



**Institutional and Personal Influences on Career Choice:  
A Study on MBA Students in Saudi Arabia**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2014

## Abstract

This study examines the career choices of MBA students in Saudi Arabia. Despite the government's efforts in reducing unemployment by encouraging young Saudis, including managers, to work in the private sector, the number of jobless educated Saudis is on the rise. The public sector seems to be more attractive despite its limited job opportunities. While most career choice theories are concerned with personal choices, this study aims to address the underlying reasons for the preference towards the public sector by investigating the influence of institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) and personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic).

Convenience sampling was employed and, overall, 273 Saudi MBA students (157 males and 116 females) responded to self-administered questionnaires. Data was analysed and the research hypotheses were tested by using descriptive statistics, binary logistic regression and independent samples t-tests. Findings showed that *Wasta* (networks), parental obedience (family), Islamic religion and extrinsic factors were significant predictors of the career choices of Saudi MBA students, with a preference towards work in the public sector. *Saudization* (i.e. replacing foreign workers with Saudis), social status, and intrinsic factors did not significantly predict the career choices. Cultural cognitive factors (parental obedience and religion) were found to be the strongest predictors within the institutional dimension compared to the normative factors (*Wasta* and social status) and the regulative factor (*Saudization*). Female participants considered *Wasta*, parental obedience and intrinsic motivations more important in their career choices compared to their male counterparts.

The findings suggest that the career choices of Saudi MBA students are not determined solely by the individuals' personal needs and that one should take into account the wider social and cultural factors which are more influential in non-Western contexts such as Saudi Arabia. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings are of interest to researchers, policymakers and employers in public and private organisations in Saudi Arabia.

**Keywords:** Career choice, *Saudization*, *Wasta*, religion, intrinsic and extrinsic, Saudi Arabia, MBA students, gender.

## **Dedication**

*To my dear father, Tami,  
To my precious mother, Norah  
And  
To my beloved wife, Faizah*

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Almighty *Allah* for giving me the patience, stamina, and health to accomplish this research and overcome all the challenges and circumstances that I have faced during my PhD years.

Looking back, the completion of this PhD thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people, some of whom I wish to thank by name. I am deeply grateful to my supervisors, Dr. Natasha Slutskaia and Professor Ruth Simpson. I feel that words cannot express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to them for their guidance, thoughtful advice and great support during all the stages of this research.

My high appreciation goes to Professor Zahir Irani, Dean of College (Business, Arts and Social Sciences), for his constant support and encouragement. I wish to thank other academic staff in Brunel Business School: Dr. Wafi Al-Karaghoulia, Dr. Emel Aktas and Dr. Abraham Althunayan for their advice, support and motivation. Special thanks go to my cousin, Mubarak Albugamy, for his help during the fieldwork. My deep appreciation goes to my good friends and colleagues: Mastoureh Fathi, Sabahat Bagci, Aiman El Asam, Javad Khorassani and Edward Rampersaud for the fruitful discussions and constructive comments.

My greatest debt is owed to my family in Saudi Arabia, particularly to my father Dr. Tami Albugamy and my mother Norah Albugamy for their unconditional love, unending support and sincere prayers throughout my life and especially during my studies. I am greatly indebted to my beloved wife, Faizah, for being by my side during this long journey and giving me all the encouragement when I needed it the most. Without the love she and my children: Norah, Khalid, Saud, and Nasir gave me, I could not pave the way.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the 273 anonymous MBA students in Saudi Arabia who participated in this research and made this possible in the first place.

## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of my original research work for the purpose of the PhD programme at Brunel Business School, Brunel University and has not been previously submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree or qualification to any other academic institution. Wherever contributions of others are involved, this is clearly acknowledged and referenced. Some of the material contained here has been presented in the form of the following:

### **Conference Paper**

Albugamy, R., Slutskeya, N., & Simpson, R. (2014). The influence of institutional factors on career choice: A study of Saudi MBA students. *Second international conference on sustainable human development, iSHuD 2014*. London, UK, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of April.

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**Date:** 10 December, 2014

**Signature:**

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## List of Abbreviations

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
<i>B</i>	Beta Coefficients
BBS	Brunel Business School
CTSS	Co-operative Training Scheme for Saudis
<i>df</i>	Degree of Freedom
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
G20	Group of Twenty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test
HRDF	Human Resources Development Fund
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KAU	King Abdul Aziz University
KAUST	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
KSU	King Saud University
<i>M</i>	Mean
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
N	Number
Ns	Non-significant

<i>P</i>	Probability (Significance)
<i>r</i>	Correlation Coefficient
SAMA	Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency
<i>SD</i>	Standard Deviations
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SE	Standard Error
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<i>t</i>	T-test value
TOEFL	Test of English as Foreign Language
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organisation
$\chi^2$	Chi-square



# Chapter 1: Career Choices of Saudi MBA Students: An Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Career choice is complex and multifaceted by nature. It has attracted the attention of scholars and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines, predominantly in psychology (Holland, 1997), sociology (Barley, 1989), and anthropology (Bateson, 2010) as well as economics (Corneo and Jeanne, 2010) and organisational behaviour (Hackett *et al.*, 1991). Choosing a career is perhaps the most important decision for an individual and has far-reaching effects on one's future in terms of income, lifestyle, status, and job satisfaction. A misfit between the individual's needs and motivations on the one hand and the organisation's needs and rewards on the other is likely to result in low performance, decreased productivity, job dissatisfaction, stress, and high turnover (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Van Harrison, 1985).

This thesis aims to examine the influence of the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) and the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices (public and private sectors) of Saudi MBA male and female students<sup>1</sup>; furthermore, the study seeks to find out which dimension (institutional or personal) is more influential in the career choice process. The researcher argues that career choice is not solely determined by personal reasons as emphasised by most of the Western-developed career choice theories (Duffy and Dik, 2009). Institutional factors, particularly the cultural ones (parental obedience and religion), should be considered when addressing career choices in collectivistic cultures such as Saudi Arabia as they play major roles in people's daily decisions.

This chapter begins by sketching the research problem. This will be followed by a discussion of the significance of this study and a statement of the research questions, aim,

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<sup>1</sup> All the factors discussed here are going to be elaborated in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. In order to clarify the argument here briefly, *Saudization* refers to the employment policy adopted by the Saudi government since the mid 1990s to replace foreign workers with Saudi citizens (Looney, 2004). *Wasta* is an Arabic concept which refers to the use of family and social networks and connections for achieving personal gains (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994).

and objectives. A brief description of the methodological approach adopted in this study will also be presented, concluding with an outline of the thesis structure.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Having worked for almost 20 years for the government of Saudi Arabia, mainly in managerial and diplomatic positions, the researcher has been always puzzled by two paradoxical facts about Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia is one of the richest countries in the Middle East, one of most prominent exporters of oil in the world and has the largest single oil reserves in the world. Additionally, Saudi Arabia is ranked first in the Arab world for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and the biggest free market in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (World Investment Report, 2013).

On the other hand, it suffers from one of the highest unemployment rates in the region, particularly among youths (30%) and women (35.7%) (IMF, 2013). High unemployment figures have social and economic implications as 50% of the population is aged 25 or under (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014) and the population annual growth rate is one of the fastest in the world (4%) (Mellahi, 2006). Increasing numbers of expatriates, working mainly in the private sector (87% in 2013), and Saudis concentrated in the public sector (93% in 2013) have created a polarity in the labour market of the country (SAMA, 2013). Saudi workers are more eager to work in the public sector than ever, while there are few opportunities to create new vacancies in that sector. It has been argued by some that the private sector does not appeal to Saudi individuals for several reasons such as their lack of expertise and cultural incongruence with a diverse workforce (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Ramady, 2005).

The governmental efforts in making Saudis employable through encouraging foreign investments, providing free education, training and scholarship programmes, and implementing *Saudization* since the mid-1990s to replace foreign workers with Saudis have not been successful at lowering the unemployment rates or decreasing the number of expatriates. Surely the above reasons, which have been studied before in Saudi Arabia (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014; Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Ramady, 2005), could not be the only reasons for such a high concentration of Saudis and foreigners in the two sectors (public and private, respectively). Given the particularities of the work sectors in Saudi Arabia and the concentration of foreign workers and Saudis in these two sectors, the researcher was interested in finding out which reasons affect the career choices of Saudi male and female managers.

Employers in the private sector prefer to hire expatriates as they are believed to be more qualified, committed, productive and profitable (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Ramady, 2005). Foreign workers are hired on short-term contracts with fewer financial and legal burdens compared to Saudis. Expatriates cannot change jobs or move to another city in Saudi Arabia without the permission of their employers, who can fire them easily (Mellahi, 2007).

On the other hand, the most reported problems for Saudi workers in the private sector are low motivation and high turnover (Mousa, 2013a; Fakeeh, 2009). In such a context, choosing to work in the private or public sector is difficult and to some extent is forced upon individuals due to the stark economic and cultural differences between the two sectors. Large numbers of young, educated Saudi individuals remain jobless after graduation to the extent that some have argued that the more educated and qualified a Saudi person is, the more difficult it is for him/her to find a job (Al-Asmari, 2008). Part of this claim is due to the fact that decision making about one's employment is affected by cultural and personal factors. In Saudi Arabia, these forces have not been part of *Saudization* and other employment related policies. Cultural and personal elements are persistent in Saudi managers' career choices.

The number of Saudi skilled managers is notably low in the private sector, amounting to around only 10% (Hertog, 2012; Ministry of Labour, 2012). Foreign managers are mainly from the West, other Arab countries and India (Iles *et al.*, 2012). In particular, women are absent from the labour market due to various cultural and educational obstacles which lead them to concentrate on the public sector, particularly in education and health (Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012). In 2012, they constituted around only 3% of the private sector and much less in managerial positions (SAMA, 2013).

### **1.2.1 Why Study MBA Students?**

The country has witnessed a huge development in all sectors due to the high revenues generated from oil and is in need of a professional native cadre to lead that economic development. Saudi Arabia cannot remain dependent on such large numbers of expatriates while qualified Saudis are unemployed: it has, therefore, devised and run *Saudization* as an 'employment strategy' to address the unemployment problem and continue to thrive as a nation. The establishment of MBA programmes was part of these efforts to *Saudize* the workforce, especially the managers.

The MBA degree is often a turning point in individuals' careers. MBA students usually come from a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds not limited to just business and management studies. They are expected to make significant choices about their future careers in the management field after graduation (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). By studying the MBA, they can become equipped with managerial skills that are crucial for the success of organisations in the competitive global market (Agarwala, 2008). Although MBA programmes have been running for more than two decades in Saudi Arabia and have generated both male and female skilled managers, the presence of men and, in particular, women managers is still scarce in the private sector (Hertog, 2012; Chaar, 2010; Achoui, 2009).

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted to examine the factors affecting the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The aim of this study is to fill this gap by investigating the reasons that cause Saudi MBA students to prefer working in the public sector despite numerous governmental efforts to employ Saudis in the private sector. What factors influence the career decisions of Saudi MBA students when choosing between public and private sectors? Are these factors merely personal motivations? Are there wider social and cultural reasons that underpin such choices? Given the high unemployment rate among women and their scarce existence in the private sector, how are men and women different in terms of the perceived importance of such factors?

The answers to these questions can inform policymakers, employers and individuals in their choices as well as providing new insights useful in the reimplementation of *Saudization*, this time with a better success rate.

### **1.3 The Significance of the Study**

A close review of the career choice literature revealed that there are two gaps that necessitate this study. The first gap is theoretical as most of the career choice theories pay more attention to the 'individual' as the key player in that process (Savickas, 2002; Holland, 1997; Super, 1992; Schein, 1990) and cultural and structural factors remain relatively under-explored (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Social and cultural factors such as social status, gender, religion and parental influence were highlighted in the sociological approach of the career choice literature (Patton and McMahan, 2014), but were not addressed in most of the career choice theories (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Brown, 2002b).

The second gap is empirical as the majority of studies on career choice have been conducted in the West. There are few exceptions to this literature that have been conducted in Africa (e.g. Amani, 2013; Bassey *et al.*, 2012), East Asia (e.g. Wong and Liu, 2010; Agarwala, 2008; Wong, 2007), and the Middle East (e.g. Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2012; Inal and Karatas-Ozkan, 2007; Karakitapoglu-Aygun and Sayim, 2007). Little research has been conducted in Saudi Arabia (Iles *et al.*, 2012), where family and cultural factors are likely to play important roles in individuals' daily decisions. As argued by Brown (2002b), a result of this overemphasis on the personal side of the process aligned with the relative ignorance of cultural effects in the existing career choice theories makes them less relevant in non-Western cultures in providing theoretical and practical guidance. Accordingly, some contemporary scholars have called for more research located within non-Western contexts examining the social and cultural influences on career choice and career development (Ituma *et al.*, 2011; Wong and Liu, 2010; Duffy and Dik, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Fouad and Byars-Winston, 2005; Stead, 2004). Ozbilgin *et al.* (2005) emphasises the necessity of re-conceptualising career choice as an interplay between personal agency and the surrounding structural and social factors.

To fill the above two gaps in the career choice literature, this research developed an integrative balanced framework applicable in the collectivistic context of Saudi Arabia and addressed the career choice process from two dimensions: personal and socio-cultural. The framework of this research is composed of two well-known theories that address the personal as well as the wider socio-political and cultural aspects of career choice (Scott, 1995; Deci and Ryan, 1985). The institutional pillars in this study include: a) *Saudization* as regulative, b) *Wasta* and social status as normative and c) parental obedience and religion as cultural-cognitive. The personal motivational factors include: a) extrinsic: salary, benefits, job security, work conditions, job location, and work in a prestigious organisation and b) intrinsic: job responsibility, creativity, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement, opportunity for personal growth and development, and the opportunity to serve society.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students?

2. What is the effect of gender on the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices?
3. To what extent do the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students?
4. What is the effect of gender on the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices?
5. Are the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) more influential than the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students?

### **1.5 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of institutional and personal motivational factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students. To achieve this aim, the following objectives have to be satisfied:

1. Explore the current literature on career choice.
2. Identify factors and issues related to the career choice process.
3. Examine and analyse the influence of the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religious influence) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.
4. Examine and analyse the effect of the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.
5. Develop a framework that comprises the institutional and personal dimensions of the career choice process for Saudi managers.

### **1.6 Methodological Approach of the Study**

A quantitative approach was adopted in this study through the use of a survey with 273 participants (including paper and online self-administered questionnaires). Several cultural and political factors which informed the data collection method will be discussed in length in Chapter 5. Due to rigid sex-segregation in Saudi Arabia, a male researcher cannot access

female participants; furthermore, some topics that are central to this research such as *Saudization* and religion are sensitive issues to be addressed qualitatively. Convenience sampling was adopted due to financial constraints and the long distances between the different Saudi cities where MBA courses are offered. In order to boost the sample size, online questionnaires were designed and used. The analysis was conducted using SPSS software (version 20). The main statistical analysis tests used in this research included binary logistic regression and independent samples t-tests.

## **1.7 The Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is composed of eight chapters. Chapter 2 depicts the context within which the study has taken place. It discusses the political, economic, cultural and labour market conditions that shape the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The chapter discusses the unemployment problem in Saudi Arabia and the policies that the government has adopted to deal with it. These include encouraging foreign investors to create more jobs, implementing *Saudization* to replace expatriates with Saudis, and developing human resources through education, training and the establishment of MBA programmes. This chapter discusses the fact that, despite these policies, the unemployment rates among young Saudis are increasing and an ever larger number of foreign workers are employed in the private sector each year. It is argued that these policies do not pay sufficient attention to the influence of socio-cultural factors such as religion and tribal and family relationships which are detrimental to Saudi workers' experiences and their career choices.

In Chapter 3, various psychological and sociological theories in the career choice literature are critically reviewed and the theoretical and empirical gaps are identified. In this chapter, the researcher argues that career choices are not solely determined by personal factors; socio-cultural factors should be considered when addressing the career choice process, especially in collectivistic contexts such as Saudi Arabia; therefore, institutional theory with its three pillars (regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive), developed by Richard Scott (1995), is adopted in the conceptual framework of this study. The chapter reviews the institutional factors within the study context (*Saudization* as regulative, *Wasta* and social status as normative, and parental obedience and religion as cultural-cognitive) and presents the relevant hypotheses of their influences on the career choices of male and female MBA students.

Chapter 4 presents the second dimension of the study's framework: the personal motivational factors in the career choice process. The chapter starts by reviewing Edward

Deci and Richard Ryan's (1985) theory of self-determination with its intrinsic and extrinsic categories. It reviews the career motivations in both public and private sectors and discusses how socio-cultural factors affect these motivations in the literature. Gender differences in career choices are discussed in relation to a management career. The chapter concludes by presenting the relevant hypotheses and the integrative conceptual framework of the study, including the institutional and personal motivational dimensions.

Chapter 5 lays out the methodological approach of this research. The chapter discusses the processes involved in research design step-by-step from data collection to analysis including issues related to validity, reliability, sampling and the fieldwork. This chapter ends by stating the ethical considerations and statistical techniques used to analyse the collected data.

Chapter 6 presents the statistical analysis of the data to test the research hypotheses. Findings reveal that *Wasta*, parental obedience, religion, and extrinsic factors are significant predictors of career choices, with a preference towards work in the public sector, whereas *Saudization*, social status, and intrinsic factors are shown to be non-significant predictors. No gender differences are found except with *Wasta*, parental obedience, and intrinsic motivations as women assigned higher importance to these factors. The chapter concludes by providing the results of the additional tests conducted to examine the effects of the demographics on the study variables.

Chapter 7 discusses the study findings in light of the previous research and the contextual considerations. In the institutional dimension, it is predominantly cultural factors (parental obedience and religion) that are shown to be the most influential factors in the career choices of Saudi MBA students, as hypothesised. Personal motivational factors such as job security, job location and work conditions are revealed to be strong predictors and are argued to be directed and shaped by the above cultural reasons. These factors seem to be the main drivers in attracting many Saudis to the public sector.

The final chapter of this thesis summarises the main findings with their theoretical implications. Some recommendations are suggested to enlighten the employers, policymakers and those managers who recruit new employees about the influential factors for Saudi managers when choosing their future careers between public and private sectors. The chapter presents the theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions of this thesis to knowledge. It concludes with the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.



## **Chapter 2: Economic and Cultural Structures Shaping MBA Education in Saudi Arabia**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Saudi Arabia is a country whose economy is mainly dependent on oil (SAMA, 2013). To achieve and sustain growth in other sectors apart from the oil industry and accommodate rapid development, a cadre with a high level of professionalism is needed. However, there is currently a shortage of qualified Saudi managers within the private sector in Saudi Arabia (Hertog, 2012; Chaar, 2010; Achoui, 2009) and a lack of congruity between the professional workforce and the financial resources within the Saudi economy which has generated increasing unemployment, particularly among younger and less experienced groups of the population. This situation has arisen because the country has a population with a large proportion of young people (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014). At the same time, due to the lack of people able to take on leadership and management roles, the structure of the economy in the private sector is negatively affected. The private sector is populated by more than seven million foreign workers (SAMA, 2013). This means that almost 90% of management roles are occupied by non-Saudis (Ministry of Labour, 2012; Iles *et al.*, 2012). Hertog (2012) anticipated that the situation will worsen over the next few years as an additional 400,000 young and inexperienced persons are expected to join the labour market annually. As such, a consistent MBA programme in Saudi Arabia training professional managers and leaders could be one of the best solutions to this problem.

This chapter is composed of two parts; the first part lays out the unemployment problem described above in detail and presents the governmental policy designed to solve it. The second part describes the other important cultural and social aspects of Saudis' lives which can affect their career choice decisions and have been missed from the governmental policies and their implementation in the workforce.

### **2.2 Background on Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia, founded in 1932 by the late King Abdul Aziz, is a country located in the Middle East between the Arabian Gulf in the east and the Red Sea in the west. It borders Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait to the north, Yemen to the south, and Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar to the east<sup>2</sup> (Long, 2005). The government of Saudi Arabia is

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for a map of Saudi Arabia and its neighbouring countries.

a monarchy and the king is the Chief of State and the head of the government. The country is divided into 13 provinces. Each province has a governor appointed by the king. Saudi Arabia is about one-fifth the size of the United States and similar in size to Western Europe with a land area of approximately (2,250,000) square kilometres (868,730 square miles). Riyadh, the capital, is located in the central eastern part of the country. Islam is the official religion and Arabic is the official language of the state (Long, 2005). According to the latest statistics released by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) in 2013, the country's total estimated population was 29.2 million at the end of 2012, 56.7% male and 43.3% female. This population is characterised by a rapid growth rate of 4% annually which is considered one of the highest in the world (Mellahi, 2006). From this population, over nine million foreign expatriates reside in Saudi Arabia (SAMA, 2013).

### **2.3 The Saudi Economy and Foreign Investments**

The Arabian Peninsula was an agricultural society that relied on farming and commerce up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Yamani, 1996). The main sources of revenue in the country were exported dates and trade arising from pilgrims coming to Mecca and Medina. The discovery of oil in 1938 resulted in a major economic boom in the 1970s. The oil wealth helped the development of the social and economic fields tremendously. The economic prosperity generated by the oil-enhanced revenues led to a popularisation of studying abroad as well as a shift in the public lifestyle affecting the entire societal structure (Yamani, 1996).

Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of oil in the world, with a daily average production of 9.8 million barrels in 2012 (SAMA, 2013). Saudi Arabia's sources of wealth, however, extend well beyond oil to include a variety of mineral deposits, natural gas, solar energy potential, and a strategic central location between Asia, Africa and Europe.

According to a recent report (Allurentis Limited, 2013), Saudi Arabia is the only Arab member of the G20<sup>3</sup>, the biggest free market in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), accounting for 25% of the Arab gross national product, and ranks fifth globally for 'fiscal freedom'; furthermore, it is ranked 20<sup>th</sup> amongst the 25 largest economies in the

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<sup>3</sup> The Group of Twenty (also known as G20) is a forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies that was inaugurated in 1999 and holds annual meetings to discuss global economic issues. The members include 19 individual countries—Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, UK, USA—and the European Union (EU) (Cooper and Thakur, 2013).

world, 1<sup>st</sup> in the MENA region, and stands as the 12<sup>th</sup> country out of 183 for overall ease of doing business (Allurentis Limited, 2013).

The Kingdom has taken major steps to broaden its economic base and reduce its dependence on oil as a major source of government revenue. In 2011, the non-oil GDP grew by 8% (SAMA, 2012). According to a recent report released by the Saudi Embassy in Washington in November 2012, the Kingdom has taken major steps to privatise many of its essential economic sectors to support the policy of diversifying the economy and moving away from reliance on oil. As a result, the private sector is growing rapidly in Saudi Arabia. Sectors that are now open to privatisation include: ‘telecommunications, civil aviation, desalination, highway management, railways, sports clubs, health services, government hotels, municipal services, education services, operation and management of social service centres, Saudi employment services, agricultural services, public parks and recreation centres’, petrochemical and other giant industrial projects (Saudi Embassy in Washington, 2012, pp. 5-6).

The privatisation of these sectors was aimed at encouraging foreign investments and thus creating more jobs for Saudis; this will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter. The Saudi government has taken several measures to attract foreign investments. For example, the Foreign Investment Law was issued in April 2000 and allows foreign companies to invest in the country. The General Authority of Investment was established on the same date<sup>4</sup>, and Saudi Arabia joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in December 2005 (Saudi Embassy in Washington, 2012). Most importantly, the government has invested billions of dollars to build six core ‘economic cities’ in different regions of the country and to develop the infrastructure projects (SAMA, 2013). Such measures have been successful in attracting foreign investments consistently. According to the latest World Investment Report (2013), Saudi Arabia ranked 12<sup>th</sup> internationally and 1<sup>st</sup> in the Arab world for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI)<sup>5</sup>.

To summarise, Saudi Arabia’s overall economic strategy is outlined in the country’s Ninth Development Plan (2010-2014), which declared its primary aim as increasing the

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<sup>4</sup> The General Authority of Investment is responsible for facilitating foreign investment and dealing with the investing companies.

<sup>5</sup> In the last two decades, the Kingdom has received approximately 150 billion dollars in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The largest investors are the U.S.A, UK, Kuwait, France and Japan, and the sectors receiving the biggest FDI are contracting, real estate, petrochemicals and transport. Britain is the second largest foreign investor in the Kingdom after the US, with around 200 UK/Saudi joint ventures. A broad spectrum of British companies is active in Saudi Arabia, including BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce, Shell, HSBC, Tate & Lyle, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), Marks & Spencer (M&S) and Harvey Nichols (Allurentis Limited, 2013).

population's standard of living and quality of life (SAMA, 2012). This involves raising the employment prospects for the Kingdom's young people; thus, attracting foreign corporations to invest in the country was one of the initiatives developed to tackle the unemployment problem and create more jobs for Saudi individuals. Attracting foreign investment has not been successful in rectifying the unemployment problem among young people. This issue will be addressed more in the following sections.

### **2.3.1 The Labour Force in Saudi Arabia**

The labour market in Saudi Arabia is segmented in various dimensions: between public and private sectors, between citizens and non-citizens, between men and women, and between skilled and unskilled workers (Al-Asmari, 2008). The segmentation of the labour market in Saudi Arabia can be attributed to different reasons. Apart from the cultural considerations and the lack of skills, the significant disparity between material and non-material rewards in the public and the private sectors could be one of the main reasons why Saudi nationals are attracted more to the public sector (Al-Asmari, 2008; Harry, 2007).

The public sector is the largest employer of Saudi individuals, who constitute 93% of this sector. Women represent around 34% of public employees, the majority of whom work in education (85%), with only 6% working in public health and 4% in administration (SAMA, 2013; Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012). On the other hand, Saudi men constitute only 10% of the private sector, whereas Saudi women represent only 3% (Ministry of Labour, 2012). Currently, the public sector is saturated and the government cannot generate more jobs as this constitutes a burden on the budget. The distribution of the workforce indicates that the private sector has the potential to be the main provider of new career opportunities for unemployed Saudi male and female individuals (Mellahi, 2006).

As a historical background, the decade of the 1970s was a remarkable era in the history of Saudi Arabia, with the government making constructive changes in the country. The implementation of long term development plans, initiated in the 1970s, has paved the way towards the industrialisation of the economy. In that decade, the foundations of the economic infrastructure such as the construction of roads, schools, airports, oil-related industries, communication networks, industrial cities, water distillation, homes and hospitals were created (Alogla, 1990). The basic needs of the people and country were addressed in these development plans. This fast economic transformation created the need for importing skilled labour not available locally (Mahdi and Barrientos, 2003). As a result, the country witnessed a major influx of foreign workers which increased annually and

consistently. From the start of the Second Development Plan (1975-1980) to the end of the Third Plan (1980-1985), over three million expatriates were added to the labour market (Alogla, 1990). According to the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Labour in Saudi Arabia (2012), the number of foreign workers, working mainly in the private sector, exceeded seven million by the end of 2012.

It is worth mentioning that over a 10-year period (1998-2008), the remittances of expatriates in Saudi Arabia amounted to 524 billion Saudi Riyals (139 billion US dollars) (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012). This placed Saudi Arabia as a country in second place with regards to the amount of remittances sent annually, after the USA (Saudi Gazette, 2013). These statistics have been of concern to the Saudi government and policy makers and have been reflected in the provisions for the training and education of Saudi individuals in order to make Saudis more employable in the private sector.

Al-Asmari (2008) argues that the Saudi labour force is characterised differently from other countries; firstly, he mentions that there is a large number of expatriate workers in the country. This claim is not true as other Arab Gulf countries share the same experience as Saudi Arabia<sup>6</sup> (Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2012; Harry, 2007). Secondly, according to Al-Asmari (2008), the rate of women's participation in the labour market is much lower than men's and compared to neighbouring countries women suffer from very high unemployment rates.

### **2.3.2 Unemployment in Saudi Arabia**

According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Labour (2012), the unemployment rate of Saudis in general has been rising persistently over the last few years. The unemployment rate in the country was 8.1% in 1999 and reached 12.1% in 2012. The unemployment figures remained nearly the same among men (6.8% in 1999 to 6.1% in 2012); however, the unemployment figures for Saudi women rose considerably and have doubled (15.8% in 1999 to 35.7% in 2012) (Ministry of Labour, 2012). In 2009, university graduates accounted for 78.3% of unemployed females, of whom more than 1,000 had a PhD degree. By contrast, 76% of unemployed males had only secondary education or less (AlMunajjed, 2010). In general, the unemployment rates are high for youths (30% by the end of 2012), according to a recent report on Saudi Arabia released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2013).

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<sup>6</sup> The Arab Gulf countries comprise: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Taking into account the fact that most public sector employees are Saudis (93%), whereas they represent only around 13% of the private sector (SAMA, 2013; Ministry of Labour, 2012), one can conclude that the policies of privatisation and attraction of foreign investment have not been successful in employing Saudis in the private sector. The high unemployment rates among young Saudis and the high number of expatriates in the private sector can be explained by several reasons; firstly, the growth of the private sector and the rapid economic developments in the country over the last four decades has created the need for a more qualified and skilled workforce, including managers (Hertog, 2012; Al-Asmari, 2008). As many Saudi nationals have inadequate qualifications and lack technical and managerial skills, this gap in the private sector workforce is difficult to fill with Saudi nationals. Secondly, cultural constraints hinder women from working in the private sector (Al-Asmari, 2008). Thirdly, there is a negative cultural perception towards manual and technical jobs among most Saudi nationals (Ramady, 2005). Fourthly, Saudi employees are more reluctant to relocate for their jobs due to family and parental obligations (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012). Finally, there is a lack of motivation among Saudis to work in the private sector which, accordingly, results in high turnover (Mousa, 2013a; Fakeeh, 2009).

### **2.3.3 Saudization as a Response to Unemployment**

To address the aforementioned unemployment challenges, the Saudi government implemented a strategy in the mid-1990s, firstly to increase the participation of nationals in the private sector and, secondly, to reduce reliance on foreign workers. This led to the adoption of a policy aimed at replacing foreigners with Saudi workers, known as *Saudization*. In other Arab Gulf countries, processes with similar goals started in the 1990s: Omanization (Al Lamki, 1998), Emiratization (Al-Ali, 2008), Qatarization (Williams *et al.*, 2011), Kuwaitization (Salih, 2010), and Bahrainization (Harry, 2007).

Looney (2004) defined *Saudization* as the substitution of expatriate workers with locally qualified and skilled labour. The Ministry of Labour (2012) described the *Saudization* policy as part of a bigger vision aimed at increasing self-reliance and security within Saudi society. In essence, the *Saudization* programme is a job nationalisation strategy with the broader view of localising the workforce (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014). *Saudization* primarily focuses on three main goals: ‘increasing employment for Saudi nationals, reducing and reversing over-reliance on foreign workers and recapturing and reinvesting income’ which would otherwise have been transferred abroad as remittances to expatriates’ countries of origin (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012, p. 2).

The Ministry of Labour launched various costly initiatives to support male and female Saudis seeking employment by providing basic training, a job seeker's allowance and establishing recruitment centres where Saudis can register for work and receive advice about available job opportunities. To reinforce *Saudization*, the government set up numerous technical colleges and training centres to train and prepare Saudi male and female nationals to satisfy the labour market needs (Ministry of Labour, 2012). The government also set up the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) and the Co-operative Training Scheme for Saudis (CTSS) in 1999 (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; SAMA, 2012). The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) was established to provide grants for qualifying, training and recruiting Saudi nationals in the private sector. For example, the HRDF pays a portion of the salaries of newly employed nationals for the first two years after being qualified and trained. It also provides loans to training centres and institutions and supports research and studies aimed at employing Saudis and replacing foreign workers (SAMA, 2012).

As a result of these efforts, the *Saudization* process has achieved great success but only in the public sector. From around 1,090,000 public sector employees, 93% were Saudi nationals by the end of 2012. From this number, around 643,000 were male employees and 370,000 were female employees (SAMA, 2013); however, the picture in the private sector is different. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Labour (2012), the number of workers in the private sector (Saudis and non-Saudis) in 2012 amounted to 8.5 million. Of this figure, 10% constituted Saudi men and 3% constituted women. The Saudi government hopes that by 2020, the majority of the private sector workforce will consist of Saudis (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012).

One of the recent *Saudization* programmes, introduced in June 2011 by the Ministry of Labour, which aims to tackle the shortage of Saudi workers in the private sector, is called *Nitaqat*. In Arabic, *Nitaqat* literally means 'categories'. The *Nitaqat* scheme is a colour-coded system that ranks all private companies (local and foreign) in terms of their level of recruitment of Saudi nationals and penalises those that fail to employ a sufficient percentage of nationals (Sadi, 2013). The percentage of Saudis to be employed in a private company depends on two factors: 'the activity of the company; and the number of employees working for that company': the bigger the company, the larger the number of Saudis to be employed (Sadi, 2013, p. 41). In general, the minimum level of *Saudization* required in different sectors ranges from 5% for companies who employ 10-50 people to 49% for banks which employ 500 individuals or more (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014).

The firms' compliant with *Nitaqat* quotas in employing Saudis will be rewarded with government benefits such as the processing and renewing of visas for their foreign workers without difficulties and the ability to apply for government loans, incentives and bids; non-compliant firms will not enjoy these benefits (Sadi, 2013). As a result of the implementation of *Nitaqat*, the percentage of Saudi nationals working in the private sector increased from 10% in 2011 to more than 13% by the end of 2012; the number of Saudi female workers increased from around 55,000 in 2010 to 216,000 in 2012 (Ministry of Labour, 2012). However, the *Nitaqat* programme can be criticised for its concentration only on the presence of specific numbers of Saudis employed in firms rather than addressing the employment of Saudis in different positions within these firms. This resulted in 'fake *Saudization*' or what are called 'ghost workers', where some companies pay some locals to use their names in their employees' list to meet their *Nitaqat* quotas and avoid the possible penalties (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014, p. 248). Management positions in most cases are held by the company owners and skilled expatriates (Iles *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, the *Saudization* policy is like any other major initiative that could affect the economy. According to Looney (2004), two concerns can be mentioned in this context. Some private companies (local and foreign) might feel that *Saudization* will affect negatively their competitiveness and for this reason may decide to look for more friendly business environments. Another impact might be reflected in the reduction of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Saudi Arabia. Foreign companies are facing the same problems as local companies. According to Looney (2004), *Saudization* is not only placing these foreign companies at a disadvantage compared to other global competitors, but the *Saudization* process itself is unpredictable, with regulations and quotas changing constantly with no previous warning. Concerns over the possible effects of *Saudization* on foreign investment are likely to stand behind the government's decision to reduce the tax on foreign investors from 45% to 20% (Looney, 2004).

Despite various *Saudization* programmes and efforts, Saudi Arabia still relies to a large extent on the foreign manpower in the private sector. One of the difficulties hindering the hiring of Saudi workers is the limited existence of women in all economic sectors (Al-Asmari, 2008). The 35.7% unemployment rate for Saudi women in the labour force in 2012 was nearly six times more than the unemployment rate among Saudi men. With females composing a meagre 3% of the private sector workforce (Ministry of Labour, 2012), the number of Saudi female managers in the private sector is even more scarce. Such low labour market participation is mainly due to the cultural constraints imposed on



women (Ahmad, 2011; Al-Asmari, 2008). These obstacles and the government's efforts in dealing with them will be discussed in the next sections.

#### **2.3.4 Saudi Women's Careers and Cultural Obstacles**

As the division of labour in the family is gendered in Saudi Arabia, one major issue affecting women's participation in the labour force is the difficulty they face in balancing work and family obligations (Aryee *et al.*, 1999). Over centuries, Saudi Arabia has nurtured a conservative society that has maintained a mixture of deeply influential tribal and religious traditions (Danish and Smith, 2012). It is commonly believed that working outside for Arab women entails sacrificing their family life (Nazzah, 2004). According to customs and traditions, a woman should not prioritise her career ahead of her family duties (Ahmad, 2011). Tribal cultures and social norms held by communities within the Arabian Peninsula before the rise of Islam and which remain today account for the more traditional and conservative attitudes towards females (AlAjmi, 2001). Effendi (2003) further argues that Arab women were, within both the family and the workplace, placed in passive roles because of the patriarchal systems prevailing in most Arab societies; Effendi (2003) asserted, therefore, that Islam does not in fact place women in such roles, but it is instead the patriarchal attitudes of communities who interpret Islam in such a way that their positions are sustained and reinforced in terms of what women can do and cannot do acceptably. As indicated by Ahmad (2011), there exists a mixture of religious values and tribal customs and traditions that distorts the image of Islam when it comes to women's rights and status. In this vein, AlMunajjed (1997) states that:

Misconceptions about the role of women in the Islamic society can only be extirpated by differentiating between the teachings of Islam as a religion and a way of life, and local customs and traditions which are often conceived as part of it (pp. 31-32).

Women in Islam have the right to get an education, to work and earn money, enter into legal deals, own property, and to manage all their assets in any way they like. They have the right to run their own businesses and no one has any claim on a woman's earnings, including her husband (AlAjmi, 2001).

Centuries of gender segregation have changed the dynamics of relationships both in the private and public spheres. The separations within public and private spheres have been translated into gendered spaces in the formal economy; the majority of women are employed in the public sector in education, health and social care, which are areas largely

confined within what is perceived to be socially acceptable (Gallant and Pounder, 2008). These socio-cultural values have constrained career choices for women (Metcalf, 2008).

The move towards greater participation of Saudi women in the workforce has, therefore, always been met with 'doubt, debate and even with antagonism' (Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012, p. 172). Women in Saudi Arabia are allowed to work according to Saudi law, which is based on the *Shari'a* (i.e. Islamic law); however, they should work in a decent and appropriate environment (i.e. women-only spaces). Nevertheless, Saudi employment law allows men and women to work in the health sector alongside each other (Vidyasagar and Rea, 2004).

In the absence of public transport, another important obstacle to women's employment is their deprivation of the right to drive, which, without the presence of a male driver, causes a great difficulty for them in commuting to their place of work. The following section discusses the government's legislative measures to achieve gender equality in employment.

### **2.3.5 Legislative Measures for Gender Equality in Employment**

The government in Saudi Arabia has taken several positive measures to create equal opportunities for men and women and, particularly, to promote women's participation in the labour market in recent years<sup>7</sup>. Every citizen of Saudi Arabia holds the right to work, in accordance with the Saudi labour code. This code also stipulates that all workers must be provided with training opportunities by the firms in which they work (AlMunajjed, 2010). The Saudi Universities Law, the Civil Service Law, and the Labour and Workers Law regard Saudi women equally with men in terms of grade, salary, curricula, opportunities in education, employment, and training (AlMunajjed, 2009). Women no longer need their husband or custodian's approval to work. Women's participation in high ranking ministerial and diplomatic positions has increased. Women's shops have to employ only female staff, factories and companies are ordered to hire more women, and businesses have to generate new jobs and separate spaces and facilities for female employees (*AlRiyadh*,

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<sup>7</sup> The former Minister of Planning, Hisham Nazer stated in 1982: 'Development in Saudi Arabia is for every single person, regardless of sex. For women to participate in setting social and educational policies, this participation does not depend on gender, but rather on the qualifications each person possesses. We should not underestimate the capability of the Saudi woman. She is a citizen that must have equal rights as well as duties. The door must remain open for her to play this role' (Al-Saad, 1982 cited in AlAjmi, 2001, p. 20). The second strategic pillar of the Eighth Development Plan (2005-2010) emphasised 'increased attention to women's affairs and development capabilities, and removal of barriers to participation in the development activities, in line with the Islamic values and teachings' (Al-Ahmadi, 2011, p. 150).

2013; Mousa, 2013b). As a result of these efforts, the employment of Saudi women has increased significantly in the last few years (Ministry of Labour, 2012).

The royal decree passed in 2013 states that women should always hold at least 20% of the *Shura* Council's 150 seats, previously an all-male consultative council. Despite all the previous efforts, the road is still long for Saudi Arabia to fully benefit from the potentials of its young generation. To achieve that and overcome the social and unemployment challenges and develop its human resources, education has been the strategic choice for the Saudi government. The next section discusses higher education as a solution to the unemployment problem among male and female Saudi nationals.

## **2.4 Higher Education in Saudi Arabia**

Education is one of the significant equalising forces in the distribution of power (Fakeeh, 2009). The spread of education even in the most conservative Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, has increased the level of literacy and provided young men and women with new career opportunities (Hourani, 1991). Saudi Arabia has a young population, 50% of which is under 25 years old (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014). Consequently, education and the development of human resources have been repeatedly emphasised by economists as being a vital part of the strategy for Saudi Arabia's future (Al-Asmari, 2008).

Since the discovery of oil in 1938, there have been continuous plans for expanding education in the country. The first public school for boys was opened in 1953, and girls were allowed to go to school in 1964. In the early 1980s, education was available to all Saudi females, and young women were already enrolled in and graduating from universities (AlMunajjed, 2009). Currently, 99% of children in Saudi Arabia are in state education. As a result of these efforts, the illiteracy rate in the Kingdom has scaled down from 60% in 1972 to only 4% in 2012, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Education on the occasion of the World Day of Illiteracy Eradication (Saudi Gazette, 2012).

Higher education in Saudi Arabia is expanding fast to meet the labour force needs of the country. 24 public universities, 8 private universities and a large number of colleges and higher education institutions have been established<sup>8</sup>. The total number of Saudi students

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<sup>8</sup> Gender segregation is applied throughout the whole educational system from schools to universities in Saudi Arabia; however, in 2009, the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) was opened on the west coast of the country as the first co-educational university.

registered at universities in the academic year 2010/2011 stood at 925,000, of which 54.7% were female students (SAMA, 2012). In 2004, 79% of all PhD degrees were awarded to women (Doumato, 2010), while in the past Saudi women were not allowed to study certain subjects such as Geology, Petroleum, Politics, Law and Engineering (Baki, 2004). In 2007, 93% of all Saudi women majored in education and humanities and were mainly employed in education and health sectors. Such concentration in particular fields can be attributed to cultural constraints and biases in relation to the 'natural' characteristics of women (AlMunajjed, 2009). In recent years, the government of Saudi Arabia has, however, made considerable efforts in promoting gender equality and ensuring that females have access to education in the same way as males. Women now study subjects such as Engineering, Law, Management and Architecture and Interior Design which were previously male dominated (Vaid, 2011).

The Saudi government has continuously increased the education budget, which reached about a quarter of the entire governmental budget in 2013 (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014). Saudi Arabia spends an average of 10% of its GDP on education, which is the highest expenditure in the world; whereas most developed countries in Europe and North America spend an average of 4-5% of their GDP on education (Arab News, 2013a).

Apart from the expanding educational support inside the country, the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Programme that funds male and female students to study abroad was launched in 2005 and will continue until November 2020 (Arab News, 2013b). According to the Ministry of Higher Education, there are currently more than 170,000 Saudi students studying across the globe, around 30% of which are women. This makes Saudi students the third largest population of students studying abroad after China and India (Arab News, 2013b). The scholarship programme has had an important effect on Saudi society and gender relations since it started. The programme has become increasingly popular with many conservative families who now allow their daughters to study abroad. The investment in human resources has aimed to reduce over-reliance on foreign workers and the oil industry. One important area that has been heavily invested in is management studies, with the aim of training managers who can organise the formal economy of Saudi Arabia.

## 2.5 MBA Programmes in Saudi Arabia

According to the 2009/2010 bulletin of King Saud University in Riyadh, the oldest and largest university in Saudi Arabia, the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme was designed to prepare Saudi male and female students for management and leadership positions in complex organisations, whether in the public or private sector. It aims to develop the managerial skills of graduates by balancing the academic and modern applied methods in business administration.

After joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2005, and with a high volume of foreign investment, Saudi Arabia is in dire need of business leaders. MBA programmes at Saudi universities aim to enrich students' competence with the business knowledge and skills needed for such a global business environment. High proficiency in English and previous work experience are required to be admitted into an MBA programme, although the latter is not compulsory. Many students who have no work experience use this programme as a step towards new career opportunities. The duration of the MBA programme at Saudi universities is two years.

According to the Ministry of Higher Education, the first university to launch an MBA course was King Abdul Aziz University (KAU) in Jeddah city in the academic year 1977/1978; however, women were not allowed at that time to study an MBA. It was only in 1986 that KAU accepted 19 female students along with 118 male counterparts. In 1992, King Saud University (KSU) in Riyadh was the second university to launch its MBA programme and took only three students, two males and one female<sup>9</sup>. Currently, 16 out of 32 private and public universities in Saudi Arabia provide MBA programmes, with a total number of 2288 Saudi students attending. Female students constitute around 33% of this figure, according to the latest (2012) statistics of the Ministry of Higher Education<sup>10</sup>. This percentage of female students taking the MBA is similar to the rate of female participation in MBA programmes in Western countries<sup>11</sup> (Financial Times, 2014; Simpson and Sturges, 2007). Considering the cultural obstacles to women's employment outside of health and education sectors, high female participation in MBA programmes in Saudi Arabia has been an achievement *per se*. Most of the MBA students in private universities and all students in

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<sup>9</sup> During the fieldwork, the researcher had meetings with the directors of the MBA programmes at King Saud University and King Abdul Aziz University.

<sup>10</sup> This information was obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia (Riyadh) during the fieldwork. See Appendix 3 for the detailed numbers of Saudi MBA students distributed across the 16 Saudi Universities.

<sup>11</sup> More detailed discussion on participation rates in MBA programmes in the West will be presented in Chapter 4.

public universities in Saudi Arabia are funded by the government. The government is taking extra measures to provide facilities to train managers in order to address the shortage in the labour market and replace expatriates (Hertog, 2012; Chaar, 2010; Achoui, 2009); however, the aim of this research is to illustrate that these governmental policies cannot succeed in reducing unemployment unless attention is paid to the factors that affect the career decisions of Saudi individuals when choosing between public and private sectors. In the rest of this chapter, these factors are discussed in the context of Saudi Arabia.

## **2.6 Islamic Culture and Work in Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia has a ‘fairly homogeneous’ culture (Idris, 2007, p. 37). This culture has been described as being collectivistic and adhering strictly to Islamic principles and teachings (Alanazi and Rodrigues, 2003). The role and message of Islam as the first tenet of Saudi culture is principally based on the *Quran* (the holy book) and the *Sunnah* (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him). These two sources unify the Islamic world and Saudis through *Sharia* law (Khimish, 2014). Saudi Arabia’s Islamic culture has significant career implications because the influence of the religion extends to infiltrate all decisions, including those related to work and personal matters (Ahmad, 2011; Idris, 2007).

According to Belton and Hamid (2011), knowledge and work constitute the two major elements which make up the personality of Muslim individuals and Muslim societies. As indicated by Possumah *et al.* (2013), working in Islam is regarded as a personal duty and social obligation for those who are able. An individual has to earn his/her own living in an ethical manner and become a source of production and benefit to society. Work is presented in Islam as the highest level of worship to God as the Prophet Muhammad said that: ‘Worshipping has seventy avenues; the best of them is the involvement in an honestly earned living’ (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007, p. 95).

Islam provides a moral framework which guides the behaviour of all individuals in their daily life activities, including work matters (Metcalf, 2008). In this sense, there are a few fundamental concepts in Islam such as *Halal* and *Haram* that are relevant to the work and career choices of individuals in Saudi Arabia (Hassi, 2012; Chaudhry, 1999). *Halal* means ‘religiously permitted to consume or to do’, whereas *Haram* is the opposite of *Halal* and means ‘religiously prohibited to consume or to do’. The concepts of *Halal* and *Haram* are universal in Islam and extend to all areas of life, including work (Mahfouz, 2006, p.28). In

other words, Islam does not limit the ways in which one can pursue one's livelihood and earnings as long as the work is accomplished with honesty, quality, perfection, and integrity and is guided by the *Halal* and *Haram* concepts (Hassi, 2012).

Some examples of *Haram* (forbidden) sources of wealth in Islam are any types of work or activity related to alcohol and pork trading, prostitution, stealing, cheating, bribery, blackmailing, exploitation, fraud, gambling, betting, monopoly and usury or money interests (in Arabic: *Reba*) (Chaudhry, 1999); thus, under the Islamic values and beliefs, most Saudi individuals are expected to prefer working in a place where they can perform their Islamic rituals easily and in organisations where the work conditions and practices do not conflict with the teachings or ethics of Islam. For example, most of the activities in the commercial banks are to some extent against the instructions of Islam. The banking system is built on taking interest on loans (i.e. *Reba*), which is considered unjust and hence is forbidden in Islam (Kettell, 2011); therefore, because of this religious dimension, most Saudi individuals, both male and female, refuse to work in commercial banks, regardless of the material benefits that may come with the job. Consequently, such commercial banks in Saudi Arabia might face a labour shortage in the future (Al Musharraf, 2003).

As illustrated, the influence of Islam covers all work and social life aspects for Saudi individuals, including the relationships between a person and his/her parents. In the following section, the importance of parents and family in Islam will be discussed as well as its implications for the career choice decisions of Saudi individuals.

## **2.7 The Importance of Parents and Family in Saudi Arabia**

The importance of family and especially parents in Saudi society is enhanced by the Islamic and tribal traditions. Parental rights and status in Islam are highly esteemed (Khan, 2001). All the Islamic teachings from the *Quran* and *Sunnah* stress the importance of being grateful to parents and returning their favours. This includes obeying them, being kind, showing respect, speaking gently, refraining from using rude words or harsh tones, keeping them company if they become lonely and, particularly during old age, ensuring that their physical, psychological and care needs are satisfied (Hussain, 2004). Reference to parents and their high status has been made at least 15 times in the Holy *Quran*. For example, on the question of treating parents in their old age, the *Quran* says:

And your Lord has decreed that you worship no one but Him and treat your parents well. Whether one or both of them reach old age in your lifetime, you must neither speak contemptuously to them nor repudiate them, but speak to them graciously. Out of kindness

act towards them with humility saying: ‘My Lord, have mercy on them both for they cared for me when I was little’ (Al-Isra Chapter, verses 23, 24).

As a result of this high status and emphasis on parents’ rights in Islam, almost all Saudi individuals look to their parents with great respect and seek their blessings and satisfaction in every step of their life. In this sense, Altorki (1986) pointed out that it is unthinkable for a person in Saudi Arabia not to obey his or her parents, either in the selection of a marriage partner or a university degree. Disobedience to parents is considered a sin and socially unacceptable (Altorki, 1986).

In addition to the importance of parents to Saudi individuals, the role of immediate and extended family is significant in all aspects of life, including the choice of a career, regardless of one’s social status and educational background (Alzoman, 2012). As Abdel-Al (1994, p. 26) states, ‘Allegiance to Islam, loyalty to family and loyalty to the tribe are the strongest bonds felt by the majority of Saudi citizens’. Whether or not they belong to a tribe, all Saudi individuals are socially organised into extended families. The extended family commands loyalty and is the first port of call when an individual needs assistance (Long, 2005).

Within this system, where kin are highly valued, there is a focus on interdependence, reciprocal commitment and sharing with one another. Social exchanges and interpersonal connections which create trust-based mutual obligations and favours are widely emphasised (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Hutchings and Weir, 2006). This culture of interdependence expands into the workplace, which relies on enhancing the broader networks of relationships that provide security to individuals by linking them to the group (extended family or tribe) to which they belong, rather than through individualism and privacy (Alzoman, 2012).

The idea that the primary loyalty and obligation of an employee is often to his/her tribe and family affects business and careers to a great degree. Practices within the employment process such as the recruitment and promotion of workers are heavily influenced by the obligation to serve tribe and family members before others (Barnett *et al.*, 2013; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011). Within such a collectivistic society, the family plays an important role in individuals’ daily personal and career decisions. These decisions should be read within this context of complicated interpersonal relationships and family obligations which manifest in the use of ‘*Wasta*’. In the following section, the concept of *Wasta* will be discussed.



## 2.8 *Wasta* in Saudi Arabia

*Wasta* is an Arabic concept which refers to the use of family and social networks and connections for achieving personal gains (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994). Much like any other long-established social institution or custom, *Wasta* evolved in the Arab world and was (and still is) generally viewed to be a social tradition providing better solutions to many social issues and problems that sometimes might not be solved by alternative formal arrangements (Barnett *et al.*, 2013). In countries where *Wasta* is prevalent, such as Saudi Arabia, rules and regulations are usually less important than connections (Metcalf, 2007; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993).

*Wasta* in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, is a force in every important decision and pervades all aspects of business and social life (Barnett *et al.*, 2013). Metcalf (2007) illustrates that opportunities for development and training, promotions, managerial recruitment, and various other aspects of careers in the Arab countries are based on family connections and personal relations rather than on the merits of the individual. He adds that *Wasta's* dominance in the Arab culture highlights the informal attitudes towards work relations and the emphasis on strong family networks (Metcalf, 2007). The usage of *Wasta* involves intervening on behalf of the applicant in order to give him/her an advantage in getting a job or admission to a prestigious university (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Hutchings and Weir, 2006). In this sense, Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) pointed out that using *Wasta* is to achieve what is assumed to be otherwise unattainable by the applicant. Studies have shown that most candidates in the Arab world have to resort to the assistance of *Wasta* to obtain a job or other career benefits (Metcalf, 2007; Whiteoak *et al.*, 2006; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). For example, in a poll carried out by the Arab Archives Institute in 2001, more than 90% of participants think that they would use *Wasta* at some point in their lives (Sawalha, 2002 cited in Hutchings and Weir, 2006, p. 281). In a recent study conducted by Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) on 200 managers from different Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, 89% of the respondents indicated that they had used *Wasta* in their careers.

*Wasta* is closely associated with social status, since the family and tribe in the Arab world are the primary *Wasta* channels (Al-Ramahi, 2008); hence, as a kin-based society, the more wealthy the family is, the more influential the occupations of its male and female members are likely to be and the greater the influence and power they are likely to have (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). Usually, *Wasta* is more likely to be associated with the

quality of connections (how influential one's connections are) rather than the quantity of connections (how many connections one has) (Al-Ramahi, 2008). Similarly, Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) indicated that this powerful position can arise due to the socio-economic or occupational status of a family that is highly respected by others in society.

Social status makes *Wasta* more effective, and *Wasta* can provide important career opportunities for individuals both in private and public sectors (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Omair, 2009; Long, 2005); furthermore, by gaining a high social status through an influential career position, one can be a source of *Wasta* and assistance to his/her family and relatives and hence fulfill the social obligations towards them (Barnett *et al.*, 2013).

## **2.9 Social Status and Work in Saudi Arabia**

Social status is a well-defined concept in sociology and cultural studies. According to Weber, social status is 'an effective claim to social esteem in terms of negative or positive privileges' (Roth and Wittich, 1978, p. 305). In Weber's view, such claims are based on lifestyle, inheritance, education and occupation.

