Gender as Symbolic Capital and Symbolic Violence in Leadership: The Context of Saudi Leaders.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own research and findings.

Dedication

To my family thank you for your unwavering support in this PhD journey. I especially dedicate this work to my beloved grandparents, and specially my grandmother Norah Al Sayegh as, she continues to be a source of inspiration and strength during my achievements and success.

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Abstract

Gender as Symbolic Capital and Violence in Leadership: The Context of Saudi Leaders

By May A. AL Dubayan

Women across many sectors have often found themselves disadvantaged when it came to assuming different managerial positions, with less opportunities in comparison with their male counterparts. This research aims to explore and investigate how leaders and managers as individuals hold positions of dominance in different business sectors can work under certain circumstances and challenging conditions; from experiencing life under rigid settings, to social peculiarities in the Saudi Arabian context. As such, these overlap with other aspects of social, legal, cultural, traditional, and psychological aspects, uncovering the hidden foundations of resources, procedures, authority, work paths and defects that lead to organisational outcomes and divide between genders. Bourdieu`s theory of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, is adopted in this study which would provide empirical support for this study.

The Bourdieusian— notion of symbolic capital and symbolic violence would provide a hypothetical foundation for this study's exposure of the social and cultural dynamics which influences the gender experiences of business leader, both male and female. In addition, a conceptual framework was developed for identifying the various constructs and relationships between them (to be investigated and evaluated) in this study, which included leadership traits, social, cultural, legal, and personal factors. A qualitative interpretivist philosophical approach is adopted for achieving the research aim. Accordingly, semi-structured interviews with 33 participants (including both male and female) leaders in Saudi Arabia are conducted. The initial findings of this research have provided an understanding of Saudi leadership experiences in public and private sector. While government policy such as vision 2030 has been a widely used tool in developing and supporting the role of women in the workplace and positions of leadership, evidence in the research suggests that gender misrepresentation and inequality issues still exist in Saudi Arabia. While gender-specific issues in the workplace were believed to have applied only to women, men have equally had their experiences shaped by similar issues. This study confirms that male/female leaders continue to face several challenges preventing them from achieving equitable representation. Male leaders remain advantaged with access to a higher number of opportunities to help them in their careers, yet they are equally anxious about current competition conversely. The focus of this investigation would not be

placed on the gender differences by themselves, but on the ways, these differences can influence organisational performance.

This study has both theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, it addressed the gaps in the literature, especially the application of western concept of gender equalities in conservative country of Saudi Arabia, by including the opinions of both male and female genders, and also consideration of social, cultural and legal factors of influence, which led to the interesting findings, reflecting the gendered inequalities greatly affecting women and partially affecting men due to the traditional practices at workplace. Secondly, this study has several practical contributions: presenting a comprehensive view on current practices at workplace in Saudi Arabian organizations reflecting the existence of gendered inequalities. Furthermore, this study formulated policy recommendations as well as recommendations for public and private sector organisations wishing to promote gender equality, making a strong practical contribution.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This introductory chapter presents the research background and an overview of leadership characteristics followed by an overview of the research statement of problematic aspects of the search context focusing on socio-demographic, social and leadership issues. The rationale of the research, the literature gaps, and the purpose of research are also explained in this chapter as are the research aim, objectives and questions.

1.1 Background

When writing about gender relationships in any social and cultural context in Saudi Arabia, many scholars would focus largely on the dichotomy in the relationship between men and women through the imbalance of power, authority and status. Men are considered as having a hegemonic power in various aspects of life. In the context of subordination and domination, it is always men who have more power than women and dominate most leadership positions. Still, women are trying to enter leadership positions and adopt men's style, especially in recent times with changes and reforms.

Rapid developments in Saudi Arabia have attracted attention worldwide due to its fast-growing economy, currently marching towards the peak of the global market. Business success has increased, especially because of the government's new visions and strategies. The rapidity with which business sectors have developed in Saudi Arabia shows that the country is keen to work with global firms to share its strengths and increase its stability, thus transforming itself into a modern economy, with an approach of female empowerment and gender equality in all sectors. Much research has been done in the area of corporate leaders, especially in terms of gender representation and gender equality in the corporate boardroom (Sayce and Özbilgin, 2014; Seierstad and Opsahl, 2011; Terjesen et al., 2009; Torchia et al., 2011).

However, many researchers have called for a shift in focus away from head-counting to reconsider and disclose hidden bases of resources, procedures, power, courses of action and drawbacks that lead to gendered organisational outcomes, as these overlap with other aspects of social and personal lives (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Özbilgin et al., 2011). This search will apply the Bourdieusian notion of symbolic capital and violence to frame gendered outcomes at work among female and male leaders in Saudi organisations to redress this gap. The focus will be on the challenges they face and any barriers to achieving their goals. Pierre Bourdieu made significant contributions to contemporary social theory, as he was able to reconfigure Marxist ideas and redirect them in a more culture-oriented analysis. He thus created

an approach that is much better be adapted to the problematic aspects of social life in the 20th century. He argued that culture and society play are the most important factors, rather than its mechanical determination by economic infrastructure. (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Everett, 2002; Özbilgin and Tatli, 2005).

Previous research on gender at work has framed gender either as a resource, which refers to male privileges to access sources of power (Collinson and Hearn, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Kerfoot and Knights, 1998; Mumby, 1998), or as women's difficulties in accessing resources because of several organisational and structural considerations (Acker, 1990; Gherardi and Poggio, 2001; Hultin and Szulkin, 1999; Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2008; Phillips, 2005). Bourdieu's theories help us to bridge these disparate discourses and demonstrate how gender is presented concerning the patriarchal relationships in the Arab world. Therefore, instead of exploring how gender is practised in different organisational contexts, this thesis will focus on a relational perspective to explore how gender concurrently serves as a resource (capital) and as a form of penalty (violence). The majority of research based on a Bourdieusian approach considers the gendered characteristic of symbolic violence, assuming that this is primarily a leadership experience of well-known patriarchy (Lusasi & Mwaseba, 2020; Yamak, 2015). Even though leader-dominated positions in patriarchal structures are a documented fact, gendered violence covers not only women but also men, even if they do occupy privileged and leadership roles. The context in which these Saudi leaders achieved their goal of becoming leaders can provide much insight into their development as leaders and contribute to leadership studies in different contexts.

1.2 Leadership Characteristics

Leadership is the action of leading individuals and organisations to achieve their goals; leaders do this by influencing employee behaviours in several ways. Scoots (2008) stated that leaders set a clear vision for the organisation, motivate employees, guide them through the work process and build morale. Leadership, as defined by Gardner (1995), is 'the ability to influence either directly or indirectly the behaviour, thoughts and actions of a significant number of individuals. A comprehensive definition of leadership is that of a process in which one individual influence a group to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2004). According to Gardner (1995, p.292), '[t]he greatest challenge the leaders face is to bring about significant and lasting changes in a large and heterogeneous group'. Leadership style is leadership behaviour with two independent dimensions: the task dimension, which includes goal setting, organisation, direction and control; and the relationship dimension, involving support,

communication, interaction and active listening (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988). A precise definition of the perfect or ideal leadership style would be useless, considering the numerous factors that might shape such a style (Trinidad and Normore, 2005). Research on leadership generally ignores gender relationships, but in recent years there has been a major expansion of international research on gender relationships in leadership, organisations and management (Hearn and Piekkari, 2005). Previous studies have found differences in leadership styles in terms of gender and top position hierarchy. The image of feminine or masculine characteristics in leadership styles is related to the construct of gender (Larson and Freeman, 1997). Gender, race, class and other elements of social difference are acknowledged to play an important role in the development of leadership styles. Fitzgerald (2003) suggested that it is impossible to create conceptualisations of leadership and management without taking into account issues of gender and society.

According to Claes (1999), new approaches have appeared in business and these values contrast with the competitive and authoritative approach usually associated with traditional masculine management as they are based on consensual relations and inspire a different management approach to communications, leadership, negotiations and organisation. New-genre leadership theories such as transformative theories, pedagogical, contextual theories, participative and relationship theories have been emerging in recent years, replacing the traditional theories such as transactional theory, great man theory, behavioural theory etc. (Giles, 2016). Studies (Jose, 2016; Lord *et al.*, 2020; Adams & Yusoff, 2020; Luke & Peters, 2020) have identified various new-genre leadership traits including context-bound, focus on mutual power and influence, emphasis on collaborative strategies, promoting empowerment and growth, transformative, process-oriented, proactive, cognitive oriented, emotion-focused, follower-centred, culture-oriented, etc., which are in contrast with traditional leadership theories. Increasingly, this rebalancing of approaches or values has been seen as a key to business success. Research aggregated from numerous sources acknowledges differences in a male versus female approach to leadership. However, the study of this literature does reveal the consensus to shape the leadership, performance or environment that affected their presence in these positions and the gains they gained through their careers. Further Leadership definitions focus on personality traits, gender behaviours and process, in the social roles are discussed in chapter 2 sections 2.2 and 2.3.

1.3 Statement of Research Problem

In recent years, both mainstream management literature and organisational policy have shown evidence of a marked turn to leadership rather than management as the means to enhance organisational performance in contemporary organisations. Although mainstream research on leadership generally continues to ignore gender relations, or only focusing on the gender as being related to female-only without the male. Over recent years there has been a significant expansion of international research on gender relations in leadership, organisations and management (Hearn and Piekkari, 2005). Previous studies have found differences in leadership styles in terms of gender and managerial hierarchy and the discussions on the gender differentiation of leadership have centred on the different qualities and styles of leadership of men and women; that is, the so-called masculine and feminine styles of leadership (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

Consequently, by mobilising the notion of symbolic capital and symbolic violence the intended contribution of this thesis is to extend Bourdieu's approach to the field of gender, culture, society and organisation in terms of corporate leadership. This thesis will expose the social and cultural dynamics that influence the gendered experiences of business leaders, both male and female, in government and organisations in Saudi Arabia, where conservatively, gender is thought to apply only to women. This thesis further will discuss the Bourdieusian approach with a specific focus on the notions of symbolic capital and violence and their interplay with gender roles to develop the contribution to organisation studies in terms of gender and leadership characteristics inspired by the context and culture.

1.4 Research Rationale

Leadership roles are said to have been traditionally occupied mainly by men. However, the increased number of women managers in the recent past has created a need to research various leadership styles concerning gender and their issues and challenges. One of the aims of this thesis is to collect data, analyse answers, identify the leadership styles of men and women and investigate their current work positions. It focuses on demonstrating the importance of the challenges that leaders are facing through their career development and organisations face today. These are likely to increase in scope and complexity as leadership has rapidly come to be seen as an integral approach to advanced risk management.

Saudi Arabia is a unique place from which to experiment and explore, as changes are happening there rapidly on an organisational or societal level. Saudi Arabia is a developing country with

high growth potential, ranked as the nineteenth largest global economy (Statistics Times, 2017). Recently, it has been experiencing a great deal of pressure to shift from the traditional values that give men all the power towards more modern values that also shape business and gender relations and provide more significant opportunities and strength to women. Saudi presents a polarised case of gender inequality as the primary workforce, especially among corporate leaders, is still dominated by men. There has also been a growing sense of change in the role of gender inequality and women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia over the last few years and there are newly implemented government policies supporting this. Thus, Saudi Arabia provides a central context in which to study continuity and change in gender issues and this could lead to further questions regarding the position of gender among Saudi corporate leaders and managers. Therefore, this research thesis will readdress the Bourdieusian approach with a specific focus on the notions of symbolic capital and violence and their interplay with gender to develop the contribution of Bourdieu to organisational studies (Johnson, 2008; Everett, 2002; Özbilgin and Tatli, 2005) in terms of leadership issues with the gender characteristics inspired by society and culture.

1.5 Significance of Research

This topic is worthy of research for two reasons: 1) it facilitates a critical analysis of how public policy has been formulated at the macro-level of society; and 2) it suggests an approach to gender equality based on the cultural context of Saudi society. This approach shows how far Saudi state leaders are committed to achieving equality for both genders in the workplace and providing insights into how leaders are empowered to take active and managerial roles in their workplaces by initiating further policies. Additionally, observing the leader undercurrent concerned with the motivations of human behaviour and the reasons for it – asking 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions about human actions and taking a naturalistic approach to the subject matter (Creswell 1998; 2003).

The main contributions resulting from achieving the research aims and objectives can be summarised as follows. Saudi Arabia is a developing country with high growth potential, ranked eighteenth in gross domestic product (GDP) in the world (Silver, 2020). It is recently under a new ruler and the Crown Prince has aspirations to embrace modern western values and visions. Unsurprisingly, there is tension between traditional and modern values that shape social structures, organisational development and gender relations. However, the main challenges to gender equality, roles and leadership representation are still valid. The Kingdom

of Saudi Arabia represents a polarised case of gender equality particularly in recent developments and reforms (Syed & Hennekam, 2018).

There is a correlation between the level of education and access to gender equality in leadership roles although there is a growing sense of retrenchment in gender equality in Saudi, owing to the ongoing traditional aspects of gender roles in the country over the past five years. While previous studies have focused on the role on gender and leadership roles between gender, there have been recent requests to transcend source counting and to reassess and reveal hidden bases of power, resources, procedures, disadvantage and courses of action that lead to gendered outcomes in organisations, as these impact different aspects of social and personal lives (Alalmai *et al.*, 2020; Al-asfour *et al.*, 2017). As society imposes changes on individuals and organisations, the need to reveal such factors would eliminate such obstacles.

To observe such knowledge, this thesis adapted the Bourdieusian notions of symbolic capital and violence to frame gendered outcomes at work and to identify the factors and challenges from the existing society that influence Saudi leaders. While it is women who experience the most patriarchy and masculinity, this study examines whether gender roles, social appearance and struggles as violence not only affect women but also men, even if they occupy privileged and essential leadership positions (Galloway, 2020; Syed & Hennekam, 2018). By using the concepts of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, this thesis contributes to Bourdieu's arguments to the field of gender, work and organisation concerning leaders' aspects of daily life and personal matters by exposing the social and cultural dynamics that affect gendered experiences and observing leaders as both male and female in Saudi where, conventionally, gender is thought to only apply to women. It will also examine how such leaders as individuals hold positions of dominance in business and organisations and who may have certain additional powers available to them are working under certain circumstances.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the daily narration and activities between leaders, defined in this research as daily life activities in a social context. After the political reform movement in Saudi and the vision for 2030, Saudi leaders' roles, especially based on their gender, have become more influential with the importance of capital accumulation in leading and managing society. Leaders in their daily activities shape myths, stories and ideologies and there is no doubt that society, family and personal values contribute to leaders' success and failure. Saudi Arabia consequently provides an essential context in which to study

continuity and change in gender issues that could lead to further questions regarding the position of gender among Saudi leaders.

The rationale of the research has emerged not only from the importance of the research area and its context, but also from the researcher's interest in exploring a relatively new area of research and contributing to the field of gender and leadership and from her desire to understand the complexity of social influence on leadership and, therefore, its effect on her future career and research.

1.6 Research Questions

This thesis addresses both empirical and theoretical questions and relates to concerns of both sociology and social policy by investigating the gender practices in Saudi Arabia with leaders' practices amongst cultural influences; exposing actions as sociological phenomena situated with Pierre Bourdieu's theory.

The research questions are:

RQ1: How do corporate managers and leaders in business organisations experience work and life in rigid masculinity and patriarchal society in Saudi Arabia?

RQ2: What identifiable forms of symbolic capital and symbolic violence are experienced in Saudi Arabian organisations?

RQ3: What schemes of perception, appreciation and action constitute the leaders' ideology and structure as part of symbolic violence, and how are such powers or structures, reproduced and maintained?

RQ4: What social roles and gender stereotypes are these leaders expected to uphold in their workplaces?

1.7 Aims

The main of this research is to establish the extent to which the Saudi leaders have progressed in achieving gender equality in cultural influences and social aspects, experiencing work, life and family relationships since the initiation of the reforms, agendas of modernisation and empowerments.

1.8 Objectives

To achieve these aims, the researcher has defined specific objectives:

1. Review the role of gender in societies and organisations.
2. Review the factors affecting women in leadership roles.
3. Review different types of gendered leadership styles and their relationship to symbolic capital and violence.
4. Review and understand leaders' ideology of symbolic capital and symbolic violence.
5. Investigate factors influencing the leadership and evaluate their relationship with leaders in the context of symbolic capital and symbolic violence.
6. Design, develop and evaluate a conceptual framework for the study of existing approaches through the lens of Bourdieu in the Saudi social setting focusing on symbolic capital forms and hidden violence that are faced by Saudi leaders.

1.9 Research Contributions

This study has contributed to both theory and practice. Firstly, it has contributed to the theoretical understanding of gendered differences through the lens of leadership in Saudi organisations, addressing the research gaps (lack of research available on gendered differences through the lens of leadership). Secondly, the majority of the research available on gendered differences analysed using Bourdieu's theory is reductionist and simplistic and this research gap is addressed by extending Bourdieu's theory on gendered differences through the lens of leadership in Saudi Arabian organisations. Thirdly, it contributes to knowledge by presenting the symbolic capital and symbolic violence in a broader social, legal, cultural and psychological context on leaders' careers while reforms aimed at gendered equality are being implemented. Fourthly, it provides a conceptual framework that can be used to study the gendered-related aspects by adopting various theories in different contexts. Fifthly, both male and female leaders are included in this study, which leads to the interesting findings, as both male and female leaders' experiences and challenges are analysed, rather than focusing only on women leaders.

Focusing on the contributions to practice, this research studies the effect of legal and political reforms in addressing the issue of gendered inequalities. It compares the policies at the implementation level, which may be influenced by the socio-cultural, religious and traditional factors embodied in the habitus of the leaders. These findings reflect the current practices in the organisations with gendered inequalities; and for addressing these inequalities, recommendations for practice are provided.

