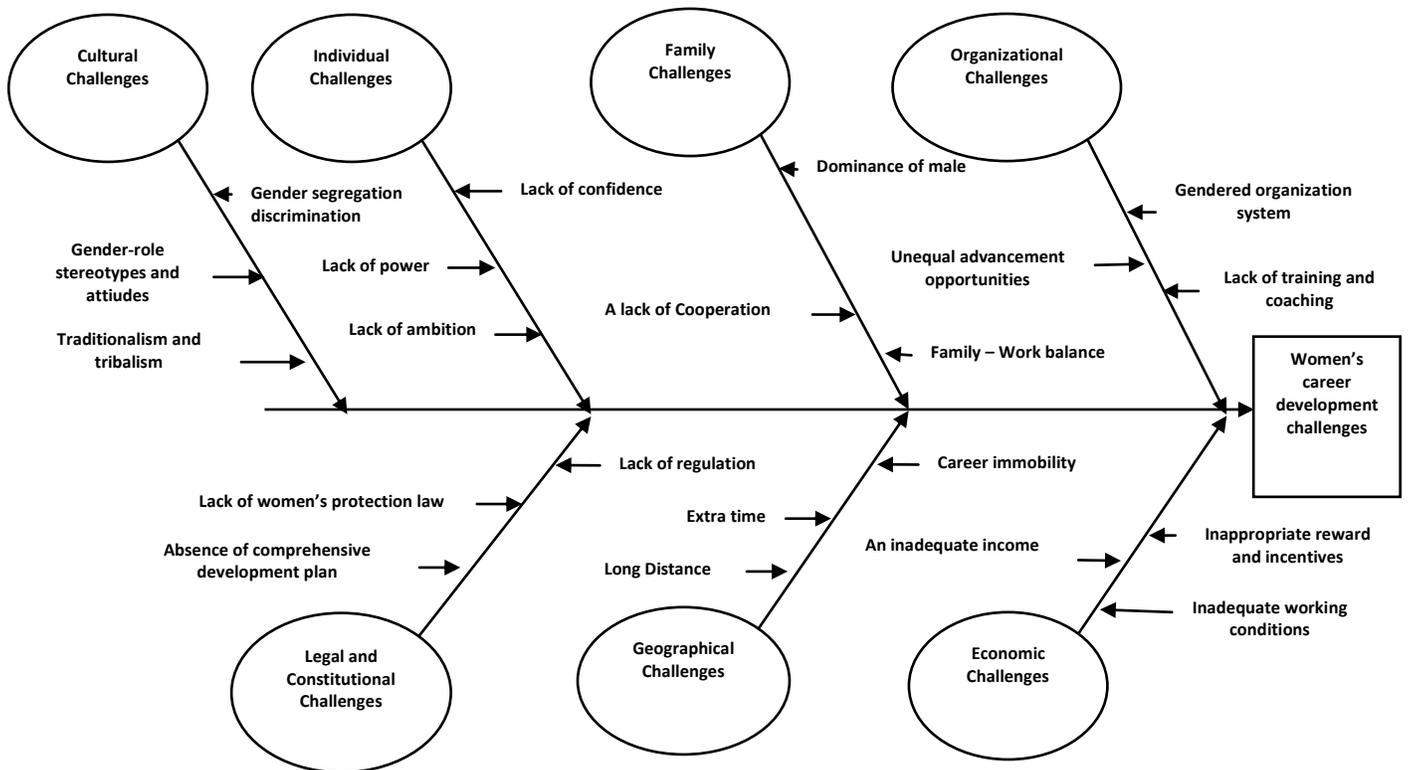


Figure 2: Fish Bone Diagram for the main problem.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the challenges affecting women career development at the state universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The results showed there were seven main challenges affecting women's career development: cultural, family, individual, organizational, geographical, economic, and legal and constitutional. The findings revealed a significant number of some challenges that influence women career development including gender-role stereotypes and attitudes, gender segregation discrimination, family – work balance, lack of training and coaching, career immobility, inappropriate income, reward and incentives, lack of women's confidence, power and ambition, absence of comprehensive development plan.

The society that believes in the necessity of women's participation in the process of sustainable development must find solutions and overcome obstacles to development of the status of women, which is appropriate to its environment and needs. Thus, equality should be sought for both sexes in universities, so that the choice in assigning tasks is limited to efficiency rather than gender, as is promotion, salary and incentives. Based on that, it is necessary to support women's access to leadership positions through the political decision, and to raise the share of women in leadership positions gradually to benefit from women's competencies in enhancing the development in KSA in all fields, especially as working Saudi women have high standards of education and training. It was recommended that a time frame should be set to support the representation of women in leadership positions, so universities should recognize the important role of women and their work. Furthermore, it is also necessary to review laws and regulations that affect women's rights to achieve gender equality and lead to a national strategy to promote equality of opportunity between the two genders. In addition, we should also take advantage of technological development and allow women to work from home, as there are scientific lectures and political discussions conducted across continents by computer through (Video conference). In conclusion, the society represented in all its official organs, civil society organizations, universities, and women's rights advocates, have sought to change the stereotype and break the rigid mold in which women have been placed.

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