In Saudi Arabia, social status has individual and collective dimensions in the sense that one's status in society also defines the status of the family and the tribe (Ali and Al-Shakhis, 1989). In Saudi Arabia, individuals are influenced by status and position, which explains their preference for managerial careers (Achoui, 2009; Idris, 2007). Social status is significant for young Saudis because it affects marriage and other social relations (Iles *et al.*, 2012). In a study about the meaning of work to Saudi managers, Ali and Al-Shakhis (1989) found that one's career is considered as a means to foster the interests of family or kin and to improve their reputation in society. A family's image and status will be enhanced if its members are employed in 'respectable' and influential positions. Ali and Al-Shakhis (1989) indicated that Saudi managers are perhaps motivated more by social needs (family affairs) than by pure financial rewards. According to Ali and Al-Shakhis (1989):

The issue is not whether or not Saudis can satisfy their economic needs; rather, it is whether they can find meaning in work which gives them a sense of pride and facilitates family interaction and social cohesiveness (p. 30).

A study conducted by Fakeeh (2009) on the reasons why the success of *Saudization* in the private sector was hindered found that most Saudis perceive that their pride and social status within their extended family and society are related to the type of work they do. As a result, they look at service-related jobs as lower status jobs. In this sense, Mellahi (2000)

pointed out that the social status of an individual in Saudi society is affected by the employment sector, type of job, and social interactions within the work context. A study by Achoui (2009) on human resource development in the Arab Gulf countries showed that Saudi individuals prefer to work in public sector and oil related companies due to the assumed social prestige in these sectors. Similarly, Al-Asmari (2008) indicated that the traditional attraction of the public sector to Saudi individuals has been due to the social status linked with government employment.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

The first part of this chapter discussed the economic status and rapid developments in Saudi Arabia during the last four decades. More than seven million foreign workers reside and work in the country despite high levels of unemployment among Saudi nationals. The situation has caused the government to seek various measures to tackle this problem and to widen the career choices for Saudi male and female individuals. The main policies implemented to address this issue include attracting foreign investment, implementing *Saudization*, and investing generously in education, training and scholarship programmes. In recent years, the development of MBA programmes in Saudi Arabia was a response to the lack of professional managers in the private sector. Efforts were made to design an MBA programme that was equally accessible to male and female students and that conformed to global standards. The programme has attracted a large number of female students, a different trend to the conventional concentration of women in health, education and humanities.

Saudi Arabia is faced with ‘the paradox of high wealth and high unemployment’, with around 60% of its population under the age of 40 (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012, p.1). In the *Saudization* policy, which only emphasises reducing the number of unemployed Saudis by trying to employ them in the private sector, some cultural and social factors that could be important in the career choices of Saudi individuals are absent from consideration. The second part of the chapter addressed the most important factors. Islam as an all-encompassing element in Saudis’ lives overshadows the other factors discussed here. Family, particularly parents, have a high status in Islam and their needs and desires come first when an individual makes a decision. The nature of Saudi culture is collectivistic, where tribal and family relations and obligations precede personal interests. *Wasta* and social status are social elements of life in Saudi Arabia that are an indispensable part of the employment and career opportunities available to a person. This culture of interdependence

entails the recruitment of family members and friends regardless of their merits and qualifications.

The issues introduced in this chapter such as religion, parental obedience, *Wasta*, social status and *Saudization* are going to be unpacked in more depth in the following chapters of this thesis. The institutional factors that are expected to affect individuals' career choices and their relevant hypotheses are going to be discussed in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 3: Institutional Perspective in Career Choice

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the institutional theory (Scott, 1995) in relation to career choices and aims to provide grounds for adopting a solid theoretical perspective that can be applied in a non-Western context such as Saudi Arabia. Most of the career choice literature has been developed in the West, with more focus on the ‘individual’ as the key player in that process. This chapter sheds light on the important roles that the institutional factors play in the daily life decisions and career choices of individuals in Saudi Arabia.

In this chapter, some definitions of career and career choice concepts will be provided and a critical discussion of the psychological and sociological approaches in studying the career choice process will be reviewed. The chapter will focus on the institutional theory (Scott, 1995) and its three pillars (regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive) as a new perspective for looking at the career choice. More specifically, in the following pages the institutional approach will be used to address the career choice process in the Saudi context in the following way: a) the regulative pillar represented by *Saudization*, b) the normative pillar represented by *Wasta* and social status and c) the cultural-cognitive pillar represented by parental obedience and religious influence. The effect of gender on the institutional factors will be also discussed. The research hypotheses that are developed in relation to the institutional dimension of the study will be introduced in this chapter.

### 3.2 What is a Career?

Since the 1960s, there have been attempts to explore the concept of career and this has resulted in various perspectives on what the term ‘career’ constitutes (Ituma, 2005). Arnold (1997) defined the term ‘career’ as ‘the sequence of employment-related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by a person’ (Arnold, 1997, p. 16). Hall (2002) discussed four dominant and distinctive perspectives. He demonstrated that, firstly, a career is linked with the progress one makes at work, which can be represented by upward moves and advancement in a work hierarchy throughout the work life of an individual. In this case, the essential postulate is that vertical mobility occupies an essential importance in a career. Secondly, Hall noticed that careers have been linked with the notion of profession. As such, a career is conceptualised as a systematic advancement from one post to another within the same occupational category. Thirdly, he observed that

a career is also conceptualised as ‘a lifelong sequence of jobs’ (Hall, 2002, p. 9). Finally, Hall illustrated that a career is conceptualised as a sequence of role-related activities and experiences over a person’s life. This is a subjective approach which takes into consideration not only tasks done at work, but also social roles and responsibilities one has outside the workplace such as being a leader in the community, parent, or spouse. Based on this analysis and assessment of these four diverse career perspectives, Hall defined a career as:

The individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person’s life (Hall, 2002, p. 12).

Although there are divergent opinions on what constitutes the concept of career, the key theme and common notion among most career studies is that careers have two dimensions: internal and external (Ituma *et al.*, 2011). The dichotomy of internal and external career was introduced by Hughes (1937). Hughes described these two dimensions as the subjective (internal) and the objective (external) careers.

Hughes defined the subjective career as ‘the moving perspective in which a person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his attributes, actions and the things that happen to him’ (1937, p. 404). The essence of the internal career is the individual’s career self-concept within the context of the organisation and occupation. The internal (subjective) career includes the individual’s personal values, motivations, orientations and needs. It encompasses one’s views of his/her career experiences (Hall, 2002; Sparrow and Hiltrop, 1994).

Hughes described the objective (external) career as an entity which can be directly measured, observed and verified. The essence of the external career is one’s perception of the organisational and occupational context itself (Derr and Laurent, 1989). It incorporates job titles, promotions, salary, and status (Vardi, 1980). It also includes career stages and developments as well as career planning for organisations and career mobility patterns (Sparrow and Hiltrop, 1994). From this viewpoint, the relation between social constructions and individuals is provided by careers (Ituma, 2005).

Hall (2002) considered these two career perspectives to be two sides of the same coin. According to Hall, ‘one aspect of career (the subjective career) consists of the changes in values, attitudes, and motivations that occur as the person grows older. Another aspect (the objective career) is composed of the observable choices that one makes and the activities

one engages in, such as the acceptance or rejection of a particular job offer' (Hall, 2002, p. 11).

Although these two dominant views act a pivot around which most of the research and theories on career revolve, there are limitations to both approaches. The objective career ignores individuals' personal experiences, while the subjective career tends to emphasise less the experiences of employment and seldom reflects on the contexts that affect and shape one's experience (Watson *et al.*, 2000). In this regard, Hall (2002) advocated the consideration of the internal-external dimension as being a comprehensive concept in order to fully understand an individual's career. Similarly, other scholars (e. g., Bailyn, 1989; Derr and Laurent, 1989) proposed that our conceptualisation of careers should go beyond such a dichotomy and concentrate more on careers as being contextualised practices. For example, Cadin *et al.* (2000) contended that the internal and external career perspectives should not be regarded as irreconcilable; rather, they should be merged and viewed as a polemic relationship between the virtual level of institutions and the tangible level of situated interaction.

### **3.3 The Concept of Career Choice**

To understand the concept of career choice, one needs to examine what 'choice' represents in the first place. The dictionary definition of choice is 'the voluntary act of selecting or separating from two or more things that which is preferred; or the determination of the mind in preferring one thing to another' (Webster Dictionary, 1998); therefore, 'career choice' encompasses choosing one occupation over another. According to Ozbilgin *et al.* (2005), in order for 'career choice' to take place, two conditions are required: a) the availability of alternative career options, which involves an objective reality, and b) the personal act of preference among these career options, which involves a subjective process.

The concept of career choice has evolved within the career landscape development. In the traditional bureaucratic career literature, careers are conceptualised as taking place within organisational structures, in the sense that career success is measured externally or objectively in terms of the positions, rewards and ranks occupied by an individual within the hierarchy of one or two firms; thus, career choices are made once or twice during the individual's lifespan (Baruch, 2004; Hall, 2002; Kanter, 1989).

Contrary to the traditional career literature and as a response to the recent economic, social, global and technological changes, new non-traditional career paths have emerged such as

the boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996), the intelligent career (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1996, 1994) and the protean career (Hall, 2002, 1996), where the nature of the career is more dynamic and transitional in multiple organisations or occupations. Consequently, individuals continually make career decisions and occupational choices as they progress through their careers (Hall, 2002; Elder and O'Rand, 1995).

The measurement of success in these new career paths is often subjective (internal), i.e. psychological success, which might include the personal satisfaction and feeling of pride that is derived from achieving one's most significant goals in life such as inner satisfaction and family happiness, rather than objective success: position, salary and status (Hall, 2004, 1996). Furthermore, in this modern context, another transformation has occurred in the psychological career contract pertaining to the relationship between the employee and the employer. The change relates to the development of the career nature from being organisationally focused to being individually centred (Hall, 2004). This suggests that the number of career options/alternatives available to a person at any given point in time is affected by various personal factors such as education, motives and attitudes as well as external factors such as the labour market, family and cultural issues (Agarwala, 2008; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). In the following sections, the career choice approaches will be discussed.

### **3.4 Different Approaches to Studying Career Choice**

There are a number of competing theoretical approaches towards the examination of occupational selection or career choice; however, most career studies have addressed the career choice phenomenon from either psychological or sociological perspectives. The main difference between the two perspectives is the emphasis they place on particular aspects of the career choice process (Moore *et al.*, 2007; Brown, 2002a). The following two sections will examine how these two approaches explain the process of career choice.

#### **3.4.1 Psychological Approach**

The psychological approach concentrates on the developmental and motivational nature of the career choice process through emphasising the individual's needs, values, desires, and hopes (Moore *et al.*, 2007). According to Wong and Liu (2010), there are four major types of psychological theories of career choice: a) trait-and-factor (e.g. Holland, 1997, 1973), b) psychoanalytic (e.g. Bordin, 1990), c) decision and motivation (e.g. Deci and Ryan, 1985)



and d) the developmental stage theories (e.g. Gottfredson, 2005, 1981; Savickas, 2002; Super, 1992, 1953; Ginzberg, 1972).

From the psychological perspective, individual factors are emphasised as key variables in the career decision making process. Theories of this approach often postulate that choice is determined mainly by the characteristics or functioning of the person and only indirectly by the environment in which one lives. Vocational psychologists have been mainly concerned with the degree of ‘fit’ between the individual and the job (e.g. Holland, 1997, 1973; Schein, 1990, 1978; Super, 1992, 1953). According to this view, if there is a high level of ‘fit’ in terms of the individuals’ interests, needs, personalities and motives on one hand and the job characteristics on the other, greater job satisfaction and high productivity is expected as well as a lesser tendency to change jobs (Johnson and Mortimer, 2002). This idea of congruence when making a career choice is important in the current study and will be considered and explained further through addressing both the institutional and personal aspects in this chapter and in Chapter 4.

In the psychological career choice literature, ‘the individual’ is central to the majority of psychological theories on career choices and has been since the pioneering work of Parsons (1909). Parsons suggested that the understanding of the self is one of the three main factors influencing career choice<sup>12</sup>; yet, the career choice literature has dealt with the notion of the individual differently. For example, in person-environment fit theories, the interests, skills, and values of an individual are optimally matched with a specific job environment (Holland, 1997; Dawis and Lofquist, 1984). The career stage developmental theories (e.g. Savickas, 2002; Super, 1990) view individuals as being in a dynamic state of development, in which the ideal career is one that facilitates best the implementation of an individual’s current ‘self-concept’. The concept of self has been used as an important and ‘organising’ construct in career choice theories (Super, 1992). Several terms in relation to the self have been developed such as ‘vocational identity’ and ‘personality type’ (Holland, 1990, 1973) and ‘self-observational generalisation’ (Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1990) as well as Gottfredson’s (2005, 1981) ‘self-concept’ term.

The recent conceptualisations of boundaryless and protean careers have focused on and increasingly associated with the notion of ‘personal agency’; that is, the individuals’

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<sup>12</sup> Parsons argued that for a good choice of career, three factors should be considered: 1) a clear understanding of the self, 2) a clear understanding of work environment, and 3) some method of matching these two factors (Parsons, 1909).

capability to act for themselves and to manage their careers (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Hall, 2004). In the social cognitive career theory, Lent views agency in terms of beliefs about self-efficacy (Lent, 2005).

Overall, despite the great effect of the psychological perspective on career development, it can be criticised for its focus mainly on the individual as the crucial determinant of the career choice process and for underestimating the cultural and institutional factors (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Brown, 2002b); however, the influence of social factors such as religion, family and the labour market on the career choice process has been emphasised in the sociological approach.

### **3.4.2 Sociological Approach**

In the sociological approach, career choice is viewed in relation to contextual factors such as social status, economic opportunities, family, race, gender and the organisation of the labour market, as opposed to the psychological approach, which assumes that the individual has the capacity and means to make free career choice decisions (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Fouad and Byars-Winston, 2005; Johnson and Mortimer, 2002).

Structural theorists, including sociologists and economists, emphasise a wide range of social structures as influences on the career choice process. These social structures include structural features of schools, discrimination, occupational and job segregation, the supply and demand of manpower, the size and location of work organisations and a variety of work and labour market factors (Patton and McMahon, 2014). Johnson and Mortimer (2002) highlighted the various contexts in which persons operate as relevant sociological variables for career attainment, encompassing family, work, and community. The influence of parents, relatives, friends, and teachers on the career and educational choices of students have also been emphasised in the sociological approach (Amani, 2013; Karakitapoglu-Aygun and Sayim, 2007).

Despite the influence of the sociological factors on the career choice process, there has been little theoretical attention paid to the complexity of the sociological variables in relation to career development. One of the frequently repeated criticisms of psychological theories of career development is their failure to concentrate in a detailed way on sociological issues (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Mignot (2000) contended that theories which overemphasise the influence of personal agency are not sufficient to elucidate systematically the role of cultural and structural variables in

directing the career choice behaviours of individuals. Similarly, Pringle and Mallon (2003) argued that adequate credence is not given to social structures such as gender, ethnicity, and national context in much of the contemporary career literature.

However, some of the psychological theories of career choice and development, although focusing on personal control and internal satisfaction, have emphasised some particular aspects of external influences (Duffy and Dik, 2009). For example, the theory of work adjustment (Dawis, 2005; Dawis and Lofquist, 1984) assumes that work environment changes often entail changes on the part of the individual and that both these changes have an acceptable level of congruence; however, the theory pays little attention to the external effects not inside the immediate work environment (Duffy and Dik, 2009). On the other hand, Gottfredson's (2005, 1981) theory of circumscription and compromise relates the effect of external influence to gender stereotype and prestige. Gottfredson's (2005, 1981) treatment of external influences is, however, non-comprehensive and empirical evidence for its propositions has been questioned (e.g. Swanson and Gore, 2000). Other theorists (e.g. Super *et al.*, 1996) referred, but in a non-specific way, to the relevance of sociological variables such as social class and educational options (Patton and McMahon, 2014).

According to Duffy and Dik (2009), social cognitive career theory (Lent, 2005) probably does the best job in emphasising the important role of the contextual factors by assuming that supports and barriers indirectly affect career choices through their impact on the acquisition of self-efficacy and outcome expectations and directly through their power to shape choice actions and goals; internal influences, however, such as self-efficacy and outcome expectations have been the core focus for researchers in this theory.

### **3.5 Integrative Approach**

By critically analysing the reviewed studies, one can argue that there are two major gaps in the career choice literature: Firstly, most of the theories focus on 'the individual' as the key player in the career choice process (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Karakitapoglu-Aygun and Sayim, 2007). Some scholars have called for more research examining external influences, particularly the structural and cultural effects on the career choice process, in order to gain more balanced knowledge (Ituma *et al.*, 2011; Wong and Liu, 2010; Duffy and Dik, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Fouad and Byars-Winston, 2005; Stead, 2004). Accordingly, there is a need for an integrative perspective that considers the personal as well as the structural and cultural factors. Mignot (2000) emphasised the necessity of revising and

re-theorising the construction of contemporary careers by gaining a critical appreciation of how personal agency relates to social structures.

The second important gap in the field of career choice is the absence of both theoretical development and empirical research into how individuals in non-Western cultures make sense of their careers in a changing work environment. Blustein (2001) argued that career choice theory ‘has been profoundly shaped by classism’ (p. 175). In a similar vein, Richardson (2000) pointed out that vocational psychology is caught within a middle class of white male American and European samples. Consequently, there is limited understanding of the impact of culture on career development (Hartung, 2002). This lack of attention to culture in current career choice theories has been raised by other contemporary scholars (e.g. Ituma *et al.*, 2011; Wong and Liu, 2010; Duffy and Dik, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Fouad and Byars-Winston, 2005; Stead, 2004). Although the career choice literature is dominated by studies focusing on the West, there are few exceptions which have been conducted in East Asia (e.g. Wong and Liu, 2010; Agarwala, 2008; Wong, 2007), Africa (e.g. Amani, 2013; Bassey *et al.*, 2012) and the Middle East (e.g. Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2012; Inal and Karatas-Ozkan, 2007; Karakitapoglu-Aygun and Sayim, 2007). Overall, there is very little attention paid to career development and human resource management (HRM) in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia (Iles *et al.*, 2012). According to Brown (2002b), one result of such a gap is that current career choice theories provide little in the way of theoretical and practical guidance.

The current research aims to fill these two gaps in the career literature by adopting an ‘integrative approach’ that examines the influence of the external and internal factors on the career choice process of Saudi MBA students; moreover, the approach develops a framework that can be applicable outside the Western context by specifically focusing on the collectivistic context of Saudi Arabia. For the external dimension, the institutional framework of Scott (1995) will be adopted, whereas for the internal dimension, the intrinsic-extrinsic categories of ‘self determination theory’ developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) will be used. In the following section, the institutional perspective will be discussed. The personal dimension of the career choice process and the conceptual framework of this study will be presented in Chapter 4.

## **3.6 The Institutional Theory**

### **3.6.1 Definition of Institution and Institutional Theory**

According to North (1991, p. 97), institutions are ‘the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct) and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)’. Historically, institutions have been created by people in order to achieve order and avoid uncertainty in society (North, 1991). Institutions are, at the same time, greatly constraining as they influence the patterns of social relationships and domination which specify who holds power and has access to valuable resources (Fligstein, 2001; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). These institutional arrangements are also self-reinforcing in such a way that they reproduce power positions and prompt dominant elites to preserve institutional arrangements in order to maintain their positions of privilege (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996). The same institutional arrangements put other actors at a disadvantage and decrease their capability to affect change (Fligstein, 1991). Highly institutionalised environments have thus been described as ‘iron cages’ which confine actors and drive isomorphism within organisational fields (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

The institutional theory concentrates on ‘the processes by which structures, including schemes, rules, norms and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour. It enquires into how these elements are created, diffused, adopted, and adapted over time and space and how they fall into decline and disuse’ (Scott, 2005, p. 460). The idea is that there are constant elements in social life – institutions – that affect greatly the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals and groups (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006); furthermore, objects transform into institutions when linked with social controls that guarantee the continuous replication of the objects (Phillips *et al.*, 2004).

However, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) pointed out that there are some practices which are designed for the creation, maintenance and disruption of the institutions. They gave examples of the ways in which institutions are created through processes such as advocacy, definitions, constructing identities and education. For maintaining institutions, practices such as ‘enabling, policing and deterring’ are suggested. The disruption of institutions can happen through the development of new ones, imposing new sanctions and rewards and undermining old customs and beliefs (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 234).

### **3.6.2 Background and Development of the Institutional Theory**

The roots of institutional theory run extensively through the formative years of the social sciences and include the creative insights of scholars such as Marx and Weber, Cooley and Mead (Scott, 2014). The early ideas of these researchers emphasised the influence of habit and history in shaping choices or, alternatively, the power of moral coercion and tradition in maintaining social order. More contemporary arguments stress how significant mental maps and symbolic systems are in providing behavioural guidance (Scott, 2014). Historically, and particularly since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the theory has been taken up from different angles such as economics (Commons, 1970) and politics (Bill and Hardgrave, 1981), but the remarkable development in this theory has happened in the past three decades (Scott, 2008; Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006).

The sociological turn was an important development in the history of the institutional theory: it placed emphasis on individuals' occupations and the systemic functioning of institutions in society (Abbott, 1992; Becker, 1982; Hughes, 1937). This approach to institutional theory modified the scope of analysis from activity and occupation towards individual tasks, commitment, self-actualisation and empowerment (Scott, 2014). With the expansion of multinational companies, the scope of institutional theory began to focus on the 'organisation' as the bearer and dispenser of corporate and social identity. At the same time, multinational companies had to adjust to new societies where they could operate whilst keeping their autonomy (Scott, 2014).

Although there exists a difference of opinion among institutionalists with regard to emphasis, the core theoretical assumption is that, in general, there is likelihood that organisations working within similar environments will seek recognition and legitimacy by responding to the institutional practices, pressures and structures viewed as appropriate in that environment (Bjorkman *et al.*, 2007). The extent of these institutional pressures does, however, vary across different types of organisations; thus, the institutional pressures on banks, for example, are different from those imposed on schools or hospitals (Scott, 2008).

The institutional theory is built on concepts of conformity, convergence and adaptation to institutional environments. It argues that organisations' and individuals' decisions and behaviours are influenced by the institutional environment in which they are embedded (Dacin *et al.*, 1999); furthermore, institutional theory attends to the deeper aspects of social structures. It proposes that individuals' behaviours are shaped by their need for legitimacy

and recognition by others within the context of specific institutions (Battilana and D'Aunno, 2011).

However, the institutional theory can be criticised for its neglect of power issues and individual interest-based behaviour. In this perspective, individuals are influenced by their institutional and cultural situations (Battilana and D'Aunno, 2011; Hodgson, 2000). The institutional theory assumes an 'over-socialised' individual whose decisions are primarily affected by predominant social norms and not by any 'real reflection or behavioural resistance' based on his/her own personal power or interest (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996, p. 176). Having reviewed the historical development of the institutional theory, the following subsection will discuss its relationship with careers.

### **3.6.3 The Use of Institutional Theory in Career Studies**

While the institutional perspective has been adopted by various disciplines and has captured the attention of a wide range of researchers, it remains underdeveloped within career studies (Ituma and Simpson, 2009). This is not to suggest that the institutional approach has been totally neglected. Political, economic, social and contextual factors are referred to as important in shaping careers (Tams and Arthur, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005); however, little research has linked career dynamics directly to the institutional processes that shape them, specifically in non-Western cultures. Lack of attention to the institutional perspective in career studies has been raised by some contemporary scholars (Ituma and Simpson, 2009; Gunz and Mayrhofer, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005; Perry, 2000) who called for the consideration of an institutional dimension within career theories.

A study conducted by Ituma and Simpson (2009) explored the influence of the institutional forces on career mobility in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry in Nigeria. The study indicated that institutional factors (i.e. regulative, normative and cultural cognitive) specifically affect career mobility; furthermore, the study provided evidence to challenge the contemporary projections of boundaryless careers and support the existence of career barriers and traditional career patterns. In another place, Ituma *et al.* (2011) used the institutional perspective in a qualitative study to explore the conceptualisation of career success among 38 Nigerian managers. Findings of that study showed that in Nigeria, contrary to some Western-based research, managers give more importance to 'objective' (e.g. achieving financial stability) over 'subjective' (e.g. achieving work-life balance) career outcomes. Findings also revealed that the well-known dichotomy of subjective and objective measures is not sufficient to explain the nuances and

complexities observed in the context of Nigeria. Accordingly, the researchers suggested that two more domains of career success (i.e. personal and relational) should be added to the subjective/objective dimensions (Ituma *et al.*, 2011).

Another study by Parboteeah *et al.* (2009), based on data from 62,128 individuals in 45 countries, examined the association between the institutional dimensions of religion and work obligation. The authors highlighted the relationship between the religious institutional dimensions and work obligation. In particular, they found positive relationships between work obligation and one cognitive factor (importance of God) and one normative factor (behavioural aspect of religion). They also found a negative relationship between the regulative factor (state religion) and work obligation. They argued that religion has an analytical importance in understanding behaviours in the workplace (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2009).

In the context of the Middle Eastern Arab countries, little research has been conducted on the careers and career management of individuals. A prominent exception is the edited work on managing human resources in the Middle East by Budhwar and Mellahi (2006), which provides important insights into HRM practices, including career management, in Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia. Mellahi's (2007) research on HRM in Saudi Arabia provides further insight into the impact of regulations on HRM practices in Saudi Arabia; however, Mellahi's research focuses mainly on HRM practices rather than on the career management of individuals in Saudi Arabia. To the researcher's knowledge, there is no extant study focusing on the career choice phenomenon in Saudi Arabia and examining, in particular, the impact of the institutional factors on career choices. A recent qualitative study in United Arab Emirates (UAE) has, however, used the institutional theory to examine career choice behaviour among young (18-23 years old) male and female Emiratis (Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2012). The study found that there is a negative attitude towards the private sector which creates 'a self-exclusion of young citizens' seeking employment in this sector (Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2012, p. 616). Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner argue, however, that the concentration of Emirati workers in the public sector is due to the wrong policies in both public and private sectors framing individuals' expectations and attitudes to work. The current research is the first to adopt the institutional framework as a tool for exploring the influence of the structural and cultural factors on the career choice process in Saudi Arabia. In the following section, Scott's (1995) three pillars of the institutional theory will be discussed within the context of career choice.



### **3.7 The ‘Institutional Three Pillars’ and Career Choice**

A useful conceptual framework to understand how career choices are shaped and constrained by institutional settings is Richard Scott’s (1995) theory of the ‘three pillars’ of institutional processes. Scott (2014) argued that ‘institutions are comprised of three pillars. They are regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that [...] provide stability and meaning to social life’ (Scott, 2014, p. 56). According to this idea, institutions are multifaceted, long-lasting social structures composed of symbolic factors, material resources and social actions, which are likely to be transmitted across generations, maintained and reproduced (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011). This is either because of their taken-for-granted status (Scott, 2014; Phillips and Malhotra, 2008) as, for instance, religious matters, or because of their association with regulative measures which ensure their survival (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011; Jepperson, 1991) such as governmental laws. In the following section, the key components of Scott’s (2014, 1995) three pillars are described in the context of career choice and how they shape individuals’ decisions.

#### **3.7.1 The Regulative Pillar**

The regulative pillar refers to ‘the existing laws and rules in a particular national environment which promotes certain types of behaviours and restricts others’ (Kostova, 1997, p. 180). Social stability is maintained by this pillar through its ordainment, in both formal and informal contexts, of ‘appropriate’ behaviours and actions that establish, observe and approve individuals’ activities. For instance, rules such as school regulations, professional standards, governmental laws, and court rulings serve to control the actions of both teachers and education administrators (Hanson, 2001). The regulative pillar that supports institutions comprises measures or rules with a coercive nature that implies a loss of freedom. The regulative role of institutions involves recognition practices such as giving licenses to individuals and/or to organisations in order to operate in a given context (Scott, 2014).

#### **3.7.2 The Normative Pillar**

The normative pillar refers to ‘a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life’ (Scott, 2014, p. 63). Normative systems encompass values and norms about human nature and human behaviour that are socially shared and adopted by individuals. The ‘basis of compliance’ is a sense of moral and social obligation which assumes that this is the way ‘things should be done’ (Phillips and Malhotra, 2008, p. 710). The logic is one of

appropriateness, such as the colour of a man's suit and the length of a woman's skirt that can both be highly constrained, even when there are no written rules to specify those markers of appropriate behaviour. The key feature of the normative approach is the shared construction of expected moral behaviour (Stinchcombe, 1997). Depending on whether or not and to what level one is following the normative rules, the emotional and moral consequences will result in shame or honour (Scott, 2014). Licht *et al.* (2005) argued that corporations may risk considerable reputational damage should they challenge the norms or values of specific national institutions.

### **3.7.3 The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar**

The cultural-cognitive pillar refers to 'shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made' (Scott, 2008, p. 428). The cultural-cognitive factors relate to the deep set of beliefs and assumptions in society (Scott, 2005) that are taken simply because they are regarded as 'right' and 'natural'. This pillar examines the ways in which meanings are constructed culturally and cognitively (Scott, 2014). D'Andrade (1984, p. 88 cited in Scott, 2014, p. 66) proposed that 'in the cognitive paradigm, what a creature does is, in large, a function of the creature's internal representation of its environment'. In social systems, symbols - words, signs, and gestures – convey meanings that are already attributed to things and activities; however, meanings are re-produced and arise in interpersonal interactions and are reiterated and transformed as they are used to make sense of the ongoing stream of actions and already existing meanings (Scott, 2014).

Culture is defined by Stead (2004) as 'a social system of shared symbols, meanings, perspectives, and social actions that are mutually negotiated by people in their relationships with others' (Stead, 2004, p. 392). Culture displays these features in conceptions of situations shared by groups of individuals; however, cultural conceptions vary among individuals. Beliefs are considered by some, but not by others. People perceive and react differently to the same situation (DiMaggio, 1997); moreover, culture is not a static phenomenon, but changes and adjusts according to the level of contact with people from different cultures (Stead, 2004).

Comparing the three pillars, the cultural-cognitive pillar has received the least attention in comparison with the regulative and normative pillars (Scott, 2014). Regulative and normative pillars are more easily visible in society and hence are more prone to change or being forced upon individuals, whereas the cultural-cognitive pillar is nuanced and

embedded in the everyday life of individuals (Scott, 2014). There is an increasing acknowledgement that, aside from the fact that they are more explicit and visible, regulative features are frequently more inconsequential and superficial than cultural and normative factors. Regulatory elements move faster and are easier to manipulate or be decoupled from actual practices compared to the other forces (normative and cultural) (Evans, 2004; Roland, 2004).

### 3.8 Institutional Factors in Saudi Context and Research Hypotheses

In this section, the institutional factors under the three pillars will be discussed within the context of this study (Saudi Arabia) for the purpose of examining their influences on the career choices of Saudi MBA students. These institutional factors are summarised in Figure 3.1 and discussed further in the following subsections.

**Figure 3.1: Institutional factors in Saudi context.**

	<b>Institutional pillars</b>		
	<b>Regulative pillar</b>	<b>Normative pillar</b>	<b>Cultural-cognitive pillar</b>
<b>Institutional factors in Saudi context</b>	<i>Saudization</i>	<i>Wasta</i>	Parental obedience
		Social status	Religious influence

#### 3.8.1 *Saudization* as a Regulative Factor

The Saudi government’s policy of localising the labour force, which is known as ‘*Saudization*’, is counted as a regulative pillar in this research. As discussed in Chapter 2, this policy has been implemented by imposing rules and laws on the private and governmental sectors which favour the employment of Saudis whilst creating obstacles and increasing the difficulty of recruiting foreign workers (Mellahi, 2007).

Hence, these efforts and legal regulations imposed by the government on the public and private sectors to enforce employment localisation policy (i.e. *Saudization*) are likely to influence the career choices and career development of individuals in Saudi Arabia

because without these coercive employment rules and laws, career choices will be limited. In this research, it is assumed that *Saudization* might affect the career choices of Saudi individuals and open new avenues for them. Thus, *Saudization* is likely to play a role in shaping the career choices of Saudi MBA students; hence, the first hypothesis of this research is:

**H1a: The perceived importance of *Saudization* will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

### **3.8.2 *Wasta* and Social Status as Normative Factors**

With regards to the normative factors that have been identified in the career literature, Ituma and Simpson (2009) referred to the kin system and personal ties as normative factors affecting the career development of individuals in Nigeria. According to them, family and tribal obligations are results of that kin system. In the next sections, two normative factors are discussed (*Wasta* and social status) as they have been found influential in the Saudi context (Barnett *et al.*, 2013; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008).

#### **1. *Wasta***

*Wasta* is a network of social ties and relations that can facilitate one's access to the sources of power in order to achieve personal benefits. The implication of *Wasta* in career choice is that the stronger the *Wasta* an individual has, the greater the number of career options available to him or her and vice versa. According to Al-Ramahi (2008), many people, supported by their *Wasta* sources, may seek the same benefits. When those seeking benefits are many and the available opportunities are scarce, applicants who have the strongest *Wastas* (i.e. influential connections) are likely to have better chances. Whether one succeeds or fails usually depends more on the influence of their *Wasta* than on their qualifications or suitability (Al-Ramahi, 2008).

Despite being part of everyday life in Arab societies and being reflected in the workplace through the influence of social and family connections, *Wasta* has received surprisingly little attention in the career literature (Barnett *et al.*, 2013; Iles *et al.*, 2012). To date, no research has been conducted to examine the influence of *Wasta* on career choices in Saudi Arabia; however, based on the studies in the Arab world which suggest the importance and prevalence of *Wasta* in all aspects of daily life for people in that region, including business and work attainment, and taking into account the

kin-based nature of Saudi society, one can assume that *Wasta*, as a normative factor, is likely to play a significant role in the career choices of Saudi MBA students. On this basis, the second hypothesis of this research is formulated:

**H1b: The perceived importance of *Wasta* (social networks) will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

## **2. Social status**

The role of social status has been emphasised by a number of theoretical studies which refer to non-material rewards such as self-esteem and respect received from others, which are associated with different occupations (e.g. Corneo and Jeanne, 2010; Weiss and Fershtman, 1998); however, only a little research has addressed the importance of social status in career choices from an empirical approach (Zhan, 2012). For example, Dolton *et al.* (1989) illustrated that the social status expected from becoming a teacher played an important role in the choice of a teaching career for college graduates in the U.K, despite its low salary. Zhan (2012) found that both income and prestige are positively related to the occupational selections of American men, suggesting that individuals follow lucrative and prestigious careers equally.

In Saudi Arabia, social status has been highlighted as an important element affecting individuals' social relations, decision making and positions in society (Iles *et al.*, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Ali and Al-Shakhis, 1989). In the Saudi context, the studies conducted on *Saudization* and different aspects of life in Saudi Arabia report social status as being an influential factor but fail to define what is meant by the term (e.g. Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Mellahi, 2000).

In this thesis, social status is defined by the researcher as one's perception of his/her position within Saudi society, which is informed by familial or tribal background, educational and occupational situation, having a technical or non-technical job, being employed in private or public sectors and, more importantly, whether or not one has access to influential individuals in the government or business sector. Both individual and collective aspects of social status determine a person's career choice; therefore, caring for the reputation and status of the family or tribe constitutes a significant social pressure on individuals' career choices in Saudi Arabia. Saudi individuals' career choices should reflect well on the family or tribe and improve its image since having

a high social status would create a source of *Wasta* and hence give one the power to fulfill family and tribal obligations (Barnett *et al.*, 2013; Fakeeh, 2009; Ali and Al-Shakhis, 1989).

There have not been studies in Saudi Arabia that address social status in depth, even those which have taken social status to be central to the process of *Saudization* (Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008). This study aims to explore the influence of social status as an institutional normative factor on career choice decisions; furthermore, the study aims to compare the importance of this factor with some personal material motivations such as salary or work benefits and other institutional factors such as parental obedience and religious influence. Taking into account the collectivistic nature of Saudi people's lives and their focus on the group interests and image, one can posit that the desire for obtaining social status is likely to play an important role in shaping and constraining the career choices of Saudi MBA students. On this basis, the third hypothesis of this research is:

**H1c: The perceived importance of obtaining social status will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

### **3.8.3 Parental Obedience and Religion as Cultural-Cognitive Factors**

Parental obedience and religion have been identified as significant cultural-cognitive variables which are likely to influence the individuals' career choices (Bassey *et al.*, 2012; Sigalow *et al.*, 2012; Wong and Liu, 2010; Wong, 2007). These factors are particularly important in non-Western contexts such as Saudi Arabia, where the focus is more on the society and culture rather than on the individual (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). In the following sections, the two factors' specific implications in this study are presented.

#### **1. Parental obedience**

Parental influence has been emphasised in various contexts to be an influential cultural variable in the career decision making process. There are, however, differences in the bases of these contextual differences, especially the ways in which parental influence is perceived influential. Studies conducted in Western contexts emphasise independence and individuation from parents (Hardin *et al.*, 2001) or see parental influence as a 'catalyst' for initiating decision (Biggart *et al.*, 2004). These studies

define career choice to mean self-actualisation and emphasise that it is fundamentally an individual choice (Ferreira *et al.*, 2007).

In non-Western countries, parental influence is seen as the salience of interdependence, a respect paid to old people and authority, a family bond, and a compliance with social and cultural norms (Wong and Liu, 2010; Wong, 2007); ‘fathers’ play a more influential role compared to ‘mothers’ in their children’s decision making (Agarwala, 2008; Karakitapoglu-Aygun and Sayim, 2007). In their research in China, Leong and Chou (1994) found that for Chinese individuals, their own family and caring for parents in their old age are more important than self-actualisation. Lee (1991), for example, suggested that values of collectivistic cultures are frequently exhibited with obedience to and firm deference for one’s parents and the family or group customs. Tang *et al.* (1999) argued that exploring family background and the expectations of parents is essential in studying the career choices of Asian-Americans.

In this study, parental obedience is defined by the researcher as a voluntary behaviour conducted by a son or daughter to respond positively to the psychological and material needs and wishes of their parents without any direct involvement or force from the parents’ side. It is a way of paying back and showing respect and kindness towards parents. This cultural value should be read within the Islamic lessons that overarch the parent-child relationship in society. This study is the first to examine how career choices might be influenced by parental obedience as a positive Islamic cultural behaviour initiated by children rather than as a passive hierarchical force that is exerted on children by parents.

Based on the findings of the previous studies in this area and taking into account the collectivistic nature of the Saudi context (Alanazi and Rodrigues, 2003), the profound and influential Islamic dimension of the child-parent relationship and the importance of obeying parents in Islam (Hussain, 2004; Altorki, 1986), it is likely that career choices of Saudi MBA students will be influenced by their parental obedience. In this regard, the fourth hypothesis will be:

**H1d: Parental obedience will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

## 2. Religious influence

Religion, as a significant social institution, is strongly influential throughout a wide spectrum of social life and human behaviour (Abuznaid, 2006). Religion creates important career expectations and constraints that most people respect if they want to be accepted in society (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2009). This suggests that, independent of a person's level of religiosity, the power of religion as a social institution specifies an important contextual influence (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2009). These cultural effects are stronger in contexts such as Saudi Arabia, where every layer of social life is intertwined with religion (Idris, 2007; Long, 2005).

Sigalow *et al.* (2012) have highlighted the impact of religious and spiritual strategies on marriage, residence, number of children and career choice while others have discussed how religion is used to cope with academic and work challenges (Constantine *et al.*, 2006). Religion is also taken positively as a way to recognise the purpose of life or destiny and motivate commitment to one's moral values as well as to make coping choices that would consider other's needs and feelings (Mattis, 2002) or as an influential factor in career choice and career success (Bassey *et al.*, 2012). Most of the above studies have been done qualitatively and mainly on Christianity. Bassey *et al.* (2012) called for more studies that incorporate Islamic influence on career choice.

The majority of research on Islamic religion and management has focused on three broad areas; Islamic leadership (Almoharby and Neal, 2013; Beekun, 2012; Ahmad, 2009; Abuznaid, 2006), Islamic work ethics (Possumah *et al.*, 2013; Kumar and Rose, 2010; Ali and Al-Owaihyan, 2008; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007), and human resource management from an Islamic perspective (Hassi, 2012; Ali, 2010; Hashim, 2010; Khan *et al.*, 2010). Although these studies offer significant insights into the application of Islam in management studies, there is a lack of research examining the influence of Islam on career choice.

Islam to Muslim people, including Saudis, is not only a religion but a way of life with a set of moral values (Abuznaid, 2006) that infiltrates all aspects of life, including personal and work issues (Ahmad, 2011; Metcalfe, 2008; Idris, 2007). In Saudi Arabia, due to the presence of strong Islamic principles and a commonality in uttering Quranic verses and the Prophet Muhammad's sayings in the public sphere, since early childhood, individuals, regardless of their level of religiosity, have developed 'an



awareness of and sensitivity to what is socially and religiously sanctioned' (Ali, 2010, p. 694). Building on the above studies, one can posit that the career choices of Saudi MBA students will be influenced by their religion; hence, the fifth hypothesis is formulated as:

**H1e: The perceived importance of religion will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

The following subsection intends to compare the importance of the three institutional pillars (regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive) for Saudi MBA students and explore which pillar is more influential on their career choices. This study aims to achieve that in order to shed light on which pillar is more important for individuals from a non-Western context such as Saudi Arabia.

### **3.8.4 Comparing the Importance of Institutional Factors**

Based on the previous reviewed studies that emphasised the importance of parental obedience and Islamic religion as influential factors affecting the daily lives of Saudi people, it is likely that cultural-cognitive factors will be more influential than the other institutional factors (regulative and normative) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students; hence the following research hypothesis is formulated:

**H1f: Within the institutional dimension, the cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and religion) will be stronger predictors than the regulative (*Saudization*) and normative factors (*Wasta* and social status) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

## **3.9 Gender and Institutional Factors**

Having reviewed the institutional factors in this chapter, the influence of gender on the institutional factors is discussed here. Although gender is not the primary focus of this study, its inclusion is not only inevitable but also important in the analysis of career choice. Gender has been considered in this research to examine its effect on both dimensions of the career choice process, i.e. the institutional and personal. The rationale for considering gender as a separate demographic factor is due to the following reasons: Firstly, and most importantly, the sample of this research (Saudi MBA students) is composed of males and

females. It is important to consider gendered nuances in career decision making, especially in the context of Saudi Arabia. Secondly, although the previous literature has shown gender to be an influential factor in career choices and management careers (Agarwala, 2008; Simpson and Sturges, 2007; Reskin and Bielby, 2005; Jacobs, 1995; Jacobsen, 1994; Reskin, 1993), gender has not been given sufficient attention in most of the Western-developed career choice theories (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Pringle and Mallon, 2003; Richardson, 2000). Finally, there is a lack of research in the literature investigating gender effects on the institutional factors. This study aims to contribute to the previous studies on gender and career choices in the context of Saudi Arabia, the paucity of which has been observed by others too (Ahmad, 2011; Elamin and Omair, 2010). In the following sections, the relationship between gender and the institutional factors of this study will be discussed.

### **3.9.1 Gender and *Saudization***

The process of *Saudization* was initiated in the mid-1990s to address the problem of high unemployment among young Saudi male and female graduates and simultaneously localise the workforce in the private sector (Fakeeh, 2009).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, *Saudization* is a policy of high importance because there are more than seven million jobs occupied by expatriates in the current labour market and those jobs could theoretically be filled by unemployed Saudi citizens (Ministry of Labour, 2012). This rationale is justified by referring to similar successful experiences in the Arab Gulf region such as in Oman and the United Arab Emirates (Fakeeh, 2009). In fact, these localisation policies in the Gulf countries have provided women with the privilege of being educated, trained and recruited to reach management positions and have ensured an equal salary scale to men (Harry, 2007). To date, the scope of studies focusing on *Saudization* has remained limited despite its importance to women's employment trajectories. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this would be the first study to consider the influence of *Saudization* on the career choices of Saudi MBA students and how this influence might vary with gender.

The figures show that *Saudization* has been successful in decreasing the unemployment rate among men to 6.1% in 2012 (the lowest in the preceding 13 years), while the situation was different for their female counterparts with a sharp increase in the unemployment rate among women, reaching 35.7% in 2012 (six times higher than that for Saudi men). Those women who were employed in the last two years in the private sector due to the new *Saudization* programme (*Nitaqat*) were mostly concentrated in the service sector as clerks

in women's shops or large supermarkets but not as managers (Mousa, 2013b) (see Chapter 2 for more details). Cultural constraints, including local traditions, gender roles and sex segregation stand as a hindrance in employing Saudi women as managers in the private sector and this has resulted in females being concentrated in mainly health and education in the public sector (Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012; Danish and Smith, 2012). Accordingly, it is likely that *Saudization* will be perceived as being a more important factor for Saudi male MBA students compared to their female counterparts when making their future career choices; hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**H2a: Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Saudization* when making their career choices compared to female MBA students.**

### **3.9.2 Gender and *Wasta***

*Wasta* is a social network that can affect an individual's access to certain positions and determine one's career success. The influence and power of *Wasta* is extended beyond family relationships and is transferred into organisational settings (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010). In a study on 200 male and female managers from different Arab countries on the importance and impact of *Wasta* on career success, Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) showed that *Wasta* is highly important for managers, regardless of their, age, gender, nationality, level of education, or management position. The study emphasised that *Wasta* is considered a significant force in the Arab world and is used to support the recruitment and promotion processes and career advancement for both genders (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011).

In the Arab Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, the importance of *Wasta* for women in career attainment has been highlighted in previous literature. For example, Binkhuthaila (2010) indicated that educated Saudi women find *Wasta* an important element in getting a new job and failure would result if female applicants lacked *Wasta*. Metcalfe (2007) pointed out that women in Bahrain report that opportunities for training and job recruitment are mostly not based on the qualifications and skills of individuals but on their personal contacts and family connections (i.e. *Wasta*). Similarly, Omair (2009), in a study on the career development of Arab women managers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), found that *Wasta* is perceived as important for career development; moreover, Arab women managers in the UAE considered the lack of *Wasta* and family connections a hindrance to employment opportunities and/or career progression.

Although *Wasta* is an important determinant in almost every decision in the daily life of Arab people, it has not been researched adequately (Barnett *et al.*, 2013; Iles *et al.*, 2012), particularly with respect to the influence of *Wasta* on the career choices of MBA students in the Arab world in general and in Saudi Arabia specifically, and the inclusion of the gender dimension is non-existent; therefore, this study intends to fill this gap in the literature by examining the influence of *Wasta* as a social normative factor on the career choices of Saudi MBA male and female students. The socio-cultural difference of Saudi Arabia (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010) and the inclusion of the gender dimension in this study are expected to add new insights to the career literature due to the absence of published studies in this area.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Saudi Arabian women's employment opportunities are constrained by cultural and traditional considerations. As a result, women constitute around only 15% of the labour market (Mousa, 2013b), and the unemployment rate among them is more than 35% compared to 6% among men in 2012 (Ministry of Labour, 2012). Besides, management is seen traditionally as a male profession and women are much less visible in management roles (Agarwala, 2008); therefore, in order to be employed and to penetrate the cultural and management glass ceilings, Saudi MBA female students are likely to depend more on *Wasta* and find it more important compared to male students when making their career choices and, hence, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

**H2b: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Wasta* when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.**

### **3.9.3 Gender and Social Status**

Previous research has paid little attention to the effect of social status on career choice and how it might vary according to gender; however, some scholars on career success argue that men tend to place more emphasis and importance on the salary and status gained from a managerial position, whereas women tend to find success in developing their own personal skills and qualifications (Powell, 2011; Sturges, 1999; Burke and McKeen, 1994; Russo *et al.*, 1991; Nicholson and West, 1988; Marshall, 1984). Agarwala (2008) discussed the tendency of women to focus more on self-development factors, particularly among Indian MBA female students. He pointed out that women may want to prove that they can succeed in a managerial career, traditionally regarded as a 'male' profession; thus,

they give more priority and importance to self-development factors, whereas men find factors such as salary and status more important (Nicholson and West, 1988; Marshall, 1984).

In Saudi Arabia, described as a strongly patriarchal society (Danish and Smith, 2012), a man is traditionally the provider and protector of the family, as well as the main source of pride and reputation for the tribe and extended family, while a woman's role is limited to being a mother and wife (Long, 2005; Ali and Al-Shakhis, 1989). Saudi women were only allowed to have an education in the late 1960s (AlMunajjed, 2009) and were given the chance for the first time to study for the MBA and become professional managers in 1986. As mentioned before, women in general only constitute around 15% of the Saudi labour market and much less than that in managerial careers (Mousa, 2013b; Al-Ahmadi, 2011). It is therefore expected that Saudi MBA women would focus more on developing their managerial skills and place less importance on social status compared to their male counterparts.

To date, no research has considered the influence of social status on the career choices of Saudi MBA students and how this influence might vary with gender. Due to this dearth of research in this area, this study aims to fill such a gap in the career literature. One can posit that Saudi MBA male students would place more importance on obtaining social status when making their career choices compared to their female counterparts because, firstly, previous literature has highlighted the importance of status for men as a perception of career success. Secondly, due to the patriarchal nature of Saudi society, a man is regarded as the main source of pride and reputation for his family and tribe and, finally, Saudi women are less experienced in the managerial field; hence, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

**H2c: Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of obtaining social status when making their career choices compared to female MBA students.**

### **3.9.4 Gender and Parental Obedience**

Most of the studies that have examined the influence of parents on career choice have been conducted either in the West from an individualistic point of view (e.g. Ferreira *et al.*, 2007; Biggart *et al.*, 2004; Hardin *et al.*, 2001) or in the Far East (e.g. Wong and Liu,

2010; Agarwala, 2008; Wong, 2007; Leong and Chou, 1994; Lee, 1991). Very little attention has been paid to the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia.

In addition, a limited amount of research has considered the influence of parents in career choice and how this might differ across gender. Exploring the parental influences on the career choices of hospitality and tourism management students in China, Wong and Liu (2010) indicated that female participants tend to be more influenced by their parents than their male counterparts. According to the researchers, this difference might be explained partially by the fact that the daughters within Chinese families are typically more open to accepting their parents' ideas and following their parents' opinions than sons, who are more likely to act independently. Similarly, Galambos and Silbereisen (1987) conducted a study in Germany and found that fathers would encourage independence in their sons, whereas daughters would not receive similar encouragement. Previous research has highlighted this type of gender socialisation and referred to the attachment of daughters to their parents, mainly to the mother (Paa and McWhirter, 2000; Blustein *et al.*, 1991). In a study of 276 seventh- and eighth-grade female students, Rainey and Borders (1997) illustrated that the mother-daughter relationship in early adolescence is of major significance and, 'based on a variety of measures, that mothers strongly influence the development of daughters' attitudes towards women's rights and roles in society' (p. 167). In a longitudinal study of 207 high school female students, O'Brien *et al.* (2000) found that attachment to the mother had a significant direct influence on career self-efficacy and thus affected career aspiration.

In the collectivistic culture of Saudi Arabia, the status of parents is high and greatly respected by both sons and daughters (Hussain, 2004; Khan, 2001; Altorki, 1986). In Saudi Arabia, gender socialisation is similar to the trends identified above in other countries. Girls in Saudi society are depicted as more caring and attached to their parents than boys, who are thought to be more independent in their personal and career decisions, in their movement out of the house and in their travel and work in another city or even another country. Daughters' personal and career decisions, movement and travel are more tied to their parents' approval and satisfaction.

To date, no research has been conducted to examine the influence of parental obedience as an Islamic cultural value on career choice decisions and how this influence might vary according to gender; however, based on the previous reviewed studies that emphasised the independence of sons and the attachment of daughters to their parents, and by taking into

account the conservative nature of Saudi society and the type of gender socialisation explained above, one can assume that Saudi MBA female students will place more importance on parental obedience when making their career choices compared to their male counterparts; hence, the following hypothesis of this research is formulated:

**H2d: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in parental obedience when making their career choices compared to Saudi male MBA students.**

### **3.9.5 Gender and Religious Influence**

The majority of Western-based research on gender differences and religiosity shows that females constantly display higher levels of religiosity in comparison to males (Collett and Lizardo, 2009; Sullins, 2006; Miller and Stark, 2002; Stark, 2002; Walter and Davie, 1998; Miller and Hoffman, 1995). Different explanations have been proposed by scholars for the underlying reasons behind these gender variations. One possibility theorised by sociologists is that differential socialisations experienced by males and females in their childhood creates the diverging cultural expectations, behaviours and gendered values held by them in later stages of their life (Suziedelis and Potvin, 1981; Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). An alternative suggestion by other scholars is that gender differences result from the structural position of females and the societal gendered division of labour (Cornwall, 1989; De Vaus and McAllister, 1987; De Vaus, 1984).

In the last two decades, there has been a new interest in suggesting that prevalent gender differences in religiosity are not a result of structural or cultural forces but, rather, emerge from innate differences in the physiologies of males and females (Sigalow *et al.*, 2012). This explanation manifests itself in risk-aversion theory, which argues that men are more likely to be engaged in high-risk activities than women and hence are more prone to living irreligiously than females (Collett and Lizardo, 2009; Miller and Stark, 2002; Miller and Hoffman, 1995). Over the last few years, however, criticisms of risk-aversion theory have surfaced regarding its hasty dismissal of narratives involving social and cultural effects and for its complete lack of attention to insights in gender research (Cornwall, 2009).

In the context of religious influence on career choice, very limited research has considered the gender dimension (Bassegy *et al.*, 2012; Sigalow *et al.*, 2012). The results of this sparse amount of research do not support the above argument that women are more religious than

men. For example, Bassey *et al.* (2012) conducted a qualitative study in Nigeria exploring the influence of religion on career choices among 14 male and female participants. Out of the 14 respondents, 13 were Christians, while one was practicing traditional African religion. Findings showed that all the participants were influenced by their religion when making their career choice decisions, without any gender difference. Another study by Sigalow *et al.* (2012) in the United States examined the influence of religion on the decisions of marriage, residence, occupation and number of children. The study revealed that gender has no significant association with any of the four decision-making outcomes. Due to the contradiction between the result of the above study and the previous research (Collett and Lizardo, 2009; Sullins, 2006; Miller and Stark, 2002; Stark, 2002; Walter and Davie, 1998; Miller and Hoffman, 1995; De Vaus and McAllister, 1987), which has constantly illustrated that women show higher levels of religiosity compared to men, Sigalow *et al.* (2012) called for more research incorporating gender into studies on religion, a tool of an individual's culture which can be drawn upon to aid in making daily life choices and decisions.