1.10 Summary of Research Methodology

In light of the growing complexity of contemporary management issues, it has become increasingly difficult to identify which of the many emerging paradigms of research methodology is most appropriate (Baker, 2001). This study adopts an interpretivist

philosophical approach which assumes that reality is multi-layered and complex and a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). As it focuses on applying and deducing Bourdieu's theory of capital, a deductive research approach that focuses on broad generalisations is considered. To address the research questions, this thesis employed a qualitative method, which includes semi-structured interviews with Saudis in leadership positions in state and civil society organisations. In addition, purposive sampling technique is applied to identify a specific group of the population representing managers and leaders.

Table 1-1. Research methodology

The approaches and process research methods tend to be used by the researcher throughout this thesis.

Desk research	Field research
1- Perform critical evaluation and theoretic approaches based on the gender roles and leadership in literature.	1- Collect and analyse the qualitative semi-structured research interviews among 33 leaders; combine and observing their experiences and career obstacles.
2- Define and discuss the gender and leadership literature gap along with leadership styles and approaches in the organisational context.	2- Validate the strategy of the Bourdieusian framework, its benefits and limitations as a part of the field of study.
3- Develop the Bourdieu theoretical approach towards symbolic capital and violence in the Saudi context.	3- Provide practical result based on the study and present a guideline and further resolutions aimed for leaders and organisation in the field of study.

Table 1.1 illustrates the respective focus of desk and field research for data collection. The desk research focused on collating published analyses from a variety of academic and industry-based journal articles, books and professional accounts and establishing a critical baseline for the development of a theoretical Bourdieu framework through an in-depth literature review. The field research involved conducting an empirical investigation of the verbal material collected from the qualitative research study and written data related to the field. This experimental phase was performed in collaboration with relevant individuals, professionals and leaders in different business; data and evidence were gathered using qualitative semi-structured interviews. The data collected from field research was analysed using thematic coding and analysis identifying the significant outcomes from the semi-structured interviews.

1.11 Setting the scene – the social and political background in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, founded in 1932 by the late King Abdul Aziz, is a country in the Middle East between the Arabian Gulf to the east and the Red Sea to 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 (Long, 2005). The government of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy and the King is the Chief of State and head of the government. The country is divided into 13 provinces and each has a governor appointed by the King. Riyadh, the capital, is located in the central-eastern part of the country. Islam is the official religion and Arabic is the official language (Long, 2005). The second spoken language is English. According to the latest statistics released by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) in 2019, the country's total estimated population was 34,268,528. Saudi Arabia has 0.44% of the total world population and ranks 41 in the list of countries at the end of 2019; 56.7% of the population was male and 43.3% female (SAMA, 2019).

The composition of Saudi society is worth noting in terms of gender, religious convictions, political rights and demography. This affects the economic activity of the country, especially by women and therefore their potential and ability to become leaders. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country governed by Shariah law, with over 98% of the natives being Muslim. Tucker (2015) argues that the Saudi government has promoted equality by including women in municipal elections but refrained from the promised wider and comprehensive widening of women's rights. However, there is evidence that Saudi society has become fairer and more open to women. King Abdullah decreed equal access to education for women and since 2011, the change in Saudi society has been accelerated. Al-Otaibi (2020) noted that more women are now working in companies, healthcare and government organisations and others have set up their own companies. They have become financially stronger and travel abroad for their education. Consequently, the perception of women by men and of women by themselves has changed.

Vision 2030

Vision 2030 aims to create a vibrant society in which all citizens can efficiently fulfil their dreams, ambitions and hopes for the economy to thrive. It aims to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy, reduce its reliance on oil and develop public service sectors such as infrastructure, health, tourism, education and recreation for all (Grand & Wolff, 2020).

Creating a vibrant society that can embrace the needs and desires of every citizen in the Kingdom will be a significant step toward accepting and acknowledging women's economic roles. For instance, Saudi women have expressed a desire to achieve equal roles, while men are opposed to such new competition and resist such change. Thus, it is the responsibility of everyone in the Kingdom to ensure that a new phase of development has been established.

1.12 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 sets out the research problem by discussing the need to understand the gender perspective, Saudi leaders' renaissance and women in power as explained by social, cultural and personal characteristics. It describes the crucial cultural and political context in which contemporary Saudi women have achieved prominent leadership positions. This was set in motion by King Abdullah's decree in the Majlis al Sura, which permitted Saudi women to accede to higher regional and central government positions.

Chapter 2 covers the existing literature on leadership. It begins the discussion with leadership theories beginning with the seminal leader's views and then focuses on women leaders, considering the forms and types of leadership. It then examines the specific factors in the literature that affect women's leadership. It then finds the remedial strategies to increase women's leadership roles and concludes with the findings from this critical review, suggesting the need to further investigate Saudi women's leadership as explained by cultural and cultural factors and personal characteristics.

Chapter 3 defines the conceptual framework arising from the Bourdieu critical review of the existing literature. The conceptual framework is formulated to achieve the research aims and objectives. It does so by deriving observable constructs from the available literature and further defines particular contextual constructs relevant to the Saudi experience. This is further refined by defining situational constructs pertinent to their knowledge of achieving leadership positions in Saudi Arabia and their familial, social and cultural contexts.

Chapter 4 sets out the research methodology designed to investigate the research aim, objectives and conceptual framework. It begins by considering the research philosophy adopted, which identifies the particular epistemology used and the specific research method needed to collect data. The interpretive epistemology is suited to explaining human experiences because people attach meaning to their actions. Equally, the researcher applies her understanding of the problem to explain Saudis' rise to prominent leadership positions, focusing on women. This is then detailed in terms of the fieldwork design and execution needed

to collect the data. This consists of data collection methods suited to collect qualitative data by the in-depth structured interview method. The interview method enables interpretive epistemology to be applied to the research topic. The chapter also details the data analysis methods and techniques used, which required interpretive methods.

Chapter 5 presents the data analysis and findings. The emergence of the themes from the data requires focusing on systematic theme identification and consolidation. It presents and analyses the findings of the study resulting from the data analysis around leadership practices as influenced by the identified cultural factors. These findings illustrate the results from the research and explain how the research questions were responded to and how the research objectives were targeted. The findings facilitate the discussion in the following chapter and add a contribution to the body of knowledge in this area.

Chapter 6 provides the discussion of the study's findings and presents further gaps in Bourdieu's theoretical framework that have not been discussed with gender inequality and leadership practices in Saudi. It also describes urgent strategic plans in the form of 'social policy recommendations' that need to be implemented in the national policy agenda to move gender equality forward in significant respects. The recommendations made in this study could lead to achieving further gender equality in the workplace concerning professional opportunities for Saudi leaders.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by providing a discussion of the study's findings and presenting further gaps in Bourdieu's theoretical framework that have not been discussed in light of gender inequality in the workplace in Saudi. It describes urgent strategic plans in the form of 'social policy recommendations' that need to be implemented in the national policy agenda to move gender equality forward in significant respects. The recommendations made in this study could lead to achieving further gender equality in the workplace concerning professional opportunities for Saudi leaders.

Chapter 2. Literature Review – Gender and Leadership in the Saudi Context.

In this chapter, the literature about leadership and gender in society is reviewed and presented starting with understanding leadership, where a general overview of leadership and management is observed. The discussion about gender and different leadership styles focused on men versus women is revealed in the literature; observing how leadership is influenced by society. Gender and gender roles in Saudi society are exposed further with present cases from the context with a focus on assumptions, perceptions and stereotypes about gender approaches and the influence of the glass ceiling, understanding Saudi Arabia through the lens of gender, combining concepts of culture and Islamic values at work and finally, Saudi women's status and their leadership approaches.

2.1 Introduction

The status of leaders in the Middle East and practically in Saudi Arabia is a controversial issue that has attracted a great deal of interest, as for many individuals from different backgrounds the subject of men and women in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia is frequently associated with Islam and the image of being isolated, veiled and illiterate. Achoui (2009) stated that the status of women in Islam was deeply affected not only by the Islam religion but by the diverse culture that it has been surrounded with and Islamic law and traditions. Khan (2014, p.79) stated that women were going from being treated as second-class citizens as they have worked very hard through the centuries to attain equality with men based on the hard effort. Saudi Arabia is a country whose economy is dependent on oil and to achieve and sustain growth in other sectors and accommodate rapid development. A high level of professionalism is needed in all sectors. However, there is a shortage of capable Saudi leaders in Saudi Arabia (Aldulaimi, 2018; Hanaky, 2021; Hertog, 2012; Chaar, 2010; Achoui, 2009) and a lack of congruity between the professional workforce and the financial resources in 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) due to the lack of Saudi female leaders being able to take on leadership and management roles because of the characteristics of society. Several scholars have attempted to link patriarchy and leadership to masculinity (Sergiovanni, 1998; Webb, 2005; Heikka and Waniganayake, 2011; Male and Palaiologou, 2011; Male and Palaiologou, 2013). However, when 'patriarchate' is attached to 'leadership', the result is an ambiguous term in need of further examination (Male and Palaiologou, 2013).

Thus, this research aims to explore such aspects concerning this notion or patriarchate leadership in Saudi Arabia.

Why Gender Matters

Since the 1960s, gender and feminism have occupied space in thoughts and society. Oakley (1985) defined the term 'sex' as the biological differences (in generally visible differences) between males and females. The term 'gender', however, is a matter of culture and societal reflection; it refers to the social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine'. The theoretical ideas Oakley included are critical of the differential psychologies of the sexes. One reason for this was that the differences between males and females are innate and acquired elements of abilities ('talents' in Mead's terminology) and attitude ('temperamental'). This idea was also partly due to anthropological research on the division of labour between the sexes. Oakley revealed that, initially, the psychological differences between the sexes are due to social conditioning. The concept of 'gender' draws attention to the aspects of 'social bias' with 'gender' being used for changes between men and women. This term has since expanded to refer not only to individual identity and personality but also symbolically to cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. It also refers to the division of labour based on gender in institutions and organisations (Oakley, 1985).

West and Zimmerman (1987) have referred to the concept of gender as an expression of the process of observing the interrelationships between women and men in society. Oakley (1985) has argued that gender may reflect individuals' attitudes, their observation and actions on a social, political, cultural and religious basis and in differences through their belonging to society. The term 'sex' is born out of human biology and is not subject to change; however, gender is subject to change because it is formed socially depending on the individual's circumstances and needs. Therefore, the advocates of the term gender make it meaningful. To understand the concept of gender, one needs to examine what 'gender' represents in the literature. Gender, as previous scholars have defined it, is being either the male or female division of a species, primarily differentiated by social and cultural roles and behaviour in each society.

> 'Gender' means practice organised in terms of, or in relation to, the reproductive division of people into male and female, Connell (1987: 140).

To understand the significant role of gender approaches in society and organisations in Saudi Arabia, this thesis will comprehend the concept of gender. Gender is known typically as a

social term and often confused with the term sex, as both may have a different concept. Sex is the biological concept determined based on an individual's primary sex characteristics. Gender refers to beliefs, values and characteristics that people take from different sexes. Lips (1979) was one of the numerous scientists to distinguish gender from sex. He observed that the males, while enjoying the status of being muscular and vigorous, which is the opposite of being female, may still appear to be constitutionally weaker than females in some circumstances; for example, they might be more likely to suffer from various injuries, prenatal death and to be victims of childhood diseases. Females are more likely to recover from illnesses than males and women's life expectancies are almost universally higher than those of men (Lips, 1979). Many authors define gender as a term that reflects the social or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female in society, while gender identity is the extent to being either masculine or feminine (Diamond, 2002). Gender is an important feature of human experiences and the scope of the gender concept has been increasing with broader societal changes (Rubin *et al.*, 2020). Social conceptions of gender consist of roles and responsibilities unique to being feminine and masculine; in some cultures, there is also gender identity associated with society and its conflicts definitions. Understanding the gender problems encompasses attention relating to females' and males' lives and how they interact, the inequalities that occur, their individual discrepancies in the usage of settings and how they adapt to society and context regulations and reforms. Moreover, the definition of gender has often been misunderstood as being the state of women only. However, the explanation of gender issues focuses on women and men and the relationship between men and other women, their characters, their parts, division of workforce, interests and their personal and physical needs. A compelling argument may appear in this part of the research and remains the most important question; is the term gender part of society and what the look of society and culture is and how gender is related to the culture. Additionally, the knowledge and term of gender is not only to measure the role of women as previous authors have investigated it but also to observe men as well that all cultural shifts favour men in a patriarchal male society such as Saudi, which will be discussed further in section 2.4.

Rossi (1984) argued that the relationship between biological and cultural processes was far more complex and reflexive than what was previously in the culture or society. In contrast, Baumann (2000) argued that 'sex' as a term is variable and won't change during periods. Nevertheless, 'gender' is not variable based on time, place and culture but depending on roles and performances. Culture, which means the intellectual and creative products in society, such

as national science, literature, music, art and drama, describes society's beliefs and practice, particularly where these are attached to religion and traditions. Alexander, *et al.* (2015) described the culture as being a part of every society and a part of every community layer, as it shapes the way things are done in the community. Additionally, the representation of culture was raised at the world conference on cultural policies in Mexico in 1982 and the discussion on the culture and culture development.

> 'Culture is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or a social group .it includes not arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs' (Alexander, *et al.* 2015, p.4).

Giuliano (2020) studied the relationship between gender and culture and observed that gender gaps in competitiveness, performance and participation across different cultures, which may persist over time. With the rapid developments in society, the economic literature explains the gender differences in different cultures in terms of individual development, education, social status and discrimination (Giuliano, 2020). Giuliano's observations reflected the relevance and effect of culture in determining the concept and understanding of gender and gender gaps in society. Culture and gender are associated with each other because of the expectations about male or female attributes and behaviours (Ellemers and Mooijaart, 2007). In contrast, gender roles are formed by culture and gender identities; gender is a critical aspect of culture because they exist in our daily lives; they are shaped in families as a small aspect and in the community and workforce as an extensive factor. Gender, like race or ethnicity, functions as an organising principle for society because of the cultural influences of being male or female, which might be a strong factor in the division of labour according to gender roles.

Hence, being a male manager differs from being a female manager for some individual workers. In most modern societies there are clear patterns and theoretical appearances and attitudes of female and male performance in the household and the broader community, while the cultural explanation is one of these significant purposes. This pattern differs among societies and they may change over time by individual, politics and workforce (Rossi, 1984). While the specific nature of gender relations varies among civilisations, the general pattern in specifically in the third world region as it has been argued that woman may have less personal autonomy or independence and this may be related to their way of influencing the decision-making processes that reshapes their society and their own lives.

This pattern of disparity based on gender in human rights and the development issues in countries, societies and cultures is not immovable; it is living practices that are continually being renewed and reshaped. Gender definitions change over time and are shaped by many factors associated with government, politics and culture. This change may occur as communities and households respond to social and economic shifts associated with globalisation as new technologies, environmental pressures, armed conflicts, wars and developed projects in the country. Changes in gender relations are often seen as challenges because such association has immediate implications for each individual, male and female.

Saudi Arabia has given a strong impression of such change. It is known as a conservative country and has developed slowly compared with neighbouring countries. Since the accession of King Abdullah Al-Saud to the throne in 2005, dramatic changes and reforms have improved the lives of Saudi citizens. On 14 February 2009, he assigned the first-ever woman to the position of deputy minister of education for girls' affairs. (Al Jazeera, 2009). Additionally, on 26 September 2011, King Abdullah announced that Saudi women would have the right to participate in the Shoura (consulting council as members and to run in municipal elections starting in 2015 (Saudi Gazette, 2011). These changes have shed light on women's issues and gender inequality and have been used to help policymakers understand women's issues. However, women have been previously appointed to leadership roles in administration, health and academic positions. The last 10 years have witnessed considerable growth in women's participation in senior management positions and the public and private sectors' decision-making processes.

Role of Women in Society

A common theme across many different cultures is the general embodiment of the female sex, often seen as just a material of desire with the sole purpose of pleasuring male species reflecting a capital resource. Women as property is a stark reality in much of recorded history, while most women who have shown any unexpected tendencies were considered rebellious, reflecting symbolic violence. Unlike in the modern era, where such initiatives were pioneering, many male individuals in different cultures treated females as part of their desires and material that belongs to them as slaves and property. Many women fought for equal rights, freedom and equivalent rights as a human and not as a second-class human being. Women's status as signifiers of human development has been much examined in feminist and development debates, drawing on the observation that women in Saudi Arabia embrace a more social

position than most women in the Middle East. Women's concerns in Saudi society are often mistakenly connected to the Islamic pedagogy and gender inequalities, which are evident in every aspect of Saudi life, are institutionalised and difficult to dislodge through individual action. In comparison, women's inequality is traditionally structured in most societies. Rashi *et al.* (2003) suggested that the rationale needed for focusing on women's achievements is a critical social development indicator to measure women's status and conditions in any country. Saudi women devise their own strategies to challenge gender inequality and achieve social justice in all matters, especially given the complexity of women's issues and concerns in religious patriarchal societies. The uniqueness of Saudi women's situations comes from their presence and yet non-presence in the public sphere (Rehman & Azam, 2012; Varshney, 2020). Yamani (2006) suggests that gender inequality appears to be rooted in women's traditional absence and silencing in public life which, comes from the normalisation of gender differences in the curriculum content at all school ages for both boys and girls. Gender ideologies may be attributed to traditional and socio-economic values and gained legal force in Saudi society by being associated with Islamic teaching until 2001, in which women were considered an extension of their male guardians. Previous scholars demonstrated and assumed that women's and men's status in society must create an appropriate environment for significant community development. In contrast, the relationship between gender and gender roles would be balanced if the concept of power turns into the perception of empowerment. Empowerment aims to create conditions that help both men and women address their daily and future needs despite what they are trying to make. The significant role of women in the family and society has not yet been fully recognised, such as maternity's social importance and the role of mother and father in the family and children's upbringing. Connell (2005) stressed that achieving full equality between men and women required a change in men's traditional roles and women's role in society and the family (Endnut *et al.*, 2020; Qing, 2020). The role of women in family orientation should not be a basis for discrimination or violence against women but sharing those responsibilities between them and the men and society. Gallagher and Kaufman (2005) stated that the view to eliminating prejudices and traditional customs and all other practices based on the idea or stereotypical roles as the natural character of men and women is always affected by external factors. Equality between women and men has been a struggle from prehistoric times and continues today (MacKinnon, 2006). In contrast, Stone (2004) stated that gender equity reflects the idea of being male or female and should be examined equally in social, economic and all other aspects of society and not be separated or distinguished based on their gender and kind.

2.2 Role of Gender in Societies and Their Relationship to Organisations

Gender roles are the definition of social of women and men. They vary among different cultures, classes, centuries and during different periods in history and diverse societies. Eagly defined gender roles in society as:

> 'Those shared expectations (about appropriate qualities and behaviours) that apply to individuals based on their socially identified gender' Eagly, (1987, p.12).

Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific effects of the global economy and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions (FAO, 1997). Gender relations affect society starting from family well-being, affecting the cultural view, developing production and many other aspects of life. Further dramatic changes have been associated with HRH King Salman and the Crown Prince, and have been the subject of some important decisions that have changed society. For instance, on 24 June 2018, Saudi Arabia lifted the ban on women drivers and on 1 August 2019, the Saudi government relaxed the strict male guardianship laws allowing women to leave the country without requiring permission from male relatives. These developments were part of the government's plan 'Vision 2030' to reduce its reliance on oil by the diversification of economic sources to develop its public service sectors. These appointments are proof of Saudi women's high status and the general orientation of the Kingdom, which aims to provide both genders with equal opportunity to make decisions and develop the economy as part of the vision to increase gender equality in the labour market. Cultural values are continuously reinterpreted in response to new conditions and needs and the new value may be reaffirmed during this process, while others may disappear with time (Baumann, 2000).

Baumann (2000) stated that gender relations are the behaviours and activities in a culture or society which define privileges, responsibilities and the identities of men from women concerning one another in the civilisation, society and culture. Understanding the issue of gender is fundamental and important to understanding the effect of developmental processes differently on men and women. Gender knowledge seeks to frame and identifies the roles of women and men in the process of social mobility and this knowledge does not only concern women by the knowledge of women but also looking at the men as gender and there are many circumstances entered into this knowledge and through this concept, it will appear that women are the gender that needs to modify its social role and emphasises the gender perspective that women and men as human beings should be seen regardless of the gender variable.

Markman (2011) states that individuals who have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from their assigned sex are known as transgendered. Cisgender is the term for those whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth or who have a gender identity or perform a gender role society considers appropriate for the sex which matches their social and biological identity they were born with (Markman, 2011). Binary the gender character which is affecting social identity 'bigender' which their identities are changes between women and men. Finally, the non-binary social identity is their identity outside the choice of woman or man (Newman, 2002). The standard gender terms do not only appear as the product of academic or social studies but also economic development.

Gender roles are based on the different expectations that groups, individuals and societies have built based on their sex, values and beliefs about gender. Blackstone (2003) stated that gender roles are the result of interactions between individuals and their environment so the individuals and their relation and believes toward the environment they were born and raised in is one of the most important factors that create and influence the roles of gender. Gender role is the role that men and woman are expected to occupy based on their masculinity and femininity. The relationship between men and women in society poses a separate attitude from any other social relationships and this may reflect not only society but any activity that is involved in development. Ludwikowski and Armstrong (2017) stated that gender roles may influence development and people's image and prestige and affect the rights and obligations of individuals. Other social relationships converge as religion, race and social class may change the social relationship in community institutions such as family, religion and education. All of these institutions resist change but may change completely to have a new role. The gender role is the model behaviour of an individual which refers to any social activity and is related to a person's rights and duties according to their role in the community or society. Blackstone (2003) argued that the roles of individuals and human and social status are determined. The variable role according to the 'social and economic changes, cultural, religious and political individual is affected by If 'gender roles determine these roles by society. Either the roles are linked to society's expectations of the individual or the community builds these expectations based on sex, male roles and roles for women.

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, boys and girls, which includes norms, roles and relationships of and between them. These characteristics may vary across societies and can be changed over time (Council of Europe, 2021) and may be influenced by vertical transmission

(the role of the family), horizontal transmission (the role of peers), oblique transmission (the role of teachers and role models), hierarchical transmission (the role of unequal power structures) and historical transmission (through time). Gender is associated with each of these roles. Behaviour reflects the dominant values of a particular society, which may assess men and women according to their success defined by that society. These are the roles that men and women are expected to occupy based on their sex and nature, although this may with time be developed and adjusted. The reproductive role of gender is known as the responsibilities of the gender role which maintains the workforce according to gender or sex. Despite the importance of this role, it is usually seen as an occupation and not real but it is a part of nature and the human instinct for women and that is why many western societies have traditionally believed that women are more nurturing than men (Blackstone, 2003). Although gender equality is a western development, it ignores the ethics and activities of a woman and many western countries still face gender inequality in many governmental aspects and many aspects related to the nation (Wike *et al.*, 2019). Both gender and culture have physical (visible) and value (invisible) components and they both affect groups and identity, Korabik (1999). Physical characteristics distinguish people into different groups as the cultural and ethical status of prime stereotypes and endow privileges on the same behaviours as genders do. Consequently, many authors have stated that gender and culture with leadership do associate, affecting the sum of every action, specifically in the labour force and organisation and even in society overall.

Stereotypes and Gender Roles

Male and female are usually the only categories when it comes to gender. Gender categories are related to how the individuals act from effortless everyday movements to deeper activities as a female leader of 200 male employees as an example. Alsop (2002) stated that women are usually seen as submissive while men are believed to be dominant. These gender standards are often reconstructed by the existing features and needs. Gender identity is gained through external knowledge. According to Alsop and Lennon:

> ‘Gender is part of an identity woven from a complex and specific social whole and requiring very specific and local readings. (Alsop & Lennon, 2002 p.60)

As a result, gender identity can be defined as part of the socially situated understanding of gender. The term gender identity allows individuals to express their attitude towards and stance concerning their current status as either women or men depending on the society that is involved in and other factors as traditions and cultural effects (Alsop & Lennon, 2002). According to social theorists, individuals from the early stages as children are influenced by

what they observe in the world around them. These influences are implicit messages regarding how women and men should act, to become feminine and masculine.

De Beauvoir (1949) claimed that equal opportunities and responsibilities play an important role which shapes even children at a young age which leads later to shaping individuals and their identities:

> ‘If the little girl were brought up from the first with the same demands and rewards, the same severity and the same freedom, as her brothers, taking part in the same studies, the same games, promised the same future, surrounded with women and men who seemed to her undoubted equals, the meanings of the castration complex and of the Oedipus complex would be profoundly modified’, De Beauvoir 1949 (p16).

These claims about gender socialisation are that women become women through a process whereby they acquire feminine traits and learn feminine behaviour. Additionally, masculinity and femininity are thought to be products of nurture or how individuals are brought up by themselves or their parents and even by society in some cases (De Beauvoir, 1972).

Chodorow (1978) criticised social learning theory as too simplistic to explain gender differences, stating that gender is a matter of having feminine and masculine personalities equally that develop in early infancy as responses to prevalent parenting practices and social influences. Chodorow moreover stated that because mothers (or other prominent women) tend to care for infants, infant male and female psychic development differs. Childhood gender socialisation further builds on and reinforces these unconsciously developed ego boundaries, producing feminine and masculine people. Chodorow thinks that these gender differences should and can be changed. Feminine and masculine personalities play a crucial role in women’s oppression since they make women overly attentive to others’ needs and men emotionally deficient. To correct the situation, both male and female parents should be equally involved in parenting (Chodorow, 1995, p.214). This would help ensure that children develop sufficiently individuated senses of selves without becoming overly detached, which in turn helps eradicate common gender-stereotypical behaviours.

Gender as Feminine, Surrounded by Masculine Sexuality.

MacKinnon (1989) developed her theory of gender as a theory of sexuality; sexual views and thoughts of women create the social meaning of sex or gender. Women have been viewed and treated as a substance meant for satisfying men’s desires. Masculinity is defined as sexual

dominance. Femininity is sexual submissiveness. Additionally, she stated that sexual forms and act are:

> ‘Created through the eroticization of dominance and submission; that man and woman difference and the dominance, submission dynamic defines each other and this simply the social meaning of sex’ MacKinnon, (1989, p.113).

MacKinnon (1989) also argued that gender is constitutively constructed in defining the position one occupies in the sexualised dominance/submission dynamic, such as men occupy the sexually dominant position. As a result, genders are hierarchical (Giulieano, 2020) and this hierarchy is fundamentally tied to sexualised power relations. So, gender difference for MacKinnon is not a matter of having a particular psychological orientation or behavioural pattern and masculine and feminine characters, behaviour and roles are not responsible for influence inequalities. The argument remains whether the type of work determines our social gender identity or whether we are changing through the different circumstances in a masculine environment such as Saudi Arabia.

2.3 Concept of Leadership

Leadership is defined as the actions by individuals which serve to direct, control, or influence the groups’ behaviour toward collective goals (Judge & Long, 2012, p.179). The concept of a leader consists that a decision-maker is involved in any action to make choices; which has been formerly defined as:

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

Given the circumstances and developments, the humanitarian community frequently requires a successful leader who can progress, develop and improve it, and not every leader is successful. Some leaders lead the work to the worst and cause its collapse; some consider leadership an activity and simultaneously as an individual trait. Leadership as a process is to use the non-binding influence of directing and coordinating individuals’ activities in a group to achieve specific goals. Many authors have described leadership as inspiring vision, as it involves a characteristic that influences people to succeed in employing this influence to achieve their ambitions. Leadership revolves around the hypothesis of the power relations in contemporary society. A leader could be defined as people or crowds who can assist their

strategic positions in influential organisations to affect national political results and that leads the organisation to achievements and future ambitions. Leaders include men and woman who hold significant positions of power and influence at the top of organisations such as CEO, COO, CFO, MD, Head of HR, Director/Non-Executive Director, Chair/Vice-Chair, Company Secretary, Headteacher of a school or general manager.

Tyler (2005) stated that, with the societal context and saliency for research into women leaders, there is still a lack of women in the prominent leader's roles. This investigation will focus on women's experiences of intra-gender relations while achieving and holding these positions, rather than the skills, attributes and activities of leaders and managers as the case of women in Saudi Arabia. The nature of organisational life serves to exclude women from the male inner circles of power and influence and obscure from them and other outsiders the intricate details of how these work (Ledwith and Colgan, 1996, p.12). Women leaders are argued to have broken through the glass ceiling and achieved a 'masculine strategic situation'. Progress has been made in that a few women now hold leadership positions in these inner circles of power; however, it is well established that these positions are 'masculinised' and constructed around the male power holder. As such, women leaders find themselves in a context marked by masculine rationality with control at its centre; an extreme version of competitive masculinity (Chesterman, Smith & Peters, 2005). Work has constantly been surrounded by social processes of gender construction and familiarities of gender differences, gained by men and women at an early age, continue into working lives, Cockburn (1985). The interest is at the top of organisational hierarchies, where we argue that relationships between man and women and the gendered nature of their social circumstance are 'a fundamental element in organising leadership learning' (Stead and Elliott, 2012).

Leadership and Gender Characteristics

The relationship between leadership characteristics and gender presents faceted and complex challenges with no agreed views if women reveal different leading methods to men (Jonsen *et al.*, 2010; Embry *et al.*, 2008; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2003; Embry *et al.*, 2008) or from agentic versus communal styles (Berkery *et al.*, 2013; Wike *et al.*, 2019) with the same sex distinctions. These conflicting categories associate male qualities (competence, efficiency, assertiveness, ambition and independence) with successful outcomes, whereas the female characteristics (warmness, kindness, helpfulness, cooperation and sympathy) put women in disadvantaged leadership positions (Berkery *et al.*, 2013). However, Eagly *et al.* (2003) and Morkeviciute and

Endriulaitiene (2020) assert that women are better equipped for applying transformational styles, thus being able to become effective guides for their followers. The same view is shared by Aldoory *et al.* (2004), who used quantitative and qualitative research to examine the preferred styles of female managers and confirmed that women feel more transformational than transactionally oriented.

In the academic debate, Arnold *et al.* (2013) and Habeed *et al.* (2020) challenge these assumptions highlighting the influence of personality, context and situational opportunities on leadership styles. However, men seem to benefit more than women for displaying a transformational approach. Brandt *et al.* (2013), instead of focusing on gender and diverse leadership, analyse the effect of personality on adopting styles and argue that leaders should evaluate their strengths and weaknesses to become more efficient in their roles, despite their sex. This paradox in the literature in relation to male and female leadership traits and their outcomes seems to be a reflection of our current historical context and proves that, although the social roles of women are rapidly changing, there is still a traditional cultural expectation that continues to be the norm (Radu *et al.*, 2017).

Empirical studies show different findings on the link between gender and leadership styles. An argument often cited in the literature is the effect of culture on the development and applications of different approaches. According to Berkery *et al.* (2013), women in management are still assessed by men. Consequently, gender stereotypes and managerial characteristics are under their control and values. Arnold *et al.* (2013) observes the link between context and leadership styles, shaping more participative versus more directive approaches or vice-versa. Atewologun and Dolder (2013) suggest that male power, authority and privilege needs to be further investigated to understand how career promotions are supported and dealt with.

Leadership in an organisational context

The literature suggests that leaders are increasingly are uneven and divided. Yet there is little empirical research that maps the distinctions between different leader groups in the labour force or organisational field. There has been a resurgence of interest in leadership styles in the organisation studies literature by Kerr and Robinson (2012), Maclean *et al.* (2010; 2012; 2014) and Morgan *et al.* (2015).

Zald and Lounsbury (2010) stated that the differences may be measured specifically in leadership groups in the labour force or organisational field. It is increasingly distinguished

that ‘leader’ does not denote a consistent set of factors but rather groups of symbolically powerful individuals who are varieties of different class backgrounds (Maclean Harvey & Kling, 2014). These surroundings may involve the ‘varieties of capitalism’ or belong to different institutional domains (Reed, 2012; Reed & Wallace, 2015). Yet, those specific boundaries and distinctions can exist between different leader fractions and observing such boundaries is especially important for understanding ‘expert leaders’ (Reed, 2012) because the cultural dispositions of expert groups come to be associated with specific political initiatives.

Culture, religion, education and power control have a strong influence on leaders until they reach their current positions in the organisation in the private and public sectors, as the leader professions’ experience and knowledge would inspire by such impacts (Collett, 2020). Either small or large organisations’ employees are controlled and dominated by a few whose decisions are taken and affect the entire organisation and its members and follow the political and economic leader’s overall goals and directions. Yamak *et al.* (2015) identified that male leaders remain blind to the privileges and constraints of their own gendered experience of symbolic capital and violence and gendered differences are still observed in the organisations. Wamsley and Zald (1976) argued that there is a general harmony among the leading sectors in their comprehensive policy directions, strategic considerations and political and economic philosophies.

The organisational leader operates in an environment in which the ordinary people or the mass of lower social classes constantly strive and struggle for leadership positions, which entails special power, prestige, privileges and economic benefits. The leaders are separated from the masses of ordinary members of managers in organisations and respond to their demands only when such demands exert irresistible pressures. Abdication of power is more likely to happen in developing nations, but it can happen in advanced industrialised societies as well, through its position and interlocking membership in political, economic and administrative leaders’ circles (Lencioni, 2020).

Drawing on political science, economics, psychology, social psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, history and administration and management, the leader or leadership theory of organisation is interdisciplinary and concerned with the allocation, distribution and exercise of power and the consequential conflicts and decisions that may arise from those activities in organisations (Wamsley & Zald, 1976).

The re-masculinisation of work environments and the effect on gender management and leadership has also been examined in the literature. For instance, Broad bridge *et al.* (2011) stress the phenomenon of silencing women's voices and tend to think that gender issues are solved through equality legislation and fair organisational policies. In practice, hidden issues still affect women, their careers and their approaches to leadership due to the strong focus on performance and the demands of a high level of presenteeism. Wamsley and Zald (1976) stated that one major assumption of organisational theory is the organisational creation of individuals, but a few people control and dominate them once created and that is how there are managers and essential members of staff. In contrast, Farazmand (1994) and Selznick (1957) demonstrate that organisations operate in the socio-political and economic environment of which they are a part. However, the political and economic leaders' role determines most organisations' directions and processes, either in the public or private sector. This will lead to instrumentality in organising and achieving societal goals in the future. Miles (1980) declared that, even with the purest and most professional enterprise, nature would be a political influence because its processes and structures contribute to society's maintenance and enhancement and the country's existing political and economic practice. Differences would arise among organisations due to human nature and social class. In contrast, the leadership role is challenging, as leaders will not abdicate their power and privileges for others as competitors or enemies, while other leaders may not make a difference for the sake of their leading roles (Dye & Ziegler, 1993).

An example would be when a manager or a leader enjoys many advantages that come with their position such as control over resources, making important decisions and having higher salaries than others. In addition to other incentives given to them, they have the opportunity to communicate and build relationships with personalities in the field or outside, whether in the same position or higher positions inside and outside the company. Despite all these characteristics, they are not immune to making mistakes or becoming jealous of the lower employees under their supervision. To gain compliance and trust, the leader must convince the masses who are prone to withdraw their authority and, the authorities and power, however, is not always given to the leaders and the masses are not always free to use such a right for it is already conditioned and controlled by the manager in organisations (Perrow, 1986; Scott & Hart, 1989; Lencioni, 2020).