In fact, most of the previous studies considering the role of religion in daily life decisions, including career choices, have been conducted in the West and/or examined mainly the influence of Christianity. Except for Binkhuthaila's (2010) minor research examining whether or not Islamic religion creates any limitations to the career choices of educated Saudi women, the literature misses the religious influence on the career choices of Saudi professionals. The findings of Binkhuthaila's study showed a disagreement among the participants on the influence of Islam on their career choices. In particular, no study to date has considered the influence of Islamic religion on the career choices of Saudi MBA students with the inclusion of gender variable; therefore, this research aims to fill this gap in the career literature by drawing the attention to the gendered implications of Islam on the career choice decisions of Saudi MBA students.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, Islamic teachings related to work, including the importance of *Halal* and *Haram* concepts (i.e. religiously permitted and forbidden), work activities, practices and sources of earning (Hassi, 2012; Al Musharraf, 2003) are directed and applied to all Muslim individuals, males and females; however, due to the patriarchal interpretations of Islam in Saudi Arabia, in which local traditions and tribal customs are conceived as part of the religion (Ahmad, 2011; Effendi, 2003; AlMunajjed, 1997), the career choices of Saudi women are more controlled and influenced by some of those religious interpretations compared to men. For example, Saudi women have the freedom to



work but this should be within an ‘appropriate’ environment which prevents mixing with men (Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012). This will, accordingly, limit their career options. In addition, travelling out of the city or country for employment purposes is constrained as well by those religious and cultural conceptions: the career choices of Saudi women would often be restricted to opportunities within the same city (Ahmad, 2011); moreover, religious and cultural pressures emphasise that the Saudi woman should fulfill her family and home responsibilities first, and whenever those are in contrast with her career, the priority should almost always be given to her family obligations (Long, 2005). Another aspect which is considered an important religious and cultural obligation by most Saudi women is wearing the *Hijab* (i.e. head scarf or veil). This practice might make some Saudi women refuse jobs that require any kind of concessions in this issue.

Overall, the influence of the previous religious and cultural questions is limited to Saudi women when making their career choices, whereas Saudi men are free from these pressures. Based on that, it is likely that Saudi female MBA students will place more importance on religious issues when making their career choices compared to Saudi male MBA students; hence, the following hypothesis is formulated as:

**H2e: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of religion when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.**

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the institutional aspect of this study’s conceptual framework. The institutional framework offers relatively enduring yet potentially flexible questions for highlighting how the institutional environment influences organisations and individual actions and behaviours (Ituma and Simpson, 2009). Overall, the implication of the institutional theory in this research is that career choices of individuals are likely to reflect the socio-cultural conventions embedded in their institutional environment. In this study, then, the institutional lens is used as a tool to explore the extent to which career choice decisions are shaped by legislation, customs, and cultural considerations.

The chapter was divided into three sections. In the first section, the adopted approach to the study of career choice was presented. It was argued that an integrative approach is more suitable than the sociological and psychological approaches to the study of career

choice that were individually reviewed. The focus of this research is particularly important given that most of the existing work on career choices, as reviewed previously in this chapter, overly pays attention to the ‘self’ at the expense of the structural and cultural factors (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Brown, 2002b). This research departs from such personal centred perspectives and contributes to the career choice literature by locating career dynamics within the institutional theory using Scott’s (1995) ‘institutional pillars’ framework, in which the structural and cultural components are embedded. This chapter argued that the career choices of individuals are determined not only by their personal motivations but also by institutional factors (cultural and structural), which become a particularly important consideration in collectivistic contexts such as Saudi Arabia, where individuals prioritise group and family interests over their own.

The second section of the chapter addressed the first component of the theoretical framework of this study; that is, Scott’s institutional theory, which is composed of three pillars: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. These are not incompatible with one another: they can intersect and overlap (Price *et al.*, 2011). The importance of each pillar is, however, expected to depend on the context (Aguilera *et al.*, 2006). Scott (2014) illustrates that the three pillars can be found at the same time within an institutional environment, with varying degrees of influence. Each individual pillar should be seen as a contribution to overarching institutionalised social order through their augmentation of stable and ‘appropriate’ behaviour (Scott, 2008).

The third section of this chapter discussed the institutional hypotheses of this study within the career choice context. These hypotheses included *Saudization* as regulative, *Wasta* and social status as normative and parental obedience and religious influence as cultural-cognitive. Among the three pillars, the cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and Islamic religion) are argued to be the most influential factors for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices. In discussing these hypotheses, a special focus was given to gender and its effects on these institutional factors. This is the first study to use collectively the aforementioned institutional factors within the institutional framework to examine and compare their influence on the career choice process. The inclusion of gender and its influence on these institutional factors is a novel contribution to the career literature.

In this chapter, the external (i.e. institutional) dimension of the conceptual framework of this study has been discussed. In Chapter 4, this research will address the internal

dimension in the career choice process by considering the personal motivational factors as reflected in the intrinsic-extrinsic categories of the 'self determination theory' developed by Deci and Ryan (1985).

## **Chapter 4: Personal Perspective in Career Choice**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the personal dimension of the career choice process which is adopted within the integrative framework of this research. As discussed in Chapter 3, the institutional perspective has been criticised for its negligence of the personal power of the individual (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996). In this research, both the institutional and individual facets of the career process are taken into consideration because the process of career choice cannot be comprehended without taking into account both dimensions simultaneously; hence, this chapter aims to address the personal motivational factors that are likely to influence the career choices of Saudi MBA students and introduce the last four hypotheses of this research which are centred on the personal dimension. The first part of this chapter will start by reviewing the ‘self-determination theory’ developed by Deci and Ryan (1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000) and the application of this theory in the study of the career choices of Saudi MBA students. In this part, the 14 personal motivational factors adopted in this study will be presented. This will be followed by a review of career motivations in the public and private sectors. The first part will conclude with a discussion on the influence of socio-cultural systems on personal career motivations.

The second part of the chapter discusses the effect of gender on career choices. This will be followed by a section that focuses on gender and management in the Arab world before examining gender and the choice of an MBA as a route to a management career; furthermore, this part will review the extant literature on career choice motivational factors among male and female MBA students and will end with a comparison of the institutional and personal factors in terms of their importance to Saudi MBA students when making their future career choices. Finally, at the end of this chapter, the conceptual framework of this thesis, composed of the institutional and personal dimensions, will be presented.

### **4.2 What is Motivation?**

Just like any other term, there are different definitions for motivation; however, the focus here will be on those which are related to the workplace. The definition of motivation starts with the root word, ‘motive’. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines motive as, ‘something (as a need or desire) that causes a person to act’. Ryan and Deci define ‘being motivated’ as being:

[...] moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 54).

Motivation is ‘a factor that exercises a powerful force on our activities and exertion’ (Jehanzeb *et al.*, 2012, p. 273). According to Baron (1983), motivation is an accretion of various practices which impact and shape one’s behaviour to accomplish a particular goal. In this vein, Dasgupta (2013) argues that an individual becomes motivated in order to accomplish his/her own personal goals as well as organisational goals. The more motivated a person is, the more likely that he/she is committed to the organisation (Dasgupta, 2013).

Research on motivational factors has continuously attracted attention in the career literature (e.g. Acar, 2014; Chen, 2014; Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Jin, 2013; Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007; Lewis and Frank, 2002). This interest is due to several reasons: Firstly, the nature of career motives is dynamic and changes over time (Karl and Sutton, 1998), therefore requiring the examination of various factors leading to these changes; secondly, the relative importance people place upon some career motives depends on factors such as age (Boumans *et al.*, 2011), gender (Agarwala, 2008), employment sector (i.e. public vs. private) (Wright, 2001) and the context (Bullock *et al.*, 2013); thirdly, and most importantly, motivation affects employees’ job satisfaction which, in turn, is reflected in both individual and organisational performance, commitment and productivity (Wang, 2004; Karl and Sutton, 1998); thus, in order to design jobs, reward systems and policies of human resource management that will result in job satisfaction, high productivity and retention, employers and organisations in public and private sectors need to know what motivates and attracts employees.

In this study, the influence of different motivational factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students in public and private sectors is investigated. Career motivations in public and private sectors are not formed in a vacuum: they are always embedded in institutional environments; therefore, this study analyses personal motivational factors along with and in relation to five institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) in Saudi Arabia. In the next section, self-determination theory, used for the personal motivational dimension in this study, is presented.

### 4.3 The Spectrum of Motivations in Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

There are many theories on motivation and reviewing all of them is outside the scope of this thesis<sup>13</sup>. One of the most frequently used theories of motivation is Deci and Ryan's (1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000) 'self-determination' theory (SDT hereafter) which is used as the theoretical basis of this study. Deci and Ryan (1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000) argued that individuals are motivated by a spectrum of reasons that are divided into three major categories. They present an argument for the existence of a continuum of different motivations spanning from not having any motivation at all for an activity (amotivation) through to being externally motivated (extrinsic) and, finally, to being naturally interested in an activity (intrinsic) at the opposite end of the spectrum. *Amotivation* refers to 'the state of lacking an intention to act' and not valuing an activity or not believing that the activity will 'yield a desired outcome' (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 61). In the context of this study, amotivation has little relevance and, accordingly, has been left out of the discussion as the aim is to examine the influence of a list of different motivational factors on the future career choices of Saudi MBA students. Extrinsic motivation in all of its four types is related to an external form of control, either by obtaining a reward or avoiding a punishment or negative outcome; however, these various types have different degrees of autonomy (Gagne and Deci, 2005).

Among the four types of extrinsic motivation, *external regulation* lies at the most controlled and 'non-self-determined end of the continuum' and is the type of extrinsic motivation usually used in the literature (Vallerand and Ratelle, 2004, p.42). In this extrinsic type, the individual is controlled by an external demand that would encourage or hinder him/her from doing the activity (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Seeking a good salary, benefits and job security are good examples of external regulation (Chen, 2014). On the other hand, *introjected regulation* means that despite the existence of an external control there is an element of self regulation that encourages a person to do something in order to feel worthy and proud. Introjected regulation is generally connected to self-related judgemental feelings about an activity (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Another type of extrinsic motivation, *identified regulation*, includes identifying a personal goal and working towards that because it has an external benefit (Gagne *et al.*, 2010). Finally, *integrated regulation* refers to a situation where a regulation becomes part of the self and congruent with one's

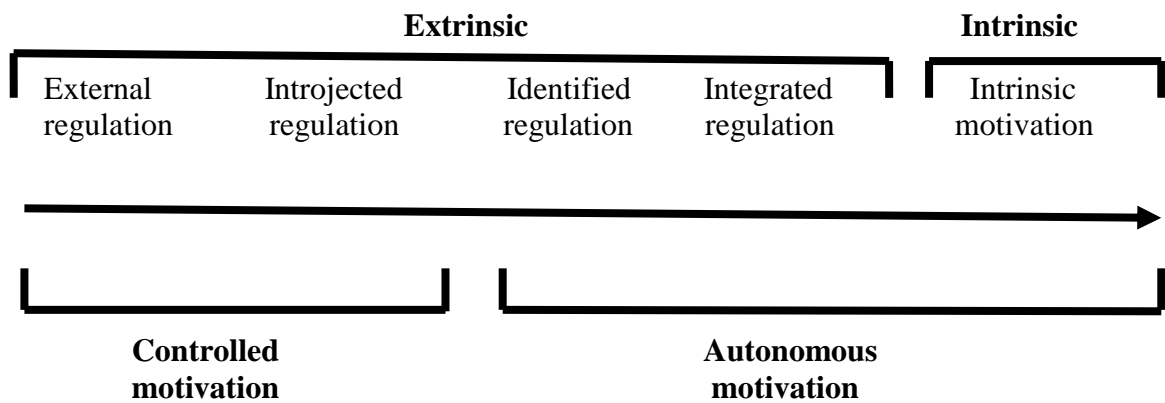
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<sup>13</sup> For an overview of some well-developed motivational theories, refer to Gagne and Deci (2005) and Dinibutun (2012).

values and needs. In other words, a person can be extrinsically motivated but he/she is nevertheless still self-determined to do an activity (Gagne and Deci, 2005).

*Intrinsic motivation*, at the opposite end of the spectrum, refers to an inherent satisfaction and a natural motivation to do an activity that is ‘catalyzed’ rather than ‘caused’ internally. Intrinsic motivation is defined in reference to the performance of something because the task in itself is ‘interesting or enjoyable’ (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p. 55). Intrinsic motivations are described as ‘internally-mediated personal benefits and satisfaction that an individual derives from their work’ (Bullock *et al.*, 2013, no page number). This construct does not seek an external outcome. According to Ryan and Deci (2004), the tendency for individuals to experience autonomy (i.e. self-determination) in their behaviour and, at the same time, to develop a sense of competence (i.e. self efficacy) are the basic psychological elements in maintaining or enhancing intrinsic motivation. This is similar to the concept of the protean career, which argues that one’s career choices are directed by his/her internal orientations (Hall, 2002).

The first two types of extrinsic motivation, external and introjected regulations, are described as being types of ‘controlled motivation’ and non-self-determined, whereas the third and fourth types of extrinsic motivation, identified and integrated regulations, are described as being ‘autonomous motivation’ and are similar to the most self-determined intrinsic motivation (Gagne *et al.*, 2010, p. 630 ). The difference, however, between the two categories (extrinsic and intrinsic) is that all the extrinsic motivation types (external, introjected, identified, and integrated), even the most autonomous types, seek an external outcome apart from the satisfaction of the activity (Gagne and Ryan, 2005). As de Charms (1968) argues, extrinsically motivated behaviours have an external perceived locus of causality. When the activity is a means of reaching another goal and not a goal or aim per se, motivation to act can be described as extrinsic (Frey and Osterloh, 2002). See Figure 4.1 for the self-determination continuum.



**Figure 4.1: The self-determination continuum.**

In this study, the two major categories of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are used to explore the career choices of MBA students in Saudi Arabia. With regard to the extrinsic motivational factors, the study aims to examine the tangible and material rewards from work, in contrast with the abstract psychological benefits (i.e. intrinsic). As a result, the first two types of extrinsic motivation are used within the extrinsic scale. They include factors that externally regulate career choice motivations and factors that are introjected to individuals. Although the researcher acknowledges the importance of the next two extrinsic stages (identified and integrated regulations), due to their proximity to intrinsic motivation they have not been included in the design of this aspect of the study. This approach has been used recently in work settings (Chen, 2014; Gagne *et al.*, 2010).

In career studies, the two forms of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) described above have been extensively used (e.g. Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Al-Asfour, 2012; Lee and Wilkins, 2011; Infeld *et al.*, 2009; Word and Park, 2009; Simpson *et al.*, 2005). It has been suggested that by fulfilling both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, individuals are expected to reach job satisfaction and exhibit high performance levels (Goetz *et al.*, 2012; Word and Park, 2009; Gagne and Deci, 2005); thus, individuals are likely to seek jobs that satisfy their needs and expectations. For example, those who are strongly intrinsically motivated might strive to choose work which allows them to meet their internal needs such as developing new skills, practicing creativity and becoming deeply engaged in their work. On the other hand, individuals who are strongly extrinsically motivated may seek jobs that satisfy their extrinsic needs, such as monetary rewards (Amabile *et al.*, 1994). A misfit between personal needs and work rewards is likely to result in stress, decreased productivity, job dissatisfaction and high turnover (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Van Harrison, 1985). Extrinsic motivation, especially in the form of salary and financial benefits, is an



important motivator in making career-related decisions (Rynes *et al.*, 2009) but is not considered the only determinant in accepting or rejecting a job (Judge and Bretz, 1992). Job security, type of work and advancement opportunities are suggested by others to be as important as financial rewards in determining one's career choice (Judge and Bretz, 1992; Jurgensen, 1978).

Some scholars argue that intrinsic factors make a person much more likely to be motivated and perform better in comparison to those who are extrinsically motivated (Vallerand and Ratelle, 2004; Deci and Ryan, 2000). Other studies have indicated that extrinsic factors increase job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Gagne *et al.*, 2010; Tremblay *et al.*, 2009; Clark, 2007). A study conducted by O'Reilly and Caldwell (1980), however, examined the relationships between intrinsic and extrinsic career choice motivations and job satisfaction and commitment among 108 American MBA graduates and found that both intrinsic and extrinsic career choice factors were positively related to subsequent satisfaction and commitment. In general, intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors can pull, or attract a person to a specific job depending on the level of congruence between the organisational goals and individuals' preferences (Bright, 2008).

#### **4.4 Application of SDT in Studying Career Choices**

Although self-determination theory (SDT) does not draw clear cut boundaries between amotivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation, the majority of studies using this theory reside in psychological and educational fields that examine behaviours (Ryan and Deci, 2004; Vallerand and Ratelle, 2004). In the career literature, the extrinsic/intrinsic dichotomy is used widely (Jin, 2013; Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Lee and Wilkins, 2011; Nawab *et al.*, 2011; Infeld *et al.*, 2009; Word and Park, 2009); however, these career studies fail to address the hierarchical level of autonomy within the extrinsic motivation category, underestimating the differences that exist between different types of extrinsic motivation. This negligence has been pointed at by Chen (2014), and the dichotomy itself and what should be described as intrinsic or extrinsic has been subject to criticism (Reiss, 2012; Reiss and Havercamp, 1998; Kanungo and Hartwick, 1987). Despite criticisms of unclear boundaries between extrinsic and intrinsic motives, the dichotomy has been a popular framework in the career literature because it offers practical solutions for quantitative and statistical studies (e.g. Acar, 2014; Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Goetz *et al.*, 2012; Twenge *et al.*, 2010; Simpson *et al.*, 2005; Frank and Lewis, 2004).

In this research, a dichotomy of extrinsic-intrinsic motivations has been applied in a different way to the studies mentioned above. Here, by 'extrinsic', the researcher refers to the motivations that strictly fall into the first two types of extrinsic category (external and introjected regulations) devised by Ryan and Deci (2000). On the other hand, by intrinsic, the author refers to those work-related motivations that have no external benefits. The reasons for adopting the extrinsic-intrinsic dichotomy in this study are presented below:

Firstly, the aim of this research is to analyse personal motivations as well as institutional effects on the career choices of Saudi MBA students in Saudi Arabia. The population under study are expected to be highly motivated by financial and materialistic rewards (Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Al-Asfour, 2012; Achoui, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Al-Ajaji, 1995) and as such it was decided that focusing on the least autonomous type of motivation can best describe the extrinsic motivation of Saudi managers.

Secondly, it is important to differentiate between intrinsic, external and introjected regulations as much as possible in order to make the points understandable and clear for the analysis; thus, the identified and integrated regulations were not considered in the design of the research because of their similarity with the intrinsic category; the use of identified and integrated regulations could have created confusion between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Devising a dichotomy corresponds with the main research question, which seeks to understand which type of motivational factors influence career choices between public and private sectors and motivational differences between men and women. Thirdly, the institutional aspect of this study analyses the social, political and cultural structures of Saudi Arabian society and how they regulate motivations externally. At the same time, this research seeks to analyse the level of autonomy and competence among individuals and to what extent their intrinsic motivations are informed by these structures; therefore, the institutional framework of this study needs distinctively defined constructs.

Finally, although there are various long-lasting problems with employment in Saudi Arabia such as high turnover, low motivation and lack of productivity at work (Mousa, 2013a; Hertog, 2012; Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Ramady, 2005), studies conducted in the country show that it is possible to address these issues and offer practical solutions by using the intrinsic and extrinsic dichotomy (e.g. Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Al-Asfour, 2012; Jehanzeb *et al.*, 2012). To understand what motivates Saudi MBA

students when choosing their future careers within the public or private sector, a discussion of the motivational factors used in this research is presented in the next section.

#### **4.5 Personal Motivational Factors in This Study**

The 14 extrinsic and intrinsic motivations used in this research are extracted from the career literature and will be discussed further in the following two sections. The items considered for each category in this framework have been selected on the basis of their importance in this study, especially in relation to the context and sample. In the current research, extrinsic motivations include materialistic and financial rewards that come from work such as salary, benefits, job security, promotions, work conditions, job location, and working in a prestigious organisation. Intrinsic motivations include the psychological and abstract job benefits such as job autonomy/independence, job responsibility, creativity, opportunity for interesting and challenging work, a sense of achievement, personal growth and development, and opportunity to serve society.

The classification of these 14 items as either intrinsic or extrinsic has been done on two bases: Firstly, the major stream of previous studies that used this dichotomy in classifying the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors was followed (e.g. Cummings and Worley, 2015; Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Jin, 2013; Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Al-Asfour, 2012; Nawab *et al.*, 2011; Word and Park, 2009; Simpson *et al.*, 2005; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Frey, 1997); secondly, the researcher finalised this categorisation by employing principal component exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with a Varimax rotation to analyse the factor loadings of the selected motivational items on the two dimensions.

Figure 4.2 shows the 14 intrinsic and extrinsic motivational items used in this research. A further discussion of these motivational factors, including their definitions and importance within the study context, will be presented in the following subsections.

<b>Intrinsic Motivations</b>	<b>Extrinsic Motivations</b>
<b>Job autonomy/Independence</b>	<b>Salary</b> (external regulation)
<b>Job responsibility</b>	<b>Benefits</b> (health insurance, car, housing, bonus etc.) (external regulation)
<b>Opportunity for creativity</b>	<b>Job security</b> (external regulation)
<b>Interesting and challenging work</b>	<b>Opportunity for career advancement</b> (promotions) (introjected regulation)
<b>Sense of achievement</b>	<b>Work conditions</b> (work environment & working hours) (external regulation)
<b>Opportunity for personal growth and development</b>	<b>Job location</b> (external regulation)
<b>Opportunity to serve society</b>	<b>Work in a prestigious organisation</b> (introjected regulation)

**Figure 4.2: Personal career motivations.**

#### **4.5.1 Intrinsic Motivational Factors**

In this section, the seven intrinsic items are presented with their definitions and importance in this research.

##### **1. Job autonomy/ independence**

Job autonomy means having a great deal of freedom and independence to plan, schedule and make decisions about the best way in which one can perform a task and accomplish a goal, i.e. being in charge of him/herself (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006; Hackman and Oldham, 1980). The importance of job autonomy as an intrinsic motivational factor is due to its positive association with a number of beneficial results such as job performance and organisational commitment (Humphrey *et al.*, 2007). Jobs with great levels of autonomy provide a sense of responsibility and high job satisfaction (Sisodia and Das, 2013; Wicker, 2011). On the other hand, the absence of job autonomy may result in stress and exhaustion (Humphrey *et al.*, 2007).

## **2. Job responsibility**

In this study, job responsibility or empowerment refers to ‘giving employees increased decision-making authority with respect to the execution of their primary tasks’ (Wall *et al.*, 2002, p. 147). Jobs with greater autonomy generate greater job responsibility (Wicker, 2011; Hackman and Oldham, 1980). According to Clark (2007), employees with a higher level of job responsibility show increased satisfaction and positive attitudes towards their careers. In addition, being intrinsically motivated by having more job responsibilities and power is positively associated with high performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and innovation (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2013; Lawler *et al.*, 1995). Also, jobs characterised by higher levels of responsibility and authority are likely to lead to lower levels of turnover (Bowen and Lawler, 1992).

## **3. Opportunity for creativity**

Creativity can be defined as ‘the development of ideas about products, services, practices, processes, and procedures that are judged to be (a) original and novel, and (b) appropriate and potentially useful’ (Joo *et al.*, 2014, p. 299). Having the opportunity to be creative is strongly related to the degree of autonomy that the job provides (Unsworth and Parker, 2003). Previous literature indicated that individuals are at their highest level of creativity when they are intrinsically motivated by experiencing interest, excitement and a challenge in the performed tasks as well as having job autonomy (Parker *et al.*, 2001; Sheldon *et al.*, 1997; Deci and Ryan, 1991).

## **4. Interesting and challenging work**

Employees who are intrinsically motivated are those who do the task because it is interesting and enjoyable (Gagne *et al.*, 2010). When daily work and activities are characterised as being interesting and meaningful, employees are likely to be more involved in such tasks and contribute to the achievement of organisational goals (Laschinger *et al.*, 2000). Doing interesting and challenging work is likely to result in creative outcomes (Deci and Ryan, 1991) and job satisfaction (Savery, 1989). On the other hand, a lack of interest and challenge reduces work productivity, job satisfaction, and performance. Consequently, unsatisfied employees are anticipated to resign from their current jobs to look for new career opportunities that satisfy their personal needs and motivations (Clark, 2007).

## **5. Sense of achievement**

Sense of achievement as an intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's psychological need to accomplish a work task or a challenge successfully and receive recognition from others, leading to self-actualisation (Bass and Bass, 2008; Isaacs, 2003). This intrinsic factor is important in this study for two reasons: Firstly, skilled Saudi managers are scarce in the private sector (Hertog, 2012), where foreign workers constitute around 87% of its composition (SAMA, 2013) and most managerial positions are filled with foreigners (Iles *et al.*, 2012). Saudi MBA students as new managers need to prove that they are qualified, competent and successful in taking high level managerial roles and achieving their personal goals as well as organisational goals; secondly, Saudi women have been suffering from legal, educational and cultural constraints which have marginalised their participation in the labour market and limited their career opportunities (AlMunajjed, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008). Achieving high level management roles or organisational leadership by Saudi women in a male-dominated society is a great challenge. Having the determination and the strong motivation to achieve that goal and actualise themselves might be of interest to Saudi women; moreover, fulfilling this motivational factor leads to job satisfaction (Savery, 1989) and high productivity (Isaacs, 2003). The current research, therefore, examines the influential role in career choice of 'sense of achievement' as one of the critical intrinsic motivational factors.

## **6. Opportunity for personal growth and development**

This motivational factor refers to one's need to improve and develop his/her career competencies by training, learning new skills and languages, and gaining new experiences (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). Previous career choice literature conducted in different contexts showed this factor to be highly important to MBA students (Agarwala, 2008; Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2008; Dexter *et al.*, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). One of the main obstacles to the employment of Saudis in the private sector is a lack of skills (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008), which has made Saudi skilled managers scarce in the labour market, mainly in the private sector (Hertog, 2012; Chaar, 2010; Achoui, 2009). It is, therefore, an aim of this research to examine the importance of the human capital development factor to Saudi MBA students and see how this intrinsic factor may influence their future career choices.

## **7. Opportunity to serve society**

This intrinsic motivation refers to the desire of an individual to find a job that provides the opportunity to deliver a ‘service to people with the purpose of doing good for others and society’ (Hondeghem and Perry, 2009, p. 6). Altruism and going beyond self-interest is part of this intrinsic motivational feeling which aims to serve society and the general public (Andersen *et al.*, 2013; Vandenabeele, 2007). Previous research found a positive association between ‘public service motivation’ and job performance (Perry *et al.*, 2010; Leisink and Steijn, 2009). Employees with higher public service motivation are likely to perform better at work. In Saudi Arabia, a collectivistic society, the dimension of ‘serving society’ includes helping relatives and friends in terms of looking after their interests and facilitating their needs.

### **4.5.2 Extrinsic Motivational Factors**

In addition to the above intrinsic factors, this section presents the seven extrinsic factors adopted in this study with their definitions and importance to this research.

#### **1. Salary and benefits**

Economic gain is one of the most important factors in motivating individuals to accept or reject a job (Rynes *et al.*, 2009; Judge and Bretz, 1992; Jurgensen, 1978). It also significantly influences job satisfaction (Malik *et al.*, 2012). People work to live, and money is what sustains living, privilege, social status, and a sense of security (Judge *et al.*, 2010). In some Western countries, most of the highly skilled workers, including managers, who value high salaries seek employment in the private sector (Ghinetti and Lucifora, 2013; Lewis and Frank, 2002). In Saudi Arabia, similar to other oil countries in the region, salaries in the public sector tend to be higher than in the private sector for low-skilled workers (Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2012; Al-Asmari, 2008). Lucrative jobs in the public sector are often perceived by Saudis as a ‘birthright’ (Mellahi, 2006, p. 108) which, accordingly, makes them reluctant to seek jobs in the private sector (Iles *et al.*, 2012). This desire is accentuated by benefit packages offered in the public sector such as health insurance, housing and transportation allowances which are more attractive (Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008); however, qualified managers might have similar high salaries and other benefits in both large, private

corporations and in public sector organisations, particularly in oil related industries<sup>14</sup> (Hertog, 2012; Achoui, 2009).

Saudi individuals have many social and economic obligations towards their families, parents and relatives; therefore, finding a job that can financially satisfy these social responsibilities represents a priority among Saudis (Fakeeh, 2009). The importance of these two external factors (salary and benefits) to Saudi individuals when seeking new careers has been highlighted in the previous studies conducted in Saudi Arabia (Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Achoui, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Al-Ajaji, 1995).

## **2. Job security**

Job security as an extrinsic (external) motivation is defined here as having a permanent work contract which includes long-term employment in an organisation and a good retirement programme. Empirical research shows that job security is positively associated with job satisfaction (Clark, 2005; Rose, 2005) and is an important factor in career choice decisions (Judge and Bretz, 1992; Jurgensen, 1978). Job security has been highlighted in the previous research in relation to the bureaucratic public sector in Saudi Arabia. For example, Iles *et al.* (2012) indicated that many job seekers in the Arab world, including Saudis, prefer public sector jobs, even if it means waiting for a long time to be employed. Job security has been found to be one of the most important motivations (Iles *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, Achoui (2009) and Al-Asmari (2008) stated that the traditional attraction of the public sector to most Saudi citizens has been due the higher salaries, greater benefits, social status, and job security associated with government employment.

## **3. Opportunity for career advancement (promotions)**

Career advancement or promotion refers to the upward mobility of an employee's position in the hierarchical system of an organisation that improves his/her financial package and ranking and increases his/her responsibility (Malik *et al.*, 2012; Kosteas, 2009). This type of extrinsic factor is introjected as it is related to the desire of ego enhancement through attaining higher positions (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The desire to achieve hierarchical progression (i.e. promotion) is usually linked to a bureaucratic career in which a person would choose to work permanently in one organisation and to

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 6 for the average basic salaries for Saudi managers in the public and private sectors.



progress within that system (Kanter, 1989). Empirical research indicates that promotion is positively associated with job satisfaction and retention of employees (Malik *et al.*, 2012; Naveed *et al.*, 2011). Previous studies show that promotion is a significant factor in motivating Saudi employees (Aamir *et al.*, 2012) and affects the career choice decisions of new applicants (Al-Ajaji, 1995).

#### **4. Work conditions**

In this study, work conditions refer to two aspects: Firstly, work environment, which refers to the sex-segregation rules and provisions for religious activities in workplaces in Saudi Arabia. Women and men have to work in sex-separated spaces in public and private organisations, although this law is more strictly implemented and monitored in the public sector. Each governmental organisation must provide its employees with a space or mosque to perform their daily prayers while at work. Similar to the sex segregation rule, this provision is applied less strictly in the private sector than it is in the public sector. The second aspect of work conditions relates to working hours. In the public sector, working hours are shorter than in the private sector. Previous studies conducted in Saudi Arabia illustrate that shorter working hours with high wages in the public sector make it more attractive to Saudi individuals compared to the private sector (Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Ajaji, 1995).

#### **5. Job location**

Job location as an extrinsic (external) motivational factor refers here to the geographical location of the work. In some studies conducted in Saudi Arabia on *Saudization*, job location has been emphasised (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Ramady, 2005) as a main reason for Saudi individuals' preference for working in the public sector, which has more geographical stability than the private sector. Culturally, Saudi men and women have parental obligations and thus prefer to find a job in the same city as where their parents live (Fakeeh, 2009). Additionally, the lack of public transportation and the difficulty faced by women travelling or moving out of the city for work purposes due to cultural constraints might make job location more important to women.

#### **6. Work in a prestigious organisation**

This type of extrinsic motivational factor is introjected as it is associated with enhancing self-pride by focusing on choosing to work in an organisation due to its

external image and good reputation (Gagne and Deci, 2005). The prestige of an organisation refers to its financial and social reputation (Carmeli, 2005), which has a motivating effect on its employees as it reflects on their social identity and their organisational membership (Haslam *et al.*, 2000). Empirical research shows that working in a prestigious organisation is positively associated with organisational commitment, job satisfaction and affective wellbeing (Carmeli, 2005; Herrbach and Mignonac, 2004). In Saudi Arabia, governmental organisations such as ministries and oil companies are attractive to Saudi individuals looking for new careers due to this prestige dimension that affects their social status (Achoui, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Al-Ajaji, 1995). Large corporations in the private sector, however, such as those in information technology, telecommunication and banking sectors may have the same prestigious image alongside strong financial and market positions.

Having discussed the intrinsic and extrinsic factors adopted in this study, the next section will review how these motivational factors differ among employees and managers working in the public and private sectors. This will be followed by a section on the importance of considering the contextual dimension when analysing career motivations. Saudi male and female individuals are concentrated in the public sector and constitute 93% of that sector, whereas they represent only 13% of the labour force in the private sector (SAMA, 2013); hence, the aim of this study is to examine the institutional and personal motivational factors that shape and direct the future career choices of Saudi MBA students within these two sectors.

#### **4.6 Career Motivations in Public and Private Sectors**

There are differences between employees of private and public sectors (Goulet and Frank, 2002), and work motivations among private and public sector workers vary considerably (Wright, 2001; Rainey and Bozeman, 2000; Ambrose and Kulik, 1999; Wittmer, 1991). Researchers suggest that the employment sectors (private and public) differ in numerous ways, such as through work-environmental factors, organisational roles, internal structures and processes, employee characteristics and reward systems (Nawab *et al.*, 2011; Goodin, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2000). Public organisations offer public goods and services benefitting society, whereas private sector employees are business oriented and engage mostly in economic exchanges of commodities and services. A result of this might be that public employees attribute social importance to their job (Bullock *et al.*, 2013). It is largely

accepted that public sector employees and managers place a higher value on serving society than their private sector counterparts (Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Jin, 2013; Pedersen, 2013; Lee and Wilkins, 2011; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Boyne, 2002; Wright, 2001; Perry, 2000; Rainey and Bozeman, 2000; Crewson, 1997; Perry and Wise, 1990).

Aside from public service motivation, previous research conducted in different contexts has produced mixed results on how employees in public and private sectors are motivated by intrinsic motivational factors such as sense of achievement, job autonomy, interesting work, and personal growth and development. While some studies suggest that public employees and managers give more importance to these intrinsic factors compared to their private sector peers (Frank and Lewis, 2004; Karl and Sutton, 1998), others showed the opposite or found no distinction (Jin, 2013; Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007; Wright, 2001; Khojasteh, 1993; Maidani, 1991). In a recent study across 30 countries, Bullock *et al.* (2013) found mixed results when they analysed the relationship between work sectors (public vs. private) and intrinsic motivational factors (i.e. opportunities for growth and development, interesting work and autonomy). They provided empirical evidence that such intrinsic motivations are not restricted to a specific employment sector for all countries.

Inconsistency can also be found in terms of the extrinsic factors that motivate public and private sector employees. Although several studies have found that public sector employees and managers place less importance on extrinsic monetary rewards than their private sector counterparts (Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007; Borzaga and Tortia, 2006; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Burgess and Ratto, 2003; Boyne, 2002; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz *et al.*, 1998), other works have found the opposite (Jin, 2013; Lee and Wilkins, 2011; Lewis and Frank, 2002; Jurkiewicz and Massey, 1997; Maidani, 1991); some found no major differences in the value that employees of private and public sectors attach to financial rewards (Crewson, 1997; Gabris and Simo, 1995).

In addition to salary, researchers have analysed the importance of job security in attracting individuals to choose a public sector career. The findings of some studies suggest that public employees and managers are motivated by this extrinsic factor (Jin, 2013; Lee and Wilkins, 2011; Lewis and Frank, 2002; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz *et al.*, 1998; Jurkiewicz and Massey, 1997), while other research indicates that there is no difference with regard to job security (Frank and Lewis, 2004; Karl and Sutton, 1998; Gabris and Simo, 1995) or that private sector employees actually place more value on job security than their counterparts in the public sector (Crewson, 1997; Wittmer, 1991).

There are several points that are common to all the above studies. The use of the intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy in public and private sectors is limited to employees' motivational factors only in postemployment settings. Little attention has been paid to the influence of these motivational factors on individuals' sector employment preferences; furthermore, the literature has produced inconsistent results about the similarities and differences between career motivations in public and private sectors. This might be attributed to the different characteristics of public and private sectors in different contexts. Finally, one important shortcoming of the literature examining the work motivations of employees and the intrinsic and extrinsic differences between public and private sectors is that most studies only explore these motivational factors in isolation from the larger political, social and cultural structures of the society within which the studies are conducted. As Perry (2000) stressed, there is a need for more empirical research on work motivation and the inclusion of the broader institutional context in order to better understand motivational differences in public and private organisations.

In this study, it is argued that this intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy is not sufficient by itself to explain the career choice motivations of individuals. Institutional structures (regulative, normative and cultural cognitive) are expected to underpin the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors and, thus, should be considered when analysing these motivations. The next section focuses on some studies that have addressed the wider socio-cultural specificities in analysing the personal intrinsic and extrinsic career motivations.

#### **4.7 Career Motivations and Socio-Cultural Effects**

Social and cultural contexts of different countries affect the career motivations of individuals. When examining the relationship between careers and cultures, Hofstede (1980) argues that cultural differences might affect career attitudes. According to Hofstede, individuals from individualistic countries may attribute high importance to personal goals and social networking, while individuals from collectivistic countries are expected to focus more on job security and group or family interests rather than personal benefits. Similarly, Price (1997) points out that in individualistic cultures, individuals seek personal success and career advancement, independence, financial security, job responsibility, and self-esteem (i.e. intrinsic factors). Conversely, in collectivist cultures people look for greater career stability (i.e. an extrinsic factor).

A comparative study between China and the USA on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations examined university students (Infeld *et al.*, 2009). The authors found that while intrinsic

factors were of high value for American students, Chinese students were far less motivated by intrinsic factors and were more extrinsically driven. In another comparative study between South Asian and UK students, Lightbody *et al.* (1997) indicated that South Asian students placed greater value on the social position obtained from working in a prestigious organisation compared to their British peers, who emphasised more the importance of personal growth and autonomy.

A study conducted by Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch (2008) examined the influence of culture and gender on the choice of a management career among MBA students in seven countries including the UK, the USA, Turkey, Cyprus, Israel, Hungary and India. Although personal skills and education (i.e. intrinsic factors) were the most influential factors among all the students in choosing the MBA as a route to a management career, other factors such as a love of the career, promotion opportunities or financial rewards were rated differently. The findings of the study showed no universality in terms of career choice motivations, and cross-cultural differences were significant across various countries except those that are culturally very similar (Turkey and North Cyprus). Cross-cultural differences were, however, more significant than gender differences in the choice of a career in management. Women rated intrinsic factors such as training, educational opportunities, competencies and abilities in their career of higher importance than men did (Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008).

In Saudi Arabia, only a limited amount of research has focused on the motivational factors of Saudi individuals when making their career choices in public and private sectors. For example, a little empirical research (Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Ajaji, 1995) and a number of theoretical studies (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014; Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Al-Asmari, 2008; Looney, 2004; Mahdi and Barrientos, 2003) have been conducted on *Saudization*. These studies emphasise the importance of some extrinsic factors such as high salary, work benefits, better job security, greater chances of promotion, better work conditions in terms of working hours, and job location in drawing Saudi individuals to the public sector. Fakeeh (2009) argues that some familial and socio-cultural obligations stand behind the importance of such factors to Saudi individuals (see Section 4.5.2 in this chapter). Several points can, however, be made on the above studies: Firstly, the majority of them are theoretical and lack empirical support; secondly, the main focus for all of them is on low-skilled applicants and, finally, all the studies concentrate on extrinsic factors without paying attention to the comparative dimension with the intrinsic factors.

Only a few other studies have examined the importance of some extrinsic and intrinsic factors for Saudi employees. For example, in a study conducted by Aamir *et al.* (2012) in the banking sector of Saudi Arabia, it was found that employees were motivated by both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, although the extrinsic factors were more influential (Aamir *et al.*, 2012). A similar study of public and private banks in Saudi Arabia explored the impacts of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards on motivation and job satisfaction (Jehanzeb *et al.*, 2012). The authors found that rewards had a positive influence on motivation and job satisfaction (Jehanzeb *et al.*, 2012). Al-Asfour (2012) examined intrinsic and extrinsic motivational preferences between domestic and foreign male employees working at a factory in Saudi Arabia. The study showed that both foreign and domestic employees rated extrinsic motivational factors as more important than intrinsic motivational factors. One can notice that these studies focus on the career motivations of public and private employees in work settings; furthermore, no reasons were provided to justify the importance of extrinsic factors for those employees.

Based on the above reviewed studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, extrinsic motivational factors (i.e. salary, benefits, job security, promotions, work conditions, job location, and working in a prestigious organisation) seem to be more important than the intrinsic ones (i.e. job autonomy, job responsibility, creativity, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement, personal growth, and serving society) for Saudi individuals.

So far, there is no research examining specifically the influence of motivational factors (extrinsic and intrinsic) on the future career choices of Saudi MBA students; hence, this study aims to fill this gap in the career literature. In accordance with the collectivist nature of Saudi individuals, in which a person has more cultural obligations and social responsibilities towards his/her parents, family and kin (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Long, 2005), and taking into account the results of the previous reviewed studies conducted in Saudi Arabia which highlighted the importance of the extrinsic factors to Saudi individuals, one can posit that extrinsic motivational factors (i.e. salary, benefits, job security, promotions, work conditions, job location, and working in a prestigious organisation) will be more influential than intrinsic motivational factors (i.e. job autonomy, job responsibility, creativity, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement, personal growth, and serving society) to Saudi MBA students when choosing their future careers. Accordingly, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

**H3: Within the personal dimension, the extrinsic motivational factors will be stronger predictors than the intrinsic motivational factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

## **4.8 Gender and Career Choice**

When looking at how individuals make sense of careers in a changing work environment, gender plays an important role. The literature based in European and North American countries has shown that, firstly, women and men have, historically, differed in their educational experiences (Jacobs, 1999). Although male and female students take the same basic courses in high school, they are not equally distributed across optional courses (Brown and Corcoran, 1997); secondly, studies have shown that women and men tend to work in different industries and jobs and hold different occupations (Reskin and Bielby, 2005; Jacobs, 1995; Jacobsen, 1994; Reskin, 1993). As a result, they differ in the skills and the way they perform tasks related to different types of work (Peterson and Morgan, 1995). For example, men tend to hold more complicated jobs compared to women and are more likely to supervise female workers and hold top positions within the organisation they work for (Reskin and Bielby, 2005). In addition, the way in which women and men are distributed within similar occupations affects wage equality in that men are paid more than women (Simpson *et al.*, 2005; Machin and Puhani, 2003; Brown and Corcoran, 1997).

Cultural perceptions of gender roles serve to shape the early career choices of males and females (Correll, 2001). Traditional gender roles are often maintained by gender stereotypes, which are closely related to the local culture in that the cognitive beliefs around distinctions between what is masculine and feminine shared by members of a specific culture are reflected through these roles (Best, 2004). The reproduction of gender stereotypes comes mostly from societies attributing women with particular traits lacking in men and vice versa. Stereotyped roles such as women being seen as most suited to caregiving and homemaking and, similarly, men being the breadwinners of the family often prejudice the perceived suitability of different occupations for both genders (Schreiber, 1998); thus, the world of women is thought to comprise a certain type of work, mainly involving the maintaining of relationships and caring for others, whereas the world of men underlines individuality, independent accomplishment, original thinking, and achievement of success through competition and hierarchy (Maier, 1997).

Within this vein, Correll (2001) states that the cultural beliefs of a society about gender

roles and work competency influence the perceptions of individuals of their own abilities and skills in performing some jobs. In a comparative study on the banking sectors in Britain and Turkey, Ozbilgin and Woodward (2003) argue that career choices are sensitive to different social constructions of gender and related processes. They assert that in order to understand such processes, it is important to take into consideration the context of the labour market and the organisation together with individual beliefs, cultures, competences and aspirations (Ozbilgin and Woodward, 2003).

#### **4.8.1 Gender and Management in the Arab World**

In the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, traditional norms and cultural beliefs hinder the career progress of women. Such beliefs are manifested in the association of leadership and management competences with men and not women, with the stereotype that women must adopt traits associated naturally with men such as assertiveness, strong motivation and commitment if they wish to become successful managers (Shahine, 1997). According to Ibrahim (1997), social institutions such as schools, families and the media in the Arab world play a large role in promoting such negative orientations towards women's role in society, their careers and their contribution in the social and economic developments of their countries. In Saudi Arabia, as argued by Ahmad (2011), society has a lower expectation of women and limits their roles to being supportive and not leading. This attitude towards the role of women, however, is not restricted to the Arab world and the problem also exists in Western societies (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Vidyasagar and Rea, 2004). In a review of research done on women in management, Berthoin *et al.* (1993, p. 63) points out that 'probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialised countries is the persistent stereotype that associated management with being male'. A consequence of the 'think manager, think male' association (Schein *et al.*, 1996) is that women managers around the globe are mostly found in lower management positions that provide them with few meaningful challenges and limit their access to power (Eagly and Sczesny, 2009; Omar and Davidson, 2001). This is why, according to Burke and McKeen (1994), many women opt for high-level qualifications such as the MBA in order to eliminate those barriers that they encounter in their careers and be well prepared for assuming a high management position so that they can break through the 'glass ceiling'. The next section will provide a review on gender and the choice of the MBA as a route to a management career.



#### 4.8.2 Gender and the MBA

The increase in MBA programmes internationally is an indication of how the qualification is perceived as a worthwhile career investment (Saba *et al.*, 2011; Agarwala, 2008; Simpson and Altman, 2000). Not only does an MBA give graduates the knowledge and skills to become more adept managers and team leaders, but it acts as a powerful means of improving the chances of employability and career success (Agarwala, 2008; Baruch *et al.*, 2005). Unlike men, women are less accessible to informal networks and so, arguably, qualifications like the MBA are even more important for them (Melamed, 1996); furthermore, Fagenson (1990) pointed out that if women are to compete with men, then they too have to develop their management skills.

Still (1992) argued that because women have to be more confident and assertive, following an MBA programme can help to achieve this as it has been shown to be an effective means of increasing self-confidence in women and concurrently reducing sexual discrimination in the workplace (Baruch and Blenkinsopp, 2007; Leeming and Baruch, 1998). Melamed (1996) indicated that because women are often judged more rigorously than men, only those with very high levels of performance, skills and qualifications have better chances of success. For this reason, education is crucial for them.

Some sources have indicated an increase in the number of women who go on to do an MBA (Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Catalyst *et al.*, 2000). In spite of this, women are still underrepresented on MBAs in the West compared to figures in medical and law schools, which are much more balanced (Catalyst *et al.*, 2000). For example, women in the UK and Canada represent only one third of MBA students (Murray, 2013) and this distribution is similar in the USA, the biggest MBA market in the world (Catalyst *et al.*, 2000). Both students and faculty members in business departments are less likely to be female. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business report showed that, internationally, only 36.1% of MBA students and 26% of faculty members were women (AACSB, 2007 cited in Kelan and Jones, 2010). Recent statistics of the 2014 global MBA ranking showed that around 30% of women were in highly prestigious business schools (Financial Times, 2014). Shellenbarger (2008) noted that there have been some initiatives in the USA to try and rectify this, notably women-only information sessions, women's scholarships, women-only courses and the offering of part-time MBA courses run in the mornings so as to attract mothers; however, Ibeh *et al.* (2008) found that, although some scholarships for women were being offered by high-ranking international business schools,

only 10% had centres for developing women leaders, and women-centred programmes were offered in only a third of them.

One explanation of lower enrolments for women in the West onto MBA courses is that 'a female way of thinking' lends itself less readily to the managerial world than does a male mindset (Schein, 2001; Schein *et al.*, 1996). Because of this, women have to adopt attitudes that are stereotypically male (Kilduff and Mehra, 1996). On top of this, MBA professors tend to be men, and the case studies that are used to reflect men's interests and women's ideas are not given credence (Simpson *et al.*, 2005; Catalyst *et al.*, 2000; MacLellan and Dobson, 1997; Smith, 1997; Sinclair, 1995).

Other reasons, ranging from a lack of skills in mathematics to having only a short period of time to recoup their investment if they are going to be mothers, have been suggested as factors in explaining women's failure to take the MBA (Shellenbarger, 2008; Catalyst *et al.*, 2000; Sinclair, 1995). Having said this, a study in some Western countries showed that women pursuing MBAs did not seem to feel that this gender imbalance negatively affected their success, even though they perceived sexist attitudes in their class (JWT, 2005). They were anxious to be seen as equally qualified to their male counterparts and so did not want to be treated differently (JWT, 2005).

#### **4.8.3 MBA Benefits and Differences among Men and Women**

Simpson and Sturges (2007) suggested that, because male and female MBA graduates have different career orientations, this may affect the way in which they view what career benefits the MBA may have. While both men and women valued the enhanced marketability and mobility that the MBA afforded them, women were also particularly likely to stress how the course gave them more confidence, job satisfaction and credibility. They believed that the course was transformational and allowed them to see their organisation, their colleagues and themselves in a new light. Whereas men's confidence stemmed from having a more developed skill set, women's came from a feeling of self-worth. It is also interesting to note that women felt they had gained a voice, whereas men said that they had learned how to give up control (Simpson and Sturges, 2007). Women tend to be more focused on career success as personal development and so are more interested in the intrinsic rewards of work, whereas men tend to value extrinsic elements such as salary, marketability and status (Powell, 2011; Simpson, 2000b; Sturges, 1999; Burke and McKeen, 1994; Russo *et al.*, 1991).

Catalyst *et al.* (2000) found that men with an MBA had a greater advancement in their career than women with an MBA and there was a greater likelihood of men reporting their satisfaction with the degree. Cox and Harquil (1991), however, found that the difference in the career satisfaction of men and women after the MBA was not significant. This was the case even though women had fewer promotions within management; furthermore, Schneer and Reitman (1995) also reported that after controlling the variables of age, starting salary, career paths, performance and experience, men's salary growth was significantly larger than women's.

These findings are supported by recent research in the UK, Canada and USA, which showed significant gender differences in the effect of having an MBA. Women were less likely to gain senior roles, advance in the internal labour market or receive larger salaries as a result of gaining their MBA; in fact, gender disparities in salary were actually larger after the course (Murray, 2013; Simpson *et al.*, 2005). The MBA is particularly a challenging course to study because the graduates need to obtain the position that would hierarchically place them above other employees. This can be a challenge for women in Saudi Arabia when working as managers of male employees since cultural, legal, and institutional challenges work effectively to impede women from developing their educational and career opportunities. In the following subsection, a review of the influential career choice factors of MBA students in different contexts and how these factors differ with gender will be presented.

#### **4.8.4 Gender and Career Choice Factors among MBA Students**

A number of previous studies have identified several factors which affect the career choices of MBA students in different contexts (Agarwala, 2008; Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2008; Tanova *et al.*, 2008; Dexter *et al.*, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). In this section, these studies will be reviewed and the factors affecting the career choices of MBA students in general will be discussed within the intrinsic-extrinsic framework. As gender is considered in this research, particular attention will be paid to gender differences and how career choice factors may vary between male and female students.

Agarwala (2008) conducted a study which examined the factors influencing the career choices of MBA students in India. The findings showed that students rated their skills, competencies and abilities as the most important factor influencing their career choice, followed by the education, training and financial rewards in the career. It was shown by

separate gender-based analyses that there was a difference in the most highly rated factors influencing career choice between Indian male and female MBA students. Male students considered financial rewards to be the most important factor affecting their choice of career, followed by the quality of life associated with their career and, lastly, self-development factors. Female students, on the other hand, perceived their skills, abilities and career competencies as well as their training and education to be the most important influencing factors. Through employing the framework of intrinsic-extrinsic influences on career choices, it appears that extrinsic influences are more important for male students, whereas female students find intrinsic factors more significant in their choice of management career. According to Agarwala (2008, p. 372), these results may be interpreted 'with reference to the traditional view of [a] managerial career as being a male profession'. Women face obstacles to career success not encountered by their male peers (Simpson, 2000a) and the criteria under which they are evaluated are stricter than for men (Konrad and Cannings, 1997). To progress, women need to prove that they have the capability to succeed; hence, intrinsic factors such as education and training are more important for women in helping them improve both their credentials and credibility (Melamed, 1996). The importance of such self-development factors increases specifically in contexts, such as Saudi Arabia, where women need to overcome gender biases and employment inequalities (Tanova *et al.*, 2008).

Ozbilgin *et al.* (2005) conducted a cross-national survey on the key factors affecting the career choices of MBA students in Britain, Israel and Turkey. A list of 20 factors, including individual, institutional and structural considerations was examined. Results showed that MBA students in the three different contexts considered the extrinsic influences of institutional and structural factors less important on their career choice decisions than their own intrinsic human capital and competence to make free choices. According to Ozbilgin and his colleagues, the findings of their study indicated the dominance of neo-liberal ideology in these contexts, which suggests that when the market and individuals are left free from an external force they perform better. Such ideology in these contexts prescribes the significance of individual 'choice' over structural conditions in the career choice process, which undermines the existing structural inequalities (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005).

Similarly, Ng *et al.* (2008) conducted a study on the role of different factors on the management career choice of American MBA students. The study found that students placed a high emphasis on self-development (i.e. education), which is an intrinsic factor.

Male and female students appear to exhibit similar patterns in the factors influencing their career choices; however, material success was more important to men than women. Furthermore, this study found that other people (i.e. family and non-family members) were not influential in career choice decisions. Instead, these decisions are reflections of the independent self of the American students in the process of career choice and the exploration stage (Ng *et al.*, 2008). This finding is consistent with the results from more individualistic societies such as USA, where the emphasis is on the 'self' for career management and direction (Bright *et al.*, 2005).

Similarly, Dexter *et al.* (2007) examined 20 different factors developed by Ozbilgin *et al.* (2005) affecting the career choices of male and female MBA students in eight countries, namely: China, Ghana, Greece, Israel, Korea, North Cyprus, Turkey, and the UK. Apart from China, in which financial rewards were rated as the highest influential factor, findings across all the other seven countries, interestingly, rated 'skills, competencies and abilities', which is a personal intrinsic factor, as the most important one in influencing their management career choices. This is in line with the results of earlier studies which had a larger sample of participants (Kusku *et al.*, 2007; Tatli *et al.*, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005) and which highlighted that individuals are more likely to report personal-level, rather than structural-level, influences on their careers. These studies indicate that cross-national similarities were stronger than differences.

According to Dexter *et al.* (2007), two different reasons might explain the similarities in these cross-cultural studies: Firstly, there is the 'MBA effect', which has a unifying impact due to its recognised acronym and its attractiveness to international students in developed countries; secondly, neo-liberal influences which seek to explain the importance of career choice by locating agency and individualism at the centre of social and structural frames. This is a different finding to that of Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch (2008), who conducted a cross-cultural survey in seven different countries using the same scale of career choice factors developed by Ozbilgin *et al.* (2005). Their main argument was that cross-cultural differences were stronger in influencing career choices than gender differences. Overall, such mixed findings indicate the necessity to conduct more research in this area in order to fully understand cross-cultural differences and similarities.