The leader controls many interlocking boards and resides in leadership positions to which the masses and the average individual members of organisations. Hence, the accessibility to the

leader's association is limited and controlled by numerous goal-keeper whose primary function is to serve the leaders interests only rather than those of the ordinary people or managers who are leading into their own interests. Confidentiality is a central and essential operational feature of the leader's power structure. According to Farazmand, (1994) this phenomenon is prevalent in the corporate sector and large government organisations of the administrative state, making individuals 'bondmen' of the modern state. The leader may extend the connection to the masses for two reasons: firstly, to recruit potential members as managers for which the manager is the primary beneficiary, as a result rewarding the manager for their loyalty (Scott & Hart, 1989). Secondly, to obtain further authority and technical expertise as co-optation (Perrow, 1986; Scott & Hart, 1989; Selznick, 1953). The standard individuals operate little in the organisations' deputy manager decision-making and strategic directions, but they may form power groups to influence or cause minor modification or changes in management decisions. The top managerial organisational positions are considered part of the leadership progression because it serves the strategic top managerial triangle's interests and it acts and behaves similarly to leadership development. Joining the leader circle must include proof of system loyalty and economic, ideological and personal qualifications if they are relevant. Being from a certain family and class or holding specific features such as having a beautiful face are generally indicated by the norms and values of inclusion institutionalised through socialisation. These strategic powers attached to leaders play the key determining role in the domination of society and the society must adapt to these large, powerful organisations dominated by the top managers and leaders who enjoy a shield of elitism (Scott & Hart, 1989).

Taking leadership actions based on each situation's particular circumstances requires certain qualities to make actions and decisions based on the situation. Leaders' personalities and personal characteristics play a vital role in influencing the followers, motivating and engaging them (Abid *et al.*, 2021; Rodd, 2013). Supporting this claim, Luthans (2002) suggests that a leader's personality influences creating a positive attitude and the organisation's effectiveness.

An aspect of leadership discussed in the literature is leadership traits and characteristics. For example, personal qualities such as being wise and reasonable (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), advocacy, enthusiasm, passion and inspiration (Solly, 2003). Being a good decision-maker and engaging and supportive communication skills were stated to have a positive influence on leadership practice and the institution's success (Rodd, 2013). It is seen as a complex phenomenon, a discourse, a praxis and a shared process where the leader is a leader and a facilitator among leaders, who require certain qualities to influence others to achieve the shared

goal. Not only the leader's personal traits but also the followers' traits and cultural values are important variables that influence the effectiveness of leader behaviours (Matthews *et al.*, 2021). Giles and Morrison (2010) argued that leadership reflects individual experiences when leading their educational institution and having certain leadership traits and characteristics to influence the success of their educational organisation. Hence, Northouse (2013) stated that perceiving the leader as a facilitator and a leader among leaders may justify leadership's complexity, which may perceive leadership as an uncertain, contextual and situational experience.

This research supports the idea that leadership will continue to have different meanings and approaches based on the circumstances, time and contextual overview of the organisation's structure. Such a modification that moves leadership from taking top-down, bureaucratic approaches to a more complex level of becoming dynamic and interactive, responding to the 21st-century changes and allowing the development of learning and innovation outcomes confirms the importance of leading with a tolerant, open mind, considering the context where leadership operates and the situations that the leader experiences every day, rather than following a specific leadership model.

2.4 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 & Rodrigues, 2003). The role and message of Islam as the first tenet of Saudi culture is principally based on the Qu'ran 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 religion extends to infiltrate all decisions, including those related to work and personal matters (Ahmad, 2011; Idris, 2007; Alalmai *et al.*, 2020). According to Belton and Hamid (2011), knowledge and work constitute the two major elements that make up the personality of Muslim individuals and societies. According to Possumah *et al.* (2013), in Islam working is regarded as a personal duty and social obligation for those who are able. An individual has to earn their own living ethically and become a source of production and benefit to society.

Islam provides a moral framework that guides the behaviour of all individuals in their daily activities, including work matters (Metcalfe, 2008). 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). Islam does not limit how 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).

Under Islamic values and beliefs, most Saudis 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 (*reba*), which is considered unjust and hence is forbidden in Islam (Kettell, 2011). Therefore, because of this religious dimension, numerous Saudis, 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). The influence of Islam covers all work and social life aspects for Saudis, including the relationships between a person and their parents. The traditional values and discriminatory gender stereotypes that hinder the careers and advancement of Arab women are reinforced in Saudi society by the Wahhabi school of thought.

The official main religion in Saudi Arabia is Islam and the Islamic law, called Sharia in Arabic, guides life. Islam plays a very important role in its followers' personal and professional lives (Tlaiss, 2013; 2014a). The effects of socio-cultural values and traditions on Saudis, especially women cannot be taken lightly. Sharia law does not prohibit women from economic and political participation and permits them to work in certain sectors, but the workforce contribution rate of Saudi women is among the lowest in the region as Islamic traditions reinforce gender differences, granting men pre-eminence and authority over women (Galloway, 2020).

Work and Islam in the Middle East

Globally, women have been entering professional and managerial roles at an unprecedented rate (Wirth, 2001; Davidson and Burke, 2004; Adler, 2004). The oil dominant economy in the Middle East created a labour market structure that kept the supply and demand of female labour

limited and reinforced a ‘patriarchal contract’ (Moghadam, 2005). Women’s entry into the labour market in the Middle East has shown significant improvements of late but is slow when compared to the west. Women’s increasing labour market participation is attributable to the declining fertility rate and women’s improved education participation and attainment.

Employment is strongly gender-segregated, with women primarily employed in education and roles related to female health, although women’s participation has increased slightly in technical and scientific fields. Moghadam (2005) argues that increases in labour participation in the Middle East are largely attributable to the ‘feminisation of government employment’ (2005, p.126). Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia has seen a sizeable increase in entrepreneurial development and self-employment among women as the growth in female employment has been facilitated by increased political representation (UNDP, 2005; Al-Lamki, 2000). While there has been a burgeoning of scholarship on women at work, the focus has tended to be on health and social issues rather than to examine women’s role in management or their role as leaders (Seikaly, 1994; Kian, 1995; Kandoyti, 1996; Tzanntos and Kaur, 2003; El-Azhary, 2003; Moghadam, 2003).

Mernissi argued that socio-historical assessment of gender and Islam provides a key reason for women’s exclusion from leadership and management roles. He reveals that a Hadith; ‘Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity’ (Mernissi, 1991: 3–5) is commonly cited in Islamic political debates about women’s ability to lead.

This is reaffirmed by recent gender and employment reports by the United Nations and World Bank (2004) which found that gender and social relations are governed by a traditional patriarchal structure in Saudi Arabia:

1. The centrality of the family, rather than the individual as the main unit in society, with which men and women have a complementary role. Both men and women view the family as a cultural asset.
2. Recognition as the man as the sole breadwinner of the family (guardian).
3. A code of modesty that rests on the dignity and reputation of the woman, with restrictions on interactions between men and women.

Labour market structures and employment regulations frameworks support these family and work relations in several ways. In Saudi Arabia, oil companies support gender segregation by subsidising sex-separate offices and educational facilities (Sian *et al.*, 2020). These labour

market dynamics relate to the broader position of women in Islamic states in Middle East society.

The nature of difference and equality is more complex than assuming women are in a position of subordination. Recent scholarship on Islamic feminism has reinterpreted the Qur'an and Hadith in a positive light and stressed the equality between the sexes (Roald, 2001; Badran, 2005; Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, 2004; 2005). Patriarchal relations are the product of cultural practice, not of the teachings of Islam (Ahmed, 1998).

In the majority of Saudi Arabia, women have the right to work and are granted this right. The concepts of not allowing women any action in society such as getting an education or working are strongly gendered since these are rules made by the male in the family (guardian), representing the relational symbolic violence. However, women now are going through a new phase. They may go to court and make a complaint about their situation and any threats if they are exposed. The concept of protection of women in the public sphere has almost vanished. It is not that common for women to have to ask their husband for approval to be permitted to work and this approval may obtain previously on signed papers.

A western cultural lens may suggest that gender or female labour is going through inequalities and to some extent, this is true, but in another sense, it is also supporting the importance of balance and equilibrium in social and work relations. The importance of modesty, however, is not necessarily about reproducing gender hierarchies through control but is concerned with acknowledging markers of sexual difference as a sign of respect and reverence.

Gender and Religious Influence on Saudi Arabia.

The majority of western-based research on gender differences and religiosity shows that women constantly display higher levels of religiosity than men (Collett & Lisardo, 2009; Sullins, 2006; Miller & Stark, 2002; Stark, 2002; Walter & Davie, 1998; Miller & Hoffman, 1995). Scholars have proposed different explanations for this. One is that differential socialisation experienced by men and women in their childhood creates diverging cultural expectations, behaviours and gendered values held by them in later stages of their life (Suziedelis & Potvin, 1981; Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). An alternative suggestion is that gender differences result from the structural position of women 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 instead emerge from innate differences in the physiologies of men and women (Sigalow *et al.*, 2012). Religion, as a significant social institution, is enormously influential throughout a broad 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 is a significant contextual influence (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2009). These cultural effects are more substantial in places such as Saudi Arabia, where every layer of social life is intertwined with religion (Idris, 2007).

Sigalow *et al.* (2012) highlighted the effect of religious and spiritual strategies on marriage, residence and number of children 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 and to make coping choices that consider others' needs and feelings (Mattis, 2002) or as an influential factor in working and career achievement (Bassey *et al.*, 2012). Most of the 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-Owaihan, 2008; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007) and human resource management (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 gender and work. 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 commonality in uttering Qu'ranic verses and the Prophet Muhammad's sayings in the public sphere from early childhood, individuals, regardless of their level of religiosity, have developed 'a 49 awareness of and sensitivity to what is socially and religiously sanctioned' (Ali, 2010, p.694).

2.5 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 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 Saudis, 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, 2018; Al-Hudhaif and Nalband, 2012). Of the total labour force, only 23.4% are women (General Authority of Statistics, 2020). Currently, the public sector is saturated and the government cannot generate more jobs as this produces a burden on the budget. The distribution of the workforce indicates that the private sector has the potential to be the primary provider of new career opportunities for unemployed Saudis (Mellahi, 2006). As historical background, 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 for 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 laid (Alogla, 1990). The basic needs of the people and country were addressed in these development plans. This fast economic transformation created a need for importing skilled labour not available locally (Mahdi and Barrientos, 2003). As a result, the country witnessed a significant 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).

Al-Asmari (2008) argues that the Saudi labour force is characterised differently from other countries. Firstly, he mentions that there are 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 (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2012; Harry, 2007). Secondly, according to Al-Asmari (2008), the rate of female participation in the labour market is much lower than male and compared to neighbouring countries women suffer from very high unemployment rates.

Various reasons such as differences in the skills between the men and women, preference for university-educated men for jobs than women and a lack of a network of potential employers for women are some major reasons affecting the high levels of women unemployment (Harvard Kennedy School, 2019).

Managers and Leaders work-life experiences in Saudi Arabian society

The roots of culture, traditions and social norms are strongly rooted in Saudi Arabian culture, and the effect of these factors can be observed in all aspects of life and work and the organisational culture. Workplaces in Saudi Arabia are driven by a male-dominated society and women need to work substantially harder relative to men to prove their eligibility to become leaders in organisations (Alobaid *et al.*, 2021). The patriarchal societal norms are rooted in a particular interpretation of Islam and are carried into legislation which is then embodied in workplace practices and organisational culture, which can have a significant effect on gendered inequalities. For instance, Sian *et al.* (2020) identified that pervasive inequality and the re-segregation of the Saudi female auditing workforce into woman-friendly areas can have a potentially negative effect on the career development of women in Saudi Arabian organisations. Therefore, to empower women's leadership, changes have to be implemented at ground level across all sectors, especially in education.

A recent review by Alshalawi (2020) revealed that it is important to develop both female leadership capacity and effectiveness in Saudi Arabian higher education. Al-Otaibi (2020) identified a strong direct correlation relationship between all dimensions of quality of working life and the performance of the employees. Allam and Shaik (2020) identified that autonomy, inter-group relationships, recognition, self-respect and supervisory relationships are the most important determinants of quality of work-life. All these factors can significantly affect women's quality of work-life balance due to male dominance, segregation and patriarchal culture in the workplace. Stress and quality of the work-life balance determine the relationship between supervisor and employee engagement (Dinh, 2020). Therefore, a supportive, collaborative and motivational environment must be provided to promote female participation and to promote women's leadership. However, despite the efforts to increase female participation in economic activities, the increase in female employment is relatively low due to the various challenges faced by women at work and also in life from culture, regulations and family responsibilities (Almathami *et al.*, 2020).

2.6 Status of Women in Saudi Arabia

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Saudi government has commitment to and supported women's education and paved the way for social change. For more than a decade, a series of events and developments in Saudi Arabia has raised women's status in society substantially. On 25 September 2012, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz issued a decree that allowed Saudi women to enter the Consultative Council (*Majlis Ashura)* and be nominated for candidacy in municipal elections. This decision was consistent with a series of transformative royal decrees issued since King Abdullah's ascendancy to the throne in 2005. It is believed that King Abdullah has pushed to pass laws in favour of women and sometimes argued with the religious establishment to give women more rights. It was during this period that Saudi women were issued national identity cards; policy and legislation were passed in the interests of women; and jobs such as in passport administration, civil defence, the state human rights commission and the Ministry of Trade and Industry were opened up to women. Women were also made eligible to run for election in the Chamber of Commerce and the engineers' and journalists' unions. In 2009, a woman was appointed deputy minister of education, becoming the first woman to hold the rank of minister, and another was appointed university director for Princess Nourah bint Abdul Rahman University.

Women and Education

Despite the socio-cultural influences and restrictive practices over women's education in Saudi Arabia, these have not deterred women from seeking and pursuing their basic right to literacy. To increase the literacy rate among men and women, the Saudi government made education compulsory and tuition-free at public schools (Hamdan, 2005). According to World Bank (2020), the literacy rate among women in Saudi Arabia aged 15 and older increased from an estimated 57% in 1992 to approximately 76% in 2004, almost 92% in 2015 and 92.7% in 2017. Given the increase in the literacy rate of women in Saudi Arabia over the years, the government-initiated reforms to the education system, particularly to higher education, that are discussed in the following sub-section.

Faced with local, regional and global challenges from 2001, the Saudi government made a conscious effort to implement educational reforms that are in alignment with its vision to eliminate extremism and terrorism, diversify its economic sources away from oil and accommodate the growing young population (Al Fassi, 2010). For instance, the government's overall dissatisfaction with the status of education resulted in the merger of the women's

education department with the Ministry of Education in 2002 to ensure equitable learning opportunities and outcomes (Fatany, 2013; Hamdan, 2005). Reforms were initiated to improve the quality of education by revising Islamic curricula, strengthening mathematics and science curricula, teaching English as a second language at public schools and providing teacher training programmes to help reverse the traditional methods of teaching and learning (Fatany, 2013). With the socio-political and socio-economic development and sustainability of the country in mind, the Saudi government implemented higher education reforms to accommodate the rapid increase in college enrolment, produce a knowledge-based economy and influence societal change (Fatany, 2013; Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). The reforms focused on expanding infrastructure projects, strengthening research and knowledge production, enhancing workforce participation through private higher education and increasing academic achievements and human capital. A study abroad scholarship programme was introduced (Fatany, 2013; Habibi, 2015; Hamdan, 2013). Given the increasing number of collegiate women in Saudi Arabia, these reforms have contributed to improving women's status in education.

Throughout the past two decades, women's enrolment rates in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions have increased substantially. For example, college enrolment rates of women increased from 28.57% in 1981 to 48.47% in 2005 (Jamjoom, 2012). More than a decade later, women in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions account for more than half of undergraduate students and their graduating class (GASTAT, 2015b; 2015c; 2016b; 2016c; 2017a), as shown in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2-1. Women's Enrolment Rates in Higher Education by Sector and Year

Year	All sectors	Public	Private
2015	52.42	52.46	52.20
2016	52.04	52.10	52.09
2017	53.66	54.23	43.68

Note. Rates in percentages. Adapted from 'Education and Training,' by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Statistical Yearbooks of 2015-2017. Copyright 2015, 2016, 2017 by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (GASTAT, 2015b, 2015c, 2016b, 2016c, 2017a).

Table 2-2. Women's Graduation Rates from Higher Education by Sector and Year

Year	All sectors	Public	Private
2014	55.33	56.75	47.65
2015	56.75	57.15	50.91

Note. Rates in percentages. Adapted from 'Education and Training,' by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Statistical Yearbooks of 2015-2016. Copyright 2015, 2016 by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (GASTAT, 2015b, 2015c, 2016b, 2016c).

The scholarship programme which was established in 2005 to study abroad aims to enhance the plans and development of the Saudi workforce significantly through learner mobility in major international universities and becoming equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to build business and leadership capacity in the country. In 2011, around 20 per cent of total study abroad scholarship recipients were women (Bukhari & Denman, 2013). A decade after the establishment of this programme, Saudi women's enrolment and graduation rates have increased as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2-3. Study Abroad Scholarship Programme and Women's Enrolment and Graduation Rates by Year

Year	2016[a]	2017	2018[b]
Enrolment		27.30	29.17
Graduation	28.50	29.40	

Note. Rates in percentages. [a]Data for 2014 enrolment in the scholarship programme is unavailable. [b]Data for 2018 graduation from the scholarship programme is unavailable. Adapted from 'Education and Training,' by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Statistical Yearbooks of 2016-2018. Copyright 2016, 2018 by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (GASTAT, 2016d, 2018d).

Workforce Participation

Despite women's access to education and their rapidly increasing numbers in higher education in Saudi Arabia, they have the lowest rate of employment in the region (AlMunajjed, 2010). According to the General Authority for Statistics (2016a, 2017a, 2018b), Saudi women's economic participation increased from 17.30% in 2016 to 19.3% in 2017, whereas their unemployment increased from 32.80% in 2016 to 34.50% in 2018, as shown in Tables 2.4 and 2.5. Studies and reports indicate that legislative, social, educational and work-related obstacles contributed to women's low participation in the workforce (Al Munajjed, 2010; Alyahya, 2016). Al Munajjed (2010) argues that the education system fails to prepare collegiate women for employment in non-traditional fields, the laws and policies of gender-specific and gender-segregated work environments exclude women from equal opportunities and the lack of support services in the workplace discourage women from employment. Alyahya (2016) indicates that social influences continue to act as dominant forces in determining women's professional choices, which may suggest that advancing women's status in Saudi Arabia is unforeseeable.