Although previous studies have examined the 'factors influencing the choice of the MBA as a route to a management career' for male and female MBA students, there is a dearth of research on the motivational factors that MBA students consider important for their future

careers after graduating from the MBA programme. Even less attention has been paid to the motivational influences on the career choices of MBA students in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia; furthermore, studies of career motivation in Saudi Arabia, reviewed previously in this chapter in Section 4.7, neglected the importance of gender (Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Al-Asfour, 2012; Al-Ajaji, 1995). In fact, the paucity of literature in this area has resulted in a lack of understanding about the personal motivational factors that might influence the career choices of male and female Saudi MBA students; hence, more research is necessary to explore the personal motivational aspects and their relationship to gender in countries where conducting research on gender-related issues is a difficult task (Ahmad, 2011; Elamin and Omair, 2010). Such research is of interest because the socio-cultural context of Saudi Arabia is sharply different from that of Western countries (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Alanazi and Rodrigues, 2003) and, consequently, it is anticipated that such research might contribute new insights to the career literature. This study, therefore, aims to achieve this goal and fill the gap in the career literature by examining the motivational factors influencing the future career choices of Saudi MBA students and how these motivations might vary with gender. Based on the above studies and by considering the traditional view that management is a ‘male profession’, female MBA students in Saudi Arabia may find themselves in a doubly difficult situation. Firstly, they need to empower themselves with more skills and training in order to become skilled managers and penetrate the glass ceiling of management. Secondly, the social structure of the country is male dominated and women need to become qualified in order to fulfil a sense of self-actualisation. On the other hand, men in the traditional system of the Saudi Arabian family are responsible for the well-being of its members and, as such, they are more likely to be interested in material and extrinsic factors such as salary, benefits, and job security; therefore, one can posit that extrinsic motivational factors would be more influential in the career choices of Saudi male MBA students, whereas intrinsic motivational factors would be more influential in the career choices of Saudi female MBA students; hence, the following two hypotheses of this research are formulated:

**H4a: Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in extrinsic motivational factors compared to female MBA students.**

**H4b: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in intrinsic motivational factors compared to male MBA students.**

In Section 4.9, a discussion comparing the importance of the previously reviewed institutional and personal factors for Saudi MBA students when making their career choice decisions will be presented. As far as is known, no study to date has been conducted in the literature that examines the importance of institutional factors in comparison with personal motivations for MBA students in Saudi Arabia. This lack of research makes it difficult to understand which factors, institutional or personal, truly matter more to Saudi MBA students when making their career choices after graduating from the MBA programme; therefore, the next section focuses on that comparison.

#### **4.9 Comparing the Importance of Institutional and Personal Factors**

Although a person's career choice is a process of the individual's self-concept (Schein, 1990; Super, 1953), the career decision is often regarded as a family issue in collectivist cultures (Shea *et al.*, 2007; Rehfuss and Borges, 2006; Ma and Yeh, 2005). In individualistic cultures, people are more likely to emphasise individual goals such as career advancement, personal financial benefits, and job autonomy (Price, 1997). Individuals in these cultures are concerned more with material achievements and believe that they are in control of their own future (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Di Cesare and Golnaz, 2003). For example, Ng *et al.* (2008) illustrated in their study that American MBA students make their career choices in a way that is consistent with their individualistic American culture, based on attendance to the self and freedom of choice.

In contrast, individuals from more collectivistic cultures are more likely to give credence to the views of significant others and value family harmony. As a result, they are influenced in their career decisions by other sources such as family members and relatives (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Shea *et al.*, 2007). In collectivistic cultures, individuals tend to subordinate personal interests to group interests and emphasise social and cultural obligations (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Ng *et al.*, 2008; Rehfuss and Borges, 2006). Ituma and Simpson (2009) suggested in their study of career development in Nigeria that the career decisions and choices of individuals in a society with a collectivist nature such as Nigeria may not be principally influenced by the individual career anchors of Schein (1990), i.e. personal motives and interests. Ituma and Simpson (2009) indicated that the burden of obligations to provide support to family members and relatives may exert a greater effect on career decisions.

Surprisingly, no research to date has examined the importance of institutional factors in comparison to personal motivational factors for MBA students in Saudi Arabia. This

paucity of research makes it difficult to understand which dimension, institutional or personal, is more influential for MBA students in Saudi Arabia, where the institutional forces are different compared to the ones in Western countries (Mellahi, 2007). More research is needed to provide new insights to the career choice literature by integrating the personal and institutional dimensions into one framework. This research aims to fill this gap in the career literature by using quantitative research methods to look at the importance of both the personal and institutional motivational factors to Saudi MBA students when making their career choices. Consistent with the previous review, it is expected that individuals from more collectivistic societies, such as Saudi Arabia, would place less emphasis on the self-concept and, consequently, focus more on external (institutional) factors compared to internal factors when determining their career choices; thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

**H5: The institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religious influence) will be stronger predictors than the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

#### **4.10 The Conceptual Framework of This Study**

In this study, by reviewing the literature on career choice, it was found out that a considerable gap exists in relation to the effects of cultural, social and structural factors on career choice in non-Western contexts. The majority of the literature is saturated by theories developed in the West and which focus on the personal perspective (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). This study has adopted a balanced integrative framework by using Scott's (1995) 'institutional theory' with its three pillars of regulative, normative and cultural cognitive and the 'self-determination theory' (SDT) developed by Deci and Ryan (1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000). This research aims to address the structural and cultural factors that might affect the career choice decisions of Saudi individuals.

These factors are of significance due to their importance in the daily decisions of Saudi people and are missing from government policy (i.e. *Saudization*) aimed at tackling the unemployment problem and the lack of managers in the private sector. At the same time, the government policy of *Saudization* did not achieve success in the private sector (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012). Among the reasons for this failure are the low motivations

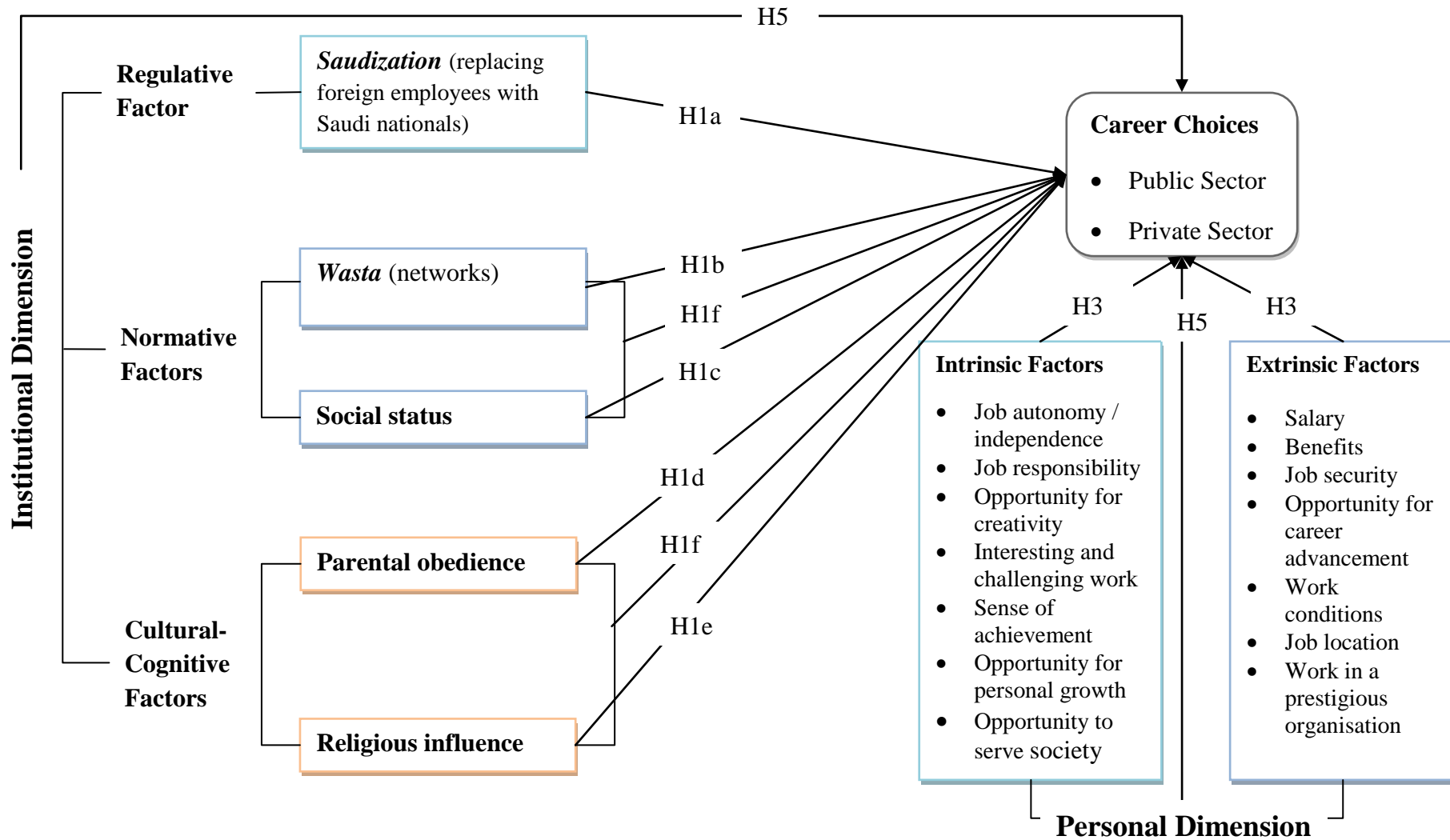


and high turnover due to family reasons among Saudi individuals (Mousa, 2013a; Fakeeh, 2009). The institutional framework that was presented in Chapter 3 offers a useful tool in this study by including these structural and cultural factors simultaneously but lacks a personal dimension; therefore, the intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy was adopted from SDT within this framework to address personal motivational factors that are also likely to be of importance to Saudi individuals when choosing their careers. There is no theory or framework in the career choice literature that combines these two dimensions (institutional and personal motivational).

The two dimensions of the career choice process, i.e. the external (institutional factors) and the internal (personal motivational factors), are included in the study's framework. What is new and unique about this conceptual framework is that it has the potential, by considering the institutional dimension, to be used to explain the career choice phenomenon in the collectivistic contexts where the institutional forces are different from those in the West, are influential and where the traditional organisational career path still exists and is dominant (Rodrigues and Guest, 2010; Ituma and Simpson, 2009; Baruch, 2006). At the same time, the framework does not ignore the personal dimension of the process, which is the main focus in Western individualistic contexts (Park and Rothwell, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Hall, 2002; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996).

In the current research, it is argued that integrating the institutional and personal dimensions of the career choice process would provide complementary insights. Each is addressing the career choice process from a different angle. Accordingly, this fusion of the two dimensions is represented by the conceptual framework of this study as shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Conceptual framework of the study.



This conceptual framework is divided into three components; namely, the institutional dimension, the personal dimension and career choice. The institutional dimension, as presented in Chapter 3, is represented by the three institutional pillars of regulative, normative and cultural cognitive factors. Regulative factors include *Saudization*, normative factors include *Wasta* and social status and, finally, the cultural cognitive factors include parental obedience and religious influence. The institutional dimension variables of this study were explored in Chapter 3. They are likely to be perceived as being significantly influential for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices.

The personal dimension of the conceptual framework is represented by the dichotomy of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors adopted from SDT. Intrinsic motivations include the more subjective and abstract outcomes of the job such as job autonomy, job responsibility, creativity, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement, opportunity for personal growth, and the opportunity to serve society. On the other hand, extrinsic motivations include the more objective and tangible career rewards such as salary, benefits, job security, promotions, work conditions, job location, and work in a prestigious organisation.

With regards to the career choice variable, the conceptual framework takes into consideration whether, once graduating from the MBA programme, respondents prefer to work within the public or private sector. This binary scale has been adopted from previous literature (e.g. Jin, 2013; Van der Wal and Oosterbaan, 2013). Since by taking an MBA programme respondents had already chosen a management career, the researcher is interested in further exploring the influence of institutional and personal factors on respondents' career choices as future managers within the two sectors (public and private).

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the personal dimension of the career choice process, which is defined within the intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy adopted from 'self-determination theory', developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) and Ryan and Deci (2000). Intrinsic motivation refers to the reasons behind the drive one feels to perform a job because the job itself is interesting and enjoyable. They are abstract factors which satisfy psychological needs such as job autonomy, sense of achievement, and opportunity for creativity. In contrast, the extrinsic motivation refers to the material rewards that are gained from doing a task rather

than actual enjoyment of the task itself. Examples of extrinsic motivational factors include salary, job security, and work conditions.

Career motivations in the public and private sectors, as well as the influence of culture on these motivations, were discussed in this chapter. Inconsistent results were found in terms of the distribution of intrinsic and extrinsic factors between employees and managers of public and private sectors in different contexts; however, the literature on career choice in different countries shows that cultural specificities have implications in career choice motivations. In individualist cultures, there is more focus on individual advantage, independence, personal success, and responsibility. Conversely, in collectivist cultures, people emphasise group interests and job security. A few studies found that extrinsic motivations such as salary, job security, promotions, and work conditions are important for Saudi individuals (Iles *et al.*, 2012; Achoui, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Al-Ajaji, 1995).

Agarwala's study of MBA students (2008) showed that women are motivated more by intrinsic factors compared to men. According to the literature, an explanation of this tendency is that women are inclined to focus more on increasing their personal managerial skills, abilities and qualifications rather than focusing on material rewards, which men seem to value more. This study built on that literature when assuming that Saudi women would be influenced more by intrinsic factors, whereas Saudi men would place a greater value on extrinsic motivations.

Finally, a comparison was made between the institutional and personal dimensions in relation to Saudi MBA students when making their future career choices. In individualistic Western countries, the self-concept is the primary focus, whereas in collectivist cultures such as Saudi Arabia, attending to the group and fulfilling cultural obligations and responsibilities towards family and relatives are likely to occupy a higher priority than the individual factors. Accordingly, the current study suggests that the institutional factors will be more influential than the personal factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

Overall, the literature on career choice informs both the research questions and hypotheses adopted in this research. Further reference to the career choice literature can be found in Chapter 7 of this thesis, where research findings will be discussed. In Chapter 5, the methodological approaches undertaken in this study will be discussed.

## **Chapter 5: Methodology of Researching MBA Students’ Choices in Saudi Arabia**

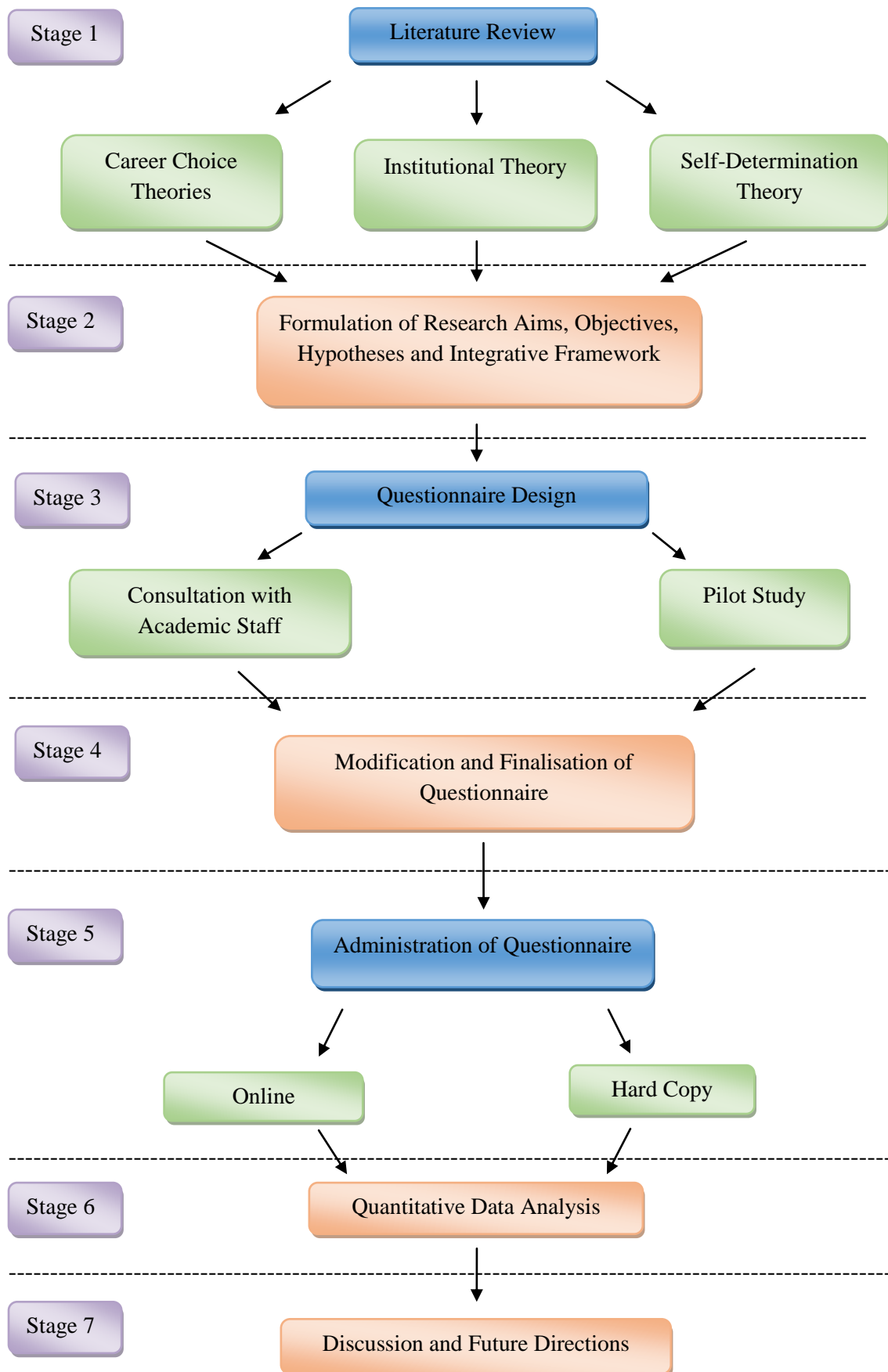
### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapters, relevant theories were reviewed and evidence was provided in support of the hypothesised influence of the institutional factors and personal motivations on the career choices of Saudi MBA students. This chapter lays out the methodological approach used in this research and explains the overall design used for testing the conceptual framework of this study. Informed by positivist philosophy, this research takes a quantitative approach to analysing career choice. Cross-sectional surveys (hard copy and online) with 273 MBA students were conducted in Saudi Arabia in 2013. A pilot study was carried out with 42 male and female students. In this chapter, the research questions and hypotheses, research design and strategy, including questionnaire design, sampling, validity and reliability as well as field work are discussed. The chapter concludes by presenting the response rate and demographic information for the main study, followed by the ethical considerations and statistical analysis techniques.

### **5.2 Research Design**

The research design is the plan or the outline used for achieving objectives and answering questions (Cooper and Schindler, 2013). It is the structure or framework within which a particular problem is resolved (McDaniel and Gates, 2012). In this study, by reviewing the literature on career choice, it was found that a considerable gap exists in relation to the effects of cultural, social and structural factors on career choice in non-Western contexts. The majority of the literature is saturated by theories developed in the West focusing on the personal perspective (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). This study has adopted a balanced integrative framework by using Scott’s (1995) institutional theory with its three pillars of regulative, normative and cultural cognitive (see Chapter 3) and the ‘self-determination theory’ developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) with its intrinsic and extrinsic dichotomy (see Chapter 4); hence, with a questionnaire design, five research questions generated from the relevant literature review were outlined. From each research question a number of hypotheses were derived (McDaniel and Gates, 2012). As De Vaus (2014) argued, social research needs a structure before data collection can begin. The positivist paradigm informs the methodological approaches of this research, and quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis were used.

The researcher is Saudi Arabian, which might make it impossible for him to suspend his personal judgment and decision making throughout the research process such as when considering the cultural constraints in Saudi society in conducting research or accessing female participants; however, despite the cultural knowledge of the researcher of the study context and its application in the design of this project, it is believed that current employment policies and practices in relation to the institutional and personal motivational factors can be assessed in the same way as natural phenomena. It could be argued that there are facts that can be gathered about career choice which can be objectively tested. The research design of this study is demonstrated in Figure 5.1.



**Figure 5.1: Research design.**

### **5.3 Research Philosophy**

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the dynamics of career choice for Saudi MBA students. There are two major epistemological paradigms that dominate the literature; namely, positivism and interpretivism/phenomenology (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). This study uses a positivist paradigm, based itself on an approach employed in the natural sciences which views social reality as existing independently of human knowledge. Positivism assumes that facts about the social world exist and can be both analysed and gathered independently of those who provided the facts (May, 2011; Gill and Johnson, 2010). The positivist paradigm underpins this research in order to help increase understanding of the career choices of MBA students by measuring how they respond to the pre-defined variables derived from the existing theories (institutional and personal motivations). More specifically, in this study, a hypothetico-deductive approach is applied. Firstly, different hypotheses in relation to institutional and personal motivational theories were developed to allow testing and explanation of the regulations. Secondly, a careful operationalisation of research concepts was made. Thirdly, institutional and personal motivational concepts were measured and, finally, these hypotheses were tested and the theories used in this research were verified by the new results (Jankowicz, 2005).

### **5.4 Rationale for Choosing a Quantitative Approach**

One of the primary aims of this study was to measure the study variables such as *Saudization*, *Wasta* and personal motivations objectively, independent from the researcher's influence. The predominant advantage of the quantitative approach is its suitability for standardised statistical analyses which enable the results to be objectively compared between the institutional and personal dimensions and can be generalisable to a wider population; this would have been impossible with a qualitative design. Accordingly, a quantitative approach is adopted to predict what informs Saudi MBA students' careers by considering the study aims, objectives and questions that seek to explain the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The quantitative approach has been widely used in similar studies examining the influence of pre-defined factors on the career choices of MBA students to analyse statistically which factors are the most influential ones (Van der Wal and Oosterbaan, 2013; Agarwala, 2008; Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2008; Tanova *et al.*, 2008; Dexter *et al.*, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). In this research, both the institutional and personal



motivational variables are assessed in terms of reliability and validity; hence, accuracy in a quantitative analysis is applied through sampling considerations, researcher objectivity and precision in statistical techniques (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

## **5.5 Sources of Data**

While research on and new conceptualisations of careers are developing in Western contexts, empirical research into career development in non-Western countries remains relatively under-developed (Ituma *et al.*, 2011; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Wong, 2007). As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, much of the existing research has been limited to career experiences of individuals mainly in North America and Europe. Little attention has been paid to the Arab world, particularly Saudi Arabia (Iles *et al.*, 2012). Because the social and cultural factors of Saudi Arabia are different from those of the West, this study is anticipated to contribute new insights to the career literature. In order to obtain information and data relevant to the development of the research questions into institutional and personal factors affecting the career choices of Saudi MBA students in Saudi Arabia, the undertaken study has used both primary and secondary sources of data.

### **5.5.1 Secondary Data Sources**

Secondary data used in this study includes databases, journal articles, textbooks, websites, government statistics, policy reports and scattered data obtained from different universities and the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia. This information supplemented the primary data collected by the researcher. The secondary data were important in the development of the research questions and hypotheses as well as in expanding the scope of the research in relation to institutional and personal variables used in this study. Secondary data should, however, also be considered within its limitations. These can include the potential of the researcher to lack familiarity with the data and the researcher's inability to have control over the quality and validity of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

### **5.5.2 Primary Data Sources**

The primary data in this study were collected by using a cross-sectional survey conducted with 273 MBA students at 10 universities across five cities in Saudi Arabia. Primary data were gathered due to the absence of any data about MBA students in Saudi Arabia. The results are used to support or reject this study's hypotheses (Thursfield, 2000). As will be discussed further in the coming sections, a survey method was employed as the main tool

of data collection in this study. This is supplemented by the researcher's knowledge of the setting and the secondary data explained above.

## **5.6 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The manner in which research is designed and the methodology adopted is fundamentally dictated by the type of questions being asked (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Five research questions and a series of hypotheses were formulated to examine the influence of the institutional and personal factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The researcher constructed a number of composite variables to be used in the hypothesis testing: *Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, religious influence and intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Each variable and the relevant hypotheses were developed in light of the relevant literature discussed in Chapters 3 and 4; thus, the dependent (response) variable in the study is the participants' future career choice preferences, while the institutional and personal factors that are likely to predict those choices remain the independent (explanatory) variables. The five research questions and relevant hypotheses are presented below.

**Q1: To what extent do the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students?**

This research question is reframed into the following six hypotheses:

**H1a:** The perceived importance of *Saudization* will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

**H1b:** The perceived importance of *Wasta* (social networks) will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

**H1c:** The perceived importance of obtaining social status will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

**H1d:** Parental obedience will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

**H1e:** The perceived importance of religion will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

**H1f:** Within the institutional dimension, the cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and religion) will be stronger predictors than the regulative (*Saudization*) and normative factors (*Wasta* and social status) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

**Q2: What is the effect of gender on the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices?**

This research question is reframed into the following five hypotheses:

**H2a:** Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Saudization* when making their career choices compared to female MBA students.

**H2b:** Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Wasta* when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.

**H2c:** Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of obtaining social status when making their career choices compared to female MBA students.

**H2d:** Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in parental obedience when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.

**H2e:** Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of religion when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.

**Q3: To what extent do the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students?**

This research question is reframed into the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Within the personal dimension, the extrinsic motivational factors will be stronger predictors than the intrinsic motivational factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

**Q4: What is the effect of gender on the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices?**

This research question is reframed into the following two hypotheses:

**H4a:** Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in extrinsic motivational factors compared to female MBA students.

**H4b:** Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in intrinsic motivational factors compared to male MBA students.

**Q5: Are the institutional factors (*Saudization, Wasta, social status, parental obedience, and religion*) more influential than the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students?**

This research question is reframed into the following hypothesis:

**H5:** The institutional factors (*Saudization, Wasta, social status, parental obedience, and religion*) will be stronger predictors than the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

## **5.7 Survey**

The survey method was chosen in this research as the main method of data collection. This section discusses different considerations applied to the design and implementation of this research's main data collection method. These decisions are directed by the research philosophy, questions and objectives (Saunders *et al.*, 2012) and are influenced by the environmental and contextual factors (Alzoman, 2012).

The survey method allows for the standardised and uniform collection of information from a large number of participants and is normally linked with a deductive approach (Neuman, 2014). The survey method is widely used in a range of disciplines, including management,

due to its ability to gather data from a large population in a timely and economical way (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). In light of the research objectives and questions, it was decided that a survey was the most appropriate data collection method due to its predominant use within the deductive research approach (Robson, 2011). It has also been noted that surveys allow the researcher to retain control over the research process in a manner which other methods do not (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012; Oppenheim, 1992).

Surveys hold further advantages over other data collection methods; they enable one to make comparisons by repeatedly applying the survey either in specific situations with the comparative population varying each time or at different times (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). On the other hand, the limitations of the survey method should be acknowledged. Non-response is one of the most important disadvantages of surveys (Dixon and Tucker, 2010). Survey methods can also be subject to misinterpretation by the respondent, which can inadvertently impact the analysis of the data; furthermore, respondents participating in a survey may choose their answers to be in line with hegemonic social norms (Fowler, 2009) and may be influenced by the ‘social desirability bias’, which suggests that participants tend to respond in a way that would be seen favourably by others, mostly in sensitive topics such as religion (Mattis, 2002; Phillips and Clancy, 1972). It has been argued that respondents may not report their beliefs and attitudes accurately in a research survey (Robson, 2011), although this is a problem with any data collection method and cannot be restricted to surveys. Despite some limitations, however, compared to experimental and case studies, surveys offer some advantages in exploring specific relationships and testing hypotheses (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

### **5.7.1 Cultural and Methodological Considerations**

For the present study, using surveys which seek to obtain an objective overview of Saudi MBA students’ attitudes towards institutional and personal influences on their career choices has been considered the most appropriate methodology. Due to several reasons, conducting a qualitative study on this topic was not viable: Firstly, an aim of this research is to generate results which could be relevant to all the MBA students in Saudi Arabia and, therefore, generalisability through a large sample size could be achieved with a quantitative approach, rather than a qualitative one; secondly, because of the location of the researcher (i.e. being based in London) and its distance from the research setting, in addition to the long distances between the participating universities, a survey was the best and most practical data collection method; thirdly, and most importantly, a survey

questionnaire is a suitable tool for collecting data on sensitive topics (Collis and Hussey, 2013; Al-Ghailani, 2005). In this study, there are several sensitive issues on which collecting qualitative data might not have been possible; these include: *Saudization* as a government policy, which people avoid criticising publicly (Fakeeh, 2009; Mellahi, 2007), religious importance, social networks (*Wasta*), social status and parental obedience influences. The researcher's initial communications with MBA students in Saudi Arabia before conducting the survey confirmed the public's sensitivity to the above factors. The majority of them expressed their discomfort in being interviewed and their preference to answer the questionnaire anonymously. The consulted students mentioned that people would either refrain from participating or choose answers that are culturally or politically accepted and would not discuss their true attitudes towards the topics; therefore, the data from the interviews may not reflect an accurate picture of the MBA students. This approach was also useful in tackling the previously mentioned social desirability bias.

Finally, in line with the sensitivity issue, a survey method was chosen over interviews because it enabled the researcher to obtain data from female students. As discussed in Chapter 2, within the Saudi educational system, sex segregation is being enforced by law; therefore for a woman, a face-to-face interview with a male researcher is not possible. Even if interviews with more liberal female students could be arranged, those with stronger religious values would have been left out of the study. This could have made the study biased towards the less religious individuals. In fact, distributing questionnaires to female participants was challenging, and it was done by the university coordinators. Another method to boost female participation was the use of an online survey, which will be explored in this chapter in Section 5.13.1.

### **5.7.2 Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire used here contained closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions offer the respondent a set of answers of which the respondent indicates the answer which best represents his/her views. These types of questions were preferred as they are quick to fill in for the respondents and do not require extensive written answers. It therefore allows the maximisation of responses (Sibson, 2011; Oppenheim, 1992). Closed-ended questions also facilitate data analysis processes which investigate the influence of the predetermined institutional and personal variables on the resultant career choice.

The questionnaire instrument enables participants to take time and think over questions in a way which interview methods may not. This helps respondents consider each item

without the presence of personal contact, which will facilitate respondents feeling at ease (De Vaus, 2014). Questionnaires allow participants to be certain of their anonymity as well as restricting the tendency for them to exhibit bias or error, possibly motivated by the interviewer's behaviour. The necessity of written rather than spoken answers on a questionnaire also allows respondents to express objective viewpoints on particular issues (Sarantakos, 2013). In addition, questionnaires allow broad coverage since researchers can approach a large number of participants simultaneously, more easily, in less time and at lower costs compared to personal interviews (De Vaus, 2014); furthermore, using closed-ended questions allows categorised data to be obtained in a format that enables comparability between the variables and respondents. A limitation of closed-ended questions is that they do not provide the opportunity to discuss answers with the respondents, thus reducing the depth of the data obtained (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The use of closed-ended questions is suitable given the limitations of the present research such as time, cost and sensitive issues; therefore, closed-ended questions decrease these limitations and maximise the response rate.

Furthermore, ambiguous questions have the potential to be misinterpreted and thus result in unreliable answers (De Vaus, 2014). Detailed explanation of how every attempt was made to reduce such unreliability can be found in this chapter in Sections 5.9 and 5.10, where the pilot study and reliability are discussed. When designing the questionnaire, the following issues were taken into consideration:

### **1. The length of the questionnaire**

Attention to different characteristics of a questionnaire is important in eliciting valid responses and increasing the response rate. The length of the questionnaire is important if it is to succeed in obtaining accurate data. If it is too short, then it could potentially produce unreliable results as too few questions may not encapsulate participants' attitudes (Sahlqvist *et al.*, 2011). Having a long questionnaire, however, could bore participants, making them rush their answers to complete it more quickly and result in the production of unreliable data since appropriate consideration would not have been given to each question (De Vaus, 2014).

In the current research, the final draft of the designed questionnaire could be completed within 10-15 minutes, taking into account that the main locations of data collection were at universities during lectures or breaks. The timeframe was a key component that was tested during the pilot study. Individual items' length and clarity

were tested during the pilot study without the use of jargon and academic vocabulary. The clarity of the items is further discussed in Section 5.9 of the pilot study.

## **2. Order of questions**

The order of questions in a questionnaire can affect results in two ways (Bickart, 1992; Billiet *et al.*, 1992): Firstly, the initial questions can provide cognitive cues to subsequent questions; secondly, habituation can affect answers as respondents may start giving the same answers to each item without proper consideration. This problem particularly applies to a series of questions that have similar multiple choices. Participants tend to lose their concentration when they face similar questions and identical choices (Oldendick, 2008; Billiet *et al.*, 1992). To overcome this difficulty, items were presented in a random order in which no item from one construct was placed next to another one from the same category (see Appendix 2 for the questionnaire). While it is understood that this method cannot completely eliminate the challenges of cognitive cues and habituation effects, it could reduce the likelihood of their occurrence to some extent (Oldendick, 2008).

## **3. The language of the questionnaire**

Another consideration was the choice of the language in which the questionnaire was to be written. While acknowledging that the sample was composed of Saudi students whose first language was Arabic, it was felt that the questionnaire was more appropriately presented in English. The rationale for this decision was that the target sample was literate in English. A pre-requisite for being offered a place on any MBA programme at Saudi universities is an English test score of at least 61 (out of 120) in TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) or band 6 (out of 9) in IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) as well as the submission of a GMAT score (Graduate Management Admission Test)<sup>15</sup>. Besides, the curricula of MBA programmes are in English. It was thus decided that the participants' level of English would enable them to answer the questionnaire without difficulty; furthermore, the level of English used in designing the questions was checked with some Saudi Arabian MBA lecturers who were familiar with MBA students' English proficiency. The

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[http://colleges.ksu.edu.sa/BusinessAdministration/Academic\\_Departments/Management\\_Department/Documents/Master%20of%20Business%20Administration-MBA.pdf](http://colleges.ksu.edu.sa/BusinessAdministration/Academic_Departments/Management_Department/Documents/Master%20of%20Business%20Administration-MBA.pdf)



results and feedback obtained from the pilot study confirmed that the choice of language could elicit valid and reliable results.

### **5.7.3 Five-Point Likert Scale**

Scaling refers to a process undertaken to measure an attitude related to a particular phenomenon using equal interval categories and assigning numerical values to responses through which one can compare opinions relative to each other (Schwab, 2011). Within the realm of attitude measurements, there is a wide variety of scales which have been developed from a number of differing theoretical positions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). According to Shafae (2001), the choice of a suitable measuring scale depends on the type of research and its requirements.

However, the most commonly used scale to measure attitudes and opinions is the Likert scale, in which the respondent is asked how strongly he/she agrees or disagrees with a statement (Bryman and Cramer, 2011; Jamieson, 2004). While the Likert scale does indeed offer a simple method by which data may be obtained, there are some debates around what the suitable number of choices in the Likert scale should be (Pearse, 2011). For instance, the use of scales that vary between five and eleven points is preferred over scales of two, three or four points. The former increase the internal consistency and validity and the latter produce lower reliability, validity and discriminating power (Preston and Colman, 2000). The optimal number of response categories is generally stated to be between four and seven (Dawes, 2008; Lozano *et al.*, 2008); however, Neumann (1979) argued that using five-point and seven-point Likert scales offer similar results with respect to means and correlation coefficients. In attitudinal research, using a five-point Likert scale instead of a seven-point is recommended by some authors (Dillman *et al.*, 2014; Neumann, 1979; Jenkins and Taber, 1977). Hartley and Maclean (2006) emphasised that using a five-point scale raises the response rate of any research by up to 90%.

While taking into account the deliberations mentioned above, a five-point Likert scale was chosen for this research. The reasons for choosing a five-point Likert scale were due to the simplicity and ease of collecting data and analysis, reliability and validity issues, its suitability for this study and, finally, its familiarity and wide use in Saudi Arabia.

#### **5.7.4 The Questionnaire Development Process**

In order to develop a survey questionnaire for the purpose of obtaining respondent opinions on a number of topics, some key considerations had to be taken into account, the most important being the type of data which needs to be obtained in order to address the research hypotheses.

According to May (2011), survey questionnaires can be characterised under three separate headings: factual, attitudinal and explanatory. Factual surveys aim to obtain data related to an individual's material situation, attitudinal surveys seek to obtain opinion, and explanatory surveys are theoretically concerned with the behaviour of specific groups, rather than that of the whole population. Explanatory surveys are designed to test and verify hypotheses derived from a theoretical basis.

The primary focus of the current research is to ascertain the importance of the institutional and personal factors which are likely to predict the career choices of the Saudi MBA students in Saudi Arabia; thus, the survey falls across three sectors: factual, as the research seeks to obtain data relating to demographic details of the respondents; attitudinal, as the research seeks to examine the opinions of the target group on factors important to them in the career choice process, and explanatory, as the questionnaire themes are derived from the literature and relate to the pre-defined hypotheses. The explanatory component of the questionnaire remains the dominant typology.

Schwab (2011) discussed the methodological concept of questionnaires from another angle, based on the type of participant: the self-report questionnaire and the observations questionnaire. He argued that the former seeks to obtain data about personal demographic information and viewpoints, while the latter targets the same, yet is applicable to individuals who act as observers (Schwab, 2011).

In the present research, a self-report explanatory questionnaire survey method was implemented; thus, the questionnaire developed was sub-divided in accordance with the themes identified in the literature review in order to test the hypotheses. The survey items are related to the variables that have been used to develop the research hypotheses. The items in the questionnaire have been implemented in order to obtain information pertaining to each of the variables; however, a small number of items are concerned with the background demographic information, as denoted below. The following paragraphs describe each section of the questionnaire:

## **1. Demographic variables**

Section A of the questionnaire comprises 8 items (1-8) which seek to obtain demographic information about the participants; however, the influence of gender on the institutional and personal factors was emphasised due to the reasons mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4. The items in this section included gender, age, marital status, work experience, father's work experience, father's education, city of MBA study, and type of MBA study<sup>16</sup>.

The rationale for focusing on the father's work experience and educational level was due to several considerations: Firstly, posing a question about the participants' mothers is, for male participants, culturally inappropriate in Saudi Arabia. It was, therefore, decided that such a question would be culturally insensitive, irrelevant and eventually might affect the response rate; secondly, the mothers of participants, even those belonging to the younger generation, have not had the opportunity to access the educational system easily. Those who did were concentrated in the public sector and mainly in education (AlMunajjed, 2009); finally, social class and inheritance in the patriarchal Saudi family system is passed through the male members of the family and thus a question on the mother's work experience or level of education would not have yielded relevant data.

## **2. Career choices**

Section B of the questionnaire encompasses one question that addresses the participants' preferred employment sector following completion of the MBA programme. This question took the form of a binary scale which had been adopted from previous career choice literature (e.g. Jin, 2013; Van der Wal and Oosterbaan, 2013). The scale consists of two response options: the public sector and the private sector. By taking an MBA programme, it was assumed by the researcher that the respondents had already chosen a management career even though within the public and private sectors there is a wide array of career options that managers can take, ranging from governmental ministries and oil companies to private sector industries such as telecommunication, banking, foreign companies and family businesses. It was, however, outside the scope of this research to specify these options because it aimed to

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 2 for the questionnaire.

explore the influence of the institutional and personal motivational factors on respondents' career choices between the two main sectors. The question specifically asks what sector the participant would prefer to be employed in after graduating from the MBA programme: (a) the public sector or (b) the private sector. The responses for this item were based on a dichotomous variable and were coded as 0 (public sector) and 1 (private sector).

### **3. Personal motivational factors**

Section C of the questionnaire comprises 14 items relating to both intrinsic and extrinsic personal motivational factors that are likely to predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The 14 personal motivational items are extracted from the career literature as previously discussed in Chapter 4 Section 4.5. The choice was made on the basis of the items' relevance to the context, sample and themes of the study. The items assess the extent to which participants perceive each factor as being important when choosing a career, using a Likert scale for each item. The classification of every item as either intrinsic or extrinsic was made on two bases: Firstly, the major stream of past studies which used a similar dichotomy was followed (e.g. Cummings and Worley, 2015; Chen, 2014; Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Jin, 2013; Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Al-Asfour, 2012; Nawab *et al.*, 2011; Word and Park, 2009; Simpson *et al.*, 2005; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Frey, 1997); secondly, this categorisation was finalised by employing principal component exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with a Varimax rotation to analyse the factor loadings of the selected motivational items on the two dimensions (see Table 6.6. in Chapter 6 for factor loadings analysis). The response scale for each item ranged from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important). This response scale has been used in previous career choice research and is therefore appropriate for the current research (Jin, 2013; Sibson, 2011; Dockery and Barns, 2005; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Lightbody *et al.*, 1997). There are seven items in each categorisation:

#### **a. Intrinsic motivational factors:**

1. Job autonomy/Independence (i.e. being in charge of yourself)
2. Opportunity for personal growth and development (i.e. training, languages, skills and experience)
3. Sense of achievement (i.e. self-actualisation)

4. Opportunity for creativity
5. Interesting and challenging work
6. Job responsibility (i.e. duties, roles, and authorities)
7. Opportunity to serve society

**b. Extrinsic motivational factors:**

8. Salary
9. Opportunity for career advancement (promotions)
10. Work conditions (work environment and working hours)
11. Job security (long-term employment in the organisation, good retirement programme)
12. Work in a prestigious organisation
13. Job location (i.e. geographical location)
14. Benefits (health insurance, car, housing, bonus etc.)

**4. Institutional factors**

Section D includes 31 items relating to the institutional factors previously discussed in Chapter 3. The response scale for all items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items in this section include the following:

**a. *Saudization*.** *Saudization* includes five items which were developed by taking into account the literature that discusses the importance of *Saudization* in Saudi Arabia (SAMA, 2012; Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Mellahi, 2007). The items, drawn from the above studies, measure the perceived importance of localisation laws and regulations for employment to Saudi MBA students when making their career choices. The items are as follows:

1. I think that the *Saudization* regulations will increase my chances of employability.

2. I think that the *Saudization* regulations will widen my career choices.
3. I think that the implementation of *Saudization* has helped Saudi managers in finding jobs.
4. I think that the *Saudization* regulations will limit my career options.
5. I think that the implementation of the *Saudization* regulations has prevented Saudi managers from finding the jobs they want.

**b. *Wasta*.** Eight items were used to measure the perceived importance of *Wasta* (social networks) in the career choice process. These items were adapted from Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) and consist of the following:

1. I would consider using *Wasta* to assist me in getting my career.
2. *Wasta* facilitates most of my daily activities.
3. *Wasta* is important in recruitment and promotion when it comes to career choices.
4. I think that using *Wasta* is unfair to those without connections.
5. I think that *Wasta* should be used less when it comes to recruitment and promotions.
6. In order to get a job that you want, friends or family members in influential positions are needed.
7. When it comes to obtaining a job that you want, who you know (*Wasta*) is more important than what you know.
8. *Wasta* is more important than your qualifications and experiences in getting the job that you want.

**c. Social status.** There are six items which measure the perceived importance of obtaining social status when making a career choice, four of which were adapted from Baruch *et al.* (2005):

1. The choice of my career is important to improve my social status.

2. The choice of my career is important to obtain recognition by society.
3. The choice of my career is important to become influential in society.
4. The choice of my career is important to gain a symbol of status within society.

The remaining two items were developed from the literature (Achoui, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Mellahi, 2000; Ali and Al-Shakhis, 1989):

5. The choice of my career is important to make my family proud of me.
6. The choice of my career is important to make my relatives proud of me.

**d. Parental obedience.** Five items were adapted from Wong and Liu (2010) and were used to assess the influence of parental obedience on career choices:

1. I will never take a job that makes my parents unhappy.
2. I will never consider any job role that causes my parents to worry about me.
3. I will consider the work location when choosing my career because I want to be close to my parents.
4. I prefer to choose a job that enables me to give my parents a good quality of life when they grow older.
5. I prefer to select a job that makes my parents feel proud in front of other relatives and friends.

**e. Religion.** Five items that measure the perceived importance of religion when choosing careers were developed from the literature (Bassey *et al.*, 2012; Hassi, 2012; Sigalow *et al.*, 2012; Binkhuthaila, 2010; Long, 2005) as follows:

1. My religion plays an important role in my daily personal decisions.
2. My daily work decisions would be influenced by my religious ethics.
3. My religious principles play an important role in my career choices.

4. I will not consider working in an organisation whose practices and activities go against my religious principles.
5. I will not consider any job role which conflicts with my religious belief.

## **5.8 Validity**

Validity is referred to as the ability of an instrument to measure what it is designed to measure (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). There are several types of validity tests, however in this study the researcher will rely on face and content validity as explained below.

### **5.8.1 Face Validity**

Face validity is the simple judgment of whether an empirical testing instrument appears relevant to the stated objectives (Neuman, 2014). To achieve this, the questionnaire was reviewed thoroughly by the researcher's supervisors to check the clarity of the items, their appropriateness to fulfil the research aims and objectives and to make sure that the content of the scales reflected the intended meaning.

### **5.8.2 Content Validity**

Content validity refers to the subjective consensus among a panel of professionals or experts that what is intended to be measured is in fact captured accurately by the measurement scales (Cooper and Schindler, 2013). For this research, copies of the questionnaire, along with the study aims and objectives, were distributed to four academic assessors who were familiar with the cultural context of Saudi Arabia. The assessors were asked to focus on the sentences' structures and the cultural meanings of individual items on the scales. As such, all the items were checked linguistically and culturally to make sure that they were valid. As a result, the researcher concluded with the final draft of the questionnaire, implementing some minor revisions suggested by the assessors. For example, a demographic question on the mother's level of education and occupation was deleted because it was culturally sensitive for the male participants, as discussed previously. Another example was the change of wording of an item in the religion scale (item 18 of the institutional factors in Appendix 2). The original sentence was, 'I will not consider working in a non-religious organisation'; the modified item was, 'I will not consider working in an organisation whose practices and activities go against my religious



principles'. The reason behind this modification was to emphasise non-Islamic practices rather than non-religious practices.

## **5.9 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is a fundamental step in the research process. The term 'pilot study' refers to the process of implementing 'a small scale version, or trial run, done in preparation for a major study or to assess feasibility' (Polit and Beck, 2014, p. 387). A pilot study can also refer to the pre-testing or 'trying out' of a particular research instrument (Baker, 1994, p. 182). Implementing a pilot study can develop and test the adequacy of the research instrument while assessing the feasibility of a full-scale study (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002). Additionally, a pilot study is conducted to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and finalise the items to be included in the study instrument. Ticehurst and Veal (2005) state that a pilot study provides a good opportunity to test questionnaire wording, item sequencing and layout as well as helping to gain familiarity with respondents; furthermore, a pilot study is crucial in terms of the success of the statistical analysis of a study as it can estimate variability in outcomes to assist in determining the sample size and also evaluate the suggested data analysis techniques (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002).

The pilot study in this research took place during the summer term in the last week of July 2013 and after obtaining ethical approval from the ethics committee at Brunel Business School (BBS), Brunel University. Of the 42 participants involved in the pilot study, 21 were male and 21 were female. These participants were accessed using convenience sampling of MBA students at a well-established university in Jeddah city. Participants recruited for the pilot study were not included in the main study. The following section presents the results of the pilot study and explains the implications of these results in terms of methodological alterations. The majority of the participants (61.9%) were aged 21–30 and 64.3% were married. These characteristics are similar to those of the main sample. Table 5.1 describes the demographics of the pilot study.

**Table 5.1: Demographic variables for the pilot test sample.**

	<b>Percentages of participants (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	<b>50</b>
Female	<b>50</b>
<b>Age</b>	
21- 25	<b>21.4</b>
26 – 30	<b>40.5</b>
31 – 35	<b>21.4</b>
36 – 40	<b>11.9</b>
41 – 45	<b>4.8</b>
46+	<b>0</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	
Single	<b>33.3</b>
Married	<b>64.3</b>
Divorced	<b>2.4</b>
Widowed	<b>0</b>

### **5.10 Reliability**

Reliability is ‘the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated at a later date’ (Veal and Darcy, 2014, p. 50). According to Bryman and Cramer (2011), the level of consistency that the research instrument holds can be assessed in terms of external and internal reliability. External reliability gauges the level of consistency of a measure over time, i.e. to what extent the researcher should expect to obtain the same result if, on separate occasions or with a different sample from the target population, s/he reapplied the same scale. The internal reliability is concerned with the extent to which each scale within the research measures a single construct or idea through the use of consistent items within the scale (Bryman and Cramer, 2011).

While there is a range of different reliability tests, the most successfully and commonly implemented assessment of the reliability of a measurement scale with multi-point items is that of Cronbach’s Alpha (Bryman and Cramer, 2011; Hayes, 2008). Cronbach’s Alpha calculates the homogeneity or ‘internal consistency’ of a given scale. As pointed out by Bryman and Cramer (2011) ‘A correlation coefficient is then generated, which varies between 0 and 1, and the nearer the result is to 1 [...], the more internally reliable is the

scale' (Bryman and Cramer, 2011, p. 78). The acceptable level of an Alpha is generally dictated to be 0.7 or above (Hair *et al.*, 2011); however, some researchers assert that 0.6 is equally justifiable (Heath and Martin, 1997; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

The present study implemented Cronbach's Alpha values for each scale to ascertain their internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha test was carried out on the data obtained from the pilot study; items which were inconsistent or of decreased reliability were removed or reworded. Further details of these modifications can be found in the following sections.

### 5.10.1 Cronbach's Alpha of the Pilot Study

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were assessed separately for each construct: *Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, religious influence, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. In order to treat the statements which generated negative responses in the same way as those which generated a positive response, negative items on the questionnaire were reverse coded before the reliability assessment.

Cronbach's Alpha was initially carried out on all scales of the questionnaire using the minimum threshold of 0.6 as the desirable Alpha level. As demonstrated in Table 5.2, all the scales of the questionnaire obtained the desired Alpha level or higher.

**Table 5.2: Initial Cronbach's Alpha coefficients from the pilot study.**

Scale	Items	Item number	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
<b>Personal Factors – Extrinsic</b>	Section C: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14	7	.61
<b>Personal Factors – Intrinsic</b>	Section C: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13	7	.67
<b>Wasta</b>	Section D: 2, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 20, 23	8	.83
<b>Social Status</b>	Section D, Part 2: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,	6	.81
<b>Religious Influence</b>	Section D: 3, 5, 9, 15, 18	5	.72
<b>Saudization</b>	Section D: 1, 6, 8, 17, 22	5	.80
<b>Parental Obedience</b>	Section D: 4, 11, 13, 19, 21	5	.71
<b>Overall</b>		42	.77

### 5.10.2 Feedback from the Pilot Study

Some changes were made after receiving written (from both male and female participants) and verbal (from male participants) feedback on the questionnaire, as outlined in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Feedback and resultant alterations.**

Original item	Qualitative feedback	Adapted item
My religion determines my daily work decisions.	Ambiguous wording	My daily work decisions would be influenced by my religious ethics.
I am guided in my career choice by my religious belief.	Ambiguous wording	My religious principles play an important role in my career choices.
I have used <i>Wasta</i> to assist me in getting my current career.	Past tense (some students have no work experience)	I would consider using <i>Wasta</i> to assist me in getting my career.

## 5.11 Sampling

When carrying out empirical research in the social and behavioural sciences, there is a wide range of sampling categories, the choice of which is determined predominantly by the aims, objectives, questions and the design of the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Teddlie and Yu, 2007).

Sampling can be divided into two main typologies; probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, used mostly in quantitative studies, is a strategy in which each member of the chosen population has an equal chance of being included (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Probability sampling allows the data to be representative of the wider population such as in simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, systematic sampling, and cluster sampling (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Lohr, 2011).

Conversely, non-probability sampling is not random and does not provide all members of a chosen population a chance of inclusion in the research. Instead, the sample consists of participants who are easily accessible to the researcher. Non-probability sampling includes snowball sampling, quota sampling and convenience sampling (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In

this study, convenience sampling, which involves using participants who are readily available and accessible to the researcher, is used (Bryman and Bell, 2011). While probability sampling is considered more advantageous because it provides more credible results that are representative of the characteristics of the study population (Saunders *et al.*, 2012), this method may cause a number of difficulties which are particularly relevant to the present study.

In order to implement random sampling, an up-to-date list of all the students undertaking the MBA programme in Saudi Arabia was required. The most important obstacle to conducting a random sampling that would be representative of all MBA students in Saudi Arabia was the absence of an updated sampling frame. Access to such information was not possible because of several reasons: Firstly, a list with the names and contact details of all MBA students could not be obtained from universities because they were not willing to share the details of their students with anyone, and they refer researchers to the Ministry of Higher Education in Riyadh; secondly, the list that is available from the Ministry of Higher Education contains only the number of students studying the MBA in the academic year of 2011/2012; finally, due to financial constraints, time limitations and the vastness of the country, it would not have been viable for the researcher to visit all the universities in different cities and, therefore, a convenience sampling method which allowed access to the maximum number of participants was chosen.

Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 198) stated that convenience sampling is common in the field of business and management and indeed is 'more prominent' compared to probability sampling. The use of personal and informal contacts for research in the Arab world is highly advisable in facilitating access to data, arranging accessibility to participants and gaining the needed cooperation to conduct fieldwork (Zahra, 2011; Sriram *et al.*, 2009). In fact, it has been argued by other researchers that conducting fieldwork and empirical research in the Middle East is a laborious task due to cultural settings, lack of statistical data, bureaucracy and the absence of academic cooperation (Burke *et al.*, 2013; Ahmad, 2011; Alzahrani, 2011; Elamin and Omair, 2010).

## **5.12 Sample Size**

When using non-probability sampling, as is the case with the present study, the research literature offers no definitive guidance on an appropriate sample size (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). The final sample size is often a matter of the researcher's judgement and is dependent on the research questions, objectives and the size of the study population

(Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Lohr, 2011); however, the sample size is a significant characteristic of any empirical research which aims to make inferences about the whole population based on a sample. According to Saunders *et al.* (2012), ‘the larger your sample size the lower the likely error in generalising to the population’ (2012, p. 265). Besides, in this study it was intended to use regression models, which usually require a minimum of 100 participants for obtaining reliable statistical results (Long and Freese, 2006). The aim in the present study was to obtain a sample large enough to enhance the generalisability of the findings to other Saudi MBA students.

The total number of MBA students in Saudi Arabia, as documented by the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia for the academic year 2011/2012, was 2,288 and these were distributed across 16 universities in different cities. Female students constituted around 33% of this number<sup>17</sup>.

As previously discussed in Section 5.11, obtaining access to all 16 universities was not viable within the timeframe and financial constraints of this research; thus, a selection of universities was made, firstly in accordance with the total number of MBA students enrolled in each institution since the distribution of students across universities varies greatly; therefore, it was more economical to target universities with higher populations in order to increase potential response rates. Secondly, the geographical location of the universities was important in the selection process. Riyadh (the capital, located in the middle of the country) and Jeddah (the commercial capital, located on the Red Sea coast in the western province), the two largest and most populous cities in Saudi Arabia, are home to the largest and oldest universities which teach 10 out of the 16 MBA programmes in the country. As a result, these two cities were targeted as the prime locations for conducting the fieldwork. Although not every university in these two cities was included, the well-known established universities were used in the study. In order to expand the variety of data, three other smaller cities in different locations were included in the sample. These included Al-Ahsa (in the eastern province), Al-Baha and Abha (two major cities in the southern part of the country). Thirdly, the personal contacts of the researcher (*Wasta*) were important in gaining access to the academic institutions and facilitating the distribution of the questionnaires. Accordingly, ten universities were elected, as shown in Table 5.4.

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 3 for the detailed numbers of Saudi MBA students at the Saudi universities that offer the MBA programmes.

**Table 5.4: Total number of MBA students at the ten sampled universities.**

No	Location of universities	Sampled universities	Male	Female	Total
1	Riyadh	Riyadh 1 (state)	43	19	62
2	Riyadh	Riyadh 2 (private)	77	58	135
3	Riyadh	Riyadh 3 (private)	47	59	106
4	Riyadh	Riyadh 4 (private)	76	20	96
5	Jeddah	Jeddah 1 (state)	287	123	410
6	Jeddah	Jeddah 2 (private)	218	0	218
7	Jeddah	Jeddah 3 (private)	248	205	453
8	Abha	Abha (private)	134	83	217
9	Al-Ahsa	Al-Ahsa (state)	31	24	55
10	Al-Baha	Al-Baha (state)	122	45	167
—	<b>Total</b>	—	<b>1283</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>1919</b>

### 5.13 Fieldwork

Prior to conducting the field study, the researcher was aware that the research environment in Saudi Arabia requires attention to cultural issues. Alzoman (2012) emphasised the importance of the contextual factors and ground realities that should be considered when choosing the research strategy and conducting the field study. The conducting of research in the Arab world is a challenging task and may be completely different from that done in the West (Budhwar and Debrah, 2005).

In order to target the universities in which fieldwork would be conducted, the researcher contacted the Ministry of Higher Education in Riyadh prior to flying out to Saudi Arabia (in July 2013). Some brief information was obtained about the universities that offer MBA programmes in Saudi Arabia and the number of students in each institution.

The hard copy questionnaires were distributed in the first week of September 2013. Online questionnaires were sent simultaneously to the gatekeepers to distribute among students. The researcher remained in Saudi Arabia for four weeks. The majority of hard copy questionnaires were collected during this time but there were some unreturned

questionnaires which were sent to the researcher by post when he returned to London. Two more weeks were allowed for the administration and collection of the remaining questionnaires. Towards the end of this period, follow up communications were made with the gatekeepers to make sure that as many questionnaires as possible were completed. In the following sections, the questionnaire administration methods are discussed.

### **5.13.1 Questionnaire Administration Methods**

The present study implemented two different methods in conducting the survey: a hard copy self-administered questionnaire and an online questionnaire. Based on the preference of the gatekeepers in participating universities, hard copy and/or online questionnaires were distributed to students. While some universities preferred one method over the other, the others requested both. Both administration methods are discussed below.

#### **1. Hard copy questionnaire**

A total of 313 hard copy questionnaires were distributed. The sampled universities in Riyadh and Jeddah were visited by the researcher himself and the questionnaires were distributed in the classes by the researcher, the gatekeepers and the female coordinators. Questionnaires were sent and administered to the participants in the other cities of Al-Ahsa, Al-Baha and Abha by post or contacts.

The completion of the questionnaires took place at the universities during breaks provided by the lecturers and lasted 10-15 minutes. Although an information sheet attached to the questionnaire detailed the research purpose, the researcher explained the research process and the ethical procedures to the participants in the instances that he distributed the questionnaires himself. While the researcher's presence is a motivating factor in increasing the response rate (Synodinos, 2003), the information provided to those in the class was exactly the same as that on the information sheet.

#### **2. Online questionnaire**

In this study, an email survey was used alongside a hard copy survey for the following reasons: Firstly, online questionnaires were specifically preferred by some universities; secondly, the online method was chosen to specifically target students at the universities that were physically out-of-reach for the researcher; finally, online questionnaires were used to boost the response rate, particularly among female participants. As argued by Sheehan and Hoy (1999), email surveys are more



appropriate to use on smaller homogeneous respondent groups, while web-based surveys lend themselves better to larger respondent groups of online users (Sheehan and Hoy, 1999). The email, including the link to the Survey Monkey programme, was distributed by the gatekeepers, and the total number of online questionnaires sent to participants was 181<sup>18</sup>.

Bryman and Bell (2011) argued that online surveys offer ‘a wider variety of embellishments in terms of appearance’, which can make it more appropriate and appealing to the target response group (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 662). The primary advantage of the online survey is its simplicity and accessibility. Online surveys are low cost, straightforward and limit the number of unanswered questions. More importantly, the whole process of obtaining data through an online survey is faster than that of a hard copy questionnaire (Cobanoglu *et al.*, 2001; Kent and Lee, 1999). While acknowledging that online surveys generally generate lower response rates and are biased towards people who have access to the internet (Lohr, 2011), because of contextual sensitivities and accessibility problems, mainly with female participants, this method was used alongside hard copies. The online questionnaire included the same information sheet as with the hard copy version. In the following sections, the response rate and a breakdown of the obtained sample is outlined.

### **5.13.2 Response Rate**

From the 494 questionnaires (313 hard copies, 181 online copies) distributed to participants initially, 302 questionnaires (193 hard copies, 109 online) were returned, with a response rate of 61.1% (a 60.2% response rate for online questionnaires and a 61.7% response rate for hard copies). After eliminating 17 invalid hard copies and 12 online copies due to incomplete answers and missing data, a total of 273 questionnaires were eligible for analysis, which resulted in an overall response rate of 55.3%. A detailed breakdown of the response rate is evidenced in Table 5.5.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZYZ6Z3S>

**Table 5.5: Questionnaire response rate.**

	<b>Hard copies</b>	<b>Online copies</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total number of questionnaires distributed</b>	313	181	494
<b>Total number of questionnaires returned</b>	193	109	302
<b>Invalid questionnaires*</b>	17	12	29
<b>Responses eligible for data analysis</b>	176	97	273

*Note.* \* Questionnaires were removed on account of incomplete answers and missing data

### **5.13.3 Demographic Information**

In this section, the demographic characteristics of the sample are described. The sample was composed of 157 males (57.5%) and 116 females (42.5%). 70% of the sample were aged 26-35, 14.7% of the sample comprised the youngest group (21-25) and 10.3% were aged 36-40. Only 5.1% of the sample were over 40 years-old. The above demographic information shows that the sample is very young. The majority of the participants were married (64.8%), while the single category comprised 31.1% of the sample. 4.1% of the sample were divorced and widowed.

The majority of the sample had work experience in the private sector (43.6%), followed by 24.5% with a public sector background. The percentage of participants who had experience in both was 20.1, while 11.7% did not have any previous work experience. A different trend was observed for the father's work experience. 49.1% of participants indicated that their fathers had experience in the public sector, 17.6% in the private sector and 21.2% had experience in both sectors. The father's educational level also varied across the sample. 47.7% of the participants' fathers had a university education, 30.4% had a Bachelor's degree and 17.3% had Master's degree or PhD. On the other hand, 52.3% of fathers were educated to secondary or lower levels (17.7% with primary or no formal education and 25% with secondary education).

Further descriptive results demonstrated that 39% of the sample (105 participants) preferred a career in a public sector, while 61% of the sample (168 participants) indicated they were likely to choose a career in the private sector. Additionally, most of the participants studied their MBA degree in Jeddah (120 participants, 44%) or Riyadh (99 participants, 36.3%), whereas 54 participants (19.8%) were recruited from the other three cities. Finally, the majority of the sample (79.9%) indicated that they were studying a full-time degree, while 19.8% indicated their type of MBA as part-time. In Tables 5.6 and 5.7, descriptive results across gender are presented.

**Table 5.6: Demographic information about gender, age, and marital status of the sample.**

	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage within sample (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	157	57.5
Female	116	42.5
<b>Age</b>		
21-25	40	14.7
Male	8	2.9
Female	32	11.8
26-30	101	37.0
Male	51	18.7
Female	50	18.3
31-35	90	33.0
Male	61	22.4
Female	29	10.6
36-40	28	10.3
Male	23	8.5
Female	5	1.8
41-45	12	4.4
Male	12	4.4
Female	0	0
46+	2	0.7
Male	2	0.7
Female	0	0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	85	31.1
Male	36	13.2
Female	49	17.9
Married	117	64.8
Male	59	43.6
Female	58	21.2
Divorced	10	3.7
Male	2	0.7
Female	8	2.9
Widowed	1	0.4
Male	0	0
Female	1	0.4

**Table 5.7: Demographic variables of work experience, father's work experience, and father's education.**

	Frequency (N)	Percentage within sample
<b>Work experience</b>		
Public	67	24.5
Male	40	14.6
Female	27	9.9
Private	119	43.6
Male	74	27.1
Female	45	16.5
Both (private and public)	55	20.1
Male	40	14.6
Female	15	5.5
None (no experience)	32	11.7
Male	3	1.1
Female	29	10.6
<b>Father's work experience</b>		
Public	134	49.1
Male	79	28.9
Female	55	20.2
Private	48	17.6
Male	25	9.2
Female	23	8.4
Both (private and public)	58	21.2
Male	28	10.2
Female	30	11
None (no experience)	33	12.1
Male	25	9.2
Female	8	2.9
<b>Father's education</b>		
No formal education	29	10.6
Male	24	8.8
Female	5	1.8
Primary school	44	16.1
Male	29	10.6
Female	15	5.5
Secondary school	70	25.6
Male	44	16.1
Female	26	9.5
Bachelor's degree	83	30.4
Male	40	14.7
Female	43	15.7
Master's degree	31	11.4
Male	14	5.2
Female	17	6.2
Doctoral degree	16	5.9
Male	6	2.2
Female	10	3.7

#### **5.13.4 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations play an important role when research is carried out with human subjects. According to Neuman (2014), ‘ethics’ in research refers to a law of conduct or set of clear principles; thus, the researcher must protect participants’ human rights and respect their privacy and personal interests (Neuman, 2014). In the current study, a number of measures were taken throughout each step of the research to ensure that it was conducted ethically. Prior to any data collection, ethical approval was obtained on 26/07/2013 from the ethics committee in Brunel Business School at Brunel University. The information sheet was included as the first page of the questionnaire pack in both online and hard copy surveys (see Appendix 2). The information sheet detailed the purpose of the study and the participants’ right to withdraw at any stage of the research.

Additionally, the information sheet assured participants of their complete anonymity. Participants were informed that no personal information was requested. Anonymous questionnaires may have encouraged respondents to answer questions about sensitive issues more easily. In the information sheet, the researcher made clear that all the answers would remain confidential and would be used only for academic purposes. The researchers’ contact details were also provided in case participants should wish to discuss the study further.

#### **5.14 Statistical Analysis Techniques**

It is of great importance to decide on how to analyse the data prior to data collection in order to avoid data being gathered in an incorrect format and to avert getting inaccurate results from the data (Cooper and Schindler, 2013). Choosing appropriate statistical analysis techniques is one of the most important steps in the data analysis process. To do this, research elements such as the research questions and objectives, the number of variables involved, the level of scale measurement, and the characteristics of the collected data should be clearly defined (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Hair *et al.*, 2011). To meet the research purposes, a number of statistical analysis techniques were applied using SPSS (version 20). The reason for choosing the SPSS statistical package is that it facilitates the calculations in all the necessary statistical tests used in this research to analyse the findings. In addition, SPSS is easily available and, most importantly, user friendly and so can be learnt within a short period of time. The statistical techniques used to analyse the data are described below.

### **5.14.1 Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics, also called exploratory data analysis or univariate statistics, refers to the process of transforming raw data into a basic level of information that describes a number of situational factors and makes them easy to interpret and understand (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Descriptive statistics ‘can include measures of central tendency (mean, mode, and median) as well as measures of variation (range, variance, and standard deviation)’ (Issel, 2014, p. 470).

In the present research, descriptive statistics were used to describe some of the data, particularly demographic variables. Frequency tables were used in order to determine sample characteristics such as age, gender, and marital status. Means and standard deviations were used to present the main scales of *Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, religious influence and personal motivational factors.

### **5.14.2 Principle Components Factor Analysis**

In this research, factor analysis was used in order to assess the extent to which the items on the questionnaire mapped onto the underlying constructs they intended to measure (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Prior to undertaking a factor analysis, it is crucial to conduct a test for sampling adequacy and sphericity. These two tests verify the appropriateness of proceeding with factor analysis (Hinton *et al.*, 2014). In order to test the internal consistency of the factors, Cronbach’s Alpha technique was applied to the items extracted from the exploratory factor analysis (De Vaus, 2014).

### **5.14.3 Binary Logistic Regression**

In the present study, the dependent variable measures the career choices of Saudi MBA students as being in either the public sector or the private sector; thus, a multiple binary logistic regression model was used to test the research hypotheses. Multiple logistic regression models are similar to multiple linear regression models in that they predict the outcome variable from multiple variables but are different in the sense that they deal with a binary outcome (Field, 2013). As the current research aims to predict career choices (a binary outcome) using multiple independent variables (predictors), a multiple binary logistic regression is the most appropriate statistical test to measure the predictive value of independent variables.

#### **5.14.4 Independent Samples T-tests**

This test is used in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between two different levels of the independent variable (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). In the current study, independent samples t-tests were used to analyse the effect of gender on institutional and motivational factors. Accordingly, these tests provide an understanding of whether males and females would have different scores on a measure by comparing mean scores across male and female participants.

#### **5.14.5 One-Way ANOVA Tests**

This statistical procedure tests whether there is a significant difference between three (or more) levels of the independent variable (Field, 2013). One-way ANOVA tests in this study were used to determine the effects of other demographic variables with more than two levels on motivational and institutional factors. These included previous work experience and father's work experience. ANOVA tests, similar to t-tests, compare means between different groups.

#### **5.14.6 Chi-Square Tests**

Chi-square tests were used in additional analyses in order to reveal associations between demographic variables (age, marital status, work experience, father's work experience and father's education) and career choices. These tests were used in particular because, at this stage of the analysis, both the independent and dependent variables were categorical and chi-square tests, therefore, demonstrated whether observed and expected counts were significantly different from each other (Hair *et al.*, 2011).

### **5.15 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the chosen methods used to test and implement the conceptual framework designed in this study. A quantitative approach was used to seek relationships between the predefined variables used in this study (institutional, personal and career choice) and a clear rationale was provided for each element of the approach applied in the study. The quantitative methods of data collection and analysis were justified.

The choice to conduct a survey was due to the sensitive context of the research, the underlying philosophy (positivism) and the aims and objectives of the study. It was emphasised that such a design was appropriate within both the timeframe and the budget of



the study. Details of tests of reliability and validity have been discussed with clear reasoning for the use of a pilot study. The subsequent amendments to the questionnaire in light of such tests have been denoted.

The statistical analysis techniques have been surmised concisely with valid reasoning for their use in light of the aims and hypotheses of the present research. The results of the study will be presented in Chapter 6 and a discussion of these results in Chapter 7.

# Chapter 6: What Predicts Career Choice? Analysis and Findings

## 6.1 Introduction

Following on from Chapter 5, which identified and justified the research methodology implemented in this study, this chapter centres on the analysis of data obtained in order to ascertain and understand the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables. As previously discussed in Chapter 5, a number of different statistical methods were applied using SPSS (version 20), each of which will be discussed in the subsequent sections within the context of the research aims and hypotheses. This chapter comprises the following sections: initial data screening, factor analysis for each scale, reliability analysis assessing Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, preliminary analyses, and inferential statistical tests.

## 6.2 Data Cleaning and Screening

Prior to obtaining descriptive statistics and the implementation of inferential statistical tests, the data were rigorously screened and cleaned in order to ensure that they accurately represented the sample population (Hair *et al.*, 2011). It was anticipated that a certain degree of inaccuracy would be found as a result of human error in manually entering the data into the SPSS (version 20) programme. Where possible, any areas of miscoding and missing data were rectified by checking the original questionnaires; furthermore, 9.6% of the submitted questionnaires (29 out of 302) were removed due to being incomplete to a large extent (e.g. answering demographic questions but none of the constructs) and were not included in the analysis. There were missing data in the completed questionnaires but the percentage of missing data was very low (0-2% of values were missing within each variable); hence, such values were replaced by the overall mean of each variable as suggested by Field (2013). This solution allows SPSS to deal with the whole sample rather than dismissing those participants who did not provide answers to a specific question.

## 6.3 Factor Analysis

As an introductory procedure, factor analysis and reliability analysis were performed initially for each scale to ensure that the main variables of the study were satisfactorily measured. Factor analysis is 'a method for investigating whether a number of variables of

interest are linearly related to a smaller number of unobservable factors' (Tryfos, 1997 cited in Josephat and Ismail, 2012, p. 190). It is an interdependence technique in which the whole set of interdependent relationships is examined without making the classification between the study variables as dependent or independent (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012). In the instance of this study, factor analysis was used in order to assess the extent to which the items on the questionnaire mapped onto the underlying constructs designed by the researcher (Hair *et al.*, 2011).

Prior to undertaking a factor analysis, it is important to conduct a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity. These two tests check the suitability of employing factor analysis (Hinton *et al.*, 2014).

### **6.3.1 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) Test**

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was calculated in order to determine the appropriateness of data for conducting factor analysis. A KMO statistic can be generated using correlations and partial correlations for each variable independently or for the whole set of variables in a particular sample. A KMO value of above 0.5 is considered acceptable; however, the closer the value is to 1 the better (Hinton *et al.*, 2014).

### **6.3.2 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity**

In order to confirm the relationship between variables, Bartlett's test of sphericity was conducted under the premise that if no relationship was evident then it was not worthwhile carrying out factor analysis. In order for factor analysis to be considered appropriately implemented, it is suggested that  $p < 0.05$  would indicate a relationship between the constructs being tested (Hinton *et al.*, 2014).

### **6.3.3 Eigenvalues**

Eigenvalues are commonly used in determining the number of factors in a factor analysis. The eigenvalue is the degree to which a certain factor accounts for the variance in all variables (Pallant, 2013); therefore, the higher the eigenvalue, the better that factor is able to explain the variance in variables. In the present study, then, eigenvalues were examined as initial criteria for the determination of the number of factors for each scale. Two methods are generally used in the extraction of factors. The first method is Catell's scree test, which provides a scree plot for each scale (Catell, 1966). Catell stated that the point at which the shape of the curve changes direction is the critical point and all factors above the

elbow should be retained; however, the most commonly used technique is Kaiser's criterion, known as 'the eigenvalue rule' and, therefore, this criterion was chosen as the selection criterion. This rule indicates that eigenvalues of 1 or higher should be retained (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2013). In the present data analysis, eigenvalues of 1 or higher were used as the criteria indicating the number of factors for each scale.

#### **6.3.4 Principle Components Factor Analysis and Factor Loadings**

In order to ensure that the independent variables mapped onto the dimensions proposed in the conceptual framework of the study, the principle components extraction method with a Varimax rotation was applied to the data using SPSS (version 20). The rotated values of factor loadings with a value of 0.3 and 0.4 or more are suggested to be acceptable (e.g. Straub *et al.*, 2004; Friendly, 1995).

Since scales in this research represented a variety of concepts, and in order to facilitate the interpretation of the results, factor analysis was performed for each scale separately. This was also necessary to check whether each scale constructed was unidimensional (Slocum, 2005); hence, the following section will outline the findings of factor analyses for each scale.

**1. Saudization scale.** Initially, a factor analysis was performed with the *Saudization* scale and indicated that all items loaded on a single factor (KMO = .75, Bartlett's sphericity test:  $\chi^2(10) = 427.98, p < .001$ ). Item loadings ranged from .65 to .84. This showed that this scale was unidimensional (see Figure 4.1 in Appendix 4 for eigenvalues and the scree plot for the *Saudization* scale). Table 6.1 presents factor loadings.

**Table 6.1: Factor analysis on *Saudization* scale.**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Item name</b>	<b>Item description</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>
<b>S6</b>	<i>Saudization_6</i>	I think that the <i>Saudization</i> regulations will widen my career choices	.84
<b>S1</b>	<i>Saudization_1</i>	I think that <i>Saudization</i> (laws and regulations for employment localisation) will increase my chances of employability	.78
<b>S8</b>	<i>Saudization_8</i>	I think <i>Saudization</i> has helped Saudi managers in finding jobs	.74
<b>S22</b>	<i>Saudization_22</i>	I think that the <i>Saudization</i> regulations will limit my career options*	.67
<b>S17</b>	<i>Saudization_17</i>	I think the implementation of the <i>Saudization</i> regulations has prevented Saudi managers from finding the jobs they want*	.65

*Notes.* \*Reversed items.

**2. *Wasta* scale.** A factor analysis was performed for the *Wasta* scale. Initial findings demonstrated that the factor analysis had a high KMO with a value of .84 and a significant Bartlett's sphericity test,  $\chi^2(28) = 763.65, p < .001$ . All items loaded on one factor (with factor loadings ranging from .66 to .85) except for two items (W20 and W23), which loaded on a second factor. One reason may be that these two items measured more on attitudes towards *Wasta*; thus, in order to solve this issue, these two items were removed from the scale, which resulted in a six-item unidimensional *Wasta* scale (see Figure 4.2 in Appendix 4 for eigenvalues and the scree plot for the *Wasta* scale). Table 6.2 presents the findings of the relevant factor analysis.

**Table 6.2: Factor analysis on *Wasta* scale.**

Item	Item name	Item description	Factor 1	Factor 2
<b>W16</b>	<i>Wasta_16</i>	When it comes to career choices, <i>Wasta</i> is important in recruitment and promotion	.85	
<b>W10</b>	<i>Wasta_10</i>	When it comes to obtaining a job that you want, who you know ( <i>Wasta</i> ) is more important than what you know	.81	
<b>W12</b>	<i>Wasta_12</i>	<i>Wasta</i> is more important than your qualifications and experiences in getting the job that you want	.80	
<b>W14</b>	<i>Wasta_14</i>	I would consider using <i>Wasta</i> to assist me in getting my career	.77	
<b>W2</b>	<i>Wasta_2</i>	In order to get a job that you want, friends or family members in influential positions are needed	.70	
<b>W7</b>	<i>Wasta_7</i>	<i>Wasta</i> (social networks) facilitates most of my daily activities	.66	
<b>W23</b>	<i>Wasta_23</i>	I think that using <i>Wasta</i> is unfair to those without connections*		.79
<b>W20</b>	<i>Wasta_20</i>	I think that <i>Wasta</i> should be used less when it comes to recruitment and promotions*		.74

*Notes.* \*Reversed items

**3. Social status scale.** A factor analysis with the social status scale indicated that this scale was unidimensional (KMO = .81, Bartlett's sphericity test:  $\chi^2(15) = 497.17, p < .001$ ), with all items loading on a single factor (with factor loadings ranging from .57 to .82). Table 6.3 presents initial item loadings (see Figure 4.3 in Appendix 4 for eigenvalues and the scree plot for the social status scale).

**Table 6.3: Factor analysis on social status scale.**

Item	Item name	Item description	Factor 1
SS4	Social_4	Obtain recognition by society	.82
SS6	Social_6	Gain a symbol of status within society	.80
SS5	Social_5	Make my relatives proud of me	.76
SS2	Social_2	Make my family proud of me	.66
SS3	Social_3	Become influential in society	.63
SS1	Social_1	Improve my social status	.57

**4. Parental obedience scale.** Parental obedience resulted in a satisfactory KMO value of .77 (Bartlett's sphericity test:  $\chi^2(10) = 260.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with all items loading on a single factor (factor loadings ranging from .57 to .80). Table 6.4 presents these findings (see Figure 4.4 in Appendix 4 for eigenvalues and the scree plot for the parental obedience scale).

**Table 6.4: Factor analysis on parental obedience scale.**

Item	Item name	Item description	Factor 1
P11	Parental_11	I will never take a job that makes my parents unhappy*	.80
P19	Parental_19	I will never consider any job role that causes my parents to worry about me*	.77
P4	Parental_4	I prefer to select a job that makes my parents feel proud in front of other relatives and friends	.68
P13	Parental_13	I will consider the work location when choosing my career because I want to be close to my parents	.65
P21	Parental_21	I prefer to choose a job that enables me to give my parents a good quality of life when they grow older	.57

Notes. \*Reversed items

**5. Religious influence scale.** Finally, concerning the religious influence scale, a satisfactory KMO was obtained (.72) and for Bartlett's sphericity test:  $\chi^2(10) = 247.91$ ,

$p < .001$ . All items loaded on a single factor, except for one item (R3) which loaded on a second factor; therefore, this item was removed from the scale, which resulted in a four-item scale (see Figure 4.5 in Appendix 4 for eigenvalues and the scree plot for the religious influence scale). The initial loadings for the religious influence scale are summarised in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.5: Initial factor loadings for the religious influence scale.**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Item name</b>	<b>Item description</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>
<b>R5</b>	Religious_5	I will not consider any job role which conflicts with my religious belief*	.79	
<b>R9</b>	Religious_9	My religious principles play an important role in my career choices	.78	
<b>R15</b>	Religious_15	My daily work decisions would be influenced by my religious ethics	.77	
<b>R18</b>	Religious_18	I will not consider working in an organisation whose practices and activities go against my religious principles*	.65	
<b>R3</b>	Religious_3	My religion plays an important role in my daily personal decisions		.96

*Note.* \*Reversed item

**6. Personal motivational scale.** An initial observation of the factor loadings for the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation scale revealed that, overall, the factor analysis had acceptable KMO and Bartlett's sphericity coefficients. Factor loadings were satisfactory, with the smallest factor loading over the 0.3 threshold. Since the main scale included two sub-scales (intrinsic and extrinsic) and it was expected that factor analysis would yield two main components, item extraction was limited to two factors.

Findings revealed that two items, M8 (Opportunity for career advancement) and M13 (Job autonomy/independence), loaded on dimensions different to those initially expected. Accordingly, M8, which was supposed to be an extrinsic factor, loaded more on Factor 1 (intrinsic) and vice versa; M13, which was assumed to be an intrinsic factor, loaded more on Factor 2 (extrinsic); therefore, these two items were removed from further analyses,



resulting in two motivational sub-scales: six items for the intrinsic and six items for the extrinsic (see Figure 4.6 in Appendix 4 for eigenvalues and the scree plot for the personal motivational scale). Table 6.6 presents these findings.

**Table 6.6: Initial factor loadings for the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational scale.**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Item name</b>	<b>Item description</b>	<b>Factor 1 (intrinsic)</b>	<b>Factor 2 (extrinsic)</b>
<b>M7</b>	Intrinsic_7	Sense of achievement	.75	
<b>M9</b>	Intrinsic_9	Interesting and challenging work	.75	
<b>M3</b>	Intrinsic_3	Opportunity for creativity	.72	
<b>M5</b>	Intrinsic_5	Opportunity for personal growth and development	.62	
<b>M11</b>	Intrinsic_11	Opportunity to serve society	.47	
<b>M8</b>	Extrinsic_8	Opportunity for career advancement (Promotions)	.44	.32
<b>M1</b>	Intrinsic_1	Job responsibility	.34	
<b>M10</b>	Extrinsic_10	Job security		.71
<b>M14</b>	Extrinsic_14	Benefits		.58
<b>M12</b>	Extrinsic_12	Work conditions		.52
<b>M4</b>	Extrinsic_4	Job location		.49
<b>M2</b>	Extrinsic_2	Salary		.43
<b>M13</b>	Intrinsic_13	Job autonomy/Independence	.28	.41
<b>M6</b>	Extrinsic_6	Work in a prestigious organisation		.30

*Notes.* KMO = .74, Bartlett's sphericity:  $\chi^2(90) = 582.90, p < .001$ .

## 6.4 Reliability Analysis

In line with the practices carried out in the pilot study, reliability was carried out prior to further inferential investigation, inclusive of Cronbach's Alpha and factor analysis. In the

first instance, the reliability of the scales was assessed by computing Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each scale, since this is the most commonly used assessment of the reliability of a measurement scale (Bryman and Cramer, 2011; Hayes, 2008). The results, which are presented below, show that the Alpha level in most of the scales reaches 0.7, thus complying with the desired Alpha level indicating internal consistency (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Table 6.7 demonstrates Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each scale.

**Table 6.7: Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the study scales.**

	Numbers on Questionnaire	Number of Items	Alpha
<i>Saudization</i>	Section D: 1, 6, 8, 17, 22	5	.79
<i>Wasta</i>	Section D: 2, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16	6	.86
<b>Social Status</b>	Section D: Part 2: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	6	.80
<b>Parental Obedience</b>	Section D: 4, 11, 13, 19, 21	5	.72
<b>Religious Influence</b>	Section D: , 5, 9, 15, 18	4	.74
<b>Personal Factors – Intrinsic</b>	Section C: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11,	6	.70
<b>Personal Factors – Extrinsic</b>	Section C: 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14	6	.61
<b>Overall Institutional</b>		26	.77
<b>Overall Motivational</b>		12	.65
<b>Overall Scale</b>		38	.79

Reliability analyses for each scale showed that the majority of the scales had good reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from .70 to .86. Two measures had a Cronbach's Alpha level below the generally accepted value of .70: the extrinsic motivational scale had a Cronbach's Alpha value of .61 and the overall motivational scale had a value of .65. The proposed level of an acceptable Alpha is generally dictated to be .70 or above (Hair *et al.*, 2011), however some researchers assert that .60 is equally justifiable (Heath and Martin, 1997; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994); moreover, the overall

Cronbach's Alpha value, including all the items in the questionnaire, had a high reliability (.79), which demonstrates that the questionnaire was, in general, satisfactory in terms of internal consistency.

## **6.5 Preliminary Analyses**

This section includes preliminary analyses which aim to present descriptive statistics for the main variables in the study, including means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations among the main variables, and data type (normality assumption, parametric/non-parametric data etc.).

### **6.5.1 Descriptive Analysis of General Statistics**

Descriptive analyses included an observation of the means and standard deviations of the main study variables (i.e. average + *SD* of items within). Table 6.8 presents means and standard deviations of the main study variables.

An initial observation of the means and standard deviations of the main study variables indicated that among the institutional factors, participants gave high levels of importance to social status ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = .58$ ) and religious influence ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) in terms of their career choices. Parental obedience was rated as the next highest important factor, with a mean of 3.93 ( $SD = .63$ ). On the other hand, lower levels of importance were assigned to *Saudization* ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .87$ ) and the perception of *Wasta* ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .72$ ). Concerning personal motivational factors, both intrinsic ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = .46$ ) and extrinsic ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .42$ ) motivational factors were rated as highly important by the participants.

**Table 6.8: Means and standard deviations for the main study variables.**

	<i>Means</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>1. Saudization</b>	3.23	.87
<b>2. Wasta</b>	3.63	.72
<b>3. Social status</b>	4.09	.58
<b>4. Parental obedience</b>	3.93	.63
<b>5. Religious influence</b>	4.23	.68
<b>6. Intrinsic motivation</b>	4.25	.46
<b>7. Extrinsic motivation</b>	4.18	.42
<b>Overall institutional</b>	3.83	.37
<b>Overall motivational</b>	4.21	.34

Table 6.9 presents descriptive statistics for the extrinsic and intrinsic items in the motivational scales. Accordingly, among intrinsic motivational factors, the opportunity for personal growth and development is indicated as being the most important factor for participants in making their career choices ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = .62$ ). This is followed by a sense of achievement ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) and job responsibility ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = .69$ ). On the other hand, participants rated lower the opportunity for creativity ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = .75$ ), interesting and challenging work ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = .72$ ), and serving society ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = .82$ ).

Among extrinsic motivational factors, salary was rated the most important factor ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = .58$ ). Next, job security ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .82$ ), work conditions ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .78$ ), and job location ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) were indicated. The lowest levels of importance were assigned to benefits ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) and working in a prestigious organisation ( $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = .86$ ).

**Table 6.9: Means and standard deviations for intrinsic and extrinsic motivational scales' items.**

	<i>Means</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Intrinsic motivational scale</b>		
Job responsibility	4.33	.69
Opportunity for creativity	4.25	.75
Opportunity for personal growth and development	4.59	.62
Sense of achievement	4.37	.75
Interesting and challenging work	4.17	.72
Opportunity to serve society	3.78	.82
<b>Extrinsic motivational scale</b>		
Salary	4.44	.58
Job location	4.25	.83
Work in a prestigious organisation	3.60	.86
Job security	4.29	.82
Work conditions	4.29	.78
Benefits	4.21	.80

### 6.5.2 Bivariate Correlations among Study Variables

Findings further indicated that intrinsic motivation was positively correlated with social status ( $r = .22, p < .001$ ), while extrinsic motivation was significantly and positively associated with *Wasta* ( $r = .16, p < .01$ ), social status ( $r = .17, p < .01$ ), religious influence ( $r = .17, p < .01$ ) and parental obedience ( $r = .23, p < .001$ ). The perception of *Wasta* was associated with social status ( $r = .14, p < .05$ ), parental obedience ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), and extrinsic motivation ( $r = .16, p < .01$ ). *Saudization* was not correlated to the majority of the variables, except religious influence ( $r = .15, p < .05$ ). Religious influence was also

positively and strongly correlated with parental obedience ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ). Table 6.10 summarises bivariate correlations.

**Table 6.10: Bivariate correlations among main study variables.**

	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Saudization</b>	-.03	.05	.06	.15*	.01	.11
<b>2. Wasta</b>	-	.14*	.13*	-.03	-.07	.16**
<b>3. Social status</b>		-	.33***	.01	.22***	.17**
<b>4. Parental obedience</b>			-	.30***	.06	.23***
<b>5. Religious influence</b>				-	.07	.17**
<b>6. Intrinsic motivation</b>					-	.22***
<b>7. Extrinsic motivation</b>						-

*Note.* \* $p < .05$  , \*\* $p < .01$  , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### 6.5.3 Data Type: Assumptions of Parametric Data

This section examines data type; specifically, it was investigated whether data analysis should involve parametric or non-parametric tests; hence, three conditions required particular examination (Field, 2013).

1. **Measurement level:** First, it was important to assess the typical measurement level in the present research. While non-parametric tests are often used when data are measured at the nominal or ordinal scales, parametric techniques are often used when data are measured at the ratio or interval level (Pallant, 2013). The present data represent 'interval data', since the majority of measurements are based on Likert-scales, which give information about the ranking and the magnitude of the difference; therefore, this condition of interval measure was satisfied (Pallant, 2013).
2. **Independence of observations:** Independence of observations is another prerequisite of parametric tests. Stevens (2009) suggested that violation of this assumption could cause serious problems. In the present research, observations were independent from each other as all participants received separate emails/hard copies at different times and locations; as such, observations are not expected to influence each other.
3. **Normality of data:** It has often been argued that one of the main assumptions for the use of multivariate techniques is normality of data (e.g. Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014). A normal distribution is described as a symmetrical, bell-shaped curve with the greatest frequency of scores in the centre (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2012). Normality of the distribution could be examined through different processes, among which the observation of skewness and kurtosis is one of the most frequently used techniques (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014). While skewness measures the symmetry/asymmetry of the data distribution, kurtosis measures the 'peakedness' of it (Kim, 2013). It was suggested that values for skewness and kurtosis of between -2 and +2 reflect a reasonably normal distribution (Bachman, 2004). The data of overall scores for all scales were shown to be normally distributed, as shown in Table 6.11.



**Table 6.11: Means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis statistics for all study variables.**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>	273	2.30	5.00	4.25	.46	-.72	.15	1.17	.29
<b>Extrinsic motivation</b>	273	2.50	5.00	4.18	.42	-.55	.15	.72	.29
<i>Saudization</i>	273	1.00	5.00	3.23	.87	-.29	.15	.27	.29
<i>Wasta</i>	273	1.00	5.00	3.63	.72	-.56	.15	.46	.29
<b>Parental obedience</b>	273	1.40	5.00	3.93	.63	-.96	.15	1.34	.29
<b>Religious influence</b>	273	1.80	5.00	4.23	.68	-.98	.15	1.25	.29
<b>Social status</b>	273	1.70	5.00	4.09	.58	-.60	.15	.80	.29

## 6.6 Statistical Tests

1. **Binary logistic regression:** In the present study, the dependent variable measures the career choices of Saudi MBA students as being in either the public sector or the private sector. For the purpose of analysis, the public sector is coded as 0 if the respondent wishes to enter the public sector as a future career choice, while a career into the private sector is coded as 1. A forced entry method is implemented, whereby all predictors are forced into the model simultaneously. Like other methods of model predictor entry in regression such as hierarchical and stepwise methods, this method relies on a sound theoretical standing. It is often argued that this is the most suitable method of hypothesis testing as there is no influence of random variation of data, unlike in the aforementioned methods (Studenmund, 2014).
2. **Independent samples t-test:** Apart from logistic regression models, independent-samples t-tests were used in order to examine the effect of gender on dependent variables. The independent-samples t-test is one of the most frequently used statistical analyses and aims to compare the mean scores of two different groups (Pallant, 2013). In statistical terms, the function of the mechanism behind the independent-samples t-test is to assess the likelihood that two sets of scores, in this case for males and females, come from the same population (Pallant, 2013).

## 6.7 Inferential Statistics

This section will further enlighten relationships between main variables by using binary logistic regression analyses and independent-samples t-tests. Results will be presented along with the evaluation of each research question and the relevant hypotheses.

### 6.7.1 Institutional Factors and Career Choices

**Research Question 1: To what extent do the institutional factors (Saudization, Wasta, social status, parental obedience, and religion) predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students?**

Binary logistic regression analysis for the overall effect of the perceived importance of institutional factors, including all five constructs in the model, revealed that, overall, the

regression model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(5) = 19.06, p < .01$ . This indicates that the overall model was able to distinguish between participants' career choices in the public or private sector. The model explained between 6.7% (Cox and Snell R-squared) and 9.2% (Nagelkerke R-squared) of the variance in career choices; moreover, findings showed that the model was able to classify correctly 68% of the cases. Among the statistically significant predictors, the perception of *Wasta* was a significant predictor of career choices ( $B = -.34, p < .05$ ). In addition, religious influence ( $B = -.45, p < .05$ ) and parental obedience ( $B = -.46, p = .05$ ) also predicted career choices. The negative values in beta coefficients indicated that increases in the perception of *Wasta*, religious influence and parental obedience resulted in decreases in the choice of a career in private sector. Table 6.12 demonstrates the full model.

**Table 6.12: Logistic regression predicting career choices from institutional factors.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	4.60	1.49	9.58	1	.00	99.34
<i>Saudization</i>	.18	.18	.95	1	.33	1.19
<i>Wasta</i>	-.34	.15	5.08	1	.02	1.41
<b>Social status</b>	.03	.25	.01	1	.91	1.03
<b>Parental obedience</b>	-.46	.24	3.80	1	.05	1.59
<b>Religious influence</b>	-.45	.21	4.04	1	.03	1.57

A further binary logistic regression model was performed for the aggregated dimensions of regulative (*Saudization*), normative (*Wasta* and Social Status) and cognitive-cultural (parental obedience and religious influence) factors. Accordingly, the regression model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 17.52, p < .01$ . The model explained between 6.2% (Cox and Snell R-squared) and 8.4% (Nagelkerke R-squared) of the variance in career choices. Additionally, findings showed that the model was able to classify correctly 65.9% of the cases. It was found that among cultural-cognitive, regulative and normative factors, cultural-cognitive factors were the strongest predictors of career choices ( $B = -.86, p < .001$ ), while normative factors also had a significant association with career choices ( $B =$

-.46,  $p = .05$ ). Accordingly, increases in the importance of cultural-cognitive and normative factors led to decreases in the choice of a private sector career, demonstrated by negative beta values. The regulative factor of *Saudization* did not have a significant association with career choice ( $B = .18, p > .05$ ). Table 6.13 represents the relevant model.

**Table 6.13: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative factors.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	5.05	1.44	12.28	1	.00	156.41
<b>Regulative factors</b>	.18	.18	1.04	1	.31	1.20
<b>Normative factors</b>	-.46	.24	3.73	1	.05	1.59
<b>Cultural-cognitive factors</b>	-.86	.27	10.39	1	.00	2.37

## 6.7.2 Hypothesis Testing (Hypotheses 1a-1f)

### 1. Prediction of Saudization on Career Choice

**H1a: The perceived importance of *Saudization* will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

Findings from the relevant logistic regression analysis, including all institutional factors, indicated that *Saudization* did not significantly predict the career choices of MBA students. Although, there was a positive association between *Saudization* and career choices in the private sector, demonstrated by a positive coefficient for this independent variable ( $B = .18, p > .05$ ). No evidence was observed in relation to the association between the perceived importance of *Saudization* and the career choices of Saudi MBA students. This finding, therefore, rejected Hypothesis (1a).

Further logistic regression analyses, including all individual *Saudization* scale items, were run to distinguish which items significantly predicted career choices. The relevant analysis

revealed that no item in the *Saudization* scale had a significant association with career choices (see Appendix 5 for Table 5.1 indicating this logistic regression model).

## ***2. Prediction of Wasta on Career Choice***

**H1b: The perceived importance of *Wasta* (social networks) will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

Findings from the logistic regression analysis further indicated that the perceived importance of *Wasta* significantly predicted career choices among Saudi MBA students ( $B = -.34, p < .05$ ). This result confirmed Hypothesis (1b); furthermore, it was found that increases in the perception of *Wasta* predicted decreases in a career choice in the private sector.

A further logistic regression model involving individual *Wasta* items demonstrated that the strongest and only significant item of this scale was *Wasta\_7*, the facilitation of daily activities through *Wasta* ( $B = -.39, p < .01$ ). Table 5.2 in Appendix 5 demonstrates regression coefficients for all individual items.

## ***3. Prediction of Social Status on Career Choice***

**H1c: The perceived importance of obtaining social status will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

A further observation of the logistic regression model indicated that social status was not a statistically significant predictor of career choices ( $B = .03, p > .05$ ). This finding rejected Hypothesis (1c) and demonstrated that the perceived importance of social status was not related to the career choices of Saudi MBA students.

Social status was also tested by a further logistic regression, including all individual social status items. Findings revealed that the strongest predictor of career choices was social status\_2, making families proud ( $B = -.49, p < .05$ ). Table 5.3 in Appendix 5 presents the relevant logistic regression model.

#### ***4. Prediction of Parental Obedience on Career Choice***

**H1d: Parental obedience will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

As Hypothesis (1d) suggested, findings from the logistic regression analysis revealed that parental obedience significantly predicted career choices ( $B = -.46, p = .05$ ); moreover, findings showed that increases in perceived parental obedience were related to decreases in career choices in the private sector, i.e. participants with a high level of obedience are more likely to choose the public sector; therefore, Hypothesis (1d), anticipating significant association between parental obedience and career choice, was confirmed.

An observation of the individual parental obedience items demonstrated that, in particular, considering jobs that are worrying for the parents (parental\_obedience\_19) was the most critical determinant of career choices ( $B = -.43, p < .05$ ). Table 5.4 (Appendix 5) demonstrates these items.

#### ***5. Prediction of Religion on Career Choice***

**H1e: The perceived importance of religion will significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

Hypothesis (1e) was also confirmed by findings from the logistic regression analysis. Accordingly, it was found that religious influence was one of the statistically significant predictors of the career choices of Saudi MBA students ( $B = -.45, p < .05$ ). Results indicated that increases in the perceived importance of religion results in decreases in the choice of a career in the private sector, i.e. participants who are highly influenced by religion are likely to choose the public sector.

Further analyses revealed that among individual religion items, none seemed to have a significant association with career choices. Table 5.5 indicates these items (Appendix 5).

## ***6. Prediction of Career Choices from Regulative, Normative and Cultural-Cognitive Factors***

**H1f: Within the institutional dimension, the cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and religion) will be stronger predictors than the regulative (*Saudization*) and normative factors (*Wasta* and social status) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

This hypothesis was confirmed by the logistic regression model; findings showed that cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and religion) significantly predicted career choices of Saudi MBA students as expected ( $B = -.86, p < .001$ ). Although normative factors also predicted career choices ( $B = -.46, p = .05$ ), beta coefficients showed that cultural-cognitive factors were the strongest predictors.

### **6.7.3 Question One Summary**

Research Question 1 addressed the role of institutional factors on career choices and indicated that the perception of *Wasta*, religious influence and parental obedience would significantly predict the career choices in the private or public sector. Cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and religious influence) were shown to be the strongest predictors within the institutional dimension compared to the regulative (*Saudization*) and normative (*Wasta* and social status) factors. The next research enquiry was to find out whether there were gender differences in the perception of institutional factors; hence, the relationship between gender and institutional factors will be examined in the next research question.

### **6.7.4 Gender and Institutional Factors**

***Research Question 2: What is the effect of gender on the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices?***

To investigate the effect of gender on institutional factors, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare mean levels across gender. An initial t-test was conducted for comparing the overall institutional factor across males and females. Findings revealed that the overall institutional factor was higher among females compared to males

( $t(271) = -3.56, p < .001$ ). This indicates that, compared to male participants ( $M = 3.76, SD = .37$ ), female participants ( $M = 3.92, SD = .36$ ) perceived institutional factors as more important.

An observation of the individual institutional factors showed that there was no significant difference between males and females in terms of the perception of *Saudization*, social status or religious influence. However, significant differences were observed in relation to the perception of *Wasta* ( $t(271) = -2.03, p < .05$ ). Accordingly, female Saudi students perceived *Wasta* as a more important factor in their career choices compared to male Saudi students ( $M_{\text{Female}} = 3.75, SD_{\text{Female}} = .72; M_{\text{Male}} = 3.53, SD_{\text{Male}} = .73$ ); moreover, there were significant differences in the perception of parental obedience ( $t(271) = -3.37, p < .01$ ). Findings indicated that females scored higher in parental obedience than males ( $M_{\text{Female}} = 4.08, SD_{\text{Female}} = .61; M_{\text{Male}} = 3.83, SD_{\text{Male}} = .62$ ). Table 6.14 presents independent t-test results.

**Table 6.14: The effect of gender on institutional factors.**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b><i>t value</i></b>	<b><i>Df</i></b>	<b><i>P</i></b>
<b><i>Saudization</i></b>	3.20 (.89)	3.29 (.87)	-1.17	271	Ns
<b><i>Wasta</i></b>	3.53 (.73)	3.75 (.72)	-2.03	271	< .05
<b>Social status</b>	4.05 (.61)	4.15 (.52)	-1.41	271	Ns
<b>Parental obedience</b>	3.83 (.62)	4.08 (.61)	-3.37	271	< .01
<b>Religious influence</b>	4.18 (.64)	4.29 (.73)	-1.38	271	Ns
<b>Overall institutional</b>	3.76 (.37)	3.92 (.36)	-3.56	271	< .001

*Notes.* Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Ns = non-significant.



## 6.7.5 Hypothesis Testing (Hypotheses 2a-2e)

### 1. Gender and Saudization

**H2a: Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Saudization* when making their career choices compared to female MBA students.**

Hypothesis (2a) suggested that male students would report higher levels in the perceived importance of *Saudization* compared to female students. This was not confirmed in the current study. Accordingly, results showed that males ( $M = 3.20, SD = .89$ ) and females ( $M = 3.29, SD = .87$ ) assigned similar levels of importance to *Saudization* in their career choices ( $t(271) = -1.17, p > .05$ ); therefore, Hypothesis (2a) was rejected.

Further independent-samples t-tests were conducted for the *Saudization* scale to determine which items differed according to males and females. No significant effect was observed between males and females on individual items. Table 5.6 shows means and standard deviations for *Saudization* items (Appendix 5).

### 2. Gender and Wasta

**H2b: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Wasta* when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.**

Hypothesis (2b) indicated that Saudi female students would score higher on *Wasta* compared to males. This was statistically confirmed; findings showed that females ( $M = 3.75, SD = .72$ ) rated *Wasta* as more important in their career choices compared to males ( $M = 3.53, SD = .73$ ) ( $t(271) = -2.03, p < .05$ ) and thus Hypothesis (2b) was confirmed.

Further t-tests were conducted to see whether different items on the *Wasta* scale differed according to gender. It has been shown that females perceived the facilitation of *Wasta* as more important in their daily activities (*Wasta\_7*) and agreed more strongly on the importance of *Wasta* in obtaining a job (*Wasta\_10*) compared to males. Table 6.15 presents the results of the t-tests.

**Table 6.15: Wasta items across gender.**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b><i>t</i>-test</b>	<b><i>Df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Wasta_2</b>	3.70 (.97)	3.82 (1.17)	-1.69	271	Ns
<b>Wasta_7</b>	2.83 (1.18)	3.28 (1.30)	-2.93	271	< .05
<b>Wasta_10</b>	3.47 (1.11)	3.77 (1.20)	-2.14	271	< .05
<b>Wasta_12</b>	3.45 (1.13)	3.60 (1.32)	-1.00	271	Ns
<b>Wasta_14</b>	3.36 (1.14)	3.50 (1.17)	-1.18	271	Ns
<b>Wasta_16</b>	3.52 (1.13)	3.67 (1.21)	-.36	271	Ns

*Notes.* Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Ns = non-significant.

### 3. Gender and Social Status

**H2c: Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of obtaining social status when making their career choices compared to female MBA students.**

Hypothesis (2c) indicated that Saudi male students would score higher on the social status factor compared to females; therefore, it was expected that males would perceive social status as a more important factor in their career choices. Results did not show any evidence for this. Accordingly, it was found that males ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) and females ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .52$ ) perceived social status as equally important ( $t(271) = -1.41$ ,  $p > .05$ ), which leads to the rejection of Hypothesis (2c).

An additional interest was to find out whether there would be gender differences on individual social status items. Two items had a significant difference across gender. In particular, females gave more importance to making their families proud (social status\_2) and becoming influential in society (social status\_3) compared to males. Table 6.16 presents independent t-test results.

**Table 6.16: Social status items across gender.**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b><i>t-test</i></b>	<b><i>Df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Social status_1</b>	4.36 (.72)	4.31 (.78)	.50	271	Ns
<b>Social status_2</b>	4.22 (.80)	4.50 (.63)	-3.10	271	< .01
<b>Social status_3</b>	4.17 (.77)	4.39 (.71)	-2.45	271	< .05
<b>Social status_4</b>	3.92 (.81)	4.03 (.81)	-1.18	271	Ns
<b>Social status_5</b>	3.81 (.93)	3.71 (.93)	.95	271	Ns
<b>Social status_6</b>	3.81 (.90)	3.95 (.84)	-1.24	271	Ns

*Notes.* Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Ns = non-significant.

#### ***4. Gender and Parental Obedience***

##### **H2d: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in parental obedience when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.**

Hypothesis (2d) indicated that Saudi female students would have higher scores in parental obedience compared to males. This was statistically confirmed; findings showed that the mean parental obedience was significantly higher among females ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) compared to males ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) ( $t(271) = -3.37$ ,  $p < .01$ ); hence, Hypothesis (2d) was confirmed.

Further t-tests were conducted to test the effect of gender on individual parental obedience items. Findings showed that females gave more importance to making their parents proud of them in front of relatives (parental obedience\_4) and were more reluctant to take a job that would make their parents unhappy (parental obedience\_11) and cause their parents to worry (parental obedience\_19) compared to males. Table 6.17 demonstrates these results.

**Table 6.17: Parental obedience items across gender.**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b><i>t-test</i></b>	<b><i>Df</i></b>	<b><i>P</i></b>
<b>Parental obedience_4</b>	3.56 (1.03)	3.87 (.93)	-2.57	271	= .01
<b>Parental obedience_11</b>	3.80 (.94)	4.10 (.87)	-2.76	271	< .01
<b>Parental obedience_13</b>	3.76 (1.01)	3.90 (1.04)	-1.13	271	Ns
<b>Parental obedience_19</b>	3.62 (.90)	4.00 (.87)	-3.50	271	< .01
<b>Parental obedience_21</b>	4.39 (.67)	4.53 (.70)	-1.64	271	Ns

*Notes.* Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Ns = non-significant.

### 5. Gender and Religious Influence

**H2e: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of religion when making their career choices compared to male MBA students.**

Hypothesis (2e) stated that there would be significant differences among males and females in terms of the perceived importance of religion; it was expected that females would have higher scores on this item compared to males. Although an initial observation of the mean religious influence levels showed that females ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .73$ ) score relatively higher on this variable compared to males ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .64$ )( $t(271) = -1.38$ ,  $p > .05$ ), this difference was not statistically significant, which resulted in the rejection of Hypothesis (2e).

A further observation of the individual religious influence items demonstrated that there was no significant difference between males and females on individual items. Table 5.7 in Appendix 5 shows the final results of independent-samples t-tests.

### 6.7.6 Question Two Summary

In summary, Research Question 2 examined the effect of gender on institutional factors. Accordingly, it was shown that males and females rated *Saudization*, social status and religious influence equally. Findings further showed that females perceived *Wasta* and parental obedience as more important compared to males.

In the following section, the major focus will be on personal motivational factors. First, it will be examined whether personal motivational factors influence career choices in the private or public sector. Next, the effect of gender on personal motivational factors will be examined. While analyses will include the overall motivational dimension, a distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic factors will shed light on the relationship between motivational factors and career choices among Saudi MBA students.

### 6.7.8 Personal Motivational Factors and Career Choices

**Research Question 3: To what extent do the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students?**

In order to explore the extent to which personal motivational factors predict the career choices of MBA students, a further logistic regression model was performed with intrinsic and extrinsic factors as the predictors of career choices. Table 6.18 illustrates the final logistic regression model.

The overall model with both predictors was significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 17.68, p < .001$ ). The model explained between 6.3% (Cox and Snell R-squared) and 8.5% (Nagelkerke R-squared) of the variance in career choices and correctly classified 64% of cases. Findings showed that intrinsic motivational factors had no significant effect ( $B = .53, p > .05$ ), while extrinsic motivational factors had a statistically significant effect ( $B = -1.31, p < .001$ ). Findings showed that an increase in extrinsic factors led to a decrease in the choice of private sector work.

**Table 6.18: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from motivational factors.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	3.71	1.66	4.99	1	.02	40.90
<b>Intrinsic motivational</b>	.53	.30	3.25	1	.07	1.71
<b>Extrinsic motivational</b>	-1.31	.34	15.08	1	.00	3.70

### 6.7.9 Hypothesis Testing (Hypothesis 3)

#### *Personal Motivational Factors and Career Choices*

**H3: Within the personal dimension, the extrinsic motivational factors will be stronger predictors than the intrinsic motivational factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

Findings of a second logistic regression model demonstrated that within the personal dimension, only extrinsic factors seemed to predict career choices. While intrinsic motivational factors did not have a significant effect ( $B = .53, p > .05$ ), extrinsic motivational factors had a strong influence in the choices of MBA students ( $B = -1.31, p < .001$ ). This confirmed Hypothesis 3. Moreover, findings showed that increases in extrinsic motivational factors resulted in a higher likelihood of choosing a career in public sector.

Two further logistic regression models were performed in order to determine which individual motivational items are the strongest predictors of career choices. The first regression model included six items from the extrinsic motivational scale. Findings indicated that job location ( $B = -.51, p < .01$ ), work conditions ( $B = -.46, p < .05$ ), and job security ( $B = -.45, p < .05$ ) were the strongest predictive factors in career choices; this showed that as the level of importance assigned to job location, work conditions, and job security increases, so does the likelihood of choosing a career in the public sector. A second logistic regression model, including six intrinsic motivational scale items, indicated that the two most significant items were serving society ( $B = -.48, p < .05$ ) and creativity ( $B = .42, p < .05$ ). This showed that although the overall intrinsic scale was not significant in predicting career choices, individual intrinsic scale items, namely serving society and creativity, were found to have significant effects on career choices. Accordingly, increases in the importance given to serving society led to increases in the choice of a public sector career, while increases in the importance given to creativity led to decreases in the choice of a public sector career (i.e. increases in the choice of a private sector career). Tables 6.19 and 6.20 indicate the regression models for extrinsic and intrinsic motivational scale items, respectively.