Table 2-4. Economic Participation Rates by Year, Gender, Saudi Nationality

Year	Total men	Total women	Saudi men	Saudi women
2016	77.80	20.20	64.10	17.30
2017	79.50	22.80	64.60	19.30
2018	78.70	21.90	63.00	20.20
2019	80.4	26.80	66.60	26.00
2020	80.6	32.1	68.5	33.2

Note. Rates in percentages. Adapted from 'Labour Force Survey,' by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Copyright 2015, 2016, 2017 by the General Authority for Statistics. (GASTAT, 2015a, 2016a, 2017b, 2020).

Table 2-5. Unemployment Rates by Year, Gender, Saudi Nationality

Year	Total men	Total women	Saudi men	Saudi women
2016	2.70	21.80	5.70	32.80
2017	2.60	21.30	5.90	34.50
2018	2.90	22.60	6.60666.660	32.50
2019	2.2	21.3	4.9.9	30.8
2020	4.0	20.2	7.1	24.4

Note. Rates in percentages. Adapted from 'Labour Force Survey,' by the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Copyright 2016, 2017, 2018 by the General Authority for Statistics. (GASTAT, 2016a, 2017a, 2018b. 2020).

2.7 Saudi Women in Leadership

In most parts of the world, top organisations' attempts to achieve gender equality and integration have culminated in targets ensuring a minimum percentage of women being promoted (Steven *et al.*, 2003). Since they have invested significantly in the preparation and advancement of women, they have developed initiatives that represent the interests of women in leadership roles. But top management is often disappointed, as the results are not satisfactory despite their investment (Omar and Davidson, 2001). The renaissance of female leadership in a society where women had previously faced is intense competition and hostility from their male counterparts has gained much interest in the media and from researchers. Research work confirms that Saudi women possess other social factors that have served as the primary motivational tools for women in the Kingdom. However, male leaders also face challenges and obstacles in their leadership careers. Even if most of the means and resources are available and more accessible to them, some still suffer individually.

The role of women in Saudi Arabia has changed dramatically in the last 50 years, as the percentage of women entering management work and assuming higher leadership positions has increased significantly after being previously associated with low workforce and labour market expectations. The last 10 years have witnessed increasing involvement of women in senior

management roles and the decision-making process in the public and private sectors. Recent trends demonstrate that policymakers and growth strategies in Saudi Arabia are specifically directed toward a much greater place for women in public life and top public and private leadership roles. Women in Saudi society are considered to have several different functions (Metcalfe and Rees, 2010). The rapid and powerful change in the Saudi community has seen women being promoted to leadership roles in leading private and public institutions and institutes at unparalleled rates such as university presidents, Shura Council advisers, ministers and head of departments and other high-ranking positions (Arab women, 2014).

Women are now seeking to obtain the highest leadership roles in the country and compete with their male counterparts, as the Kingdom's recent transformations have witnessed differences at all levels for women and men alike. It has significantly grown over the past few decades as women have been given more resources and more power and a willingness to take on more responsibilities in the public sphere, and the ability to hold higher ranks in organisations (Thompson, 2015). Despite this, women are more common than ever in the work sector and been known to be cracking the 'glass ceiling'. It seems that the presence of Saudi women in the workforce is among the most potent challenges and obstacles that have hindered it in the past, but despite many of these dilemmas, Saudi women are still able to prove themselves. However, their presence is different in positions of leadership. When it comes to achieving promotion, they cannot achieve entry since there are unseen obstacles (Davies, 1995). The glass ceiling is known to be a neutral structural-cultural obstacle, focused on biological gender determination and gender position norms (Hester, 2007).

Cliff (2008) and Olin *et al.* (2000) argue that the 'glass ceiling' effect was previously known as an informal barrier to opportunities in an organisation or company that prevents a protected class of workers, especially women, from advancing to higher positions. While recent reforms in Saudi Arabia have improved the status of women in society and senior leadership positions, there has been opposition among religious conservatives. Saudi leaders have been able to hold on to roles such as deputy minister, heads of government universities, political advisers, members of the Shura Council, the King, the chief executive of financial institutions, board members and leaders of private organisations (Abu Suleiman, 2017). Most women feel they do not deserve to grow up, while other women enter the world of organisations, demonstrating that they act in power as men while believing they are less able to lead. Scholars have argued that it has been known that leadership and leaders' positions are dominated by men, especially in a male society like the Kingdom (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). One of the main obstacles to women

moving into leadership positions is the patriarchal power relations and attitudes towards other men and women. Elamin and Omair (2010) found that Saudi men strongly believe in the premise that men are dominant, independent, aggressive and capable of leadership while women are submissive, dependent and loving and, thus, incapable of leadership. Although administration and power do not know the nature of gender of the leader, women are still facing challenges to enter leadership positions and adapt their style of leading, regardless of what can happen through their administration and their assumption of power. Although the roles of Saudi women have witnessed major strides towards more participation, their development has been slower because of cultural factors. Shahine (1997) argued that women are subject to socialisation, educational and social pressures that prevent the formation of values and attitudes appropriate to leadership roles, thus limiting the effectiveness of women in leadership positions.

Traditionally, women have worked in government and some private sectors under the 'umbrella of men', their leadership and power. Ultimately, this negatively affected some women leaders or department sections managed by women. Research in 2007 showed that Saudi women face various difficulties, which include: a) lack of clarity about the hierarchical partnership between women and men; b) insufficient communication between departments and the subordination of the female section to the organisational map; c) the inability to fully integrate the female section into the organisational structure; d) reduced financial and material resources; and e) no involvement in strategic preparation (Al-Mankash *et al.*, 2007).

The challenges women in Saudi Arabia face have also been receiving attention during the last few decades. The tenth *Development Plan of Saudi Arabia* mentioned in its second strategic pillar that it is one of the foremost aims of Saudi Arabia to provide 'increased attention to women's affairs and development capabilities, while removing barriers to participation in the development activities'. Hence, it is evident that the development plan emphasises women's leadership empowerment and encourages their involvement in their family lives and the workplace. The World Bank Report *Women, Business and the Law 2020* recognised Saudi Arabia as the top reformer globally in the last year. Saudi Arabia has implemented historic reforms to advance women's economic participation. The measures introduced freedom of travel and movement for women over the age of 21.

These reforms fundamentally changed women's legal rights. Despite the expansion and advancement of women in Saudi Arabia in the past few decades, the difficulties that women

serving at senior management levels continue to face from their male counterparts are immense (Almankash *et al.*, 2017). These challenges affect the ability of Saudi women to eliminate those obstacles in their capacity to become successful administrators and leaders. Women in Saudi Arabia and similar Gulf countries have common problems and much the same concerns. The key hurdles, according to Al-Lamki (2007), are: (1) there are very few prospects for women; (2) gender discrimination at the time of promotions; (3) being compared to their male colleagues; (4) male-dominated environments at the workplace; (5) lack of strategies for protecting the women's rights at leadership positions; (6) an absence of skilled networking between men and women at the workplace; (7) the lack of structured strategies and processes for the advancement of women empowerment creates issues for women; and (8) problems that are cultural and economic.

Despite, these obstacles, the work environment in Saudi Arabia has shown significant improvement over the last few years and different from that in other Gulf states for both genders. This has happened mainly due to the entry of large numbers of women in Saudi Arabia's labour market and segregation based on gender category in the workplace as the government has recently concentrated on women's empowerment and being equal to men in organisations. While all of these changes are evidence of evolution, unfortunately, discrimination based on gender is built into the governing and social framework of Saudi Arabia. These women find it hard to access employment opportunities, and even if they start working, they will not gain the full benefits of working. (Women and Leadership, 1996) which has become a limitation that the Saudis are realising and attempting to reform. Women have increasingly moved toward greater gender equality starting from home and ending at the workplace. Changes in gender roles and lifestyles have occurred with men now sharing more household chores and childrearing. Social rules of etiquette and gender roles are now more flexible and equity in the marital relationship more common.

Table 2-6. Important Milestones for Women in Saudi Arabia (2009–2020)

Year	Milestone
2009	The appointment of the first woman as the Deputy Minister of Education for Girls' Affairs (Thompson, 2015).
2010	The establishment of KAUST enabled women to enrol at a co-educational private non-profit graduate research university (Fatany, 2013).
2011	The campus expansion of PNU, accommodating up to 60,000 female students (Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013).
2012	Women athletes competed for the first time in the Summer Olympics (Quinn, 2012).

2013	A royal decree was issued to appoint 30 women to the Shura Council, a Consultative Council that provides the country's King with recommendations on policymaking (Saudi Arabia's King speech, 2013).
2015	Seventeen women were elected for municipal seats (Black, 2015).
2016	The initiation of Vision 2030, which aims to advance women's role in the country's social and economic development (Vision 2030, 2016).
2017	The appointment of the first woman as the Vice President of the Saudi General Authority for Sports in 2016 and as the President of the Saudi Federation for Community Sports in 2017 (Khatib, 2017). A woman was elected for the first time to chair the Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul), the largest stock market in the Middle East (Mabrouk, Warrier & Lasrado, 2017). A royal decree was issued to lift the driving ban on women beginning June 24, 2018 (Baker, 2018; Gaouette & Labott, 2017; Sadek, 2017).
2018	The appointment of the first woman as the Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Development (First Saudi woman appointed, 2018).
2019	In 2019 more women were appointed to senior leadership positions and women's empowerment began to increase the pace in the Saudi market. The appointment of the first female ambassador, Princess Reema Bint Bandar al Saud, as of 23rd Feb 2019. She is the first Saudi female ambassador in the United States. In August 2019, the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia was completely changed. Multiple restrictions on travelling and certain rules were changed so that women were treated the same as male Saudi citizens in ministries, organisations and most importantly of all, the field of work.
2020	Further women empowerment has increased all over the country such as; appointing a second female ambassador, having further female participants in the royal court and Shura Council.

Nielsen and Huse (2010) indicated that women believe in gender equality and are more cooperative and supportive, while their male counterparts tend to be more assertive and competitive. Women want collaborative, compassionate, supportive, democratic and calm leaders and most view leadership as facilitating and organising rather than as power and dominance; nevertheless, they are known to be good listeners and multitasker humans.

2.8 Factors Affecting Women in Leadership

Previous research indicates that women in the west also face various challenges and difficulties when working in managerial capacities. Several factors affect their leadership progress based on the challenges that they face but those faced by women leaders in Saudi Arabia differ in many ways. According to Stead and Elliot (2009), women in western countries face difficulties such as stereotyping, lack of preparation and development programmes, problems of society's demands on women as sacrificing and competing with men equally. Women leaders in Saudi Arabia have high cultural and social expectations imposed on them, along with sexism at the workplace, severe lack of confidence and a lack of job support, experience and career support along with extreme discrimination from male colleagues (Wilkinson, 1996).

Hodges (2017) identified that women in Saudi Arabia are faced with various challenges, social, religious, cultural and organisational, which affect their leadership. In addition, their findings reveal that women's relationship to self, others, place and work are key influencers in how they perceive and experience leadership. Al-Asfour *et al.* (2017) identified that societal and

organisational structural and attitudinal barriers are the major factors affecting the advancement of Saudi women in leadership. These barriers included: lack of mobility; the salience of gender stereotypes; gender discrimination in the workplace; limited opportunities for growth, development and career advancement; excessive workload caused by a lack of family-work balance; and gender-based challenges related to dealing with pregnancy.

Although Saudi women's leaders face obstacles associated with their culture, society and family values, men are more spontaneous in leadership roles and almost all Saudi women work in an office or their own private business under men who intervene continuously such as the intervention of the father or husband in the decision-making process inside the home or the decision-making by the approval of the top male management and thus this leads to an effect on the performance of the woman (Al-Halawani, 2002; Al-Manqash *et al.*, 2007; Abdullah, 2008).

The type and form of leadership are related to the leader's style, the variables affected and internal and external factors. Some of the critical factors include culture, success hostility, male domination, corruption, lack of self-confidence, the glass ceiling, difficult career paths, lack of empowerment, barriers of family values, legal factors and occupational factors. In the past, it has been assumed that leadership was primarily a man's role because of their masculine aspect and power. Leadership and management were vertical and more hierarchical and achieving the goal was the most urgent need. In the conventional leadership system, there was no place for feminine behaviour that has traditionally been synonymous with women only. However, as time passes and culture evolves, her feminine features are shifting to be more confident, powerful and influential.

Culture

Saudi culture is one of the main factors affecting leadership in Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi society is modern in most of its approaches, leadership is still seen from an ancient perspective where only men had leadership capabilities and were women by nature; did not have any characteristics or traits that would make them influential leaders (Anderson, 2009; Al-Otaibi, 2020). This position goes back to pre-Islamic times and is therefore rooted in Arab culture. Such harmful situations are endemic elsewhere (Eagle, 2007).

Mills (2002) compared this contrast which is evident in the western press and many previous western studies are based on people's perceptions and preferences regarding traits commonly associated with women, especially those characteristics in organisational leadership. Mills

concluded that there is a high level of discrepancy between recognised capabilities and desire or contentment with existence subject to female leadership in a formal organisational context.

Success Hostility

Traditions and culture, especially among tribal societies in Saudi Arabia, reinforce hostility towards women and men prefer domination over women's survival. The acceptance among the Saudi male community of female managers and leaders is shallow, even among those who accept female leadership. They are dissatisfied with allowing such freedom in the workplace. Hostility or resentment towards women seeking to become leaders in the workplace is rooted in education and family systems (Mills, 2002). This may be why Arab women leaders find it more difficult than women in other parts of the world to achieve more and demonstrate effective leadership (Abele, 2003). Moreover, the belief in women and the ability to lead is an important fact that starts with the support of the family and the surrounding community, other than the gains they gain from their education and social privileges and even their access to the position be assumed. Sometimes the enemies of success are even closer to the person and, instead of encouragement, you see them frustrated and trying to reduce your value and the success of goal achievement.

The Fact of Male Dominance

Another factor that affects women's leadership in Saudi Arabia and worldwide is male dominance in leadership roles. It is evident that male dominance is prevalent and stands as a barrier to the progress of women. A society in which male leadership is preferred and male dominance is explicitly permitted will prevent women from entering its competitions (Schien, 2001; Al-Qahtani *et al.*, 2021). In Saudi Arabia, the situation is acute. In Saudi society, men may refuse to follow any female leader regardless of their experience and ability. Even if she can prove herself, being a woman would put her under a fixed framework which was prevalent before. The facts add more meaning to the existing cultural and societal norms, making it more difficult to break the standards (Cubello & Brown, 2003). Recently, the government has strongly supported these aspects of giving women the full professional sustenance, being equal empowerment. Hence the view of dominance remains personal and individuals view them from their perspective and evaluate them themselves.

Corruption

Around the world, including in Saudi Arabia, women are failing to reach leadership positions due to organisations' corrupt practices in both the public and private sectors. Corruption is a major problem in the public sector and individuals occupy leadership roles through pressure or based on personal relationships. Bribery is also common and with such practices, whether explicit or otherwise, the possibility of placing women in a leadership position based on merit is unlikely. The culture of male domination and corruption makes it extremely difficult for women to emerge as leaders, especially in regions like Saudi Arabia where the culture supports this supremacy. Since the new young leaders came to power, their leadership has been keen to eliminate these behaviours regardless of the status of the people who carried out this disgraceful act, as justice is applied to all.

Lack of self-confidence

One of the factors that drive a woman is the confidence and belief that she can lead and drive effectively. There is internal oppression, and this limits a woman's ability to assume roles and leadership responsibilities. Again, this persecution is wider society's fault, which has created this environment and built a system to train women to follow traditional practices and roles as an end goal. Thus, women are restricted due to their lack of confidence and they often fail to seek change (Al-Otaibi, 2020). However, family support is mostly for boys and not girls, since they are the basis of families' and society's direct support. Also, the culture of failure and lack of success is viewed by some people as a social defect. Therefore, it is difficult to even talk about the most critical obstacles: lack of self-confidence and fear of failure. Consequently, we find many who suffer from work pressures that do not talk about it for fear of others judging them, leading to further consequences. Previously, it was uncommon for individuals to enrol women or men in effective planning or self-confidence courses, so this was a significant obstacle for some.

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

Previous authors have described barriers as they refer to the events, preventing individuals from progressing towards their aims and goals. The glass ceiling phenomenon and the prejudice women have to face in their organisations remain the most common issues. Eagly and Carli (2003) conducted a large-scale assessment of women's progress in leadership skills and assert that many of the impediments to further advancement relate to prejudice and what constitutes 'leadership' in an organisation, specifically what leadership is supposed to look like. Based on

diaries, recordings and analyses by participant and nonparticipant observers, Bormann *et al.* (1978) devised an extensive case study of a developing organisation. They concluded that male response to female dominance was a critical component. Powell and Graves (2003) also identified that the glass ceiling phenomenon might affect women's job roles and create numerous hurdles that prevent women from reaching leadership roles in organisations (Powell & Graves, 2003).

Challenging Career Paths

Another obstacle is the career path for a particular job role. Organisations have functions designed to achieve specific goals and the process ignores gender issues (Correll, 2001). Certainly, it is much easier for men to travel and carry out work in a different region or country mission even if they are married. Women would find such challenging obstacles as a problematic issue as they have to take care of their families, leading exposure and knowledge of organisations' operations. With higher positions, job requirements increase and cannot be avoided. Top management roles ignore women's needs and thus women may avoid such positions and remain satisfied with jobs of lower ranks (age and Davidson, 2001). Hence, this would lead some organisations to recruit a younger age group that is more comfortable because they will not have family obligations. This would create a gap between employees' age and their experience.