**Table 6.19: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from extrinsic personal motivational scale items.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	5.35	1.55	11.94	1	.00	211.19
<b>Location</b>	-.51	.17	8.60	1	.00	1.67
<b>Work conditions</b>	-.46	.19	5.63	1	.02	1.59
<b>Security</b>	-.45	.19	5.45	1	.02	1.56
<b>Work benefits</b>	.30	.18	2.99	1	.09	1.35
<b>Prestige</b>	-.11	.16	.52	1	.47	1.23
<b>Salary</b>	.09	.24	.13	1	.71	1.09

**Table 6.20: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from intrinsic personal motivational scale items.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	.11	1.30	.01	1	.93	1.12
<b>Serving society</b>	-.48	.18	7.27	1	.01	1.61
<b>Creativity</b>	.42	.21	4.14	1	.04	1.52
<b>Responsibility</b>	-.33	.21	2.41	1	.12	1.39
<b>Interest and challenge</b>	.31	.22	1.98	1	.16	1.36
<b>Sense of achievement</b>	.25	.20	1.48	1	.22	1.28
<b>Personal growth</b>	-.12	.24	.27	1	.60	1.13

#### **6.7.10 Gender and Personal Motivational Factors**

**Research Question 4: What is the effect of gender on the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) for Saudi MBA students when making their career choices?**

The effect of gender on the personal motivational factors was tested further. It was tested whether there would be differences between overall extrinsic and intrinsic factors and between each individual factor within the scale. Table 6.21 presents the findings across gender.

Subsequent independent samples t-tests revealed that there was a significant difference between males and females in terms of overall personal motivational scale ( $t(271) = -3.50$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Findings demonstrated that female Saudi students ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = .32$ ) had higher scores on the personal dimension in their career choices compared to male Saudi students ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .35$ ). A further distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic factors indicated that females had higher intrinsic motivation compared to males ( $t(271) = -3.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ) ( $M_{\text{Female}} = 4.36$ ,  $SD_{\text{Female}} = .46$ ;  $M_{\text{Male}} = 4.16$ ,  $SD_{\text{Male}} = .44$ ). On the other hand, there was no significant difference between males and females with respect to extrinsic motivation ( $t(271) = -1.67$ ,  $p > .05$ ), although, females ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = .40$ ) had relatively higher extrinsic motivation compared to males ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = .44$ ).

**Table 6.21: Individual extrinsic and intrinsic factors across gender.**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b><i>t-test</i></b>	<b><i>Df</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Overall extrinsic factors</b>	4.14 (.44)	4.23 (.40)	-1.67	271	Ns
Salary	4.50 (.58)	4.36 (.57)	2.00	271	< .05
Location	4.10 (.85)	4.44 (.76)	-3.39	271	< .01
Prestige	3.59 (.82)	3.63 (.93)	-.41	271	Ns
Security	4.24 (.85)	4.35 (.77)	-1.11	271	Ns
Conditions	4.12 (.84)	4.52 (.63)	-4.27	271	< .01
Benefits	4.31 (.73)	4.08 (.88)	2.34	271	< .05
<b>Overall intrinsic factors</b>	4.16 (.44)	4.36 (.46)	-3.70	271	< .001
Responsibility	4.18 (.71)	4.52 (.60)	-4.07	271	< .001
Creativity	4.23 (.73)	4.27 (.77)	-.41	271	Ns
Personal growth	4.54 (.59)	4.66 (.66)	-1.57	271	Ns
Achievement	4.27 (.75)	4.52 (.73)	-2.76	271	< .01
Interest and challenge	4.11 (.68)	4.24 (.76)	-1.44	271	Ns
Serve society	3.63 (.81)	3.98 (.79)	-3.58	271	< .001
<b>Overall personal motivational</b>	4.15 (.35)	4.30 (.32)	-3.50	271	<.01



Further t-tests showed that there were significant gender differences in terms of the perceived importance given to both extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Although there was no significant gender difference on the overall extrinsic factors scale, considering individual items shows that salary and benefits were perceived to be more important among males compared to females,  $t(271) = 2.00$  and  $t(271) = 2.34$ , respectively, both  $p < .05$  (salary:  $M_{\text{Female}} = 4.36$ ,  $SD_{\text{Female}} = .57$ ;  $M_{\text{Male}} = 4.50$ ,  $SD_{\text{Male}} = .58$ ; benefits:  $M_{\text{Female}} = 4.08$ ,  $SD_{\text{Female}} = .88$ ;  $M_{\text{Male}} = 4.31$ ,  $SD_{\text{Male}} = .73$ ). On the other hand, job location and work conditions were more important for females compared to males,  $t(271) = -3.39$  and  $t(271) = -4.27$ , respectively, both  $p < .01$  (location:  $M_{\text{Female}} = 4.44$ ,  $SD_{\text{Female}} = .76$ ;  $M_{\text{Male}} = 4.10$ ,  $SD_{\text{Male}} = .85$ ; work conditions:  $M_{\text{Female}} = 4.52$ ,  $SD_{\text{Female}} = .63$ ;  $M_{\text{Male}} = 4.12$ ;  $SD_{\text{Male}} = .84$ ).

Next, whether gender had an effect on intrinsic factors was checked. Results demonstrated that there were significant gender differences on responsibility ( $t(271) = -4.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ); females ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = .60$ ) perceived responsibility as more important compared to males ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). For sense of achievement, females ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = .73$ ) again reported higher levels compared to males ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) ( $t(271) = -2.76$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Finally, for serving society, females ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) indicated higher levels of importance compared to males ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) ( $t(271) = -3.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### **6.7.11 Hypothesis Testing (Hypotheses 4a-4b)**

#### ***1. Gender and Extrinsic Factors***

**H4a: Saudi male MBA students will have significantly higher scores in extrinsic motivational factors compared to female MBA students.**

Hypothesis (4a) stated that male Saudi MBA students would indicate higher levels of extrinsic motivational factors in their choices compared to their female counterparts. Independent-samples t-tests showed that males did not score higher on extrinsic motivation compared to females. Females ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = .40$ ) had relatively higher extrinsic motivations compared to males ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = .44$ ), but this difference was not statistically significant ( $t(271) = -1.67$ ,  $p > .05$ ); thus, Hypothesis (4a) was rejected.

## *2. Gender and Intrinsic Factors*

**H4b: Saudi female MBA students will have significantly higher scores in intrinsic motivational factors compared to male MBA students.**

As Hypothesis (4b) suggested, it was tested whether male and female Saudi students would report significantly different levels of intrinsic motivation in their career choices. Findings indicated that, as expected, females ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = .46$ ) scored higher than males ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = .44$ ) in intrinsic motivation in their career choices ( $t(271) = -3.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ); hence, Hypothesis 4a was statistically confirmed.

### **6.7.12 Questions Three and Four Summary**

In summary, Research Question 3 addressed which personal factors (intrinsic or extrinsic) were the strongest predictors of career choices. Findings showed that, as hypothesised, extrinsic factors were stronger determinants of career choices among Saudi MBA students; furthermore, Research Question 4 investigated the effect of gender on personal motivational factors. As hypothesised, females reported higher levels of importance for intrinsic factors in their career choices compared to males. As opposed to what was initially suggested, females also had relatively higher scores on extrinsic factors compared to males, although the difference was not statistically significant. At this stage of the results, the next section will combine both personal motivational factors and institutional factors and examine which dimension has a stronger influence on the choice of a career in the public or private sector.

### **6.7.13 Institutional and Personal Motivational Factors in Career Choices**

***Research Question 5: Are the institutional factors more influential than the personal motivational factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students?***

Next, an overall logistic regression model was run with both personal motivational factors and institutional factors. At this stage of the research, extrinsic and intrinsic personal motivational factors were combined to constitute the overall personal motivational variable, whereas the overall institutional factor variable was obtained by taking the average of all individual institutional factors. The overall logistic regression model with two main predictors yielded a significant result ( $\chi^2(2) = 11.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The model

explained between 4.1% (Cox and Snell R-squared) and 5.6% (Nagelkerke R-squared) of the variance in career choices and correctly classified 60.1% of cases. Among the main predictors, the overall personal motivational factor did not significantly predict career choices, whereas the overall institutional factor significantly predicted the career choices of Saudi MBA students ( $B = -1.06, p < .001$ ). Accordingly, increases in the perceived importance of institutional factors led to decreases in choices of a career in the private sector. Table 6.22 presents the findings from this model.

**Table 6.22: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from both personal and institutional dimensions.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	6.12	1.99	9.48	1	.00	455.70
<b>Institutional factors</b>	-1.06	.37	8.21	1	.00	2.94
<b>Personal motivational factors</b>	-.37	.40	.86	1	.35	1.45

#### 6.7.14 Hypothesis Testing (Hypothesis 5)

##### *Institutional and Personal Motivational Factors in Career Choices*

**H5: The institutional factors (*Saudization, Wasta, social status, parental obedience, and religion*) will be stronger predictors than the personal motivational factors (*intrinsic and extrinsic*) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students.**

Findings from the logistic regression model that included both institutional and motivational factors indicated that, as Hypothesis 5 suggested, institutional factors ( $B = -1.06, p < .001$ ) were stronger predictors of the career choices of MBA students compared to personal motivational factors ( $B = -.37, p > .05$ ). This way, Hypothesis 5 was statistically confirmed.

## 6.8 Additional Analyses

The previous hypothesis testing and main statistical analyses contributed significantly to the understanding of career choices among Saudi MBA students; furthermore, there is a need for a thorough examination of the data in relation to demographic variables; hence, this section is introduced to highlight these additional analyses.

### 6.8.1 Examination of Other Demographic Variables

Although gender has been examined in relation to institutional and motivational factors, it is still important to investigate whether gender is associated with career choices in private or public sector. Additionally, further statistical tests were conducted in order to demonstrate whether the importance assigned to institutional and personal motivational factors and career choices in private and public sectors vary across age, marital status, work experience, father's work experience and father's educational level.

- 1. Gender.** The associations between gender and career choices in the private or public sector were examined with a chi-square test. Findings showed a significant chi-square test:  $\chi^2(1) = 31.73, p < .05$ . Results demonstrated that the number of male participants who chose a public sector career was lower than expected, while the number of male participants who chose a private sector was higher than expected. On the other hand, the number of women who chose a career in the public sector was higher than expected, whereas the number of women who chose a private sector career was lower than expected. Table 6.23 presents the relevant cross-tabulation.

**Table 6.23: Cross-tabulation: Gender X Career choice.**

		Career choice	
		Public	Private
Male	Observed	38	119
	Expected	60.4	96.6
Female	Observed	67	49
	Expected	44.6	71.4

2. **Age.** In order to ease the interpretation of the results, and because there were only a few cases over 40, age was transformed to a dichotomous variable as younger (21-30) and older (31- 46+) participants ( $N = 141$  and  $N = 132$ , respectively). Independent-samples t-tests were applied to reveal age differences on outcome variables. The majority of t-tests revealed that there was no difference between age groups in terms of personal or institutional factors, except in the perception of *Wasta*: findings revealed that younger people ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = .91$ ) gave relatively more importance to *Wasta* in their career choices compared to older people ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = .87$ )( $t(271) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .05$ ).

A further chi-square test was conducted to determine whether there was an association between age (younger vs. older) and career choices (public vs. private). Findings indicated that there was a significant association between age and career choices:  $\chi^2(1) = 10.10$ ,  $p < .05$ . A further observation of adjusted residuals indicated that for each cell observed counts were significantly different than expected counts. Accordingly, the number of younger participants who chose the public sector and the number of older participants who chose the private sector were both higher than expected, whereas the number of younger participants who chose the private sector and the number of older participants who chose the public sector were lower than expected. Table 6.24 presents the relevant cross-tabulation.

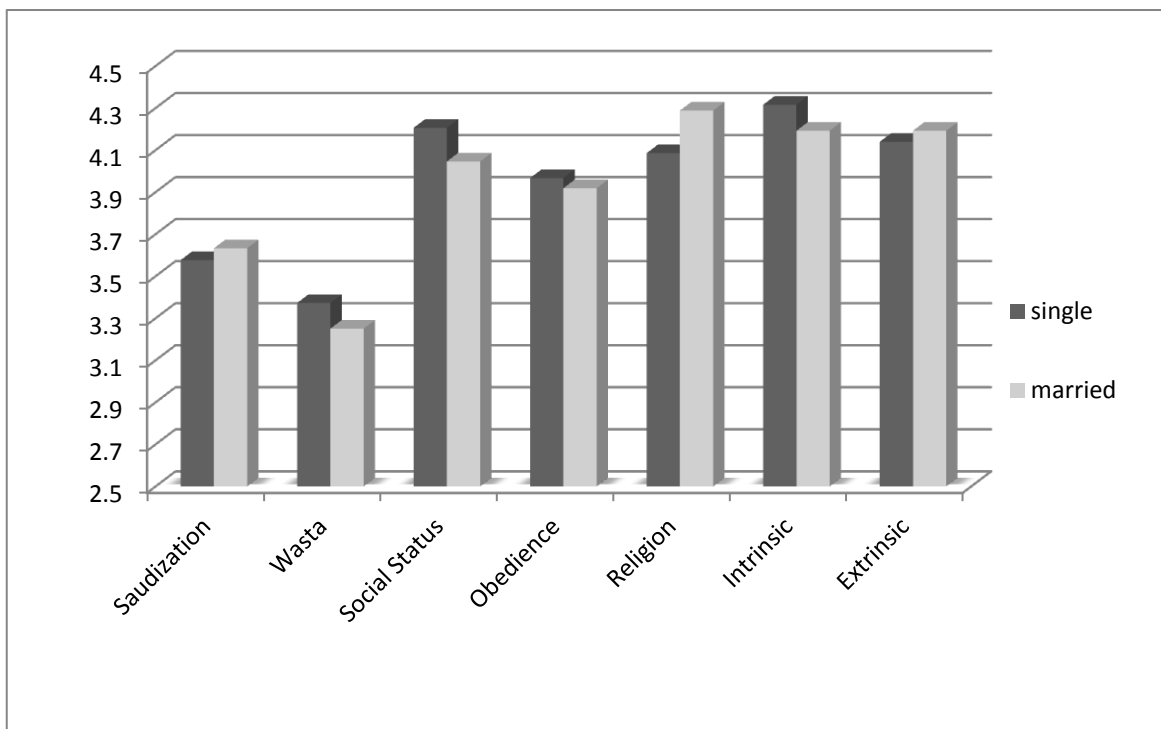
**Table 6.24: Cross-tabulation: Age X Career choice.**

		Career choice	
		Public	Private
Younger	Observed	67	74
	Expected	54.2	86.8
Older	Observed	38	94
	Expected	50.8	81.2

*Note.* Counts are presented.

**3. Marital status.** Although marital status initially included four different categories (single, married, divorced, and widowed), the divorced and widowed categories included only a few cases ( $N = 10$  and  $N = 1$ , respectively) and so these two categories were excluded, which resulted in the testing of two categories: single and married; hence, independent samples t-tests were conducted with marital status as the independent variable and both institutional and personal motivational factors as the dependent variables.

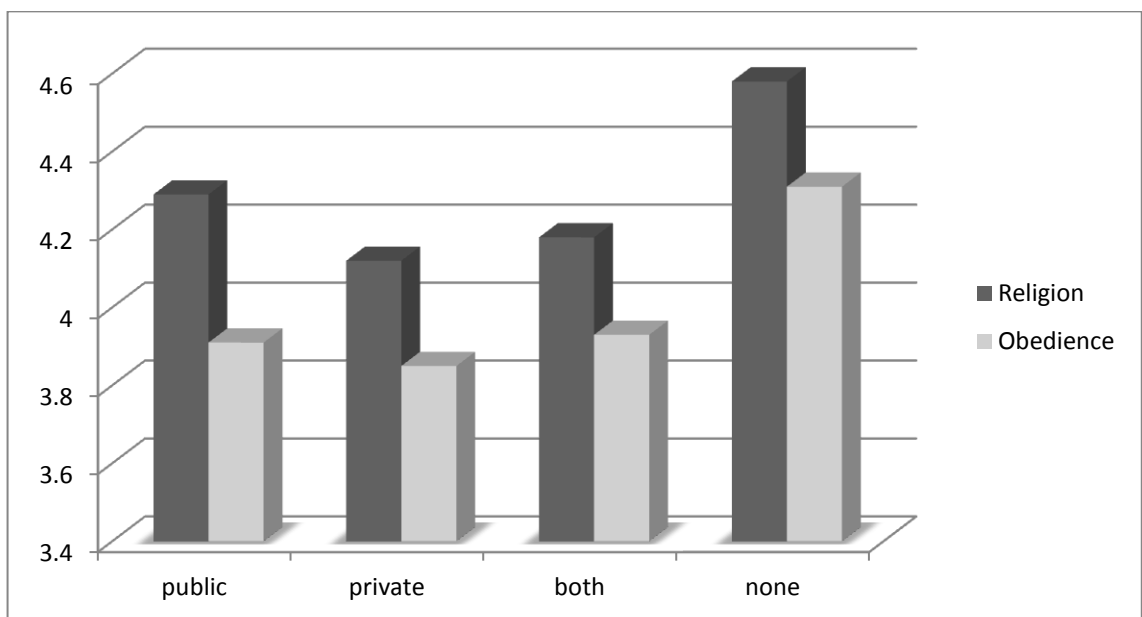
Significant differences emerged across single and married individuals. Social status was perceived to be more important among singles compared to married participants ( $t(260) = 2.09, p < .05$ ). Similarly, intrinsic factors were also more important among singles ( $t(260) = 2.04, p < .05$ ). On the other hand, religious influence was a more important determinant of career choices for married participants ( $t(260) = -2.30, p < .05$ ). Figure 6.1 illustrates these differences.



**Figure 6.1: Institutional and personal motivational factors across single and married participants.**

An additional chi-square test was performed to investigate whether there was a significant association between marital status (married vs. single) and career choice (public vs. private). Findings showed no significant association between the two, demonstrated by a non-significant chi-square result:  $\chi^2(1) = .62, p > .05$  (see Table 5.8 in Appendix 5 for cross-tabulation marital status x career choice).

**4. Work experience.** Work experience was also investigated in relation to personal motivational and institutional factors. Since the independent variables have more than two categories in this case, one-way ANOVA tests were conducted for each outcome. Findings indicated that there were significant effects of previous work experience on parental obedience ( $F(3,269) = 4.80, p < .01$ ) and religious influence ( $F(3,269) = 4.24, p < .01$ ); furthermore, Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests indicated that participants with no previous work experience reported higher levels of religious influence and parental obedience compared to other categories (no experience  $p < .05$ ). Figure 6.2 demonstrates levels of religious influence and parental obedience across work experience.



**Figure 6.2: Religious influence and parental obedience across previous work experience.**

An additional chi-square test was conducted to test the association between previous work experience and career choice. Findings showed a significant

association:  $\chi^2(3) = 38.94, p < .01$ . Further observation of adjusted residuals demonstrated that the observed number of participants with previous experience in the private sector who chose a career in the public sector was significantly lower than expected, while the number of participants with private sector experience who chose a career in the private sector was higher than expected; furthermore, significant differences emerged for participants with no previous experience; the number of these participants who chose a career in the public sector was higher than expected, whereas the number of participants who chose a career in the private sector was lower than expected. Table 6.25 indicates the cross-tabulation between previous work experience and career choices.

**Table 6.25: Cross-tabulation: Work experience X Career choice.**

		Career choice	
		Public	Private
Public	Observed	31	36
	Expected	25.8	41.2
Private	Observed	24	90
	Expected	45.8	73.2
Both	Observed	23	28
	Expected	21.2	33.8
None	Observed	24	6
	Expected	12.3	19.7

*Note.* Counts are presented.

**5. Father's work experience.** A further one-way ANOVA test was performed with father's work experience as the independent variable. Only one significant effect was detected; specifically, participants whose father had experience in both the



private and public sector reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = .37$ ) compared to participants whose fathers had experience in the public sector ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = .44$ ) or the private sector ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = .53$ ) alone or had no experience at all ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = .48$ ) ( $F(3,269) = 4.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ); further, a post-hoc test was conducted to test whether any two groups are significantly different from each other. A Tukey's HSD post-hoc test revealed that there was a significant difference between those whose parents had experience in both (public and private) sectors and those whose parents had experience in the public sector only ( $p < .05$ ) compared to those whose parents had experience in none of the sectors ( $p < .01$ ).

The association between father's work experience and career choice was additionally tested by a chi-square test which yielded a non-significant association between the two variables:  $\chi^2(3) = 1.02$ ,  $p > .05$  (see Table 5.9 in Appendix 5 for a cross-tabulation of father's work experience X career choice).

**6. Father's education.** Father's education was also dichotomised into lower education (no formal education to secondary school) and higher education (bachelor's degree to doctoral degree) in order to simplify the interpretation of the results; therefore, independent-samples t-tests were conducted. Findings revealed significant differences only in terms of the perception of *Wasta*; specifically, it was found that participants whose fathers had higher education ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = .86$ ) reported higher levels of importance for *Wasta* compared to the ones whose fathers had lower levels of education ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = .90$ ) ( $t(271) = -2.91$ ,  $p < .01$ ) (see Table 5.10 in Appendix 5).

Finally, it was also examined whether there was a significant association between father's education (lower education vs. higher education) and career choice (public vs. private). No significant association was detected between the two variables:  $\chi^2(1) = .06$ ,  $p > .05$  (see Table 5.11 in Appendix 5 for a cross-tabulation of father's education X career choice).

## 6.9 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter presented statistical findings that aimed to test the specific hypotheses suggested in previous chapters. Data were mainly analysed using a variety of parametric tests, including t-tests and binary logistic regressions, preceded by factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis assessing the validity and reliability of

each scale. A number of significant findings were detected during the data analysis process.

***Institutional factors and career choices:*** Concerning the relationships between institutional factors and career choices, logistic regression analyses demonstrated that the perception of *Wasta*, religious influence and parental obedience had significant associations with career choices in the public or private sector; specifically, results revealed that increases in the importance given to *Wasta*, religion and parental obedience lead to decreases in the choice of a career in the private sector. On the other hand, *Saudization* and social status did not have any association with career choices, as opposed to what was initially suggested; moreover, it was statistically demonstrated that cultural-cognitive factors (religion and parental obedience) were the strongest predictors of such career choices among all other variables. Figure 6.3 illustrates these relationships.

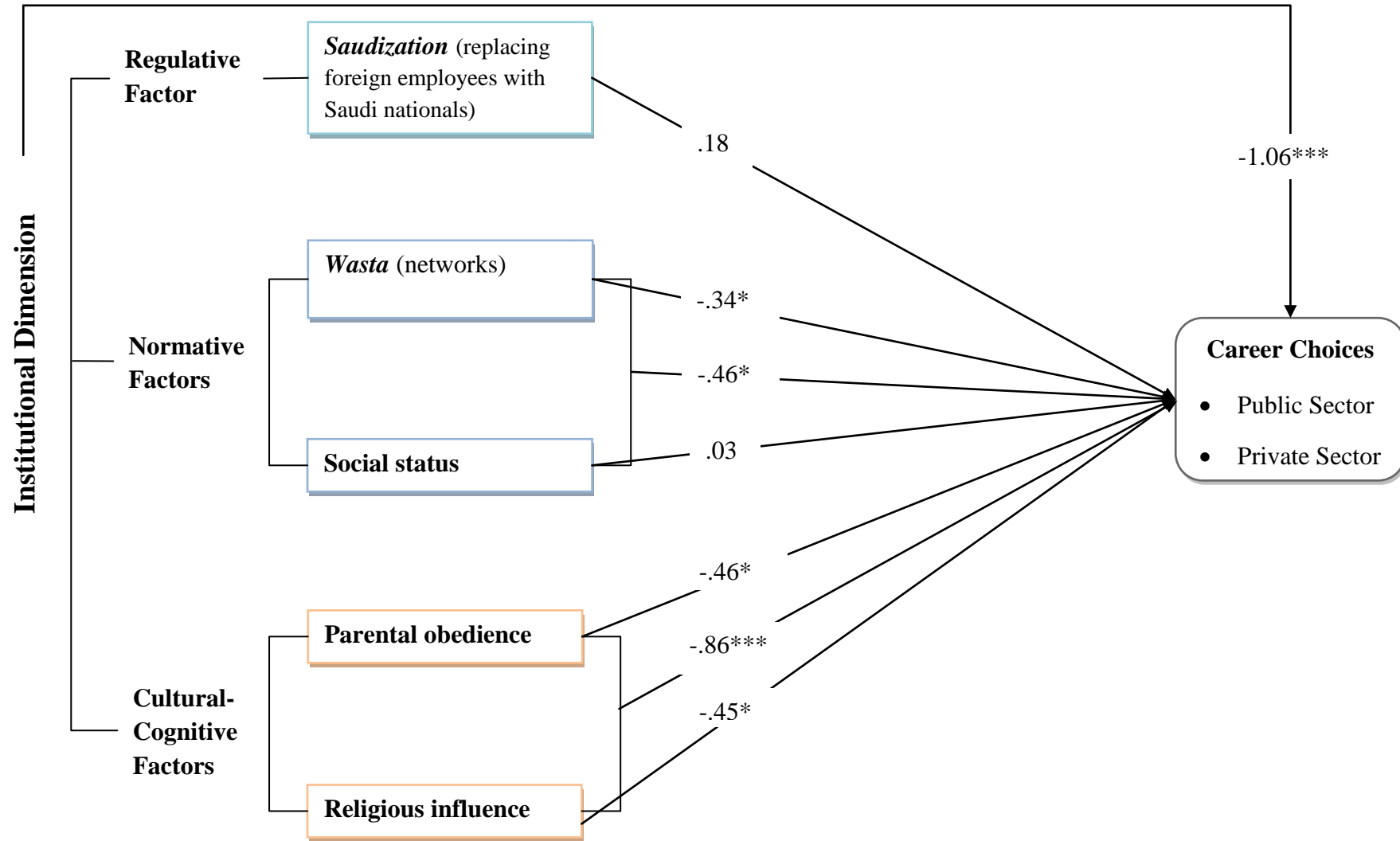
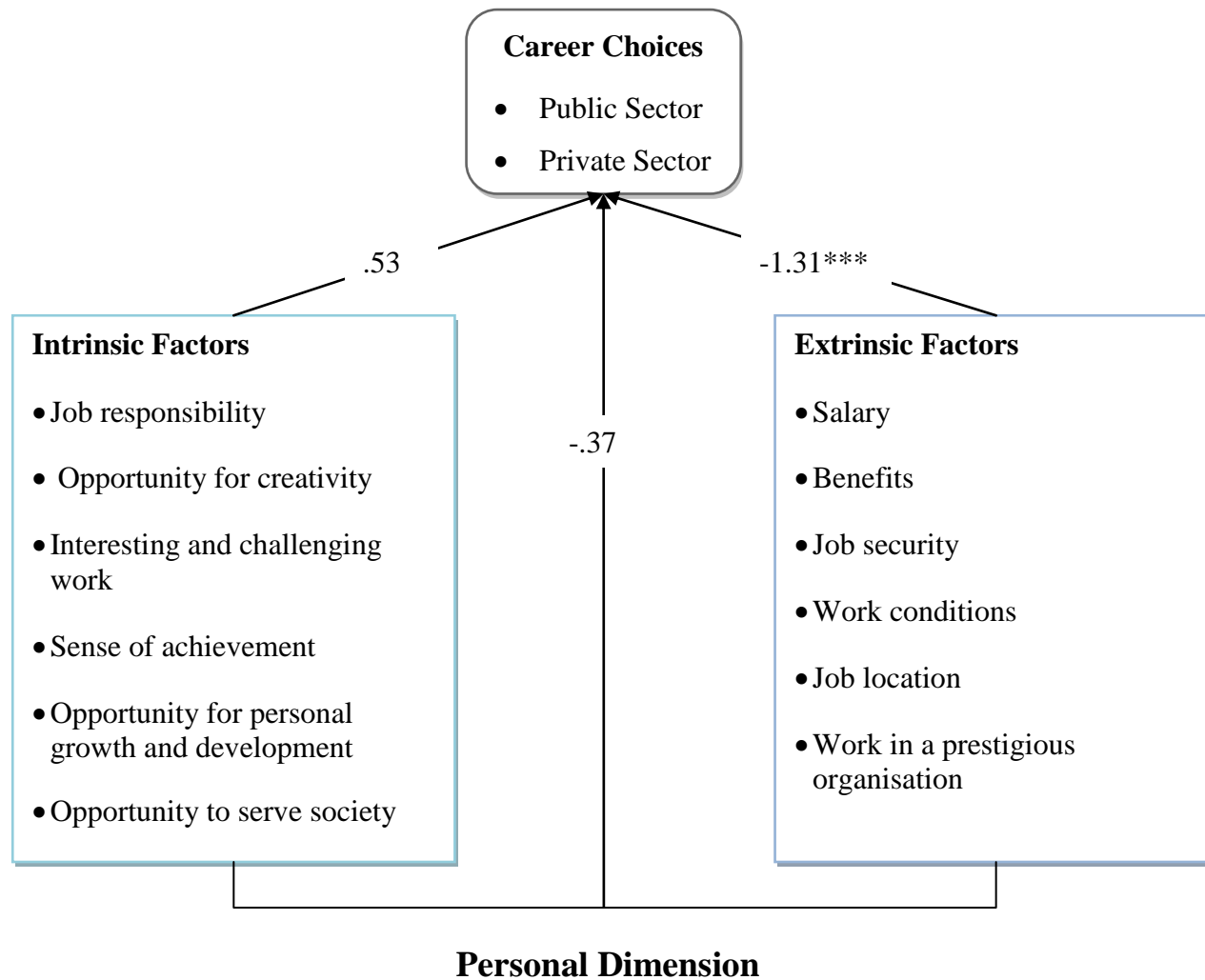


Figure 6.3: Prediction of career choices from institutional factors.

***Gender and institutional factors:*** The second research question addressed the effect of gender on institutional factors. Independent-samples t-tests indicated that there were no gender differences in terms of *Saudization*, social status or religious influence; however, it was demonstrated that the level of importance given to *Wasta* and parental obedience was higher among females compared to males and, moreover, females had higher scores on overall institutional factors compared to males.

***Personal motivational factors and career choices:*** The third research question investigated the role of personal motivational factors on career choices in the private or public sector. Logistic regression models indicated that extrinsic motivational factors had a strong influence on career choices. Particularly, increases in extrinsic motivational factors led to decreases in the choice of a private sector career. On the other hand, intrinsic factors had no significant effect. These associations are illustrated in Figure 6.4.



**Figure 6.4: Prediction of career choices from personal motivational factors.**

***Gender and personal motivational factors:*** The fourth research question aimed to reveal the effect of gender on personal motivational factors. As hypothesised, it was found that females had higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to males. On the other hand, contrary to the initial assumptions, there was no significant gender difference on extrinsic motivational factors.

***Personal motivational factors and institutional factors in career choices:*** The final research question examined whether personal motivational or institutional factors were stronger predictors of career choices in the public or private sector. The final logistic regression model indicated that, as expected, institutional factors were stronger determinants of career choices; specifically, increases in the importance given to institutional factors were found to decrease the choices in the private sector. Figure 6.5 illustrates these relationships. Table 6.26 summarises the findings across specific research questions and hypotheses.

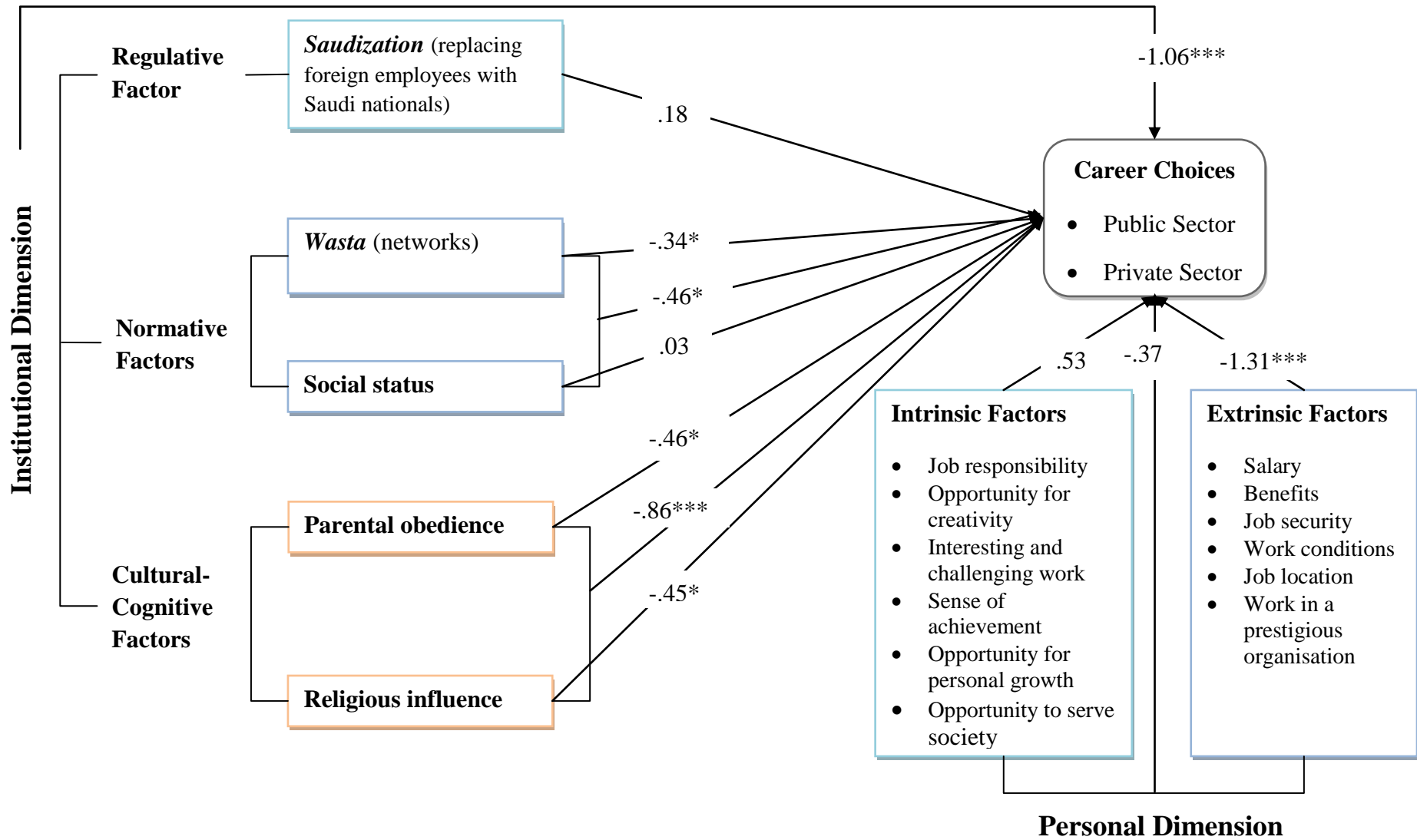


Figure 6.5: Prediction of career choices from institutional and personal factors.

**Table 6.26: Findings across research questions and hypotheses.**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Hyp. confirmation</b>
<b>Do institutional factors predict career choices?</b>	<i>H1a.</i> Perceived importance of <i>Saudization</i> will predict career choices	Rejected
	<i>H1b.</i> Perceived importance of <i>Wasta</i> (networks) will predict career choices	Confirmed
	<i>H1c.</i> Perceived importance of social status will predict career choices	Rejected
	<i>H1d.</i> Parental obedience will predict career choices	Confirmed
	<i>H1e.</i> Perceived importance of religion will predict career choices	Confirmed
	<i>H1f.</i> Cultural-cognitive factors will be the strongest predictors of career choices	Confirmed
<b>Does gender affect institutional factors?</b>	<i>H2a.</i> Males will have higher scores in the perceived importance of <i>Saudization</i>	Rejected
	<i>H2b.</i> Females will have higher scores in the perceived importance of <i>Wasta</i>	Confirmed
	<i>H2c.</i> Males will have higher scores in the perceived importance of social status	Rejected
	<i>H2d.</i> Females will have higher scores in parental obedience	Confirmed
	<i>H2e.</i> Females will have higher scores in the perceived importance of religion	Rejected
<b>Do personal motivational factors predict career choices?</b>	<i>H3.</i> Extrinsic motivational factors will be stronger predictors than intrinsic motivational factors on career choices	Confirmed
<b>Does gender affect personal motivational factors?</b>	<i>H4a.</i> Males will have higher scores in extrinsic motivational factors compared to females	Rejected
	<i>H4b.</i> Females will have higher scores in intrinsic motivational factors compared to males	Confirmed
<b>Which factors are more influential in career choices?</b>	<i>H5.</i> Institutional factors will be stronger predictors of career choices	Confirmed



# Chapter 7: Socio-Cultural and Political Considerations in Career Choice

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the research presented in Chapter 6. The primary purpose of this research was to explore and compare the influence of institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) and personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The effects of gender on the institutional and personal factors were investigated to highlight the differences between Saudi male and female students in terms of career choices.

The theoretical framework guiding this research assumes that a career choice is not solely determined by personal factors, as most of the Western-developed psychological theories about career choice suggest (e.g. Savickas, 2002; Holland, 1997, 1973; Schein, 1990, 1978); one should also consider that in some non-Western contexts such as Saudi Arabia, the institutional and personal factors are not just equally important in the career choice process: institutional factors are actually more influential.

In this chapter, the 15 hypotheses that were introduced in Chapters 3 and 4 are discussed in relation to the findings presented in Chapter 6. The first two sections of the chapter will include a discussion of institutional and personal factors both individually and in relation to gender differences. In the third section, findings of the demographic particulars are interpreted. This chapter ends with a presentation of a newly developed model based on the significant findings of the research called the ‘socio-cultural model of career choice’.

## 7.2 Institutional Factors, Gender, and Career Choice

According to the descriptive results, all the institutional and personal motivational factors were viewed as being important by the participants in general career choice. Of highest importance was intrinsic motivation followed by religious influence, extrinsic motivation, social status, parental obedience, *Wasta*, and then *Saudization*, respectively; however, when testing whether or not such factors predict career choices between public and private sectors, mixed results were generated. In order to see the influence of the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) on the career

choices of Saudi MBA students, several logistic regression tests were conducted; furthermore, to examine the effects of gender on these institutional factors, independent-samples t-tests were conducted. This section will discuss these findings.

### **7.2.1 Saudization and Career Choice**

The first hypothesis (H1a) of the study assumed that *Saudization* would significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students. This hypothesis was rejected based on the statistical analysis and was ranked as the lowest in importance compared to other institutional and personal motivational factors using means and standard deviations. As illustrated previously in Chapter 3, this is the first empirical research in Saudi Arabia that examines the influence of *Saudization* as a regulative institutional factor on career choices. The initial assumption of this study was that *Saudization*, as a regulative coercive measure implemented by the Saudi government since the 1990s to replace foreign workers with Saudi citizens, would help Saudi MBA students to find jobs and thus would influence their future career choices when finishing their MBA programme. This assumption was built on the historical success of the *Saudization* policy, targeted at the public sector in the 1990s, which helped Saudis to occupy around 93% of that sector by the end of 2012 (SAMA, 2013). Such an outcome has encouraged the government to exert similar efforts in the private sector, resulting in the proportion of Saudis increasing from 10% in 2011 to 13% in 2012 (Ministry of Labour, 2012).

A plausible interpretation for the rejection of the above hypothesis is that Saudi MBA students may have low expectations of the *Saudization* policy in fulfilling the requirements of the labour market. Although the policy has achieved great success in the public sector, in which 93% of its employees are Saudis (SAMA, 2013), this sector has become saturated and cannot create new jobs for them (Al-Asmari, 2008). Saudi MBA students are most probably aware of this situation and this might be behind their low expectations of the effectiveness or help of *Saudization* in the public sector. Although the private sector, employing more than 8.5 million workers (SAMA, 2013), still has the potential to be the alternative employer of Saudis, the *Saudization* policy has not had any tangible success in the private sector since the start of its implementation. The continuously increasing numbers of foreign workers being employed in the private sector (comprising 87% of the workforce in 2012 (Ministry of Labour, 2012)) is indicative of this failure (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012). The unemployment rates had remained high among Saudi nationals (12%

in general) and, in particular, among women (35.7%) and youths (30%) by the end of 2012 (IMF, 2013).

The failure of *Saudization* in the private sector, which is expected to be the main reason for the rejection of (H1a), has been discussed by Torofdar and Yunggar, who described the approach of the Saudi government towards *Saudization* as ‘enthusiastic’ but lacking long-term vision and planning and being too ‘ambitious rather than practical’ (2012, pp. 2-3). Similarly, Fakeeh (2009) argued that although the government considered *Saudization* a solution for unemployment, there is a feeling of frustration and disbelief among some Saudi individuals who view *Saudization* as ‘helpless’. Similar employment localisation processes in the labour markets of other Arab Gulf countries such as Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were claimed to be successful (Fakeeh, 2009). According to Fakeeh (2009), the success of such a policy in those countries could be attributed to several reasons: the lower population and unemployment rates in those countries compared to Saudi Arabia, the setting of realistic differential localisation goals designed for each industrial sector and having flexible laws in restructuring education (Fakeeh, 2009). A recent study shows that the problem of the Emirati workforce concentration in the public sector has caused a ‘budgetary burden’ and a ‘hindrance to real growth’ (Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2012, p. 609). This suggests that the process of localisation in the UAE might not have produced the outcomes discussed by Fakeeh (2009).

According to Ramady (2005), despite the massive localisation efforts exerted by the government, the private sector in Saudi Arabia prefers to continue employing expatriates; this applies to managerial posts. Many private organisations employ large numbers of experienced, skilled foreign managers and professionals, often from the West, other Arab countries and India, in key managerial positions (Iles *et al.*, 2012). The existence of Saudi managers in the private sector is limited (Hertog, 2012; Chaar, 2010). The employment of foreign workers and managers in the private sector is due to various factors: Firstly, among private sector employers, there is a negative perception about Saudi nationals as being less productive compared to foreign expatriates (Ramady, 2005); secondly, Saudi managers and workers are more expensive to hire than their Asian or Arab counterparts and are on a similar salary to expatriates from Western countries (Hertog, 2012); thirdly, skills, the ability to communicate in different languages and having international experience are needed in the private sector and young Saudis lack these (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012); fourthly, there are cultural boundaries to women’s employment (Al-Asmari, 2008) and, finally, reluctance among Saudis to relocate to different cities due to family

responsibilities, particularly looking after parents (Fakeeh, 2009). Mousa (2013a) argues that there is a low level of motivation among Saudi employees which causes high turnover (Mousa, 2013a). *Saudization* policy and its related programmes such as *Nitaqat*<sup>19</sup> are addressing the issue of unemployment on the surface (such as having specific numbers of Saudi employees in a given organisation) rather than exploring the reasons behind low motivation in depth. Usually private organisations only recruit Saudis for lower level jobs, while managerial positions are mainly occupied by expatriates (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014; Iles *et al.*, 2012). In the current research, it is argued that such low levels of motivation and high turnover cannot be linked only to personal decision making. As can be observed from the above reasons, personal choices are embedded in larger political, social and cultural contexts that are often ignored when designing and implementing *Saudization* policy.

To sum up, the failure of *Saudization* in the private sector represented by the continuously increasing number of foreigners and saturation in the public sector might explain why *Saudization* is not a significant predictor of career choice. Both groups of participants who chose public or private sector might share the same views about *Saudization*.

### **7.2.2 Saudization and Gender**

It was hypothesised that male Saudi MBA students would have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Saudization* when making their career choices compared to female students (H2a). The Ministry of Labour highlighted the efforts of the government in employing more Saudis in the private sector in a report published in 2012. These efforts resulted in lowering the unemployment rate among men from 7.4% in 2011 to 6.1% in 2012 (the lowest in 13 years). On the other hand, the unemployment rate among Saudi women has increased from 33.4% in 2011 to 35.7% in 2012; hence, it was assumed that men would find *Saudization* more helpful and important than females when looking for new careers. Findings of this study, however, did not support this hypothesis and showed no significant difference between males and females in terms of the importance assigned to *Saudization* in career choices.

There can be a few interpretations of such a result. Despite the negative effects of the cultural forces on female employment, women's legal and political rights have improved significantly in recent years (Mousa, 2013b; Al-Ahmadi, 2011). For example, in 2011, Saudi women were given the right to vote and run in municipal elections, 20% of the

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<sup>19</sup> *Nitaqat* refers to a colour-coded classification system that ranks private sector organisations according to the number of Saudi employees in those organisations (see Chapter 2).

*Shura* council must be constituted of women, and more women have been working as diplomats since 2007 and in high ranking ministerial positions since 2009 (Mousa, 2013b). Women have been granted equal opportunities to study different majors, including MBA programmes, inside the country and abroad on state scholarships which have improved their level of education tremendously since 2005. These improved legal rights could be a reason why the importance of *Saudization* was scored equally by women and men.

Another possible explanation of this result may be that both Saudi male and female students do not count *Saudization* as successful or helpful for different gendered reasons. Although *Saudization* policy seeks to reduce unemployment, in effect it assumes that unemployment rates among men and women are the same. While unemployment rates among women and men are highly divergent (women 35.7% and men 6.1%), *Saudization* has failed to create any quota in favour of women (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014). At the same time, *Saudization* was seen as being as unhelpful for men as it was for women. This is perhaps an issue concerning different generations of employees; older generations of Saudi men are mostly employed in the public sector. According to the recent IMF report, the unemployment rate among youths is as high as 30% (IMF, 2013). Taking into account that the main target of *Saudization* is the young Saudi workforce, the figures show that the policy could not create the desired optimal outcome for male Saudis either. In general, the failure of *Saudization* can be seen on its emphasis on ‘ethnic differences’ between Saudi citizens and expatriates rather than focusing on Saudi men and women’s chances of employment. The fact that *Saudization* was ranked the lowest in the descriptive results of this study shows that *Saudization*, as the most invested regulative factor, is considered by Saudi men and women as less helpful in providing career opportunities. As will be discussed in the next section, informal routes are more reliable for obtaining a career than formal routes such as *Saudization*.

### **7.2.3 *Wasta* and Career Choice**

The findings of this study confirmed the second hypothesis (H1b), which indicated that the perceived importance of *Wasta* would significantly predict career choices among Saudi MBA students. This result suggests that *Wasta*, which is defined as the use of family and social networks and connections for achieving personal gains (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1994), is important for the career choices of the participants in this study. This finding is in line with the previous research emphasising the importance of *Wasta* in obtaining jobs and career benefits in the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia (e.g. Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011;

Harry, 2007; Metcalfe, 2007; Whiteoak *et al.*, 2006; Al-Ghailani, 2005; Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). The confirmation of this hypothesis enhanced the speculation mentioned in the first hypothesis that Saudi MBA students might perceive *Saudization* as less helpful when looking for new career opportunities. Accordingly, they seek alternative and informal solutions for facilitating new jobs such as through *Wasta*.

In Saudi Arabia, where family plays a pivotal role in one's career opportunities, the wealthier a family is, the more influential its members are likely to be, which in effect increases their power in obtaining sought-after positions (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). As illustrated by Al-Ramahi (2008), many individuals seek new jobs or better opportunities but those applicants with the strongest *Wasta* might have better chances of succeeding. Accordingly, success or failure usually depends on the power of *Wasta* more than on the merits or suitability of the applicants (Al-Ramahi, 2008). This suggests that *Wasta* gives undue advantages to some applicants who are less qualified for a job than others who lack a *Wasta* channel. The fact that *Wasta* is used as an asset and is talked about openly, despite its negative and unfair meaning, is indicative of its influence and embedded nature in the social life of Saudi people.

Further findings of this research indicate that students who assigned higher importance to *Wasta* are more likely to choose work in the public sector. This finding could be related to several issues: Firstly, compared to the public sector, the private sector is based more on competitiveness and profitability factors, and the employment process, to a certain degree, is based on the qualifications of applicants rather than other factors. On the other hand, the public sector is more bureaucratic than competitive. Accountability in the public sector is often low, giving opportunities for nepotism and favouritism in the recruitment and selection processes (Iles *et al.*, 2012; Mellahi, 2006); hence, *Wasta* perhaps pervades the public sector more than in the private sector; secondly, the desirability of the public sector in terms of monetary incentives, fewer working hours, better job security and geographical stability (Harry, 2007) combined with the sector's saturation with Saudi employees (Al-Asmari, 2008) makes the use of *Wasta* even more necessary in obtaining a job; finally, and most importantly, the public sector might be seen by Saudis as a source of long-lasting relationships with other Saudi individuals. By working in the public sector, one can gradually become a source of *Wasta* her/himself. This form of social capital may not exist in the private sector, where most of the employees are foreigners who work on fixed and short-term contracts and cannot create national or transnational ties for their Saudi co-workers and, hence, may not be seen as sources of *Wasta*.

The use of social networks to achieve business and personal goals is not limited only to Saudi Arabia, and it can be found in other countries in the Arab world (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Al-Ramahi, 2008) as well as in other Asian countries such as China (Hutchings and Weir, 2006), Malaysia (Mansor, 1994), Indonesia (Wright and Crockett-Tellei, 1994), India and Korea (Christie *et al.*, 2003). In these countries, it is usually the family's influential connections that facilitate the career advancement and recruitment of both males and females as helping family members is considered an obligation. This type of social interaction which favours family members, relatives, and friends is also known as *Blat* in Russia and *Guanxi* in China; when this preferential treatment is given at the expense of others it is seen as a form of corruption (Michailova and Worm, 2003). On the other hand, networking and mentoring in the West focus more on the building of relationships and social networks to facilitate business, but the issues of job attainment and hiring are generally determined on the basis of merits and qualifications (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Christie *et al.*, 2003).

#### **7.2.4 *Wasta* and Gender**

It was hypothesised that Saudi female MBA students would have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of *Wasta* when making their career choices compared to male students (H2b). This hypothesis was supported. Female students rated *Wasta* as more important compared to male students possibly due to several reasons: Firstly, as MBA students and future managers, they are aware of the male dominated field of management; secondly, Saudi Arabian society is a patriarchal society where women tend not to be preferred for managerial positions. In fact, the high unemployment rate among women (35.7%) is suggestive of such glass ceilings that do not put women on an equal platform to men. As a result, *Wasta* may be more important for women in order to pass through these discriminations. In addition to that, Saudi women have fewer career opportunities due to legislative, educational and cultural obstacles (Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012; AlMunajjed, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008); therefore, female students may resort more frequently to *Wasta* as a possible source of future employment and, consequently, may perceive *Wasta* as a powerful grounding in making career choices.

Women in Saudi Arabia can use and benefit from *Wasta* through their family contacts. The importance of *Wasta* for Saudi MBA female students in this research is in line with the results of Binkhuthaila (2010), who described *Wasta* as an important factor for educated Saudi women in facilitating or limiting their career choices. This confirms the findings of

the previous literature in some of the Arab Gulf countries; Metcalfe (2007) indicated that women in Bahrain reported that training opportunities and job recruitment were mostly not based on the skills and qualifications of an individual but rather on the personal connections and family networks (i.e. *Wasta*). Similarly, Omair (2009) found that *Wasta* was perceived as significant for the career development of Arab women managers in the United Arab Emirates, who also consider the absence of *Wasta* as a hindrance to their employability and career progression. As discussed before, *Wasta* is not only a means of obtaining a career but is also seen as a source of power. In the patriarchal society of Saudi Arabia, due to cultural constraints, women are more dependent on *Wasta* than men as they are already less employable because of their gender.

### **7.2.5 Social Status and Career Choice**

The third hypothesis (H1c) stated that the perceived importance of obtaining social status would significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The results of this study rejected this hypothesis and indicated that social status was not a statistically significant predictor of career choices between public and private sectors.

A plausible interpretation is that the MBA bestows the role of a manager, a position with high social status in Saudi Arabia regardless of the sector. As Hertog (2012) argues, managers in both public and private sectors in Saudi Arabia are likely to have similarly high salaries that would probably render similar social status in both sectors for the same position. As a result, there is no significant influence of social status on their future career choices between public and private sectors.

In the Saudi context, previous studies have highlighted the importance of social status, particularly to Saudi individuals when making their career choices (e.g. Iles *et al.*, 2012; Idris, 2007; Mellahi, 2000). Fakeeh (2009) argues that most Saudis perceive that their pride and social status within their extended family and society are affected by the type of work they do; furthermore, previous studies (e.g. Achoui, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008) state that, traditionally, most Saudi individuals have been attracted to the public sector for different reasons, including social status, which is associated with government employment. As far as the researcher is aware, no study so far has examined the influence of the desire to obtain social status by choosing a managerial career in the public or private sector.

Social status not being significant here could mean that there is no difference between the social statuses attributed to these specific sectors. What is important to note here is that



with a high level of managerial education, participants are more likely to be concerned with obtaining a position at a high hierarchical level rather than with being employed in one particular sector or another. In agreement with Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007), the researcher found that hierarchical differences are likely to be stronger determinants for career motivations than sectoral differences: this is mainly due to the nature of their jobs.

The current study is, therefore, contrary to previous findings which emphasised the importance of social status in public sector positions (Achoui, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008). Social status to Saudi applicants is so important that, regardless of their level of education, they tend to avoid manual jobs due to their perceived low status and prefer the managerial and administrative jobs because of their perceived high status (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014; Forstenlechner and Rutledge, 2010). Gaining high social status may be important for young Saudis, since such social status is associated with marriage opportunities and other social and business relations (Iles *et al.*, 2012; Ramady, 2005). In addition to the individual dimension of social status, it has a collectivistic meaning in Saudi Arabia since one's social status affects the status of his/her family and tribe (Barnett *et al.*, 2013; Ali and Al-Shakhis, 1989).

Unfortunately, there exists little research examining the influence of social status on the career choice process in different contexts (Zhan, 2012). Even less attention has been paid to the influence of social status on the career choices between public and private sectors. These studies do not provide sufficient grounds for backing up the results obtained in this study about social status and career choice. This Western based literature is limited to a few empirical studies (Zhan, 2012; Dolton *et al.*, 1989) and a little theoretical research (Corneo and Jeanne, 2010; Weiss and Fershtman, 1998) that have sought to find out the association between social status or self-esteem with different occupations that have different social status attributions such as executive and managerial jobs, teachers, and labourers. Accordingly, results of these studies cannot be compared with the findings of the current research, which examines the influence of obtaining social status on the career choices of managers choosing between public and private sectors.

#### **7.2.6 Social Status and Gender**

Contrary to the research hypothesis which assumed that Saudi male MBA students would have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of social status when making their career choices compared to female students (H2c), the findings of this study did not show any significant difference between males and females.

It is possible that achieving a high social status is one of the main reasons for Saudi women to become interested in becoming managers. Saudi women might feel that by taking their MBA and becoming qualified managers, they can reflect a professional image that diverges from their gendered identity to prove themselves, compete with men, and enhance their social status within society. Among limited professions available to women, which are mainly in health and education sectors in Saudi Arabia (Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012), medicine was found to impart high social status (Vidyasagar and Rea, 2004) similar to that of management; however, as Vidyasagar and Rea (2004) argue, Saudi women doctors do not enjoy the same social status as male doctors. Traditional views and patriarchal systems in countries like Saudi Arabia place women's social status lower than men's (Ahmad, 2011). These views are the main obstacle for women in obtaining their 'desired' position. Although men and women in this study scored the importance of social status similarly, these results should be contextualised and not taken at face value.

This speculation is strengthened when observing the individual items of the social status scale for males and females. Two items had significant differences across gender: compared to males, females placed more importance on the item that stressed making families proud (social status\_2) and becoming influential in society (social status\_3). As already discussed, by breaking down the individual items of social status one can see the gendered preferences sharply differentiate between family and social spheres. In order to work outside the home women need the approval of the family, particularly that of the male members (Ahmad, 2011); thus, a Muslim woman's social status is tied heavily to her family's perception and understanding of a 'respectable' and 'safe' work place (Omair, 2009; Siann and Knox, 1992). As such, the desire to make one's family proud means that social status is intertwined with the superior position of men and subordinate position of women in the family. This is of importance even to Muslim migrant families in Western countries, where the choice of a career for girls affects the reputation and status of the family within the community (Siann and Knox, 1992). Women's preoccupation with 'becoming influential in society' in this study shows their desire to become independent subjects. By becoming managers they can strengthen their social status and thus improve their social positions and resist the existing patriarchal system. Ahmad (2011) also indicates that Saudi female entrepreneurs are highly motivated to show independence and self-actualisation. Women express their need to work harder to compete with men and to prove themselves in a male-dominated society that lowers their status in relation to men and regards them with less expectation (Ahmad, 2011).

### 7.2.7 Parental Obedience and Career Choice

The conceptual framework of this study was based on the hypothesis that parental obedience would significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students (H1d). The results supported this hypothesis. In the context of this study, parental obedience is defined by the researcher as a voluntary behaviour conducted by a son or daughter to respond positively to the psychological and material needs and wishes of their parents without any direct involvement or force from the parents' side; thus, understanding parental obedience requires an analysis of the religious and cultural characteristics of Saudi Arabian people, which will be discussed in the next section. In this study, parental obedience was found to significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students: Saudi students indicated that their career choices would be shaped by the satisfaction of their parents; moreover, findings of this study show that students who give high importance to parental obedience are likely to choose to work in the public sector. As is discussed by several scholars, parental obedience is important to Muslim people, including Saudis (e.g. Hussain, 2004; Khan, 2001; Altorki, 1986); hence, pleasing parents and looking after them is of great significance to most Saudi individuals and affects their personal and career decisions.

It is interesting that those who place more value on parental obedience are likely to prefer working in the public sector. This is indicative of the interrelations of family structures and social and institutional regulations. For Saudi parents, their children's success is of great importance. The public sector offers long lasting rewards, and working in this sector is widely seen as an ultimate aim of employment (Forstenlechner and Rutledge, 2010). An important aspect of working in the public sector is that it has shorter working hours compared to the private sector (Hertog, 2012) which, in effect, provides individuals with more time to spend with their families. At the same time, because of the job security and the geographical stability that are associated with working in this sector, looking after parents financially and emotionally is more viable. Previous studies on *Saudization* (e.g. Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Ramady, 2005) also reveal that among factors hindering Saudi individuals from joining the private sector are family obligations, particularly looking after their parents. All this shows that, on the one hand, familial obligations make some Saudi graduates more interested in choosing to work in the public sector. On the other hand, these findings provide a new angle to the reasons behind the failure of the *Saudization* process in the private sector. Such complications in different

levels of society make *Wasta* an important tool for those who are interested in the public sector.

Parental obedience is not limited to Saudi Arabia, and a similar notion has been discussed in some studies conducted in Asian countries (e.g. Wong and Liu, 2010; Agarwala, 2008; Wong, 2007; Tang *et al.*, 1999). These studies highlight the importance of parents' decisions in their children's career choice process. In collectivistic contexts, children are responsible for their parents' welfare when they get old (Leong and Chou, 1994). This culture affects individuals' perceptions of careers that could facilitate familial duties. In the West, studies that refer to parental influence in the career choices of children stress on individuation and independence from parents (e.g. Ferreira *et al.*, 2007; Biggart *et al.*, 2004; Hardin *et al.*, 2001). Western countries, which are mainly welfare states, support older generations financially. This is partly the reason why individuals do not see themselves as being financially responsible for their parents; however, these studies identify parental decisions as an important element in children's career aspirations and decisions, particularly as a 'catalyst' in initiating decisions rather than enforcing them (Biggart *et al.*, 2004). In Saudi Arabia, although the government offers old age pensions, this is not enough to live on, and so providing for parents is one of the responsibilities of children. Making parents proud is partly seen as having a job that enables the children to care for their parents later on.

### **7.2.8 Parental Obedience and Gender**

The findings of the study supported the hypothesis that Saudi female MBA students would have significantly higher scores in parental obedience when making their career choices compared to male students (H2d). This result might be attributed to the gender socialisation in Saudi Arabia in which girls are brought up to be more caring and attached to their parents; hence, their personal and career decisions are more closely associated with their parents' desires and satisfaction. On the other hand, boys are socialised to have more independence and are raised to be the family's future leaders, usually playing the father's role in his absence. Accordingly, boys have more independence in their movement, travel and career decisions, whereas girls are more dependent on their parents and spend more time with them at home. This could explain why Saudi female students gave more importance to parental obedience when making their career choices compared to males.

This result is consistent with previous studies conducted in the West, which emphasise the issue of gender socialisation. These studies describe girls as being more attached to their

parents (mainly to the mother), whereas boys are found to be more independent in their decisions (O'Brien *et al.*, 2000; Paa and McWhirter, 2000; Rainey and Borders, 1997; Blustein *et al.*, 1991). As Wong and Liu (2010) indicate, Chinese girls are more likely to accept parents' opinions and act dependently compared to boys, who are more independent in their decision making. Parental obedience for Muslim individuals in their career choice persists after migration because it is ingrained in the lifestyle of Muslim families. Siann and Knox (1992) argue that for British Muslim girls career decisions are mainly informed within their families.

### **7.2.9 Religious Influence and Career Choice**

It was hypothesised that the perceived importance of religion would significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students (H1e). The analysis of the current empirical study confirmed this assumption: religion influences career choices. Findings of this research suggest that Saudi MBA students are influenced by Islam when making their career choices. Such results were expected due to the holistic and profound effect of the Islamic religion on different aspects of life in Saudi Arabia, including personal and work issues (Ahmad, 2011; Metcalfe, 2008; Idris, 2007; Long, 2005). As described by Hassi (2012, p. 1035), 'Islam is not only a religion prescribing to prayer, worship and rituals, but is also a way of life concerning every facet of individuals, groups and societies' existence'. It has been argued that work and knowledge are fundamental to a Muslim person's character and society (Belton and Hamid, 2011). A living in Islam has to be earned in an ethical manner, and work has to benefit others and not cause any harm or damage to people or society as a whole (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007). Concepts such as *Halal* (i.e. religiously permitted) and *Haram* (i.e. religiously forbidden) are basic in Islam and cover all of life's activities, including work practices and sources of earning (Hassi, 2012). Any source of money and type of work should be guided by these two concepts. Adherence to Islamic principles and teachings is the cornerstone of Saudi culture (Alanazi and Rodrigues, 2003).

Moreover, findings of this study revealed that students with higher scores in religious influence are more likely to choose work in the public sector. Saudi Arabia is a conservative Islamic state where religious practices are observed strictly in all governmental organisations. This includes the activities of organisations, daily practices within these organisations, working in sex-segregated spaces, and designated places or mosques in which to perform daily prayers. In the private sector, some activities might not be fully in line with Islamic teachings. Examples include working in commercial banks

where *Reba* (i.e. usury) exists, and working in some private companies in Saudi Arabia or in other countries where they might have some activities that contradict with Islamic principles and ethics such as fraud, cheating, bribery and the like. Accordingly, the public sector might be preferred more by those who assign higher importance to religious influence.

The importance of religion (mainly Christianity) in career choice decisions has been researched in countries like Nigeria (Bassey *et al.*, 2012) and the USA (Sigalow *et al.*, 2012). Sigalow *et al.* (2012) tested the influence of religion on career choice alongside other factors such as marriage, number of children and place of residence. They found that people assigning a higher religious importance were three times as likely to indicate that religious factors affect their career choice compared to those who assigned a lower importance to religion. Religious commitment influences one's career commitment and eventually leads to career success (Bassey *et al.*, 2012). Duffy (2006) argues that, for some people, participation in a religion is a predictor of an individual's inclination to move towards choosing a particular career.

It is clear from the findings of the current study and others that religion/faith has a direct effect on personal choices, including one's profession. The extent to which one's religious belief can affect their choice of career is often related to the social and political forces in the surrounding environment. Because the level of religiosity is usually high in all components of Saudi society (Ahmad, 2011), it was expected that Saudi MBA students would give high importance to religious influence on their career choice decisions.

#### **7.2.10 Religious Influence and Gender**

Findings of this study rejected (H2e), which assumed that female Saudi MBA students would have significantly higher scores in the perceived importance of religion when making their career choices compared to male MBA students. In Saudi Arabia, the concepts of *Halal* and *Haram* are applied to both genders; however, some religious considerations and practices are applied only to women in Saudi society, and women are expected to experience a greater religious influence on their career choices compared to men. As a woman's place is considered to be at home in Islamic tradition, certain Islamic provisions are necessitated culturally. These considerations are related to the work environment and interactions with the opposite sex, wearing *Hijab* (i.e. head scarf or veil), travelling alone for work purposes, and family and home obligations.

Despite the above religious factors, which can limit women's participation in the labour market, findings show that male and female students are equally influenced by religion in their career choices. A possible explanation for this result is that the new Saudi female generation might not consider the aforementioned issues as obstacles to or extra pressure on their career choices. Saudi society and gender relations in this society have transformed in recent years due to many factors, including economic prosperity. The spread of education to all groups in society and the scholarship programmes that facilitate higher education among individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds has changed both men and women's expectations of gender roles to a certain degree. As Riedy (2013) indicated, Saudi female students in the United States do not see their Islamic religion as constraining or limiting their educational ambitions or future career choices. They believe that what limits them are traditional views towards women rather than religion itself.

This finding of this research is in line with the results of a limited number of studies in the field of career choice. Bassey *et al.* (2012) in Nigeria and Sigalow *et al.* (2012) in the United States found no significant gender differences on the influence of religion on career choices. The findings are, however, in contrast with the major stream of the previous Western-based research on gender differences and religiosity which assumes that women are more religious than men (Collett and Lizardo, 2009; Sullins, 2006; Miller and Stark, 2002; Stark, 2002; Walter and Davie, 1998; Miller and Hoffman, 1995). The reasons for this assumption are rooted in social, cultural and physiological aspects that collectively agree that women are brought up since childhood to be more religious.

### **7.3 Career Choice and Regulative, Normative, and Cultural-Cognitive Factors**

Finally, it was hypothesised that within the institutional dimension the cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and religion) would be stronger predictors than the regulative (*Saudization*) and normative factors (*Wasta* and social status) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students (H1f). Findings supported this hypothesis and showed that cultural-cognitive factors are the strongest predictors of career choice, and participants who scored highly in cultural-cognitive factors are more likely to choose to work in the public sector. The assumption of this research was based on the importance of the two cultural-cognitive factors in this study, i.e. parental obedience and religion. These two variables, as illustrated previously, have been influential in daily life decisions of Saudi individuals. The high importance of parents and Islam to Saudi individuals might inform the significance of the

cultural-cognitive factors compared to the regulative and normative factors. As discussed previously, Islamic principles are followed more rigorously in the public sector than in the private sector, which makes the public sector more attractive to those who are perceived to be more religious. As Schein (2010) argued, social institutions shape the individuals' rooted cultural beliefs and values, which he termed as 'basic underlying assumptions' (Schein, 2010, p. 24). These basic assumptions, i.e. parental obedience and religion in this study, are the underlying, invisible, taken-for-granted cognitive structures (Schein, 2010). In other words, in the everyday life of Saudis, parental obedience and Islam are accepted as elements guiding individuals as well as constraining their perceptions, thoughts, feelings and activities.

#### **7.4 Personal Motivational Factors and Career Choice**

The personal dimension in this study is composed of the extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors. Extrinsic items are the materialistic career rewards, which include: salary, benefits, job security, work conditions, job location, and work in a prestigious organisation. Intrinsic items are defined as abstract and psychological benefits of the job, which include: job responsibility, creativity, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement, opportunity for personal growth, and the opportunity to serve society. In order to see the influence of these personal motivational factors (extrinsic and intrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students, several logistic regression tests were conducted. This section will discuss these findings.

It was hypothesised that within the personal dimension the extrinsic motivational factors would be stronger predictors than the intrinsic motivational factors on the career choices of Saudi MBA students (H3). Findings of this study supported this hypothesis and revealed that only extrinsic factors significantly predicted the career choices of Saudi MBA students, whereas intrinsic motivational factors had no significance; moreover, findings showed that MBA students who assign more importance to extrinsic motivational factors are likely to choose a career in the public sector. The next section will discuss this result in light of the previous literature and within the institutional effects.



#### 7.4.1 Extrinsic Motivational Factors and Career Choice

To interpret the above result, individual items of the extrinsic motivational scale are discussed separately.

##### 1. Salary and benefits

Although the overall scale of extrinsic motivation is significant in predicting career choices, further regression analysis results showed that salary and benefits individually had no significant effect on career choices between public and private sectors. Considering the descriptive results, salary was ranked the highest in importance compared to the other extrinsic items when it comes to general career choices. Salary might have been perceived as being equally important by participants when choosing to work in both sectors; hence, there was no significant prediction. Similarly, the same can be concluded about benefits.

Saudi Arabia is a rich country in which the government pays high salaries and other benefits such as health insurance, housing and transportation allowances. These monetary rewards are much lower in the private sector, which makes it less attractive among Saudis compared to the public sector (Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009); however, this might apply more to the non-skilled workers, as indicated by previous research conducted on *Saudization* (Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Al-Ajaji, 1995) and human resource management (Iles *et al.*, 2012; Achoui, 2009; Mellahi, 2007). In the case of Saudi qualified managers, who are scarce in the private sector, they may receive similar high salaries and competitive packages of benefits in large private organisations as well as in the public sector, particularly in oil related companies<sup>20</sup> (Hertog, 2012; Achoui, 2009). Saudi MBA students might be aware of these conditions and, accordingly, place similarly high importance on salary and complementary material benefits when choosing their future careers in both sectors. This might explain why these two individual extrinsic items are not significant in predicting any specific direction of career choices (public or private).

Saudi individuals have family responsibilities and social obligations towards their dependents, parents, and relatives. As such, they have high expectations when looking for new careers in either public or private sectors, in which receiving a high salary and

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 6 for the average basic salaries for Saudi managers in the public and private sectors.

other benefits are of great importance in meeting these social obligations (Fakeeh, 2009); moreover, such lucrative incentives enhance the social status of individuals (Forstenlechner and Rutledge, 2010).

The major stream of the previous literature, conducted in different contexts (Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007; Borzaga and Tortia, 2006; Frank and Lewis, 2004), suggests that employees and managers who value high wages tend to choose work in the private sector, which is perceived to pay more highly than comparable jobs in the public sector (Ghinetti and Lucifora, 2013; Lewis and Frank, 2002); however, this is not the case in Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil countries in the region whose governments can afford to pay high salaries and attractive benefits to public sector employees (Forstenlechner and Rutledge, 2010; Harry, 2007).

## **2. Job security**

Job security was found to be a significant predictor of career choices. Participants who value job security more are likely to choose work in the public sector. Others have concluded with a similar result, indicating job security as one of the most important factors attracting Saudis to the public sector (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014; Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009). The public sector in Saudi Arabia offers ‘a lifelong career with benefits and retirement pensions that are structured and clear’ (Fakeeh, 2009, p. 101). Limited provisions for pension and retirement benefits in the private sector, mainly in small and medium-sized organisations, increase the employers’ power and influence over the job tenure and job security of the Saudi workers (Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008). Employers in the private sector prefer to recruit foreign workers as they are less expensive and easier to control compared to Saudis. Foreign workers are employed on short-term contracts and ‘hire and fire’ policies (Mellahi, 2007). Due to the large number of foreign workers in the Arab Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, and to avoid any demographic imbalance, foreign workers are not eligible for permanent residence or citizenship, regardless of the length of their stay (Mellahi, 2007; Ramady, 2005)<sup>21</sup>. These policies do not apply to Saudis and make them a less desirable workforce to employers in the private sector (Ramady, 2005).

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<sup>21</sup> Citizens are estimated to constitute 13-15% of the total population in Qatar (Williams *et al.*, 2011), 15-20% in the United Arab Emirates (Forstenlechner and Mellahi, 2011), 31% in Kuwait (Salih, 2010), and 67% in Saudi Arabia (SAMA, 2013).

On the other hand, a lack of job security, unclear career paths and competition with international workers who are more experienced in working for international corporations in the private sector makes the public sector more homely and secure for many Saudi individuals (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014; Al-Shammari, 2009). This experience is similar to that in other Arab Gulf countries, where job security has been highlighted as a significant reason for the preference of being employed in the public sector (Forstenlechner and Rutledge, 2010; Harry, 2007). Additionally, this finding of this study is in line with the major stream of the literature conducted mainly in the West which suggests that employees and managers who are motivated by job security are more inclined to prefer public sector employment, which is less risky and more stable compared to working for private businesses (Jin, 2013; Lee and Wilkins, 2011; Lewis and Frank, 2002; Houston, 2000; Jurkiewicz *et al.*, 1998; Jurkiewicz and Massey, 1997).

### **3. Work conditions**

Work conditions in this research refer to work environment and working hours. It was found to be a significant predictor of the career choices of Saudi MBA students. Participants who assign high importance to work conditions are likely to choose a career in the public sector. In this research, work environment refers to two elements in the work place. The first element refers to the ease of performing cultural and religious duties such as working in sex-segregated places and having access to a designated prayer room or mosque. These are strictly overseen designs in the public sector work environment. As indicated previously in the hypothesis (H1e), participants who are likely to choose work in the public sector score highly in religious influence.

The second element refers to the importance of cultural homogeneity with co-workers. As Mellahi (2006) argues, there is generally a lack of interest among some local populations to integrate in multi-ethnic work environments. With high concentrations of foreign workers in the private sector (87%) (SAMA, 2013), Saudis are a minority and this can impart on them a sense of alienation within their work environment. Feeling isolated in the workplace in the private sector, Saudi workers complain that some expatriates exaggerate their qualifications and previous experiences and at the same time belittle their Saudi peers and magnify their weaknesses and mistakes to management (Fakeeh, 2009). The homogeneous environment within the public sector

provides a more comfortable atmosphere with better rights and also a good opportunity for Saudis to create influential and lasting networks (*Wasta*).

The second aspect of work conditions refers to working hours. In Saudi Arabia, working hours in the public sector are shorter (usually between 25-30 hours a week), while in the private sector working hours might exceed 50 hours per week (Hertog, 2012). The longer working hours in the private sector are an important element in shaping Saudi workers' preference for the public sector, which offers a higher salary for fewer hours of work (Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Al-Ajaji, 1995). Additionally, long working hours in the private sector restrict the amount of time that a person is able to spend with members of his/her family. This lack of free time may create difficulties when employees try to satisfy the needs of their family and nurture healthy social relationships. This finding of this study is in line with the previous research conducted in the other Arab Gulf countries (Swales *et al.*, 2011; Forstenlechner and Rutledge, 2010; Salih, 2010; Al-Ali, 2008; Harry, 2007) which suggest that citizens in these countries prefer working in the public sector due to the shorter working hours. As indicated by Salih (2010), spending long hours in the private sector organisations in Kuwait do not leave much time for individuals to fulfill their daily social activities.

Previous research shows consistent positive associations between working hours and work-family conflict (Swales *et al.*, 2011; Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007; Major *et al.*, 2002). As pointed out by Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007), employees in the public sector may make essential choices and prefer to enjoy a more balanced life; possibly they invest more in their personal and social lives and simply do not want to join the 'rat race' (Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007, p. 69).

#### **4. Job location**

Job location, which refers to the geographical location of the work, was found to be the most significant extrinsic item in predicting the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The results revealed that participants who assign more value to job location are likely to choose a career in the public sector. Family obligations, particularly looking after parents, make many young Saudi individuals prefer to be employed within the same city as their parents' residence and avoid mobility (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009). Accordingly, they prefer the public sector due to the higher level of geographical stability in this sector compared to that in private

organisations. There seems to be an association between job location, parental obedience and the desire to work in the public sector. As discussed previously in the hypothesis (H1d), those who assign a high level of importance to parental obedience are more likely to prefer working in the public sector. As studies on the *Saudization* process show, one of the reasons hindering the success of *Saudization* in the private sector is the reluctance of many young Saudi individuals to be relocated to a city different to where their parents live (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014; Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009; Ramady, 2005).

The issue of easier mobility among foreign workers (mainly due to the absence of family ties) has been desirable to employers in the private sector (Ramady, 2005). Expatriate workers usually cannot change or leave their jobs without their employers' permission (Mellahi, 2007) and this ties them more to the wills of their employers, contrasting sharply with the preferences of Saudi nationals, who are hesitant to move.

## **5. Work in a prestigious organisation**

Although the overall scale of extrinsic motivation is significant in predicting career choices, further regression analysis results demonstrated that as an individual item 'work in a prestigious organisation' had no significant effect on career choices between public and private sectors. According to the descriptive results, this item was ranked the lowest in importance compared to all the other extrinsic items when it came to general career choices. A possible explanation is that participants might have assigned an equally low importance to this item when choosing public or private sector which, in effect, caused no significant prediction in any direction. Considering the high figures of unemployment, mainly among Saudi youth (30% in 2013 (IMF, 2013)), the high numbers of skilled expatriates in the private sector (87% in 2013 (SAMA, 2013)) and the saturation in the public sector (Hertog, 2012), the priority of this young educated workforce seems to be finding a job.

As discussed previously in the hypothesis (H1b), such a competitive situation makes participants resort to informal alternatives such as '*Wasta*' to secure employment. For them, finding a job with a good salary and job security in one's hometown seems to be more necessary in fulfilling their personal, family and social needs. Another possible interpretation is that MBA students might have perceived the prestigious image of their position as managers to be more important than the prestige they may get from an organisation. As argued by Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007), for managers,

hierarchy is more important than sectoral or organisational differences in determining their career motivation.

To recap, the overall scale of extrinsic motivation was shown to be significant in predicting the career choices of Saudi MBA students. Findings demonstrated that participants who give high importance to extrinsic motivation are likely to choose to work in the public sector. Further regression analysis of the individual extrinsic items was conducted to identify the strongest predictors of career choices. Findings revealed that job location, work conditions, and job security were the strongest predictive factors. Students who assign high value to these extrinsic factors are likely to choose a career in the public sector. The importance of these specific factors is directly linked to the cultural necessities in Saudi society that require specific considerations such as working with colleagues of the same sex, performing religious obligations, allocating more time for family and social activities as well as having a secure and stable job and being close to parents.

Although the overall scale of extrinsic motivation was significant in predicting career choice, salary and work benefits did not have any significance when analysed individually. Salary, in the descriptive results, was ranked the highest in importance compared to the other extrinsic items when it came to general career choices. This led to a plausible interpretation for the study's results as participants might have given equally high importance to salary and benefits when choosing their careers either in the public or private sector. This might explain why there was no significant prediction of career choice in any direction for these two items (public or private). Financial responsibilities towards family members, including parents, and other social obligations towards relatives make monetary rewards of great importance to Saudi individuals. Receiving economic incentives can, at the same time, enhance the social status of individuals.

As argued by this research, the influence of the above extrinsic factors in the career choices of Saudi MBA students can be understood when regarded within the larger socio-cultural context. The findings of the bivariate correlations between the institutional variables (*Wasta*, social status, religious influence, and parental obedience) and extrinsic motivation showed significant and positive associations. Having discussed the findings for extrinsic factors for the whole sample, the next

section will focus on analysing gender differences in terms of the importance assigned to the extrinsic motivational factors.

#### **7.4.2 Extrinsic Factors and Gender**

In order to examine the effect of gender on the extrinsic motivational factors, independent-samples t-tests were conducted. In the hypothesis (H4a), it was assumed that male Saudi MBA students would have significantly higher scores in extrinsic motivational factors compared to female MBA students. This hypothesis was rejected and findings did not show any significant difference between male and female participants. This assumption was built on the previous literature conducted in different contexts (Powell, 2011; Agarwala, 2008; Russo *et al.*, 1991; Nicholson and West, 1988; Marshall, 1984), which suggested that female students would focus more on self-development factors to empower themselves with managerial skills, whereas men would assign more value to the extrinsic material factors.

Relying further on the analysis of the individual items of the extrinsic scale was helpful in explaining this result. This analysis demonstrated that male and female students perceived the importance of some extrinsic factors differently. Salary and benefits were perceived to be more important among male students compared to their female counterparts. This finding agrees with the past research conducted in Saudi Arabia (Aamir *et al.*, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Ajaji, 1995), which highlighted salary and benefits as important factors for Saudi men. A possible explanation might be related to the familial and social obligations and responsibilities that men usually shoulder in Saudi society as breadwinners. This result is in line with the previous studies of Agarwala (2008) and Ng *et al.* (2008), which emphasised the importance of financial rewards among male MBA students compared to their female colleagues.

On the other hand, work conditions and job location were perceived to be more important for female students compared to their male counterparts. This result illuminates the claims of others who briefly addressed the importance of working hours and work environment for Saudi women (Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012; Ahmad, 2011; Al-Ahmadi, 2011). The findings presented here are important as they compare men and women's perceptions of work conditions and job location, unlike the above studies which just concentrate on women. Fulfilling responsibilities related to the home and family are likely to be the priority for Saudi women (Long, 2005; AlAjmi, 2001); thus, shorter and more flexible hours as an aspect of work conditions might be needed more by women. As indicated by

Ahmad (2011), success, to Saudi women, is measured by achieving a family-work balance. With regard to the work environment as another aspect of work conditions, working in women-only spaces could be a possible explanation behind the importance of this item for women in this study. Women generally have to abide by gendered social roles. Apart from religion, family and tribal traditions reinforce specific work conditions for women. Sometimes, it is very difficult to draw the line between what is religious and what emerges from local traditions and customs; however, as Ahmad (2011) argues, it is the mixture of the two that distorts the image of Islam and its stance about women in Saudi society. Many families in Saudi Arabia prevent their daughters from working in mixed environments to stop them from becoming 'corrupted'. Working in a mixed environment might endanger a young woman's chances of getting married. Working in a conservative environment is considered by many as working in a respectable space, an indication of modesty and having high morals. On the other hand, those women who move against the stream, either by challenging their families or accepting work in mixed places, are socially criticised or described as rebellious.

Despite relative social changes in recent years, such negative perceptions and social consequences are still influential and considered to be among the key factors hindering Saudi women working as nurses or doctors, where they need to interact with male colleagues and patients (Gazzaz, 2009; Vidyasagar and Rea, 2004). This is similar to the viewpoint of Omair (2009), who indicated that one of the most important factors for Emirati women managers when choosing their careers is that the job to be in a 'safe' environment. This is to maintain their chastity and avoid any possibility of inappropriate behaviour from their male colleagues such as 'sexual innuendo or harassment' or 'bullying from top management' (Omair, 2009, p. 133). A job with shorter working hours is also appealing for Emirati women managers since this enables them to have enough time and energy for their family responsibilities (Omair, 2009).

The importance of job location for female participants in this research might be attributed to family obligations, including their responsibilities as mothers and wives or, if they are not married, their attachment to parents and the difficulty in moving or living away from them. Another factor that makes job location highly important to Saudi women is the lack of public transportation and, additionally, being prevented from driving, which makes their mobility very difficult.



Although there was no significant difference between men and women in valuing the extrinsic motivation scale as a whole, there are important differences between what men and women prefer among the extrinsic items. Male students valued salary and benefits more than other items, whereas female students prioritised work conditions and job location. This might be a plausible explanation for the perception of extrinsic factors as being equally important for both men and women, as was found in this study. Such a result highlights the importance of considering the wider socio-cultural context when studying extrinsic motivations for men and women.

### **7.4.3 Intrinsic Motivational Factors and Career Choice**

According to the findings of the logistic regression model, intrinsic motivation was not significant in predicting the career choices of Saudi MBA students. At the same time, the descriptive results showed that the intrinsic motivation variable (including all the intrinsic items) was ranked the highest in importance compared to the other variables (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, religious influence, and extrinsic motivation) when it came to general career choices. This might give a plausible explanation as to why intrinsic motivation was not a significant predictor: the participants might have assigned equally high importance to the intrinsic factors when choosing their careers in both sectors (public and private). As such, no significant prediction of career choices was found in any direction, with the exception of two intrinsic items (serving society and creativity). To interpret these results, the intrinsic motivational items adopted in this study are discussed separately.

#### **1. Job responsibility**

This item was not significant in predicting career choices. This result might be explained by Saudi MBA students being likely to be motivated equally by job responsibility when choosing their future careers either in public or private sectors. Job responsibility can be achieved through gaining access to information and resources, the granting of sufficient authority, participation in setting the organisation's goals and policy-making decisions as well as through specifying means and methods (Kubaisi, 2004). Nawab *et al.* (2011) argue that employees become satisfied with the hierarchical position, authority and responsibility granted to them according to their educational level and skills. In this research, MBA students, as well-educated future managers, would prefer having a job with a high level of authority and responsibilities which match their professional and educational qualifications,

regardless of the sector. However, organisations in the public and private sectors might not provide the same type of extrinsic and intrinsic incentives (Nawab *et al.*, 2011). Previous literature revealed that public sector professionals and managers have less authority and independence over the missions and strategic goals of the organisation compared to their counterparts in private companies because of the rules, bureaucratic procedures, higher levels of centralised structures, and the stronger influence on public organisations by external governmental authorities (Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Anechiarico and Jacobs, 1996). Being intrinsically motivated by job responsibility can enhance the moral and physical sense of belonging to an organisation (Effendi, 2003) and lead to high performance, job satisfaction and innovation (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2013; Nawab *et al.*, 2011).

## **2. Opportunity for creativity**

Although the overall intrinsic motivational scale was not significant in predicting career choices between public and private sectors, creativity as an individual item was found to have a significant effect on career choices. The results indicated that participants who place higher importance on creativity are likely to choose to work in the private sector. As indicated by Unsworth and Parker (2003), opportunity for creativity is associated with the level of autonomy that is provided by the job or position. The public sector in Saudi Arabia is characterised as being rigid, with bureaucracy in routine tasks and more rules and centralism in decision making. Although managers enjoy certain degrees of freedom in being creative in their roles in the public sector, their duties are mainly defined within a set structure. This type of work setting might lessen opportunities for creativity in the public sector. As was discussed by Milliken and Martins (1996), cultural diversity in the workforce, as is the case in the private sector in Saudi Arabia, implies the need for being able to manage and deal with multi-ethnic groups, and this may provide greater potential for creativity and innovation. Participants who are highly motivated by this intrinsic factor (i.e. opportunity for creativity) are likely to be aware of such conditions and, as a result, might prefer to have a career in a competitive, challenging and dynamic environment in the private sector, where there is more autonomy, authority and a better opportunity to be highly creative (Fernandez and Moldogaziev, 2013; Parker *et al.*, 2001).

### 3. Interesting and challenging work

According to the results of this research, interesting and challenging work as an intrinsic item was not found to be significant in predicting career choices between the public and private sectors. Saudi MBA students are likely to be motivated equally by this intrinsic factor when choosing their future careers in both sectors, without any significant difference being extrapolated. Both the public and private sectors may be of interest to the participants, but for different reasons. Perhaps apart from the security and benefits offered in the public sector and the dynamism and competitive bonuses in the private sector, one may find a managerial position interesting and challenging because of the nature of the job itself. Accordingly, participants expect to work as managers and exercise their management skills in solving work problems and in dealing with more diversified, interesting and challenging tasks in both sectors. Government jobs provide opportunities to help others, benefit the public and solve social issues (Frank and Lewis, 2004). At the same time, the private sector offers a dynamic and creative environment that could facilitate routes to enhancing one's managerial skills (Van der Wal and Oosterbaan, 2013). Individuals who are intrinsically motivated by the enjoyment, interest, and challenge of their work tasks are more likely to be highly creative (Deci and Ryan, 1991), perform better (Laschinger *et al.*, 2000) and be more satisfied by their jobs and more committed to their organisations (Clark, 2007).

The career literature regarding the importance of this intrinsic factor to public and private sector employees is variable, dependent on the specific context under study. For example, some studies conducted in Western contexts (Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007; Jurkiewicz *et al.*, 1998) suggest that employees in the public sector are less motivated by work challenge compared to their private sector counterparts. In opposition to these studies, Rashid and Rashid (2012) indicate that public sector employees in Pakistan are motivated more by challenging and interesting work. In a recent study across 30 countries, Bullock *et al.* (2013) found inconsistent results when analysing the relationship between the employment sectors (public vs. private) and the importance of interesting work. The inconsistency in the previous literature might be attributed to the differences in job characteristics of public and private sectors in different contexts.

#### **4. Sense of achievement**

According to the results of the regression analysis, sense of achievement as an intrinsic item was found to be insignificant in predicting career choices. Considering the descriptive results of this study, this intrinsic item was ranked second in importance compared to the other intrinsic items when it came to general career choices. This might possibly indicate that participants assigned similar high importance to this intrinsic item when choosing to work either in public or private sectors, without any significant difference observed between them. Individuals who are highly motivated by this motivational factor are those who, according to Bass and Bass (2008), seek to accomplish a challenging work task successfully which will be recognised by others and make them feel self-actualised (see also Isaacs, 2003). A possible reason for this result might be attributed to the shortage of Saudi skilled managers in the labour market, mainly in the private sector (Hertog, 2012; Chaar, 2010; Achoui, 2009). Most managerial positions in the private sector are often filled with qualified expatriates (Iles *et al.*, 2012). As a result, young Saudi managers might feel that they need to exert more effort to prove themselves and compete with highly experienced foreign managers. They may want to show others that they are competent in accomplishing difficult tasks and, hence, are qualified to reach high managerial positions in both sectors. This interpretation is enhanced when considering the previous finding in this research showing that participants are also intrinsically motivated by the interesting and challenging nature of the job. Sense of achievement and the interesting and challenging nature of the job seem to be associated.

#### **5. Opportunity for personal growth and development**

This intrinsic factor refers to one's desire to improve and develop his/her career competencies by training, learning new skills and languages, and gaining new experiences (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). This intrinsic factor has been ranked as the most important reason for the career choices of MBA students in a number of studies (Agarwala, 2008; Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2008; Tanova *et al.*, 2008; Dexter *et al.*, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). These studies follow a similar analysis route, using simple means and standard deviations to rank the importance of some career choice factors. With the same method, this research came to a similar result: opportunity for personal growth and development is ranked the highest in importance.

The primary aim of the current study was, however, to predict career choices in two specific spheres (public and private) and, therefore, regression analysis was used to test the effect of each intrinsic item on career choices in public or private sectors. These findings showed that ‘opportunity for personal growth and development’ as an intrinsic item had no significant effect on career choices. Considering the descriptive and regression analysis results of this study, one might infer that participants are more likely to be highly motivated by this intrinsic factor when choosing their future careers either in public or private sectors, with no difference discerned between them. The participants in this research are going to enter a highly competitive market in both public and private sectors. They need to focus on developing their human capital and keep empowering themselves with the needed skills, training, languages and managerial experience. By doing so, they may become more employable and could reach high and influential positions in both sectors. Indeed, a lack of skills and a lack of competency in the English language among many Saudi individuals, including managers, have been highlighted in the previous literature as one of the main reasons hindering the success of *Saudization* in the private sector (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008; Ramady, 2005).

## **6. Opportunity to serve society**

Although the overall intrinsic motivational scale was not significant in predicting career choices between public and private sectors, serving society as an individual item was found to be the strongest intrinsic predictor of career choices among Saudi MBA students. Results indicated that participants who place higher importance on serving society are likely to choose to work in the public sector. This finding is in line with the major stream of the literature conducted in different contexts (Bullock *et al.*, 2013; Jin, 2013; Pedersen, 2013; Lee and Wilkins, 2011; Frank and Lewis, 2004; Boyne, 2002; Wright, 2001; Perry, 2000; Rainey and Bozeman, 2000; Crewson, 1997; Perry and Wise, 1990), which suggests that employees and managers of the public sector assign more value to serving society than their private sector counterparts. As indicated by Bullock *et al.* (2013), employees in the public sector are, in general, often engaged in providing goods and services to society and working for the public interest, whereas private sector employees are mostly business oriented and involved more in economic activities and profitability issues; therefore, public employees might attribute more social importance to their job (Bullock *et al.*, 2013). Previous research conducted in the West suggests that religious individuals have more public values and

stronger public service motivations compared to their private sector peers (Van der Wal and Oosterbaan, 2013; Perry, 1997).

There seems to be a positive link between the motivation to serve society, the level of religious importance and the desire to work in the public sector. The previous finding discussed in the hypothesis (H1e) indicated that students who assign high importance to religious influence are likely to prefer working in the public sector. Islamic principles promote the values of contributing to society and being helpful to others through work and other life activities as well as emphasising the importance of altruism and going beyond the self-interest to the society-interest (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007). In Islam, work has a social dimension and meaning. It has to benefit others and not be a source of harm or damage to people or society as a whole. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad said: ‘The best work is the one that results in benefit’, and ‘The best of people are those who benefit others’ (Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007, p. 95).

To recap, the findings of the logistic regression model revealed that the overall scale of intrinsic motivation was not significant in predicting the career choices of MBA students between public and private sectors. At the same time, descriptive results showed that intrinsic motivation was ranked the highest in importance compared to the other variables of the study (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, religious influence, and extrinsic motivation) when it came to general career choices. Considering both the inferential and descriptive results, one might infer that participants could have assigned equally high importance to the intrinsic factors when choosing their career choices either in the public or private sector, without any difference. As such, there was no significant prediction of career choices in any direction for all the intrinsic items, with the exception of two items (i.e. creativity and serving society). The findings of the regression analysis for these two intrinsic items demonstrated that participants who assign high importance to creativity are likely to prefer working in the private sector, whereas those who place more value on serving society are likely to choose a career in the public sector. The results of all the intrinsic items were discussed in light of the previous literature and the contextual and cultural considerations. The next section will focus on analysing gender differences in relation to the intrinsic motivational factors.

#### 7.4.4 Intrinsic Factors and Gender

In order to see the effect of gender on the intrinsic motivational factors, independent-samples t-tests were conducted. The findings supported the research hypothesis that female Saudi MBA students would have significantly higher scores in intrinsic motivational factors compared to male students (H4b). This result is in line with the previous literature, which indicated that when choosing their managerial careers, female MBA students tend to give more importance to intrinsic factors, such as developing their managerial skills, compared to male students (Agarwala, 2008; Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Sturges, 1999; Melamed, 1996; Burke and McKeen, 1994). Women in management face barriers to career success not encountered by their male colleagues (Simpson, 2000a) since their competencies and career commitment are viewed with suspicion (Konrad and Cannings, 1997). To succeed in such a male-dominated profession, women may need to develop their capabilities and professional skills. As a result, focusing on intrinsic factors such as education and training seems to be more important for women in reinforcing their credibility and credentials (Agarwala, 2008; Melamed, 1996).

Women in Saudi Arabia have gradually and slowly entered the labour market in recent years and suffer from high unemployment (35.7%). Those who work are concentrated mostly in the public sector due to cultural barriers as discussed in Chapter 2. They only represented 3% of the workforce in the private sector in 2012 and much less in managerial positions (Ministry of Labour, 2012). Due to such conditions, the small number of women managers in public or private sector lack management skills and professional training in addition to having poor experience in exercising leadership roles (Ahmad, 2011; Al-Ahmadi, 2011). This might explain why female participants in this research gave priority to intrinsic factors when choosing their future careers. Their focus on such intrinsic factors may provide them with the professional skills needed to achieve career success, compete with men, and break through the managerial and cultural glass ceiling. As indicated by Tanova *et al.* (2008), the importance of such self-development factors increases in contexts where women need to overcome gender biases and inequalities in employment.

The analysis of the individual items of the intrinsic scale supported the above interpretation that women may want to empower themselves and overcome this marginal status. Female students assigned significantly higher importance to items such as job responsibility and sense of achievement compared to male students. The importance of these two items might

be attributed to the fact that Saudi women in most sections of public and private organisations work under the umbrella of men (often in separate sections), which limits their freedom in making decisions. Structural challenges such as centralisation in decision making, a lack of participation in formulating the strategic goals and plans of the organisation, limited power, and the absence of control over material resources impede women from leading effectively and thus they are reflected negatively in the performance of their sections (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Vidyasagar and Rea, 2004; Al-Halawani, 2002). This might justify why female managers in the current research showed a high level of desire for obtaining job responsibility as well as achieving self-fulfillment. This is similar to the results of Ahmad (2011), who found that Saudi women entrepreneurs have a strong motivation for being independent in their work and achieving their personal goals in order to prove themselves and overcome gender-biased barriers. Other studies have also found that sense of achievement is the main motivational factor for Saudi women entrepreneurs (Danish and Smith, 2012; Sadi and Al-Ghazali, 2010).

Women in this research perceived ‘serving society’ to be significantly more important compared to men. Women may want to increase their presence in society and prove that they are capable of serving the public and being of good help. Despite the relative improvement of the general view of women in Saudi society in recent years<sup>22</sup> (Al-Ahmadi, 2011), women are still marginalised and often perceived by society as having lower status compared to men, even if they are in the same profession with the same qualifications (Ahmad, 2011; Vidyasagar and Rea, 2004). Other studies also suggest that women express a stronger preference for choosing careers that are deemed useful to society (e.g. Grove *et al.*, 2011; Fortin, 2008; Tanova *et al.*, 2008; Marini *et al.*, 2006).

## **7.5 Institutional and Personal Motivational Factors in Career Choice**

The findings of this study supported the final hypothesis of this research (H5), which stated that the institutional factors (*Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion) would be stronger predictors than the personal motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) on the career choices of Saudi MBA students. This result is in contrast with the assumptions of most of the psychological theories in the literature, which suggest that self-concept is the main determinant of the career choice process (e.g. Savickas, 2002; Holland, 1997; Schein, 1990). These theories assume that individuals have the freedom to make

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<sup>22</sup> The improvement of the general view towards women is due to the government’s recent policy of giving women greater educational and career opportunities and integrating them into decision making positions with ministerial, diplomatic and parliamentary ranks (Mousa, 2013b); see Chapter 2.



their career choice decisions and would be primarily influenced by their internal goals, needs and self-satisfaction (Duffy and Dik, 2009). Individual choice is reflected in the study of Ozbilgin *et al.* (2005), who examined the influence of a group of personal, institutional and structural factors on the career choices of MBA students from Britain, Israel and Turkey. Ozbilgin *et al.* (2005) argue that MBA students in these three contexts are influenced more by personal factors than by institutional and structural factors. Ozbilgin and his colleagues attribute their results to the neo-liberal ideology prevalent in these three contexts.

Here, the current research shows that this may not be always the case, particularly in collectivistic cultures such as Saudi Arabia. Findings of this research suggest further that institutional factors are more important than personal motivational factors in predicting the career choices of Saudi MBA students. The result of this study supports the argument of a series of studies which suggest that in collectivistic cultures, career choices are made based on familial and cultural factors rather than on the implementation of an individual's self-concept (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Duffy and Dik, 2009; Ituma and Simpson, 2009; Ng *et al.*, 2008; Shea *et al.*, 2007; Rehfuss and Borges, 2006). In individualistic cultures, people emphasise individual goals such as career advancement, job independence, self-actualisation and individual material benefits (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Di Cesare and Golnaz, 2003; Price, 1997). Accordingly, they make their career choices based on attendance to the self and freedom of choice (Ng *et al.*, 2008). In that sense, the current study constitutes a major step towards understanding cross-cultural differences in terms of career choices, which could be guided by a number of factors in different contexts.

## **7.6 Demographic Differences**

Although gender has been examined in relation to institutional and personal motivational factors, the researcher also found it important to investigate further whether gender is associated with career choices in public or private sector. Additionally, other demographic variables (age, marital status, work experience, father's work experience, and father's education) have been examined to find out whether the importance assigned to institutional and personal factors and career choices in private and public sectors vary across these demographic factors.

The associations between gender and career choices in the public or private sector were examined by conducting a chi-square test. Findings indicated that women are more likely to choose to work in the public sector than men, whereas men are more likely to choose to

work in the private sector than women. Several reasons might provide possible explanations for this result. In Saudi Arabia, men's roles as the breadwinners of the family necessitate a form of paid employment in any circumstance. On the other hand, women's roles are limited mainly to the private sphere and dependent on the male members of the family. The public sector in Saudi Arabia is saturated and cannot generate more jobs (Al-Asmari, 2008), while the private sector could potentially absorb skilled Saudis. Regarding the gendered duties described above, men need to find a job as quickly as possible in order to fulfil their family obligations. This might explain why men are more interested than women in getting jobs in the private sector. Another plausible interpretation could be attributed to the work conditions in the public sector in terms of women-only spaces and shorter working hours. As discussed previously, these two aspects were found to be more important to women in this research due to familial and cultural considerations. Additionally, the public sector in Saudi Arabia is characterised by less mobility and has more geographical stability compared to the private sector (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012). For this reason, the public sector is made more attractive to female participants, who were found to be more motivated than men by job location and working in the same city that their family resides in.

With regard to age, the findings of the t-tests showed no significant differences between age groups in terms of the importance assigned to institutional and personal motivational factors, except with *Wasta*. Accordingly, younger students (21-30) assigned more importance to *Wasta* compared to older students (31- 46+). A possible explanation of this finding is that younger people might have just begun their career journey, having fewer skills and limited experience; thus, they may need *Wasta* to assist them in finding the jobs they want. Older participants might have stable careers or better chances due to their work experience and so might perceive *Wasta* as less important compared to the younger ones. This result is in line with the study of Whiteoak *et al.* (2006), which found that younger generations in the United Arab Emirates view *Wasta* as an essential tool compared to older generations. The authors argue that younger generations might perceive themselves as not having a great deal of access to *Wasta* compared to older people and ultimately 'fear being disadvantaged' (Whiteoak *et al.*, 2006, p. 86).

Furthermore, the associations between age (younger vs. older) and career choices (public vs. private) were examined with a chi-square test. Findings demonstrated that younger students (21-30) are more likely to prefer working in the public sector compared to older participants (31- 46+), whereas older participants are more likely to prefer working in the

private sector compared to younger students. This result might be related to the work experience and better management skills that older students may possess, which qualify them to be employed in the private sector or have their own business. Younger students might lack this experience and these professional skills and may find it difficult at this early stage of their careers to compete with the highly qualified expatriate managers in the private sector. The result also reflects career aspirations and how they may change as people get older. The younger generation may feel that it is possible to get a job in the public sector more than those who are older and have more experience in job hunting. This speculation is confirmed by the results of another chi-square test conducted to examine the association between work experience and career choices. Findings showed that students with no previous work experience are likely to choose the public sector.

In terms of marital status, results of independent samples t-tests revealed significant differences between single and married students. Social status and intrinsic factors were perceived as more important among single students compared to those who were married. It is possible that social status was more important to single students than married ones due to the importance social status has in creating marriage opportunities. Single students are more likely to be younger and to have fewer family responsibilities compared to married individuals and, as a result, they may focus more on intrinsic factors to develop their career skills and do something interesting and challenging. This is consistent with the study of Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1997), who suggest that young people assign more importance to intrinsic factors, such as doing an interesting and enjoyable job, when making their career choices and place less emphasis on financial rewards. Married students might have created a level of social status, financial independence and stability through being married and responsible; hence, they are likely to focus more on fulfilling their immediate family obligations rather than improving their social status or on intrinsic factors.

On the other hand, findings of this research revealed that religious influence on career choices was more important among married students compared to those who were single. Being married and responsible for the *Halal* income and living of a family and children might be a possible explanation of this result. Additionally, marriage in Saudi Arabia is an important institution, and a person who gets married is described as if he/she has fulfilled half the religion in Islam (Mathewes, 2010). This finding is in line with a number of studies (Waite and Lehrer, 2003; Sherkat and Ellison, 1999) which indicate that married people are more religious than single people.

With regard to the participants' work experience, findings revealed that parental obedience and religious influence were higher among those with no work experience compared to those with previous experience in public, private or both sectors. A possible explanation of this result might be that those with no work experience are the younger students who still live with their parents and are more attached to them compared to the older and more independent students who have work experience. Parental obedience is based on religious foundations and was found to be significantly and positively associated with religious influence, as illustrated by the findings of the bivariate correlations.

Finally, when examining the effect of the father's education on institutional and personal motivational factors, no significant differences were found, except with *Wasta*. Findings revealed that those students whose fathers had obtained higher education reported higher levels of importance for *Wasta* compared to the ones whose fathers had lower levels of education. As one's educational level in Saudi Arabia connotes social status and recognition in society (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Al-Ramahi, 2008), the higher one's father's educational level is, the more likely one is to have access to influential connections; therefore, students with highly educated fathers are more likely to depend on and find *Wasta* important since they have access to this capital. For those with less educated fathers, graduating from an MBA course means to depend solely on their own merits and qualifications to become employed.

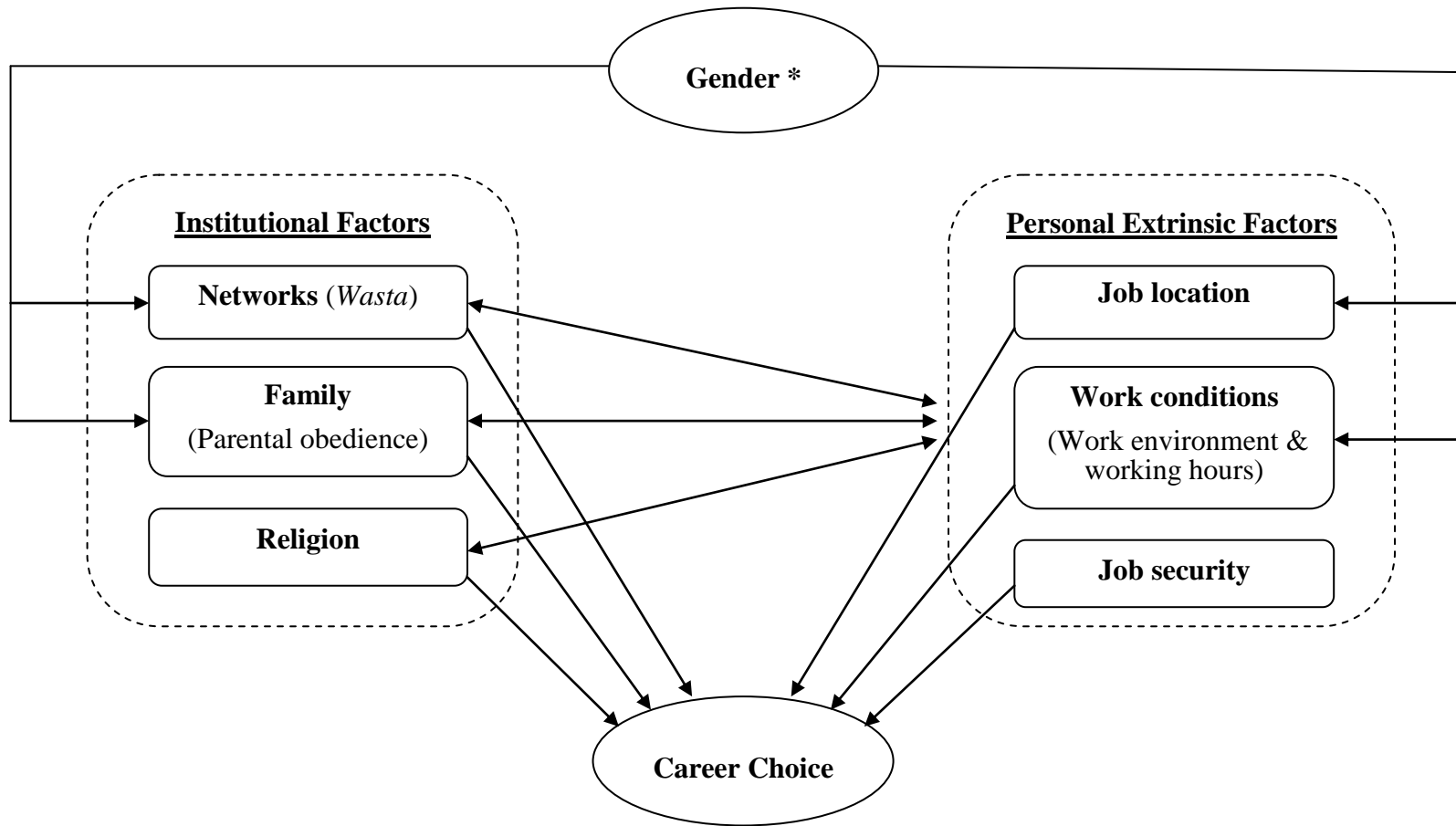
## **7.7 Career Choice within the 'Socio-Cultural Model'**

The conceptual framework of this research, which was presented in Chapter 4, was composed of the institutional and personal factors. A developed version of this framework is presented in Figure 7.1 based on the significant outcomes only. According to the findings, it was revealed that among the institutional factors, religion, family (parental obedience), and networks (*Wasta*) were the significant predictors of career choice. Among the personal factors, job location, work conditions, and job security were found to be the significant predictors of career choice. All the significant predictors favour the choice of a public sector career.

Gender effect was noticed on a number of factors. In the institutional dimension, family (parental obedience) and networks (*Wasta*) were more important to women compared to men; furthermore, in the personal extrinsic factors, female students ranked work conditions and job location as more important compared to men. The model also includes the significant correlations between individual institutional factors (religion, family, and

networks) and the overall personal extrinsic factors (work conditions, job location, and job security). All correlations were positively significant, which means that high scores in religion, family, and networks leads to high scores in the overall extrinsic factors and vice versa.

**Figure 7.1: Developed socio-cultural model of career choice.**



\* Women assign higher importance than men.

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the social, political, and cultural implications of Saudi MBA students' career choices in the private or public sector. The first section of this chapter examined the three institutional pillars (regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive). The non-significance of *Saudization* possibly denotes a sense of low expectation among young Saudis towards the *Saudization* process in providing career opportunities. On the other hand, *Wasta* (networks) was perceived to be more influential than *Saudization* in the career choice process. It is not surprising that students who gave high importance to *Wasta* are likely to choose a career in the public sector, where social connections are needed more than in the private sector. The saturated public sector is characterised by excessive bureaucracy but desirable work conditions as well as a life-long and hassle free career that permits nepotism as a main alternative to the conventional recruitment process. *Wasta* was, in particular, more important for women than men, given the different cultural barriers they need to overcome in order to get a job.