Lack of Empowerment of Women

Metcalfe (2008) states that women's lack of empowerment in Saudi Arabia has affected their decision-making abilities. Lack of access to knowledge, lack of participation in setting up organisational goals and insufficient power has led to a lack of female empowerment (Metcalfe, 2008). According to Effendi (2003), women in Saudi Arabia have proven that lack of empowerment has a negative effect on their psyche and gives them no feeling of recognition by or affiliation with their organisations. The public sector must allow women to employ more resources. Their actions have a greater effect on society and employment practices in general. Suppose women are empowered by giving them opportunities to lead in public domains. In that case, the sector will become a role model and open new doors for women in other disciplines.

The lack of women as leaders makes it more difficult for women to make it to the top levels and the scarcity leads to an increase in female leaders' scrutiny that leads to risk aversion (Charness and Gneezy, 2012).

Family Value

Research indicates that women have always been repressed. The general perception is that women have responsibilities strictly in the traditional role as housewives. This division of roles between men and women in Saudi Arabia means that men focus on their careers. In contrast, women fulfil obligations in their homes (Thompson 2015). Saudi women often withdraw from working in low-paying job roles as they lack additional benefits. Another pressure they have to face is striking a balance between their professional life and their home life, family raising and her female role in society. One of the most critical factors affecting the lives of Saudi women is the support of the family and the man in their working life, as it is prevalent for the father to be a blessing or an obstacle in the lives of many women; as it is one of the most important supporters in their lives because of his significant role in society.

Legal and Occupational Factors.

The legal rules and policies in Saudi Arabia are highly discriminatory against women. They discourage women from working professionally and pursuing careers. There are no policies in Saudi Arabia that protect women's rights and allow them to work. Policies that cater to such issues never go beyond documents into an implementation phase. Noraini (2002) feels that a significant factor that hinders the growth of women in Saudi Arabia is the law that inhibits women from driving a vehicle, which means that working women will be dependent on male members of society to work outside their homes (Noraini, 2002).

The occupational division in Saudi Arabia is seen as the most discriminatory worldwide because men continue to enjoy better career growth and work opportunities. According to Rhode and Kellerman (2007), Saudi men only have the decision-making power in the banking sector; while women remain in the organisations' lowest posts. Women have found themselves demanding to form unions or raise voices against discriminating practices in organisations (Rhode and Kellerman, 2007). One occupational factor is the dual role that women have to perform in terms of work and family. Since women were not given leadership roles and positions of decision-making power and influence, their systems and supporting structures are never established (Howard and Willins, 2015). The option of having day-care facilities is a significant concern for working mothers internationally. Based on such factors, women will

choose to work with low responsibility to earn for their family and take time for their children or work from home. If organisations are supportive and understand the dual roles that women play, more women will opt to work and strive for leadership positions.

Carli and Eagly (2001) argued that the general trend in Saudi Arabia is that the men decide, control, organise and plan, while women do only repetitive jobs. The confidence of women regarding their abilities to achieve their goals and be rewarded also influences their working capabilities and skills. The gender identity threats, and the lack of recognition have caused women to lack motivation and they either have to quit working or cope with low paid and unchallenging positions.

2.9 Remedial Approaches to Increasing Women's leadership

Leadership is the most critical element to keep the balance between men and women at an organisational level. It has been known that female leadership styles are more growing successfully than male leadership styles in a varied working setting because women can better manage people (Fernando *et al.*, 2020). The general behaviours of women are considered to be more polite than that of their male counterparts and they are good at consoling the workforce. Chapman (1975) observed that women are more cooperative in organisations. Women have contributed a lot to economic development since the foundation of Saudi Arabia. The government is focused on policies that offer jobs to women and crack cultural and social barriers (Oakley, 2000). As a result, Saudi society would accept expanding women's leadership roles and through empowerment, initiatives must allow them to participate in the decision-making process to provide women leaders with adequate independence and flexibility. One of the main components of that is changing hearts and minds. Thus, a government empowerment programme would reduce the aspiration gender gap. Among the most recent reforms that have taken place in the Kingdom is the appointment of a female deputy speaker with an excellent degree. Note that women in the Shura Council represent at least 20% of the members, which is considered a significant percentage.

According to Stade and Elliott (2009), plans to develop women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia are primarily aimed at increasing the knowledge level and experiences of Saudi women. The plan also emphasises the need to reduce stereotypes and negative biases that hinder women's advancement in leadership roles. Development plans aim to provide women leaders with a sense of belonging by recognising their performance and making women's training part of the overall organisational strategic plan. Organisations and governing bodies also realise

that women will have a platform to find solutions through various workshops and conferences and discuss the challenges they face in their working lives (Pinto, 2020). The key to achieving business goals and aspirations in Saudi Arabia is to maximise human resource potential by allowing women to participate in the workforce. To harness the potential of women in Saudi institutions, it is necessary to follow specific strategies to mitigate the limiting factors.

Increasing Positions for Women

Organisations must encourage equal employment opportunity practice and a practice that encourages women to apply. In a conservative culture, organisations do not seek women employees. Therefore, a Saudi woman's opportunity to be a part of an organisation and build a career is sparse (Burke and Nelson, 2002). Organisations have realised that Saudi women have the potential to work effectively and lead efficiently. Suggestions show that positions and corresponding employment opportunities must be open for women to apply and not only for men. When organisations ensure diversity in terms of gender, women's chances of rising in situation and leading will be higher (Alajmi, 2001). One does not just enter an organisation and start showing; instead, there is a long and challenging journey to reach management positions. With the glass ceiling removed and more women working, women's leadership in Saudi organisations will be evident. It is also essential that those in leadership roles in the public sector understand the importance and advantages of gender parity. When women access leadership roles with more power and authority, the outcomes will serve as a model for the country's working sectors. The positive results will encourage the private sector to preserve competitiveness and hire more women (Gneezy & List, 2009). With more women employees, the likelihood of women emerging as leaders in different domains and roles will be higher.

Breaking challenging barriers

The invisible barriers that prevent women from getting to higher positions in organisations must be eliminated. Such barriers can take many forms and may be a policy or a person that defines the limitations. For this, organisations must understand and analyse their policies from the perspective of women, critically analysing associated factors. Statistical data can provide useful details on how many women reach top management and the factors that inhibit them in leadership roles (Barreto *et al.*, 2009). Only through a proper understanding of the entire context can an organisation rectify and break glass ceilings. When seeing women as top managers, it will be evident that the glass ceiling no longer exists.

One of the primary reasons for having fewer women in leadership roles in the Saudi region other than the cultural limitation is getting access to the right education and training. Another issue highlighted by Almenkash *et al.* (2007) was that women in Saudi Arabia are now given leadership roles too soon without sufficient experience and preparation for the job's required performance. Lack of female role models is another problem that Saudi Arabia faces (Omair, 2008). Few young women believe that they are expected to be a part of the organisation. Rather, they are expected to be married and ready to raise a family of their own and those beliefs come from society or even mothers, especially if they were housewives. With such expectations, the focus on education and training of girls becomes insignificant and men feel that there is not much need to do so. This idea has begun to change dramatically as women must now be allowed to seek quality education and training (Ridgeway, 2001). The cultural limitations have to be broken to allow preparation for leadership roles. When women are qualified for positions, they will be able to use logical reasoning and convince others and eventually lead them (Al-Ahmadi, 2005). In this context, training programmes are important. Women are mostly given supportive roles and therefore organisations feel that there is no need to invest in training women (Leonard, 2001). This culture also needs to change and through enrolling women in training programmes and helping them develop leadership potential. Training programmes that target leadership building are vital.

These programmes must target both men and women and educate them on how to overcome biases as various forms of individual and organisational-wide biases that limit women from excelling (Alexander, 2012). One bias that is evident in the Kingdom is that in many large organisations, the number of women in top management is limited. This suggests that the organisation only aims at allowing a certain number of women to lead, which might indicate that the organisation only seeks affirmative action. Through training on different levels, mindsets need to be changed as women can be in top management regardless of the total count of women already in leadership roles in the same organisation (Omar & Davidson, 2001).

Improving effectiveness of Human Resource Departments

Organisations must encourage and promote equal employment opportunity and practice and a practice that promotes women, and they can. In a conservative culture, companies do not seek women for their jobs. On account of the deficient numbers of working women, the number of opportunities available in an agency is very low (Burke and Nelson, 2002). In today's work world, organisations have realised that Saudi women have the potential to work effectively and

lead their respective companies to success. When applying, we need to be prepared to consider candidates from the start, even women. When organisations reach diversity when it comes to gender, it will increase the number of women who will rise in situations and lead organisations (Alajmi, 2001).

Leaders in an organisation do not just show up and take charge. To reach the top positions, leaders must take a long and complicated journey. With the right networking and communications that seek women, leadership roles for women in that organisation would be more numerous. Effective leadership requires open and effective communication and improved channels of communication. Without sharing information, it becomes difficult for anyone, regardless of gender, to take the lead. The conservative culture in Saudi Arabia makes it difficult for Saudi women to communicate with their male counterparts and to be part of communication forums. Stead and Elliot (2009) argued that departments' weaknesses that would enhance women's influential role in the organisation are essential dilemmas that must be considered, such as the human resources department.

Al-Hawani (2002) states that women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia is very recent and has concerns about the challenges that still arise, affecting women's capacities to manage and lead effectively. There is consensus that human resource departments in organisations are not effective in promoting gender equality and ensuring that women and men get equal opportunities to excel and attain a leadership position. This department's effectiveness in large organisations needs to be improved so that the employment, compensation and career management practices support women in Saudi Arabia. In addition to these remedial strategies, some actions can help improve the current scenario.

Firstly, educate women about second-generation gender bias and the glass ceiling effect, as it is important as the women need to understand what implicit factors will affect their performance (Harrison *et al.*, 2015). Secondly, leaders of both genders should clearly understand the true definition of leadership and its styles; which has nothing to do with the gender type or sex. Thirdly, women must break beyond their traditional roles and know that they are fully capable of achieving more. With these steps in an organisation, the women will understand both themselves and their surroundings and effectively proceed to roles with greater responsibility and decision-making power (Tibus, 2010).

2.10 Male versus Female Style in Leadership

In our society, women dominate leadership positions, which is a niche taken mainly by men. Women tend to be more direct, while men tend to be more indirect while considering the differences and similarities, or note behaviour and emotionality in how men and women manage this. Although the research mainly covers the differences between autocratic and democratic leadership styles between men and women, there is essential information about the differences between men and women in this area. This study would investigate the relationship between leadership styles relating to the gender of leaders while exploring the barriers and challenges. Women are different from men when people were facing the same position. It is not only that women face more obstacles to becoming leaders but also that women face different types of blocks in various leadership positions such as upper or lower management positions. Additionally, men face a different type of barrier such as competition to obtain the position, explore themselves further around others without being exposed emotionally and competing with new changes. Leadership styles are rarely discussed; instead, it is more focused on good behaviour in the workplace and successful leadership.

Different styles of leadership can make a difference because these styles determine whether or not people think that a woman should be the leader of the group. Another typical discussion of leadership is that women are more important than men, a tendency that is rooted in the usual gender difference in these roles. The differences in leadership styles are diverse enough to make women less available for positions such as the next president or executive, as women's empowerment is similar to the female leader's perceptions of similarity which is known as the 'power of diversity',

such as women's empowerment, gender equality and inter-group relationships. One of the reasons women feel superior is the relational qualities that women have, but men have not, thus made women behave and lead better. But the similarities and differences between them is not the main point here. While women are likely less than men to become leaders, which will lead to less workplace tension, they are more cooperative than men and less hierarchical in their leadership style. However, men and women have different social roles, for instance, in the family and employment place.

The main differences between men and women are that men are known to be assertive, dominating, independent, confident and competitive. Women are affectionate, kind, helpful, sympathetic, active and have a broad social network, a strong sense of fairness and respect and

sensitivity for others (Eagly, LCarli 2003). Because they have different characteristics, men and women try to be more competent in leadership roles by adopting each other's leadership styles. Women contribute to promoting the collective project through production, while men will reduce their contribution because the team works better. Female leaders provide more internal and external feedback than men and they offer various ways to enhance women's job responsibility.

Women tend to initiate and resolve conflicts twice as often as men. To understand how women interact and how are they are reacting towards the issues arising, we should consider that women are equalitarian. Women have a greater tendency to be supportive and cooperative, while their male counterparts tend to be self-assertive and competitive. Women are more likely to subconsciously desire leaders who are cooperative, empathetic and supportive. It is generally agreed that most women perceive leadership more as facilitation and organisation than as power and dominance (Fernando *et al.*, 2020). Men and women are equally effective leaders. In addition, female and male leaders are equally effective at managing conflicts. Women and men tend to be different in their levels of authority, authority and power and leadership and leaders must agree to the similarities to make this happen. Both, 'men and women who have female bosses are more collaborative and less aggressive than men' (H. Eagly, L. Carli, 2003).

Leaders of both genders seek consensus, emphasise team building, are more nurturing and empathetic and are more approachable than experienced managers. Regardless of how negative the behaviours turned out; each gender was often more positively rated for the same behaviours. More men have leadership roles, make more quality contributions, are more desirable for hiring, get a higher salary and are more responsible for holding the job. The opposite effect was seen by men who were rated as colder, less affectionate, less warm-hearted and less sensitive. The new women's degree of independence, assertiveness and competitiveness has woken the men of the world. When reminded of the fact of their equalitarian ideas, men will express a reduced sense of domination (Hodges, 2017). Leaders are expected to create an environment in the organisation that provides a high rate of learning and continuous improvement and to achieve these knowledge-based outcomes, a leader needs to have emotional intelligence and a self-training programme that includes self-awareness, listening, empathy, the ability to learn from others and to empower others (Abid *et al.*, 2021). Responsibility laws are very important in terms of nurturing individuals to become leaders, but they are also important for people to learn to respect one another and know how to relate to one another. Although men and women can secretly display individuality, assertiveness and

dominance and these traits are considered more masculine, they are often more socially permissible for men than women.

Based on the interpretation of this event, it is expected that the new leadership approaches will give women an advantage over their male counterparts. The shift to new leadership in more gender-reflective leadership is more complex, as the transformation is linked to the gender power dynamic, not just gender (H. Eagly, L. Carli 2003). Eagly and Karau (2002) argue that female leaders are less effective to the extent that leadership roles that are masculine oriented because: a) women became less effective to men as the number of male subordinates increased, reflecting on great approval for traditional gender roles; b) the comparatively more significant proportion of men among those whose data showed measures of effectiveness; c) women were noticeably less effective in military organisations, which is a predominantly male-dominated environment; and d) women's insignificance relative to men in middle-level leadership positions.

Influence of Saudi society's culture on the thinking of men and women.

The social environment in which children are born and live affects their culture, language, way of thinking and behaviour. Their behaviour and perceptions of what is around them are reflected in who they live with. Culture influences the nature of jobs related to an individual's sex and parents, teachers and educators affect men and women's socialisation from childhood. Individuals may experience pressure about how they are supposed to behave from the culture of the society in which they are raised. Hence, Saudi society is a male-dominated society. For example, many parents call their children 'the man of the house' especially when they are absent. Other types of people may create a conviction that women do not understand or are weaker. These are all individual examples and contexts and do not apply to all segments of Saudi society.

Alu (2019) argued that by looking at reality when working with some men, some women find the way they deal with them is difficult and impractical and this is primarily due to the upbringing they have grown up around. Also, some women may act very strictly or violently in front of men, which is all because of their environment, which reflects how they deal at work. Individuals coming from narrow cities or villages will behave differently to individuals from capitals when dealing with the opposite sex. The reason is what they learned through their childhood in terms of attitudes and ways of coping.

2.11 Leadership roles to be upheld at workplaces

Research has identified an inclination towards autocratic leadership (Zumbragel & Demmelhuber, 2020) in Saudi Arabia, which is slowly moving towards transformative and participative leadership (Alsubaie, 2021; Alharabi, 2020) as a process of change initiation in achieving the Vision 2030 objectives of gender equality and increased female participation in the economic sector. However, there is a wide range of challenges facing women in the workplaces, which include social, cultural, religious and family challenges (Alobaid *et al.*, 2021). However, increased female participation is one of the major initiatives identified for achieving economic empowerment, which is one of the major objectives of Vision 2030 (Al-Qahtani *et al.*, 2020). Given this context, it is essential to identify the roles of leaders and women in the workplace to increase participation and overcome gender inequality. The strong desire among the women to help their family members must be converted into opportunity by becoming a female entrepreneur. Becoming an entrepreneur can be easy for the current generation who have observed an era of socio-economic reforms where the contribution of women is increasingly acknowledged (Khan, 2020). This approach focuses on women becoming economically independent and leading the organisation with employees including both sexes, reflecting a role of social and motivational leader. Jamjoom (2020) presented the role of women leaders through various approaches of resistance to male domination in workplaces in Saudi Arabia. Firstly, using the body as a site of resistance in different ways such as body language; for example, resisting the traditional approach of women lowering their voice in front of men, or dress code expressing feminism through dress code such as a pink bag and pink dress representing women's participation and presence in the workplace). Secondly, focusing on the structural powers and different roles such as resisting male dominance, negotiating for women rights, resisting male barriers in presenting knowledge and information and resisting segregation. Thirdly, women should bend rules if they have to become leaders or follow male orders if they want to become administrators. Fourthly, and most importantly, persistence is the major attitude which women should carry forward for achieving gender equality (Jamjoom, 2020). All these aspects of resistance require transformative, participative, ethical and collaborative leadership at workplaces, requiring the roles of strategist, communicator, negotiator, innovator, coach, delegator, adaptor and networker.

2.12 Female Empowerment in Vision 2030

Previous Saudi cultural perspectives encouraged women to remain at home to serve their families and community without operating and working outside their homes. With all of this,

the religion of Islam and Saudi culture has not forbidden women from working as long as it consists of traditional Islamic views or Sharia law (Al-Otaibi, 2019). According to Al-Sheha (2000), Islamic law has never tried to prohibited women from their right to work or blend in different businesses. Instead, it has permitted women to conduct their businesses and financial issues according to their perspectives without any male guardian or supervision. However, these businesses must not conflict with the primary responsibilities and duties between men and society. Much of the Vision 2030 focus is on women's empowerment and women reaching a high leadership role, a massive development step that the country has recently witnessed. As an outstanding effort to create more job skills and to guarantee employment to both genders of Saudi citizens, the government and the new ruler has focused on the need to overcome the traditional rentier economy which has focused on the oil market and petrol and shift to a more diversified pattern of different fields (Alsharif, 2019).

One of the significant steps toward achieving the country development goal was to empower numerous Saudi women in different positions. Saudi women who constitute more than 50 per cent of the population in the country have been participating and contributing their needed skills and talents in the labour market but their representation was not sufficient. One of the principal themes that the National Transformation Programme (NTP) was to work on is the labour market's accessibility and attractiveness, which mainly focuses on overcoming the obstacles and challenges that leads to the development of the labour market faces for all divisions of society. This includes enhancing the culture of women's participation in the labour market and business fields, providing a possible suitable working environment for women and making the gender-related issues disappear.

In considering this theme, the government has acknowledged three main challenges that prevent women from contributing to their country's development and achievement. Firstly, the limited awareness of women's positive role in the labour market and their contribution to GDP. Secondly, the weak representation of women in leadership positions in all fields. Lastly, they undergo training and empowerment of female leaders to withstand future obstacle. Over recent decades, Saudi women had played a significant public and political role, which existed when Vision 2030 were announced in 2016 but the economic policies and social restrictions have rapidly shifted. Senior positions in business were filled by women, a significant step towards improving women's rights and opportunities. Increasing the number of women in the workforce and leadership was a part of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman's proposed

Vision reforms. The objective was to raise women's participation in the workforce from 22% to 30% by 2030.

According to the *Global Gender Gap Index 2016*, Saudi Arabia has achieved considerable improvement in the gender gap and is the fifth-most improved country globally in educational attainment (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). According to Al-Bakr *et al.* (2017), women's participation in the labour market has almost tripled over the last decade in the Kingdom, including engagement in the construction of country Giga projects such as NEOM, energy installations that have been previously only occupied by men (Mulligan, 2019).

2.13 Working under unspectacular circumstances – COVID 19

One of the most critical labour dilemmas under which most of the world's leaders have worked was the Coved-19 epidemic. This led to sharp changes in economic activity worldwide. In 2020, the epidemic spread in all countries which greatly affected the job market and global management. The hardest-hit sectors were those requiring intensive human contact, working together in offices and groups of people. IT-intensive activities have fared better, while other sectors such as tourism, transportation, services and construction haves rapidly changed and some businesses closed down. The Saudi authorities have implemented a set of measures to mitigate the economic damage, such as loosening monetary and macroprudential rules, injecting liquidity into the banking system and recent signs of improvement. Visible significant changes have been implemented, such as the number of jobs in the public and private sector have been reduced, a compulsory ban was imposed on shops and working hours, and precautionary restrictions were imposed on various sectors which led to pressure.

The International Monetary Fund in their recent GCC pandemic report has suggested that labour reforms will need to cut large wage premiums to encourage more citizens to work while enhancing teaching and learning skills. Continuing to increase women's participation in the workforce is essential because it will balance gender equality and the wage gap so that everyone can rise out of this pandemic.

As of 1 November 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases per 100,000 reached 1,000 in Saudi Arabia, which resulted in the country taking serious action towards national and credit growth. One of the arrangements that the country took was increasing VAT, which jumped to over 6 per cent as a result of the increase in the VAT rate from 5 per cent to 15 per cent at the beginning of July. As COVID-19 affected the labour market, the unemployment rate for nationals rose by 3.6 percentage points to 15.4 per cent in 2020.

2.14 Chapter summary

A review of the literature on the leadership renaissance in Saudi Arabia sets out how leadership is seen with a particular focus on women leaders in the Kingdom. The gaps in the literature could be divided into three areas for further study. Firstly, the place of values in the Saudi leader and leadership system's ambition in achieving the leadership position, which is implicit in the current research which examines these sources and the value creation process that helps Saudi leaders reach the desired positions they want to achieve. Secondly, while some research points to social issues affecting women's leadership, there is a need to understand actual social dynamics and, in the case of Saudi women leaders, cultural dynamics and social values. Achieving leadership possible for them needs to be explained and understood. Thirdly, focusing on Saudi Arabia by observing the current societal obstacles and challenges.

History lacks the presence of Saudi women in leadership roles. Women are considered influential leaders based on their ability to handle situations effectively, politely and ethically. Saudi women also tend to adapt to changes in the regulatory environment because they are more flexible and empathetic and to improve women's leadership in regions where Saudi women previously have had limited freedom which is challenging on multiple levels. Reforms need to support women in leading roles. Great importance has been given to women's traditional role in the Kingdom. However, this does not mean that women should adopt only traditional roles. If women are equipped with flexible employment options and supportive organisational designs, they will show more interest in pursuing excellence in careers. Another crucial factor in achieving gender parity in which men need to play an essential and supportive role in women's leadership in a male-dominated society. A few pioneering women will not be able to change the norms and develop the culture into something more suited to career orientation women. Understanding and high levels of commitment from the male leader is also an essential ingredient for change.

The Saudi government needs to pursue its attempts to motivate women at the grassroots level and in society as a whole. It needs investments in initiatives that ensure quality education for girls, and it must also ensure that organisations provide equal opportunities to work and an equal right to be rewarded appropriately. Saudi women have the confidence to take up leadership positions, however, culture and society have restricted them to traditional roles and thus they are unfamiliar with these roles and their requirements. It has also forced men to remain in the same traditional masculine role. Saudi women, although they increasingly work

outside the home, are most marginalised in their career opportunities and male dominance continues.

With increased employment of women, their male counterparts must be seen so that the gender gap is closed as joining the workforce can ultimately promote reform in culture and society in the Kingdom.

To explain the foundations of Saudi culture, specifically, the cultural representations of society, the Bourdieusian Theory of Symbolic Capital and Symbolism will be extended to deconstruct the cultural representations that influence the social structure, the obstacles and barriers of the community, the discrepancies in the way men and women are viewed in leadership by the framework which will be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The social dynamics of daily life activities and influences, in several ways through gender differences and small power contexts, allow for different normative types of capital power and hidden violence to be established. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how these influences can affect an individual's outcomes and their interactions within organisations and society. As this thesis takes a socio-cultural lens, the Pierre Bourdieu theoretical approach of symbolic capital and symbolic violence will be adapted through the leader's career investigations. This chapter will examine the French scholar Pierre Bourdieu's sociology and theoretical tools offered by his model, which can help to investigate and delineate the field of gender influences on leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia. The focus of this chapter will primarily be on the examination of two major Bourdieusian notions: symbolic capital and symbolic violence.

Moreover, these notions will be critically explored and elaborated upon through their influences on leaders of both genders, with special emphasis on how they have been developing their careers. Examples and illustrations will be drawn from the current studies and interpretations, that have been applied to Bourdieusian sociology. Other examples are drawn from the Saudi sociological context; Saudi contexts will also be used to illuminate the theoretical framework. This new generation of Saudi leaders, both men and women, have sustained careers in their senior management roles and positions despite all the changes and challenges that have occurred in their contemporary society. Bourdieu's notions of symbolic capital and symbolic violence with contemporary interpretations of personification will aid an analysis of these leaders' narratives regarding their own management experiences and careers. We argue that it might be an essential cultural resource through which leaders of both genders can develop and maintain their senior management functions. Returning to the objectives of this research stated in Chapter 1, the main research question is:

> RQ1: How do corporate managers and leaders in business organisations experience work and life in the rigidly masculine and patriarchal society within the Saudi Arabian context? To what extent does Bourdieu's theory apply to the case of gender in the workplace for leaders in Saudi Arabia?

Bourdieusian theory will provide an unexplored but powerful explanatory mechanism to advance our understanding of the complex and different ways that Saudi leaders in senior management roles can shape contemporary management discourses and practices. An introduction to field theory in general terms precedes a discussion of Bourdieu's work in

relation to fields. In particular, Bourdieu's work on the field of symbolic capital and symbolic violence will be discussed further. Several critiques and criticisms of Bourdieu's work will then be examined. These critiques examine Bourdieu's work in a broad sense, but the concluding paragraphs concentrate on critiques of his approach related to Saudi Arabian society and the leadership context associated with their own fields and outcomes. Furthermore, the critiques will observe how this theoretical framework is applicable to the workplaces of Saudi leaders while showing how this divide requires interrogation in the Saudi case. This chapter ends with a summary of the discussion and introduces several key concepts related to the research questions.

3.2 Understanding the Bourdieusian Concepts

Bourdieu published work spanning an extensive range of disciplines and topics including sociology, politics, education, work, economics, philosophy, language, literature and religion (DiMaggio, 1979, pp. 1460-1461; Calhoun et al, 1993, p.1).

Brubaker (1985) summarises the work of Bourdieu as:

> A wide-ranging body of work remarkable for its theoretical sophistication and for its ethnographic acuity and constituting one of the most significant of recent attempts to adapt the theoretical legacy of classical social theory to the empirical study, from a broadly critical perspective, of contemporary society (Brubaker, 1985, p.745).

Moreover, other authors have explored the relevance of Bourdieu's for work for social policy and social work practice as an attempt to make progress towards a 'culturally sensitive social work'. Houston argued that:

> By focusing on the relationship between agency and structure in such a fecund and challenging way, Bourdieu's theory enables practitioners to gain an in-depth understanding of the nexus constituting the person in society (Houston, 2002, p.163).

DiMaggio draws attention to Bourdieu's work in terms of it comprising an intense effort to define the symbolic mechanisms of domination and control through which the existing social order is preserved in pre-industrial and modern social systems. Bourdieu also sought to construct a generally applicable social practice that reveals legitimacy, the misidentification of power and hidden forces, which he believed were inherent in the majority of social systems (DiMaggio, 1979, p.1460). Bourdieu views society and class as a structure of social fundamentals and an objective network of positions related to cultural, social, economic and capital distribution across occupational status. One of Bourdieu's sociology theoretical

cornerstones is the idea of society as a plurality of social fields. Bourdieu's sociology aims to analyse the control mechanisms that control the objective structures of societal domains. As for societal actors, they are simply implementers of the control mechanism in an unconscious way. Therefore, they do not constitute a factual reality that sociologists can explore. Hence, these individuals reproduce the same class production, through their actions, which equates to the sum of the individual's strategies to face sudden or new situations. Individuals carry out social and political protests that express their conscious and reject their stance towards all forms of power and domination. An essential aspect of Bourdieu's notion of capital is the inseparability of capital from field and habitus. These three aspects of the theory represent the social arena in which practice takes place. Social products can be material and psychological; they include thoughts, actions, objects or any human activity product. One of the theoretical approaches of Bourdieu's sociology is the idea of society as a plurality of social fields. Bourdieu originally conceived of three forms of capital: economic, social and cultural. Later, a fourth form was introduced that became known as symbolic. Each social field has a unique profile, depending on its relative importance to each of the forms of capital advocated. Economic capital is simply money or wealth in all its transferable forms. Social capital concerns social relations and is represented by a person's network of friends and contacts. Symbolic capital began as the idea of artistic recognition and seemed to extend to notions of collective honours, prestige or the imbuement of standing. As this thesis is purely investigating Saudi society and sociology, it is crucial to explore the Bourdieusian approaches as following.

Habitus

Habitus is the way that society becomes placed in people in the form of lasting dispositions. Habitus has been criticised as 'a concept made to do an extraordinary amount of theoretical work' by Bourdieu (Brubaker, 1985, p.760). Joppke further argues that the habitus is a conceptual monster often applied in a blurred and metaphorical way (Joppke, 1986, p.61).

Bourdieu and Wacquant deal with some of these criticisms as an invitation to reflexive sociology (1992, pp. 22-23). Distinctly, Bourdieu acknowledges these attitudes and argues that 'the habitus does not follow or adhere to certain or specific laws or explicit rules but rather is completely ambiguous and this ambiguity determines by the individuals; as they determine one's normal relationship with the world' (Bourdieu, 1994: 78, Original Focus). The habitus structures inherent qualities of mind and character in an individual and is produced by the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence. This constitutes

several systems of durable and transposable dispositions (Achoui, 2009; Ali, 2009; Mellahi, 2006). Hence, the presence of habitus cannot be separated from the other two concepts: field and capital.

Field

The field is a structure consisting of agents and social sites; its locations are determined by the interaction between specific rules in the field, the nature of the agent (creation) and the capabilities: social, economic and cultural. Moreover, the field structure interacts with the other, and its structure is hierarchical; the most important part is the lowest area in terms of strength and class. Instead of limiting its analysis of social relations and social change within the framework of voluntary agency or the structural concept of the social class, Bourdieu uses the concept of the domain that connects the agency and the structure: one with a heterogeneous historical social arena in which people are circumvented and struggling in their quest for the required resources. Habitus works together in the context within the field. Bourdieu argues that these actions in the field are not a constant reflection of the existing positions. As a result, various theories call for us to take actions (Bourdieu, 2007; Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, and Virk, 2009, p.265) The context required the field with individual intervention to make habitus work; therefore, habitus needs the support of the symbolic capital that corresponds to the context so that the individual can 'participate and make a difference' to the field.

Individuals can shift their habitus much faster and can exercise the proper power to achieve their target in the desired area. Evidence shows that habitus often becomes individuals' unconscious powers to conduct their lives and societies (Bourdieu, cited in Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p.49).

Capital

Capital is seen as an asset of individual property rather than belonging to the entire society; it is derived primarily from one's social position and status. Members of a group can collaborate, connect and mobilise their resources with the group as a whole. According to Bourdieu, capital refers to social resources that may benefit and increase capital. Competing against the simplistic view of wealth as resources alone, Bourdieu (1986) introduces four forms of capital termed: economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. While economic capital is made up of properties, directly and indirectly, pertaining to money but institutionalised as property rights, cultural capital refers to an embodied state of dispositions of the mind and body involved in the objectified and institutionalised elements of cultural products qualifications (Bourdieu,

1986). Social capital refers to human networks of families, friends, co-workers or a neighbourhood group. Furthermore, the final source of symbolic capital is a form of legitimate recognition and prestige (Bourdieu, 1986).

3.2.1 Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is closely related to the concept of 'distinctions' resulting from capital or a product of qualification (Lee, 2010). Bourdieu also clarifies the characters, the characteristics and the attributes of classes (p. 337). Embodied symbolic capital of a person and groups often vary, separating dominant and subjugated classes. However, whereas a stratified social structure provides actors with rules under which they can live or the forms in which people view and behave, power differentials in the political and economic spheres affect stability and transmutations in society within the ruling class. As compared to these dominant classes, the dominated groups would spend their scarce resources in maximising their losses. These adaptation processes of the social system occur in this new situation and show that capital investments interrelate efficiency, exchangeability and convertibility. For example, obtaining a PhD degree can be seen as obtaining an institutionalised form of cultural capital that can be converted into economic capital as one uses it to become employed. Cultural resources can be viewed as economic benefits, qualifications and knowledge. Economic capital might be a sign of money, as someone spends a certain amount of money on capital, charitable or humanitarian operations. In the same way, the label of leader can be seen as a symbolic capital of recognition that can be turned into social capital. This process occurs when leaders and executives take advantage of their power related to their positions to secure more social resources or even to establish more comprehensive networking based on their high-end positions.

3.2.2 Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu (2001) refers to symbolic violence such as violence that is subtle and invisible even to its victims and those who impose this mechanism. Symbolic capital can be involved through purely symbolic ways of communicating and recognising (more precisely, misperception), perception or even feeling' (Bourdieu 2001 pp. 1-2). In this context, violence occurs when there is agreement on individuals and groups' subordination, and hierarchies of power oversee these actions. However, unlike acts of violence in which the perpetrator may be forced to suppress a previous social order that would have seriously offended them, symbolic violence takes a more subtle approach that focuses on social mores, or social norms, that many individuals seem to have forgotten or about which they are unaware. The individual believes

that this phenomenon resembles an organic phenomenon of people in terms of assimilating perceptions and acting through their socialisation experiences and progressing gradually to develop accepted ways of thinking and behaviour (Connolly and Healy, 2004). Symbolic violence from false naturalisation occurs when the dominant accepts the predominant viewpoint and apply it (Bourdieu, 2001).

When individuals experience violence, they still have to either act or accept, which allows them to re-enact the same violence (Clark, 2004). As previously described, introspective rumination is evident. Leaders can provide social and cultural insights that illuminate other contexts where the value of their appearance, knowledge, value, and power is built and adapted through social and cultural conventions. Philosophical ideas may represent the subtleties of embodying a human leader's capital through consumption. Such methods provide useful explanations of the leader's position, for example, and references to the situational contexts of violence against him or her are, in essence, subjugated, denigrated and potentially life-threatening. The Bourdieu concept will function as an analytical framework within Saudi leaders bilaterally portrayed as both symbolic capital and symbolic violence, based on the age of consumption in which the society and culture play a significant role in their context within their power.

3.3 Using Bourdieu's Concept of Social Capital, Habitus, and Field

The Bourdieusian approach covers three concepts: 'habitus', 'field' and 'capitals' (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 1990, 1993, 1998, 2001; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). These are rooted in Bourdieu's reflexive methodological approach that transcends the conflict between objectivism, the duality between individual agency and the social structure, and the material and symbolic characteristics of social life (Karakayali, 2004; Wacquant, 2006; Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002). Bourdieu's framework has been applied increasingly in management and organisation studies (e.g., Golshorki *et al.*, 2009; Gomez, 2010; Özbilgin, Küskü and Erdogmus, 2005; Özbilgin and Tatli, 2011; Tatli, 2011; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2009) and in entrepreneurship (e.g., Anderson, Drakopoulou-Dodd and Jack, 2010; De Clercq and Voronov, 2009; Karatas¸-Özkan, 2011; Karatas¸-Özkan and Chell, 2010; Patel and Conklin, 2009). Özbilgin and Tatli (2005) provide a multi-layered and relational analysis of Bourdieu's theory and its operationalisation within organisation and management studies. They demonstrate the interchange between individual choices, dispositions, capacity and strategies under causal structures and power relationships in organisational contexts.