Social status, as another normative factor, was not significant in predicting career choices. This result might be attributed to the participants assigning an equally high level of importance to the social status of their managerial positions in both sectors. As expected, Islam and parental obedience were the strongest predictors among the institutional factors, and these predictors exhibited a strong association with the choice of public sector work. The public sector in Saudi Arabia strictly conforms to *Sharia* law and has more geographical and financial stability, which are all important elements for the majority of Saudi families. Parental obedience was scored higher among women participants in this research.

In the second section of this chapter, it was argued that extrinsic factors would be stronger predictors than intrinsic factors. Job location, work conditions, and job security were the most important factors in predicting career choices with a preference to work in the public sector. Salary and benefits were not found to be significant in predicting career choices between the public and private sectors. For women, work conditions and job location and, for men, salary and benefits were the most important extrinsic factors. The importance of the extrinsic factors in this study is likely be related to the influence of culture, religious considerations, family and social obligations that precede personal interests and shape motivational behaviour in the everyday life of Saudi individuals.

Intrinsic motivation, as a scale, was not significant in predicting career choices. It is possible that participants assigned a high level of importance to the intrinsic items when choosing their careers in both sectors (the factor held in highest importance in the descriptive results). Individually, all intrinsic items except creativity and serving society were not significant predictors. Participants who value creativity more are likely to prefer working in the private sector, whereas those who care more about serving society and doing good for the public are likely to choose public sector employment. Women scored significantly higher than men in intrinsic factors. In both a male-dominated society and the management field, where women do not enjoy the same career opportunities as men do, they feel the need to focus on developing their human capital as much as they can to be able to overcome gendered inequalities. Women scored higher, specifically in job responsibility, sense of achievement, and serving society. This result might be explained in relation to the situation faced by women in terms of high female unemployment rates, a scarcity of women managers, a lack of authority and facing negative attitudes towards their professional role by society. As hypothesised initially, for the whole sample, the institutional factors were more important than the personal dimension in predicting the career choices.

Finally, in analysing the demographic specificities, valuable findings that could shed light on the major outcomes of this research were discussed. In general, women preferred to work in the public sector. This was predictable given the gendered familial duties that they need to prioritise and the more relaxed atmosphere in the public sector. Younger people and those with highly educated fathers relied more on *Wasta* than older people and those with relatively less educated fathers. At the same time, younger participants expressed a stronger desire to work in the public sector and were influenced more by parents and religion than the older generations. Single participants, who were also more likely to be younger, rated social status and intrinsic factors as more important. It seems that younger and single participants were perhaps more concerned about the image of their future job, long term employment (public sector), and status in society after graduation than older people, who faced greater practical needs such as providing for their families and accessing paid employment immediately.

There is seemingly a polarity in Saudi society between younger and older generations and between male and female citizens in the labour market. Those who are younger, female, and have higher social status are more interested in the public sector, and participants who are older, male, and have less educated fathers are more interested in the private sector.



The findings presented here suggest that power relations in the family and society are much stronger in influencing career choices than personal motivations in countries such as Saudi Arabia, where social, political, and cultural processes emphasise the collective identity. This is in contrast to the individualistic societies, where most of the career choice theories originate.

# Chapter 8: Career Choices of Saudi Managers: Concluding Notes

## 8.1 Introduction

This thesis examined factors that influence the career choices of Saudi MBA students. This research stemmed from a simple but important question: Why, despite major governmental efforts in reducing unemployment over decades, is the number of unemployed people increasing? Let us take a step back to summarise some facts about Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a rich country with 60% of its population aged below 40 who, at the same time, suffer from high unemployment rates, specifically amongst youths (30%) and women (35.7%) (IMF, 2013). The country also hosts more than seven million foreign workers, who constitute around 87% of the labour force in the private sector, including most of the managerial positions. Saudis are concentrated in the public sector and compose 93% of its 1,090,000 workers. While the public sector has become saturated with Saudi workers, the private sector is increasingly populated by foreign expatriates. This sharp division between concentrations of Saudi and non-Saudi workers in the two poles of the labour market (public and private sectors) and its implications in the social and economic spheres have been problematised by politicians, economists and policymakers. Indeed, the major solution offered to reduce unemployment has been the tackling of this problem of binary division and ethnic concentration in the two sectors through attracting more Saudis to the private sector. This concentration can be seen in the hierarchical structure of the labour system, meaning that the managerial positions are mostly occupied by non-Saudis. The top-down governmental efforts to deal with this problem included: encouraging foreign investments in the hope of creating more jobs for young Saudis, implementing *Saudization* policy to replace foreign workers with the Saudi workforce and developing human resources via training and education such as through the establishment of MBA programmes at different universities to provide the labour market with qualified male and female managers.

### 8.1.1 What is the Missing Thread?

Despite the above efforts, the employment rate among young Saudis has not increased and the number of expatriate workers has not declined. The government has pushed the *Saudization* policy and has exerted every effort to make it succeed by imposing measures and quotas on private sector organisations (such as the *Nitaqat* programme) to employ

Saudis; however, there seems to be a missing line of communication between policymakers and the realities of the life experiences of Saudi people, both employers and employees. What is known, generally, in Saudi Arabia is the reluctance of foreign investors and employers to hire Saudi workers; in other words, they find every opportunity not to undergo the *Saudization* requirements. The employers in the private sector have negative perceptions about Saudi workers and see them as less committed and productive and more expensive compared to foreign expatriates. Saudi workers are often depicted as suffering from low motivation and high turnover in the private sector in these discourses. If the Saudi workforce is gaining the education and training required to fit into the private sector, what are the factors that affect their perceptions of the private sector, and why do they increasingly prefer the public sector? What factors inform their career choices between a job in the public and private sectors? Are these perceptions personal or are they a result of the wider contextual reasons? Given the high unemployment rate among women and the governmental claims of providing suitable work conditions for them, how are men and women different in their motivations?

The answers to these questions can partly address the above missing link. The current study investigated a series of cultural and personal motivational factors that were believed to influence the career choices of Saudi MBA students between public and private sectors; in implementing *Saudization*, these factors have not been considered. Unless these cultural and motivational factors in career choice of young graduates are unfolded, the unemployment problem that persists among the educated Saudis may not get solved.

This study investigated career choice through examining the influence of *Saudization*, *Wasta*, social status, parental obedience, and religion, and both intrinsic and extrinsic personal motivational factors among male and female MBA students in Saudi Arabia. An integrative framework, composed of the institutional (Scott, 1995) and personal motivational factors (Deci and Ryan, 1985) was conceptualised. A survey was conducted with 273 Saudi MBA students (male= 157, female= 116) at 10 universities in different cities in Saudi Arabia. The findings deduced form that led to the development of a new model which emphasised the role of some socio-cultural factors such as religion, family and networks as well as some extrinsic motivational factors (i.e. job location, work conditions, and job security) in informing the career choices of Saudi male and female students.

The findings of this study were presented and discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively. In this chapter, the theoretical and practical implications of the main findings will be presented; furthermore, the unique contribution of this research to the literature in the field of career choice will be addressed. The thesis will be concluded by reflecting on limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **8.2 Theoretical Implications**

The main significant and non-significant findings of this research and their theoretical implications are summarised in this section.

### **8.2.1 What Predicts Career Choice?**

#### **1. *Wasta***

*Wasta*, a normative factor that refers to networks of influential people, was found to be a significant predictor of career choice, suggesting that *Wasta* is not only prevalent among ordinary unskilled individuals but is also an effective tool for employment among highly skilled managers. Some scholars (e.g. Barnett *et al.*, 2013; Iles *et al.*, 2012) argued that *Wasta* is a widespread phenomenon that is interwoven with the social fabric of societies in the Arab world. As *Wasta* is in many cases more effective than having relevant education and work experience, it reduces the incentive to develop career skills and abilities among the young workforce in these countries.

Previous research has shown that *Wasta* is a form of corruption associated with cronyism, nepotism, and networking practices that is considered unethical in Western organisational settings (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Al-Ghailani, 2005). In Saudi Arabia specifically, *Wasta* is seen as an ‘inevitable’ route to obtaining a job in the public sector. In this research, the more highly the participants rated *Wasta* as important, the more likely they were to choose work in the public sector; however, the *Wasta* culture in the labour market of Saudi Arabia requires individuals to seek help through informal connections not only for working in the public sector but also in the private sector.

The prevalence of *Wasta* in Saudi Arabia implies that those who do not have access to the ‘right’ people may fail to get a well-paid position, usually in the public sector, regardless of their gender. For women, younger participants and the less experienced, the need for *Wasta* was expressed more strongly than it was for men, older participants

and more experienced participants. Higher scores for *Wasta* among the former groups are suggestive of their marginal positions in the labour market and their need for informal routes to employment.

## **2. Parental obedience**

Parental obedience as a cultural-cognitive factor was found to be a significant predictor of career choices in this research. This is not the first study to include an active role of parents in influencing their children's career pathways (see Amani, 2013; Wong and Liu, 2010; Agarwala, 2008; Wong, 2007); however, the approach to the parents' role in this study is counted as a positive Islamic cultural behaviour initiated by children in their choice of employment sector. As discussed in this thesis, working in the two sectors in Saudi Arabia involves having different lifestyles. The public sector is represented as being more compatible with family life, religious beliefs and a stress-free environment, while the private sector was associated with higher competition, having less time for family life and lack of long-term benefits.

The findings of this study suggest that the career choices of Saudi MBA students are influenced by their parents' psychological and material needs. Those students who gave high importance to parental obedience were more likely to prefer working in the public sector, where workers can find more geographical and financial stability and less chance of relocation and which, in effect, turns caring for parents into an easier task.

Female students rated the importance of parental obedience higher than their male counterparts; however, considering the context of Saudi Arabia, it should be noted that women do not enjoy the same legal and cultural rights as men do: women need their family's approval in their decisions. This result implies that any career opportunity which might negatively affect the daughter-parent relationship would be of less interest to Saudi female managers. Similar results for non-experienced and younger participants suggest that younger generations are dependent on parents and seek their approval.

## **3. Religious influence**

Religion (Islam) was found to exert a significant influence on the career choices of participants in this study. Little research has emphasised the importance of religion in

career choice, and the few existing studies focus mainly on Christianity (Bassey *et al.*, 2012; Sigalow *et al.*, 2012).

The holistic nature of Islam in influencing the decisions of Saudi individuals, including in personal and business aspects, is not unknown (e.g. Ahmad, 2011; Metcalfe, 2008). One of the findings of this study showed that students who gave high scores to religious influence would be more likely to choose to work in the public sector. All governmental organisations in Saudi Arabia strictly maintain religious values such as sex-segregation in the workplace, designated prayer rooms and protected prayer time. Similarly to other research (Bassey *et al.*, 2012; Sigalow *et al.*, 2012), this study found no gender difference in religious influence on career choice, indicating that women do not necessarily think of Islam differently to men. This finding provides important insights that reject the hegemonic images in the West about Muslim women as victims and Islam as an oppressive force or barrier to women's employment. As indicated by Riedy (2013), Saudi female students in the United States think that it is the tribal customs and traditions, rather than their Islamic religion, which hinder their educational ambitions and career choices.

#### **4. Extrinsic factors**

The overall scale of extrinsic motivation (including salary, benefits, job security, work conditions, job location, and work in a prestigious organisation) was found to be significant in predicting the career choices of Saudi MBA students. Further analysis of the individual extrinsic items showed that job security, work conditions, and job location were the strongest predictors. This result confirms the importance of these items to Saudi individuals' preference of the public sector as previously concluded by other studies on *Saudization* (e.g. Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009). This study stresses the influence of the collectivistic nature of Saudi culture in shaping the personal motivators in career choice. The desire to work in a religiously appropriate environment with shorter working hours and to meet family and social obligations as well as having a secure, stable job near to one's family and parents attracts many Saudis to the public sector.

Salary and benefits were found to be non-significant predictors, suggesting their equally high importance for participants when choosing between public and private sectors. Most of the studies addressing similar issues argue that monetary rewards are more important for private sector employees and managers (e.g. Bullock *et al.*, 2013;

Buelens and Van den Broeck, 2007). In Saudi Arabia, public and private sectors provide similar high salaries and generous benefits to managers; it is, then, possible that salary and benefits are not predictors of career choice.

This thesis emphasised the importance of culture in career choice decisions and the results on extrinsic factors should be read within the same context. Salary and benefits were rated higher among men compared to women as men are the main breadwinners in Saudi families. On the other hand, job location and work conditions were rated as more important to female students compared to their male peers. The importance of job location reflects women's limitations in mobility and the places they can spend their time outside the family. In Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive and in most cases they cannot afford to hire a driver; hence, working in a different city to where one lives is not possible for many women. The importance of work conditions for women shows women's concern for working in women-only places and having flexible hours that enable them to both work outside and fulfill their expected responsibilities at home.

## **8.2.2 Non-Predicting Factors in Career Choice**

### **1. *Saudization***

Taking that the government is providing easier access to employment through *Saudization*, it was assumed that Saudi individuals would have more career options; however, it was found that *Saudization* did not significantly predict the career choices of Saudi MBA students. In fact, *Saudization* was ranked as the lowest in importance compared to the other variables of the study, suggesting its failure in achieving its aims. It is true that some people have described the process as 'non-realistic' and with 'a short-term vision' (Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Fakeeh, 2009). The government pressurises the private sector organisations to employ certain numbers of Saudis while neither workers nor employers are willing to comply with the rules. Employers feel that Saudi workers are lazy and expensive to hire (having to pay higher salaries) and workers find the sector too competitive, less attractive and demanding compared to the public sector. In this thesis, it was argued that a lack of attention to individuals' needs and motivations is among the reasons why the success of *Saudization* is hampered.

Contrary to the research assumption that male participants would give higher importance to *Saudization* compared to their female counterparts, the results revealed

that both men and women assigned equally low importance to *Saudization* when making their career choices. Although in the last few years Saudi women have been provided with relatively better educational and career opportunities which might explain the above result, *Saudization* by and large has focused on men and has ignored women's employment in the private sector (Al-Asfour and Khan, 2014).

## **2. Social status**

Social status was not significant in predicting career choices between public and private sectors. In Saudi Arabian society, being a manager already implies that one has a high social status. As argued by Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007), the hierarchical position of a manager inherently bestows a high social status which is perhaps more important than the choice of sector itself.

Besides, social status in Saudi Arabia is affected by the type of job one has. There is a stigma attached to manual jobs to the extent that some people prefer being unemployed to having to work in low status positions such as labourers, domestic workers and cleaners, jobs that the *Saudization* process does not deal with. Despite the earlier claims linking social status only to the public sector in Saudi Arabia (Achoui, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2008), this study shows that, in the case of managers, social status is related to both sectors partly because managers have similar high salary scales in both sectors.

It was found that women rate the importance of social status equally to men when making their career choices, perhaps indicating their 'desire' to have an equal status to men. In such a patriarchal society, the phenomenon of women's employment is a recent one. Women may generally see themselves as being in need of confidence and status in society.

## **3. Intrinsic factors**

The overall intrinsic motivational scale (job responsibility, creativity, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement, opportunity for personal growth, and the opportunity to serve society) was not significant in predicting career choices. In the descriptive results this variable was ranked the highest in importance. Individually, two intrinsic items, creativity and serving society, were found to be significant predictors. Participants who assigned more importance to creativity were likely to choose the private sector, whereas those who valued serving society more were prone



to preferring the public sector. These results reflect the different characteristics of the working sectors and highlight the importance of being creative and serving others in participants' future careers. Managers who chose to work in the private sector might have more opportunities for creativity through leading multi-national groups in a dynamic and competitive environment. On the other hand, those who preferred the public sector might see themselves as having more opportunities to serve society.

Four intrinsic items were found to be non-significant predictors even though they were ranked as highly important in the descriptive results: job responsibility, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement and opportunity for personal growth and development. This is an important result in relation to studies on *Saudization* that have focused on the importance of a few extrinsic material factors that were said to attract individuals to the public sector (e.g. Torofdar and Yunggar, 2012; Al-Shammari, 2009; Fakeeh, 2009). The result here provides evidence and new insights by showing that young Saudi managers are not just motivated by extrinsic factors but are highly concerned about the intrinsic non-material benefits when choosing their future careers in both sectors.

Intrinsic factors were more important for female students compared to their male counterparts. This result agrees with other studies on MBA students in different contexts that indicate female students give more value to intrinsic factors in order to improve their managerial skills (e.g. Agarwala, 2008; Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008). In particular, three items were more interesting to women: sense of achievement, job responsibility and serving society. The importance of such intrinsic factors might be a result of the structural and cultural constraints that entangle women's understanding of achievement in society, and this shows their interest in the ethics of work beyond material factors.

### **8.2.3 Thinking through Institutional Motivations**

The findings of the study provide empirical evidence that the career choices of these participants are not solely determined by personal factors. The results of this research support this argument, contrary to most Western-developed career choice theories (e.g. Savickas, 2002; Holland, 1997; Schein, 1990), which focus on the individuals as the key determinants in their career choice process as well as minimising the influence of structural and cultural conditions on personal decisions. This study demonstrates that institutional factors and, specifically, cultural-cognitive factors (parental obedience and religion) are the

most influential forces for Saudi managers; furthermore, the findings suggest that even the personal motivational factors (e.g. job location, work conditions, and job security) influencing the career choices are directed and shaped by socio-cultural considerations such as parental obedience and religion. Indeed, career choices in collectivistic cultures are concomitant with familial and cultural obligations more than with personal derivations (Duffy and Dik, 2009; Ituma and Simpson, 2009; Ng *et al.*, 2008).

### **8.3 Implications for Practice**

According to the findings of this study, institutional factors, mainly cultural-cognitive, emerged as the key determinants in career choice decisions for Saudi MBA students. The integrative framework used in this thesis identifies important institutional and motivational factors for employees that could be used by employers and policymakers to shift their perspectives towards improving the current recruitment policies. The results suggest that employers need to become aware of what the important factors are for Saudi managers in order to alter labour and reward systems within smaller and larger organisations. Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are suggested to the policymakers and the organisations' directors in Saudi Arabia.

#### **8.3.1 *Wasta* or Equal Opportunities at Recruitment Stage?**

Recruitment and selection processes in the public and private sector organisations should be based on merits and qualifications and not on the power of *Wasta*. Equal opportunities should be made available to all applicants. This research revealed that MBA students as highly skilled professionals still find themselves in need of *Wasta* in being recruited as managers. Not only does dependence on *Wasta* create a sense of frustration among those with no influential links, but the murky system of recruitment has wider implications on individuals' performance, professional development and the productivity of the organisation.

#### **8.3.2 Career Development**

Similar to recruitment, the development of one's career is tightly bound to informal channels of networks. Organisations, particularly in the public sector, should work harder in abolishing *Wasta* from their recruitment, selection, and promotion procedures. Local and foreign companies in the private sector need to actively participate in recruiting and promoting employees based on their merits. Eliminating *Wasta* completely in a society

whose relationships are built on interdependence is challenging; however, spreading the culture of competition, meritocracy and fairness in the country might at the very least reduce the negative effects of *Wasta* on people from marginalised backgrounds. Religious leaders, school teachers and media and government officials are encouraged to start and support a campaign as well as setting stricter laws to abolish *Wasta*.

### **8.3.3 The Importance of Family Ties**

Policymakers and organisations' directors in the private and public sectors should be aware of both the importance of parental obedience as a cultural value to Saudi managers and its significant influence in their career choice decisions. Being close to parents to look after them is of great importance to Saudis. Obtaining information on caring responsibilities can help employers to adjust work conditions such that they suit employees' familial life circumstances. Moving Saudi managers, particularly women, to another city or a place far from where their parents live can result in low performance or even resignation. As was discussed before, high turnover rates for Saudi employees have negative effects on the productivity of organisations.

Policymakers and organisations' directors in the private and public sectors should be aware that issues such as job location, work conditions, and job security are influential forces in the career choice decisions of Saudi MBA students. These are the very same factors that make the public sector more attractive to many Saudis than the private sector. Related to the previous points made in this chapter, Saudi female managers are more concerned about job location and work conditions than male managers. Salary and benefits are more important for male managers compared to their female counterparts. Men have more family and social obligations in Saudi Arabia and they expect their careers to satisfy their material needs.

### **8.3.4 Religious and Traditional Perspectives of Employment**

It was discussed that careers which contradict with the principles of Islam are not attractive to Saudi MBA students; hence, organisations of such practices may not be the first choice for young Saudi managers. For example, commercial banks, due to the practice of usury or money interests (i.e. *Reba*) as a *Haram* activity in Islam (i.e. forbidden), are anticipated to suffer from a shortage of Saudi employees; thus, it is recommended that Islamic banks in Saudi Arabia expand to employ Saudi male and female managers.

In most cases, patriarchal views towards women in Saudi Arabia are interpreted as religion even though they may not have roots in the *Quran* and *Sunnah*. The traditional and tribal interpretations of religion are key players in the problem of women's unemployment. These views can change, as evidenced by some recent legislation on women's eligibility to study abroad on governmental scholarships. It is now an accepted norm among many families to send their daughters overseas to study. The government should continue its efforts not only in supporting modernisation processes and female education in all majors but also facilitating women's chances of employment outside health and education sectors. This can be done by creating nurseries for children, supporting maternity and paternity leave and reducing working hours for mothers with younger children. Religious figures, schools and the media can contribute by adopting and promoting a positive image of working women as opposed to the already existing pictures of working women as not being family-oriented individuals.

Women in this research showed a higher interest in the intrinsic factors such as job responsibility, sense of achievement and serving society. Such factors should be given attention when employing Saudi female managers in public or private organisations.

### **8.3.5 Non-Material Needs of Employees**

Intrinsic factors such as job responsibility, interesting and challenging work, sense of achievement, and opportunity for personal growth and development have been emphasised by the findings of this study as being highly important to Saudi managers when choosing their careers in the public and private sectors. Employers and directors in both sectors are advised to employ career counsellors when designing jobs in order to motivate workers to improve their work effectiveness, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment.

### **8.3.6 How Can *Saudization* Be Taken Forwards?**

The disparity between the conditions of work in public and private sectors is the central reason for the creation of policies such as *Saudization*. The private sector in its current form is designed for precarious employment where foreign workers are often employed on fixed, short-term contracts, usually with lower salaries compared to colleagues in the public sector (but higher than in their native countries) and are dependent on the strict conditions of their contracts with few legal rights. A lack of government surveillance on small and medium-sized corporations creates conditions within which the exploitation of workers becomes easier and more profitable; hence, there exists less interest in employing

Saudi workers with more legal rights who need to secure a long-term job followed by a pension. The question is whether and to what extent the government can regulate the private sector organisations in their recruitment policies. This disparity between the conditions of work in public and private sectors makes the career choice difficult and dependent on various factors.

It is wrong to suggest that the public sector should not increase the salaries and benefits of its employees with the aim of making it less desirable for Saudi citizens as some have suggested (Forstenlechner and Rutledge, 2010; Al-Asmari, 2008). The focus should remain on the private sector and on structural transformations to the rules which make exploitation among both Saudis and foreign workers easy. Two points should be mentioned in relation to this: Firstly, although programmes like *Nitaqat* urge employers to employ Saudis for at least a fraction of their workforce, this fraction of workers usually constitutes the lowest ranking workers in the organisation; secondly, men's unemployment has been the main target of *Saudization* programmes. Women are left out of the picture and are seen as a subsidiary workforce. Concluding from these points, one can argue that highly educated Saudis are likely to find employment in small/medium-sized corporations in the private sector that usually pay less than both larger organisations and the public sector. In the case of women, many stay unemployed after graduation and are not absorbed into the private sector either.

## **8.4 Contributions to Knowledge**

This thesis provides novel theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions. In this section, these contributions are presented.

### **8.4.1 Theoretical Contribution**

In the analysis of career choice, this study initially combined the institutional dimension with the three pillars (regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive) developed by Scott (1995) and the personal motivational dimension with the extrinsic and intrinsic categories adopted from the 'self-determination theory' by Deci and Ryan (1985). The findings of the study informed the construction of a new model (presented in Figure 7.1 at the end of Chapter 7) called the 'socio-cultural model of career choice', which took into account the significant social and cultural factors that underpin the personal factors. The model shows the importance of the mutual relationships between institutional and personal extrinsic

factors and the gender influence on the institutional and personal factors which shape career choices in Saudi Arabia.

This new model can be applied to the study of career choice in a context where cultural and social forces are important in shaping individuals' career choices. Most of the career choice theories have been developed in the West, focusing on an individualised perspective within a gender-blind context that emphasises the role of personal agency in determining career choices at the cost of socio-cultural factors (Patton and McMahon, 2014; Duffy and Dik, 2009). Such theories cannot be applied within non-Western collectivistic contexts such as Saudi Arabia, where factors like religion, gender, family and access to social networks are highly influential in personal choices and play key roles in people's daily decisions.

#### **8.4.2 Empirical Contribution**

This study contributes to the literature on career choice in Saudi Arabia in different ways: Firstly, the majority of the career choice literature has been conducted in the West with scarce research on the Arab world, specifically Saudi Arabia; secondly, although MBA programmes have been running in Saudi Arabia for more than two decades, a surprisingly limited amount of research has been conducted on the emerging 'management career' among Saudis; thirdly, although there are a few studies on MBA students in different contexts (e.g. Dexter *et al.*, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005), this study is the first to focus on sectoral preferences among the current MBA cohorts in Saudi Arabia; finally, there is limited information about women's involvement and their career motivations in Saudi Arabia. This research is the first comparative study to focus on gender differences in factors affecting career choices.

#### **8.4.3 Methodological Contribution**

Two methodological contributions have been provided by this research: Firstly, previous studies on MBA students have used only simple means and standard deviations (descriptive statistics) to rank the importance of some factors when making career choices (Agarwala, 2008; Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2008; Tanova *et al.*, 2008; Dexter *et al.*, 2007; Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2005). This thesis has used logistic regression analysis (inferential statistics) to predict the effects of institutional and personal motivational factors on career choices between public and private sectors. The use of regression has been helpful in illuminating the effectiveness of some factors (intrinsic) that

have been counted as the most important by the above studies, while the regression analysis shows intrinsic motivation as not predictive of career choice.

Secondly, due to the lack of studies measuring the influence of *Saudization* and religion on career choice in Saudi Arabia, the researcher has developed two scales to measure these two factors: the *Saudization* scale is composed of five items and the religion scale is composed of four items (see Chapters 5 and 6); furthermore, the five items measuring parental obedience were adapted from sub-scales of a previous study (Wong and Liu, 2010) in which they were used to measure different aspects of parental influence and were modified and reorganised into one scale measuring 'parental obedience' in order to meet the needs of this research. These three scales have been standardised (by factor analysis) and tested; they can, therefore, be used in other quantitative studies on related issues in Saudi Arabia or in other similar contexts.

## **8.5 Limitations**

As is the case with any field of study, this research has its own limitations. The first is related to the sampling technique. Probability sampling could not be used because a sampling frame of all MBA students in Saudi Arabia was not available to the researcher. The universities offering the course were not willing to share this information with the researcher, but a few universities did instead allow personal access to the researcher so that the questionnaires could be distributed by either himself or through coordinators (in the case of female students). Due to time and financial constraints and in the absence of a sampling frame, a convenience sampling method was applied to students present on the particular dates that the researcher visited the participating universities. In order to expand the sample and give absentees, females and students living in remote cities a chance, online questionnaires were designed.

Secondly, and more importantly, throughout the course of this project the researcher has identified the benefits of applying a mixed-method approach. Conducting interviews could have enriched the research outcome and validated the findings; however, this methodological approach was difficult to adopt for this research. On one hand, Saudi people tend not to like to talk to researchers about sensitive and political issues such as religion and *Saudization*. On the other hand, accessing female participants is not possible for a male researcher due to social, cultural and religious constraints; as a result, the use of anonymous questionnaires was the best option to overcome such obstacles and produce reliable data.

## **8.6 Suggested Avenues for Future Research**

Although the results of this study addressed some theoretical and empirical gaps in the career choice literature in relation to managers in Saudi Arabia, several questions regarding career choice have remained unanswered; thus, some suggestions for further research which could expand and build on the current findings will be made below.

First, as with any career, the perspectives of those entering the field of management need to be analysed in different stages of their career trajectories; therefore, a longitudinal study is recommended so that one may follow the trajectories of MBA students to find out whether their institutional and motivational factors and attitudes change when they are in the actual work setting.

Following on from the first point, a further suggestion relates to the role of long-standing managers in shaping the expectations of employers of young and inexperienced managers. The private sector in Saudi Arabia is a thriving and dynamic workplace with a constantly changing workforce. The role of foreign employers should be investigated with a focus on the ways in which Western and capitalist models of business are applied in the sector.

Due to the prevalence of localisation processes in the Arab Gulf countries, comparative research is needed to analyse how these processes are managed in different countries with similar economies. Managers are often thought of as important players in regulating and localising the market of these countries and yet consideration of their experiences, ambitions and expectations are missing from both the literature and policy implementation. It is hoped that this shortcoming of the literature was addressed for the case of Saudi Arabia.



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## Appendix 1: Map of Saudi Arabia



Source: World Atlas (2013).

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

### Institutional and Personal Influences on Career Choice:

#### A study on Saudi MBA Students

**Dear Participant,**

I am a doctoral researcher at Brunel Business School, Brunel University in the UK. As part of my PhD research, I am examining the influence of the personal and institutional factors on the career choices of **Saudi MBA students**. The personal factors include the interests and motivations, whereas the institutional factors in this study include the *Saudization* laws and regulations, social and cultural effects on the career choice decisions.

I will be very grateful if you can carefully complete the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire is composed of four sections and should take around 10 minutes to complete. In each section there is a list of statements for which you are required to tick the box which indicates your level of agreement. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. **All information provided by you will remain anonymous and will be treated as strictly confidential and will be only used for academic research purposes.**

For any concerns or questions about the survey, please feel free to contact me on:

[Rajeh.Albugamy@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:Rajeh.Albugamy@brunel.ac.uk)

Your cooperation is highly appreciated and will contribute to the success of this study.

**Thank you.**

Yours sincerely,

**Rajeh Albugamy**

PhD Researcher

Brunel Business School

Brunel University

London, UK

## Section A: Demographic Information

1. Please state your gender: a) Male  b) Female

2. Please state your age (*tick one*):  
a) 21 – 25  b) 26 - 30  c) 31 - 35   
d) 36 – 40  e) 41 - 45  f) 46+

3. Please State your marital Status: a) Single  b) Married   
c) Divorced  d) Widowed

4. Do you have work experience in the following sectors? (*tick one*)  
a) Public Sector  b) Private sector   
c) Both (Public & Private)  d) None

5. Does your father have work experience in the following sectors? (*tick one*)  
a) Public Sector  b) Private Sector   
c) Both (Public & Private)  d) None

6. What is the level of your father's education? (*tick one*)  
a) No formal education  b) Primary   
c) Secondary  d) Bachelor's degree   
e) Master's degree  f) Doctoral degree

7. Please state the city of your MBA study: a) Riyadh  b) Jeddah   
c) Other

8. Please state the type of your MBA study: a) Full Time  b) Part Time



**Section B: Future Career Preferences**

**1. After graduating from the MBA programme, I prefer to be employed in:**

a) Public Sector

b) Private Sector

**Section C: Personal Motivational Factors**

**Please rate the following items in terms of the importance to you when choosing your career (*tick one*):**

		Not Important At All	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Extremely Important
1	Job responsibility (i.e. duties, roles, and authorities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Salary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Opportunity for creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Job location (i.e. geographical location)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Opportunity for personal growth and development (training, skills, languages, experience etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Work in a prestigious organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Sense of achievement (i.e. self-actualisation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Opportunity for career advancement ( promotions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Interesting and challenging work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Job security (long-term employment in the organisation, good retirement programme)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Opportunity to serve society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Work conditions (working hours & work environment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Job autonomy/Independence (being in charge of yourself)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Benefits (health insurance, car, housing, bonus etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Section D: Institutional Factors

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements (*tick one*):

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I think that the <i>Saudization</i> (laws and regulations for employment localization) will increase my chances of employability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	In order to get a job that you want, friends or family members in influential positions are needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	My religion plays an important role in my daily personal decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I prefer to select a job that makes my parents feel proud in front of other relatives and friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I will not consider any job role which conflicts with my religious belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I think that the <i>Saudization</i> regulations will widen my career choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	<i>Wasta</i> (social networks) facilitates most of my daily activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I think <i>Saudization</i> has helped Saudi managers in finding jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	My religious principles play an important role in my career choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	When it comes to obtaining a job that you want, who you know ( <i>wasta</i> ) is more important than what you know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	I will never take a job that makes my parents unhappy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	<i>Wasta</i> is more important than your qualifications and experiences in getting the job that you want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	I will consider the work location when choosing my career because I want to be close to my parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	I would consider using <i>Wasta</i> to assist me in getting my career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	My daily work decisions would be influenced by my religious ethics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	When it comes to career choices, <i>Wasta</i> is important in recruitment and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	I think the implementation of the <i>Saudization</i> regulations has prevented Saudi managers from finding the jobs they want	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
18	I will not consider working in an organisation whose practices and activities go against my religious principles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	I will never consider any job role that causes my parents to worry about me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	I think that <i>Wasta</i> should be used less when it comes to recruitment and promotions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	I prefer to choose a job that enables me to give my parents a good quality of life when they grow older	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	I think that the <i>Saudization</i> regulations will limit my career options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	I think that using <i>Wasta</i> is unfair to those without connections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements (*tick one*):

	<b>“The choice of my career is important to.....”:</b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Improve my social status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Make my family proud of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Become influential in society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Obtain recognition by society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Make my relatives proud of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Gain a symbol of status within society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Thank you for your time.**

### Appendix 3: Numbers of Saudi MBA Students at Saudi Universities

No	University	Male	Female	Total
1	Riyadh 1 (state)	43	19	62
2	Riyadh 2 (private)	77	58	135
3	Riyadh 3 (private)	47	59	106
4	Riyadh 4 (private)	76	20	96
5	Riyadh 5 (private)	59	29	88
6	Riyadh 6 (private)	45	29	74
7	Jeddah 1 (state)	287	123	410
8	Jeddah 2 (private)	218	0	218
9	Jeddah 3 (private)	248	205	453
10	Jeddah 4 (private)	0	7	7
11	Abha (private)	134	83	217
12	Dhahran (state)	131	0	131
13	Al-Ahsa (state)	31	24	55
14	Al Khobar (private)	13	4	17
15	Qassim (state)	6	17	23
16	Al-Baha (state)	122	45	167
<b>Total</b>		<b>1537</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>2288</b>

**Source:** Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia (2011/2012).

## Appendix 4: Eigenvalues and Scree Plots

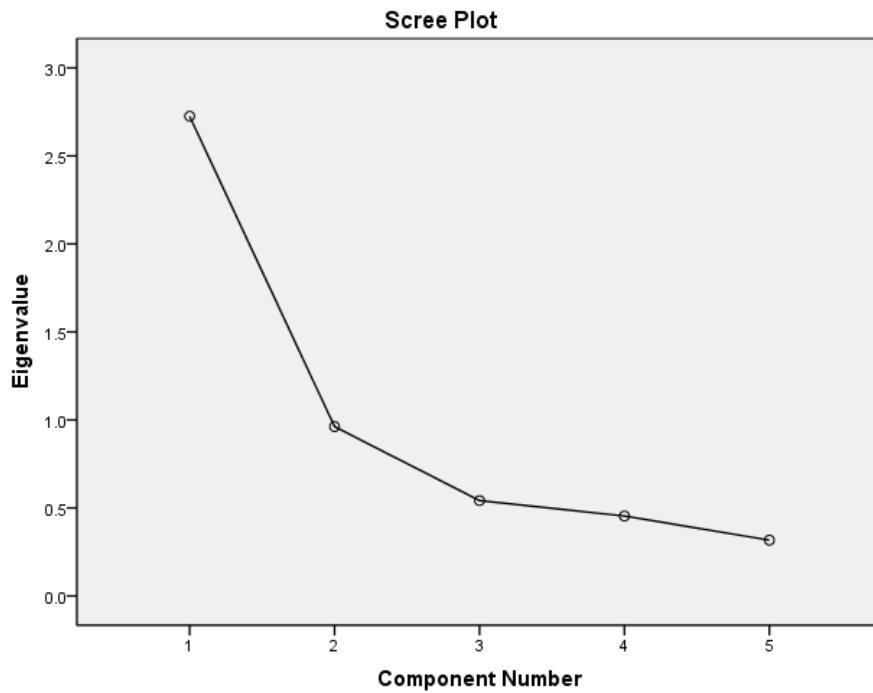


Figure 4.1: Eigenvalues and scree plot for the *Saudization* Scale.

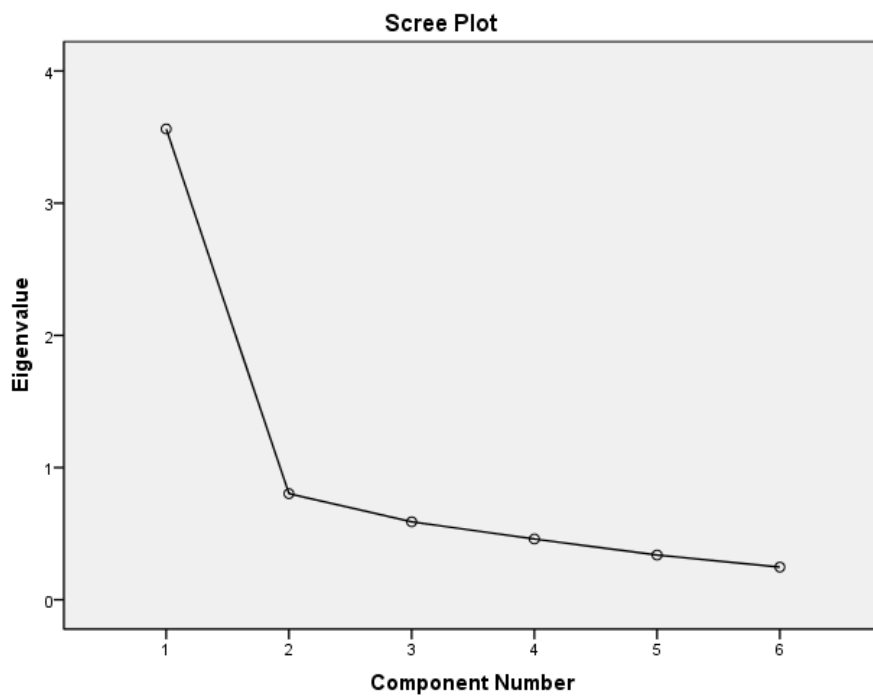
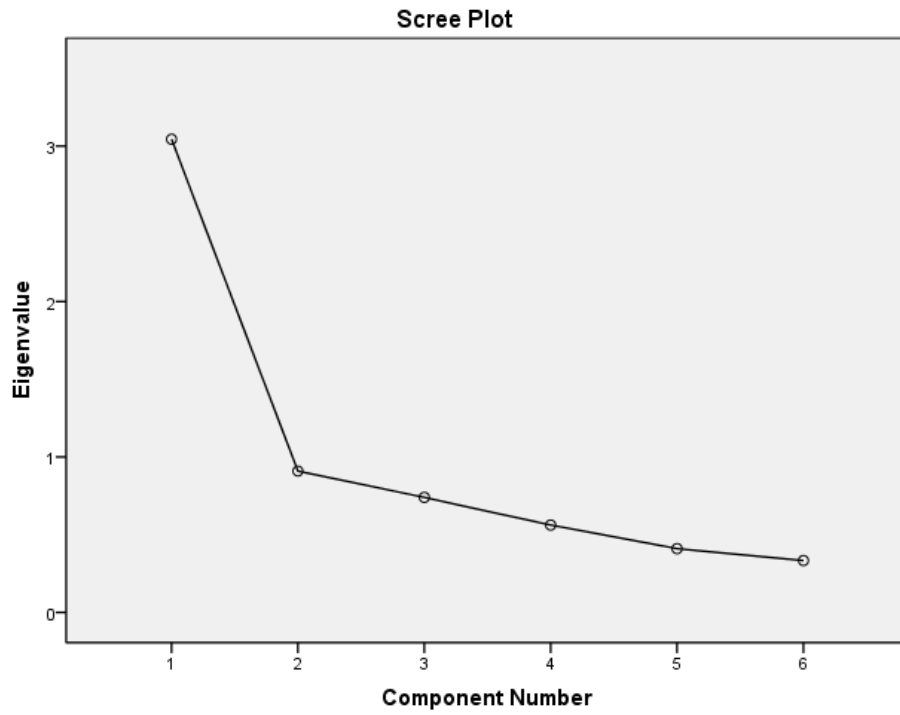
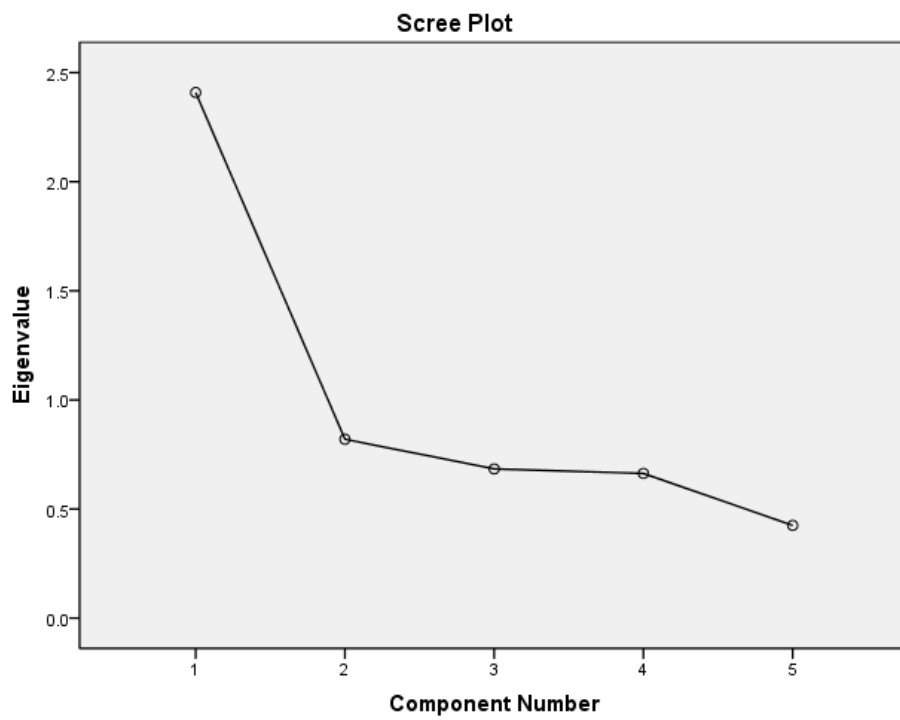


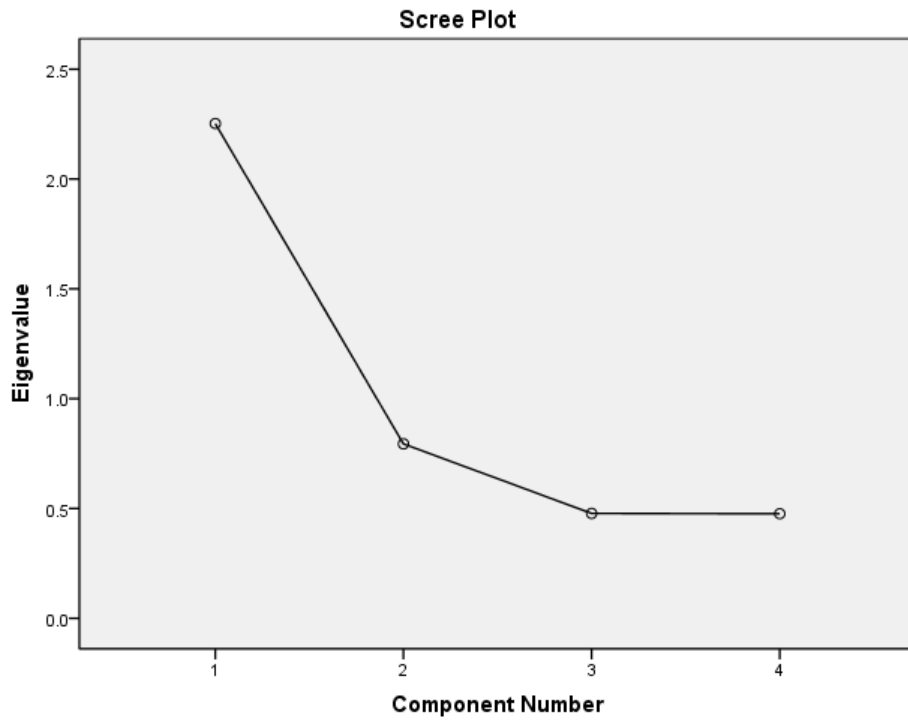
Figure 4.2: Eigenvalues and scree plot for the *Wasta* scale.



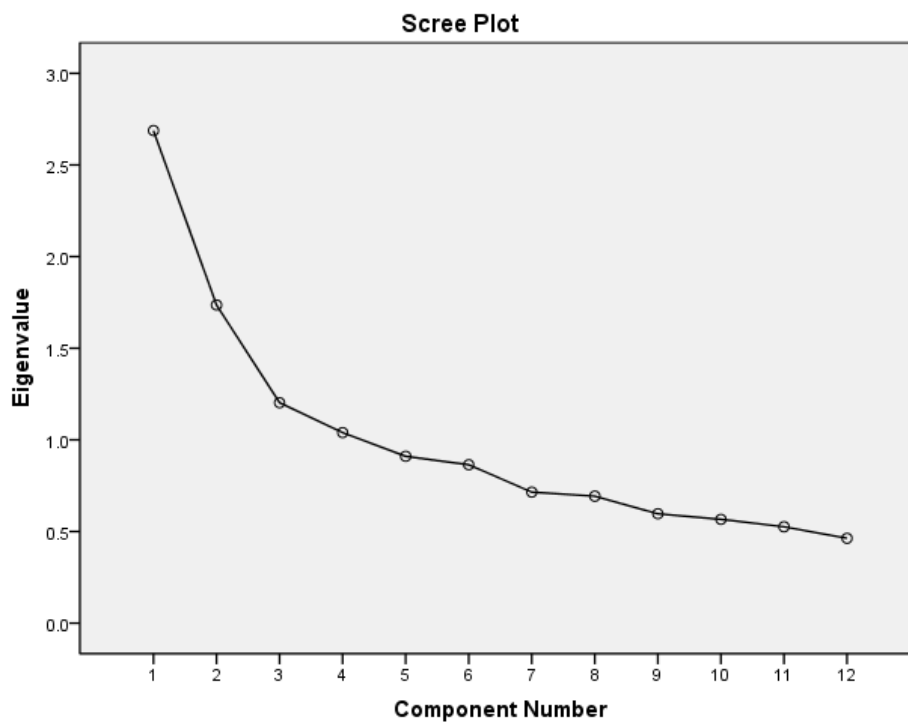
**Figure 4.3: Eigenvalues and scree plot for the social status scale.**



**Figure 4.4: Eigenvalues and scree plot for parental obedience scale.**



**Figure 4.5: Eigenvalues and scree plot for the religious influence scale.**



**Figure 4.6: Eigenvalues and scree plot for the motivational scale.**

## Appendix 5: Statistical Analysis Tables

**Table 5.1: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from *Saudization* items.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	.10	.65	.03	1	.87	1.11
<b>Saudization_1</b>	-.18	.18	.99	1	.32	1.19
<b>Saudization_22</b>	.18	.16	1.20	1	.27	1.19
<b>Saudization_8</b>	.10	.15	.46	1	.50	1.11
<b>Saudization_6</b>	.09	.19	.20	1	.65	1.09
<b>Saudization_17</b>	-.08	.15	.31	1	.58	1.09

**Table 5.2: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from *Wasta* items.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	1.60	.52	9.43	1	.00	4.94
<b>Wasta_7</b>	-.39	.13	9.23	1	.00	1.49
<b>Wasta_12</b>	-.22	.16	1.86	1	.17	1.25
<b>Wasta_14</b>	.12	.15	.58	1	.45	1.12
<b>Wasta_16</b>	.10	.19	.27	1	.60	1.10
<b>Wasta_10</b>	.05	.17	.09	1	.76	1.05
<b>Wasta_2</b>	-.02	.15	.01	1	.91	1.02

**Table 5.3: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from social status items.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	1.97	1.04	3.62	1	.06	7.19
<b>Social status_2</b>	-.49	.22	5.05	1	.02	1.64
<b>Social status_6</b>	-.33	.21	2.52	1	.11	1.39
<b>Social status_5</b>	.32	.18	3.06	1	.08	1.37
<b>Social status_4</b>	.23	.23	1.02	1	.31	1.26
<b>Social status_3</b>	-.17	.20	.68	1	.41	1.19
<b>Social status_1</b>	.12	.19	.37	1	.54	1.12



**Table 5.4: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from parental obedience items.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	3.39	1.03	10.76	1	.00	29.66
<b>Parental obedience_19</b>	-.43	.19	5.35	1	.02	1.54
<b>Parental obedience_11</b>	.27	.18	2.22	1	.14	1.32
<b>Parental obedience_21</b>	-.26	.21	1.56	1	.21	1.30
<b>Parental obedience_4</b>	-.16	.15	1.24	1	.27	1.18
<b>Parental obedience_13</b>	-.15	.14	1.06	1	.30	.86

**Table 5.5: Logistic regression model predicting career choices from religious influence items.**

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>
<b>Constant</b>	2.58	.86	8.92	1	.00	13.21
<b>Religious_15</b>	-.27	.17	2.45	1	.12	1.32
<b>Religious_18</b>	-.20	.16	1.51	1	.22	1.22
<b>Religious_9</b>	-.05	.18	.08	1	.78	1.05
<b>Religious_5</b>	.01	.19	.01	1	.94	1.01

**Table 5.6: Saudization items across gender.**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<i>t-test</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Saudization_1</b>	3.34 (.91)	3.44 (.96)	-.76	271	Ns
<b>Saudization_6</b>	3.22 (.84)	3.34 (.89)	-.99	271	Ns
<b>Saudization_8</b>	2.98 (.84)	3.19 (.82)	-1.70	271	Ns
<b>Saudization_17</b>	3.10 (.82)	3.20 (.83)	-.81	271	Ns
<b>Saudization_22</b>	3.20 (.83)	3.20 (.87)	.02	271	Ns

*Notes.* Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Ns = non-significant.

**Table 5.7: Religious influence items across gender.**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<i>t-test</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Religious_5</b>	4.41 (.90)	4.54 (.85)	-1.20	271	Ns
<b>Religious_9</b>	4.04 (.87)	4.16 (.92)	-1.15	271	Ns
<b>Religious_15</b>	4.01 (.91)	4.02 (.97)	-.04	271	Ns
<b>Religious_18</b>	4.25 (.89)	4.45 (.95)	-1.78	271	Ns

*Notes.* Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Ns = non-significant.

**Table 5.8: Cross-tabulation: Marital status x career choice.**

<b>Marital status</b>		<b>Career choice</b>	
		<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
<b>Single</b>	Observed	36	49
	Expected	32.7	52.3
<b>Married</b>	Observed	66	111
	Expected	68.1	108.9

*Note.* Counts are presented.

**Table 5.9: Cross-tabulation: Father's work experience x career choice.**

<b>Father's work experience</b>		<b>Career choice</b>	
		<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
<b>Public</b>	Observed	53	75
	Expected	51.5	29.5
<b>Private</b>	Observed	18	28
	Expected	18.5	29.5
<b>Both</b>	Observed	21	36
	Expected	22.3	35.7
<b>None</b>	Observed	10	21
	Expected	12.7	20.3

*Note.* Counts are presented.

**Table 5.10: Effect of father's education on the main study variables.**

	<b>Lower education</b>	<b>Higher education</b>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Saudization</i>	3.64 (.76)	3.62 (.68)	.23	Ns
<i>Wasta</i>	3.12 (.90)	3.43 (.86)	-2.91	< .01
<b>Social status</b>	4.10 (.62)	4.08 (.52)	.35	Ns
<b>Parental obedience</b>	3.90 (.59)	3.97 (.67)	-.99	Ns
<b>Religious influence</b>	4.23 (.65)	4.22 (.72)	.18	Ns
<b>Overall institutional</b>	3.80 (.38)	3.86 (.36)	-1.46	Ns
<b>Extrinsic motivational</b>	4.20 (.40)	4.16 (.45)	.93	Ns
<b>Intrinsic motivational</b>	4.29 (.45)	4.20 (.47)	1.47	Ns
<b>Overall motivational</b>	4.24 (.34)	4.18 (.35)	1.55	Ns

*Notes.* Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Ns = non-significant.

**Table 5.11: Cross-tabulation: Father's education x career choice.**

<b>Father's education</b>		<b>Career choice</b>	
		<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>
<b>Lower education</b>	Observed	52	84
	Expected	55	88
<b>Higher education</b>	Observed	50	76
	Expected	50	80

*Note.* Counts are presented.

## **Appendix 6: The Average Monthly Basic Salaries for Saudi Managers in the Public and Private Sectors (Saudi Riyal \*)**

	Public Sector		Private Sector	
	Civil service	Oil industry	Large companies	Small & medium sized companies
<b>Junior Manager</b>	10,000 – 15,000	15,000 – 21,000	14,000 – 23,000	7,700 – 11,300
<b>Middle Manager</b>	12,000 – 22,000	22,000 – 34,000	19,000 – 34,000	14,000 – 18,700
<b>Senior Manager</b>	23,000 – 30,000	35,000 – 55,000	26,000 – 47,000	19,800 – 26,500

**Sources:** Ministry of Civil Service (2014); Saudi Aramco Oil Company (2014); Saudi Telecom Company (2014); Alhokair Group (2014).

\* 1 Dollar = 3.75 Saudi Riyals.

## Glossary

<i>Halal</i>	In Arabic this literally means ‘permitted’. In everyday use it can refer to any act that does not contradict Islamic principles.
<i>Haram</i>	The opposite of <i>Halal</i> , this literally means ‘prohibited’. It refers to specific practices that are defined in Islamic teachings as such.
<i>Hijab</i>	Head scarf or veil.
<i>Nitaqat</i>	An Arabic term which literally means ‘categories’. In Saudi Arabia, it refers to a colour-coded classification system that ranks private sector organisations according to the number of Saudi employees in those organisations.
<i>Reba</i>	An Arabic word which refers to usury or taking monetary interest on loans, which is <i>Haram</i> in Islam as it is considered unjust.
<i>Saudization</i>	Refers to the employment policy adopted by the Saudi government since the mid-1990s to localise the labour market by replacing foreign workers with Saudi citizens.
<i>Sharia</i>	Islamic law which covers many aspects of daily life including politics, economics, family and social issues such as marriage, inheritance, divorce etc.
<i>Shura</i>	In Arabic this means ‘consultation’. <i>Shura</i> council refers to the consultative council as a political body advising the government or the ruler in some Islamic countries including Saudi Arabia.
<i>Sunnah</i>	Refers to the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad.
<i>Wasta</i>	An Arabic concept which refers to the use of family and social networks and connections for achieving personal gains.