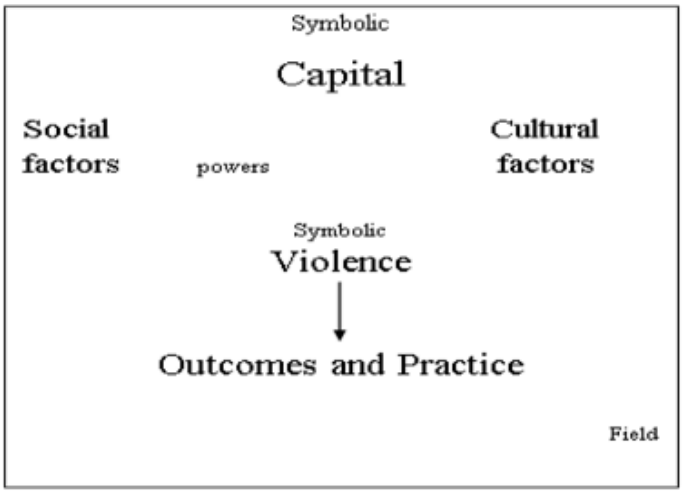

Figure 3-1. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and society, individual's attitude towards class production, through habitus. (Resource Bourdieu 2011vii.)

Bourdieu (1977, 1990) proposes habitus as a 'feel for the game' and emphasises its influence to help us understand what happens in practice as an outcome of the interplay between human agency and the underlying structures that procedure particular conditions, producing actions that extend the rules and the conditions (Schatzki, 1997).

Bourdieu argues that practice is:

> The product of a dialectical relationship between a situation and a habitus, which understood as a system of durable and transposable dispositions. Hence, which integrating all past experiences functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions, and make it possible to accomplish infinitely differentiated tasks, thanks to the analogical transfer of schemata acquired in prior practice (Bourdieu, 1977, p.261).

The habitus concept completes Bourdieu's theoretical triad and makes the truly unified and relational sociology of organisations possible. Such an approach can help us overcome several unfortunate dualisms in the literature, especially between micro-and macro-level research.

Habitus allows for:

> Understanding the subtle imposition of systems of meaning and power that legitimise and solidify structures of inequality – imbued with a form of domination and exercised upon a social agent with her or his complicity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.167).

Habitus refers to the values, dispositions, and expectations of particular social groups, acquired through everyday life activities and experiences. These continuing dispositions produce cognitive structures that create and organise practices, which can be objectively adapted to their outcomes subconsciously. Those practices might progress and be dominated by particular social groups who look to impose their habitus. Bourdieu's account of symbolic violence

(Bourdieu, 2000, 2001; McNay, 1999; McCall, 1992; Weininger, 2002) is potentially relevant in studying social phenomena from a gender perspective; revealing power relations masculine domination in a field such as corporate leaders.

Thus, a gendered field is cast within a male social order or habitus that is difficult to penetrate by women. Bourdieu (2001, p.9) underscores this by showing how the social order functions as an immense symbolic machine that tends to ratify masculine domination. Several researchers have used Bourdieu's sociology to clarify gender differences in social phenomena. McNay's (2004) research explores gender as a lived social relation, focusing on relational experience. McNay proposes links between identity and overt and covert forms of power relations, conceptualising gender as an abstraction, as a lived social relation that involves conflict, negotiation and tension. West and Zimmerman (1987) propose 'doing gender', acknowledging the gender's situated and processual properties that include socially guided political perceptual, interactional, and activities that shape specific pursuits as masculine and feminine expressions.

Gender is understood to be a powerful ideological device produced and reproduced in social situations as the interactional scaffolding of social structure and the social control processes that sustain it. Bradley (2007) highlights the importance of multilayering of gendering: macro (broader social networks), meso (institutional rules) and micro (individual actions) dimensions. These dimensions address the relationship between agency and structure, which is dealt with through the concepts of habitus and field in Bourdieu's social theory. Habitus (as a style of engagement expressed in practices) is embedded in a field, which refers to a dynamic social space (Chia and Holt, 2006, p.645). The field of forces or context in which perceived institutional situations are framed and the symbolic nature of requisite capitals are objectified in the schemata of the agents, who compete for different forms of capitals that influence their positions and power (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 1990; Moi, 1991; Tatli, 2011; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2011). Bourdieu describes the intellectual field as the 'matrix of institutions, organisations, and markets in which symbolic producers, such as artists, writers, and academics, compete for symbolic capital' (Swartz, 1997, pp. 117–118). Discourses are instrumental in perpetuating the governing logic and structures of social practice and legitimising relations of power and domination (Swartz, 2008; Tatli, 2011).

The exchange between habitus and field is a 'quasi-politically textured process of existential negotiation for relative symbolic advantage' (Marcoulatos, 2003, p.74), which is not a simple interaction. Domination activities towards men and women are reproduced within actual social

practices (Bruni, Gherardi and Poggio, 2004; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Gherardi and Poggio, 2007; Murgia and Poggio, 2009); this is habitus. Habitus yields a more dynamic concept that is central to understanding the gendered nature of the social practice. In contrast, the concept of field provides a nuanced analysis of the social context in which the reflexive transformation of gendered discourses, power relations, competition for capital accumulation and, hence, position-taking and social practices unfold. Feminist critiques of Bourdieu's theory note that most of his writings deal with social processes from the perspective of class rather than gender (Adkins, 2004; Moi, 1991, 1999). Several researchers argue that gender should be conceptualised as a part of Bourdieu's general social field. Moi (1999, p.2888) highlights the concept that gender should be considered 'as a particular combinatory social category; one that infiltrates and influences every other category.'

Furthermore, researchers have also criticised Bourdieu's theory regarding its limitations in explaining social transformation and contemporary processes of individualisation involving complex new modes of gendered differentiation (Adkins, 2004). Witz (2004) identifies Bourdieu's theory as a social approach to be adapted and questions how gender relations in society are contemporarily differentiated, and heterodox based on an anthropological of an undifferentiated society and a heterodoxy established based on the anthropology of an undifferentiated society. Bourdieu distinguishes another form of capital symbolic capital when he refers to the legitimised cultural, moral and ethical values, standards, and styles (Bourdieu, 1986; Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995). Bourdieu (1998, p.47) stresses symbolic capital as an amalgamation and the situated value of all other forms of capital upon which individuals draw. Three forms of capital (i.e., economic, cultural and social) become socially effective as resources, and their ownership is legitimised, through the mediation of symbolic capital, which can be considered as the symbolic capital of establishing legitimacy and credibility as an entrepreneur, in the entrepreneurial team and through the legitimacy of the new venture. A study by De Clercq and Voronov (2009) examines the role of cultural and symbolic capital in entrepreneurs' ability to legitimise their identity and entrepreneurial practices and acquire resources. They claim that entrepreneurs' cultural and social capital can be instrumental in navigating the possible conflicting demands for conformity (to fit in the field) and innovation. Bourdieu's concept of social capital emphasises conflicts and power functions as social relations that increase the ability of an actor to advance her or his interests (Siisiainen, 2000, p.2) Compared with Putnam's (1993) conceptualisation of social capital, which has three components that are namely moral obligations and norms, social values and social networks,

the focus in terms of Bourdieusian perspective is on the social struggles of individuals in a field. In other words, social capital becomes a resource in the social and economic efforts that are carried out in different social arenas or fields (Siisiainen, 2000). Bourdieu views all organisational power relations as based on symbolic violence, which is the imposition of and misrecognition of arbitrary power relations (e.g., class, gender, race) as natural relations. Bourdieu argues that symbolic violence would be recognised in its objectified form. Thus, symbolic violence in daily life may be represented in three forms, which include: a) physical objects, such as cars, ornaments or buildings; b) as diplomas, certificates, passports and other examples of cultural capital; c) incorporated in people as 'habitus' (Wacquant, 2002, pp. 32–3).

Moreover, the objectified symbolic violence concept allows the researcher to analyse power at the level of 'the cultural conflicts of everyday life' (Wacquant, 2002, p.32–3). The concept of field is also associated with the symbolic violence concept. Bourdieu (1991) would define this as 'certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space' (Bourdieu, 1991, p.215). For Bourdieu, a field consists of 'a set of objectives, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.16). Therefore, Bourdieu uses the concept of field to refer to a social and historical space in which individuals, with possibly different upbringings and backgrounds (and habitus), interact within the parameters or boundaries of the particular rules of the game that regulate the ways individuals behave and interact in that social space (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu further argues that to function well in a social space, individuals need to acquire different forms of capital to negotiate and create their positions in a specific field. Therefore, while conceivably eventually the most important aspect, economic capital (material possessions and so on) is not the only type of capital that functions in the social world. Bourdieu demonstrates that other types of capital, such as cultural capital (skills, knowledge, and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications), symbolic capital (accumulated prestige or honour), and social capital (the networks a person can draw on as a resource) are also significant in getting on and getting by both professionally and personally.

3.4 Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Capital and Violence of Gender

The concept of capital was once considered exclusively as an economic asset. However, Bourdieu reinterprets the notion of capital as having the power to determine social forms (Bourdieu, 2003). As a result, Bourdieu (1980) reinterprets the concept of capital concerning a

pluralistic reading; he additionally redefines other forms of capital based on their social purpose, which leads to a system of reciprocal actions. Therefore, Bourdieu (1980) provides an understanding of capital concerning the fields of political, social and economic relations (Özbilgin and Tatli, 2011). According to Bourdieu, the perspective of culture would be seen as non-material acquisitions, such as knowledge attained via family, school or the social environment. The economic capital of money would be noticed as an accrued and market-oriented asset that might be gathered and organised as a domination strategy at individual and class levels. Moreover, social capital is the network of relationships enjoyed by an individual and the networking that those individuals contribute. Therefore, it can play an essential role in social position. Every individual is born into a culturally determined circle of socialisation habitus to which he/she continuously will add new components in order to enrich the cultural capital in both structured layers and class characteristics, within specific individual ways.

The latter refers to a system of cultural acquisitions that can be militarised as symbolic tokens (including prestige and reputation) for reaching more diverse and productive resources (Bourdieu, 2003). Bourdieu highlights the concept that all types of capital harmoniously function symbolically because of their ability to be adapted into symbolic forms of domination. Within this framework, Bourdieu (1994, 1998) defines symbolic capital as 'the collection of resources and the sum of an individual's symbolic cultural acquisitions (diplomas, titles, affiliations, etc.), which are mobilised to accrue meaning, value and power. Symbolic capital in the case of a zero-sum social game, in which there are clear winners and losers, results in symbolic violence, a form of penalty that losers experience in the game.' Bourdieu (2001) defines symbolic violence as 'the downgrading of one's symbolic value, worth, resources and skills.' He highlights that symbolic violence is an 'omnipresent ideology' that is deeply embedded in social action. In other words, symbolic violence is 'an alternative tool in understanding and analysing legitimate domination' (Robinson and Kerr, 2009, p.881).

In the words of Bourdieu:

> The effect of symbolic domination, whether it is based on ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic distinctions, is exerted not in the pure logic of consciousness but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the level of the consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself (Bourdieu, 2001, p.37).

The Role of Bourdieu's Theoretical Framework in the Research

Bourdieu's theoretical framework's role is to orientate the research to the macro-features of the leader's equivalence in the workforce, observing the existence of hidden powers, and informing and guiding the micro features of the research (see Chapter 4). Hence, Bourdieu's theory intends to help clarify what Alexander *et al.* (1987) call the 'micro-macro link' in which the 'lived experience' of participants 'on the ground' is not only understood for its own sake but is also brought into productive engagement with the historical and structural features of gender inequality in the Saudi leaders' context. Hence, this present study does not test a theory in order to falsify it (Popper, 2002). However, this would imply the prioritisation of the theoretical framework over the empirical research and the sociology of the social structure, namely the *macro* over the human agency of the *micro*.

One of the critiques of Bourdieu's work is that it constitutes 'abstract social structuralism' (Pollert, 1996). Bourdieu's social structuralism contains significant presuppositional shifts. The change from rule-following to rule-breaking is motivated by the insight that social actors do not always follow the rules imposed upon them by their social environment, which shifts from rule-following to rule-breaking, reflecting an assumption that human actors do not always accept the rules dictated by their environment.

The shift from structure to action is justified considering that social structures cannot exist without social action; society's possibility is contingent upon the constant interplay between the social network and social activity. This interplay between form and social action is necessary to allow for social structures to be possible.

By conducting interviews with male and female leaders, this thesis will show the schemes of actions, perceptions and appreciation constitutive of capital ideology and the taken-for-granted structure of the Saudi leaders, daily acts of life, rapid experiences and structural forms. This framework will also reveal how such structures and threads are reproduced and preserved, especially those threads that link broader social structures (such as ideology and the state) to cognitive structures of gender concerning symbolic arrangements (Everett, 2002). Both women and men accumulate symbolic capital to reach a certain level or to maintain their leadership status at the corporate level. Simultaneously, for both men and women, the domination structure appears self-evident, natural, and legitimate as an outcome of the operation of symbolic capital and violence (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008). Additionally, by observing the symbolic violence and hidden power, such a concept will enable the researcher to explain

further how these dominants can maintain and reproduce these structures by their actions in the field (Bourdieu, 2001). Furthermore, the concept of symbolic violence will reveal how this dominant act will affect hegemony and how they conform to or maintain these values intentionally or unintentionally (Corsun and Costen, 2001; Forbes, 2002). This study will examine gender as symbolic capital and symbolic violence, which women and men both experience to different degrees, depending on the nature of the context and relations in their pursuit of leader status in corporate circles.

Consequently, in agreement with the research objectives, the research will undertake a relational perspective; relations and context take precedence in understanding gender issues (Husso and Hirvonen, 2012; Karataş-Özkan and Chell, 2015; Ross-Smith and Huppatz, 2010; Tatli, 2011). In this thesis, the focus will be on society links as the core of the relational approach to give in-depth meaning and vitality to gender relations in the unique Saudi society context.

3.5 Structure and Habitus in Relation to Individuals' Practices

in terms of the structure of the relationship between habitus and practices on individuals in the society, Bourdieu's main argument is that power is culturally and symbolically created and continuously reinforced through an interplay of agency and structure through the habitus and through socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking, which influence the individual's identity, actions and choices (Bourdieu, 1994). The habitus involves dispositions, the way that individuals behave, act and think due to the way that they are habituated; it is attained unconsciously through socialisation, their family, school, education and cultural background. Bourdieu (1994) distinguishes two lenses of habitus: the habitus of class and the individual habitus. The habitus of a class is the idea of the classification of individuals, having communal dispositions in their lifestyle, and having shared orientation through their shared habitus; the class habitus is not about individual choice and options but rather it is more of a collective in reality (Bourdieu, 1994).

In distinguishing the individual habitus, Bourdieu described further that the individuals have their own habitus and are related to a specific class; the individual habitus is the singular composition of the different collective. Individuals could be anyone in the society acting as workers or bosses either young or old, male or female, and each individual will have different characteristics because they are coming from a different habitus of class. Furthermore, these individuals have characteristics that will combine later on to produce habitus. Habitus is known

as a historical product; it produces unique and collective practices under the schemes generated by history. Bourdieu argues further those systems of 'present past' reinforce the active presence of past experiences instilled in an organism through thought, perception and action. This ensures the righteousness of practices and their constancy over time; this tends to be more reliable than all the formal rules and explicit norms. These dispositions are shaped by past events and structures; they shape current practices and structures and condition our perception. The habitus characteristic is not fixed or permanent and can be changed under certain conditions or over a long time.

The habitus is internalised as second nature and gives practices their relative autonomy, making the individual an agent in the world. This imminent law inscribed in the bodies by identical histories is the pre-conditions for the coordination of practices and practices of coordination (Bourdieu, 1994). Through habitus, agents shape their aspirations according to the chance of accessing a particular good and in terms of motivations and needs. As the possibilities and impossibilities durably shape the agents' dispositions, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in their objective conditions that generate essence objectively compare these conditions and, in a sense, pre-adapt to their demands. The relation to what is possible is a relation to power. The habitus protects itself or at least protects the individual concerned in a sense by favouring experiences that are likely to reinforce it. This selective perception reinforces the habitus rather than transforming it. The habitus adjusts itself to the probable future that it anticipates and helps bring it about because it leads directly into the presumed world's presence. Therefore, the realistic relation to what is possible is founded on and limited by power: 'the habitus itself formed by a system of power'. The way that society becomes deposited in people in the form of lasting dispositions, propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, inclines the agent to 'cut their coats according to their cloth' and become the accomplices of the process. Bourdieu (1994) suggests in his habitus theory that categories are collective representations; they are a product of society, so society has played a significant role in reaching this current phase. People collectively constitute society, but they come before any particular person's experiences because of the cultural phenomenon. In mechanical solidarity, there is mass production, every individual is similar, and in mechanical solidarity there is a conscience collective which englobes society's consciousness. In organic solidarity, there is space for evolution, development or organisms and managing complexity, and the conscience collective takes on a different character, depending on the division of labour.

3.6 Leaders' Ideology of Symbolic Capital and Symbolic Violence

Different leaders utilise different types of capital for improving their leadership qualities in different contexts. Salehi *et al.* (2021) identified that competencies are the most important symbolic capital of the leaders in organisations, followed by output and organisational honours. Combining these capitals with other capitals such as advertisement and personal branding can help in creating social capital (trust and support) among the followers (Salehi *et al.*, 2021).

Bekus (2021) in a different context identifies that the symbolic capital of mnemonics in enhancing international standing and prestige among leaders reflects their personal capabilities such as memory and can also influence the process of becoming a leader. This is the case not only in terms of their respective capabilities, but also in terms of education which can become symbolic capital for leadership. For instance, English-educated people were considered as ready-made leaders in the student police cadet in Kerala as observed by Chacko (2020). In addition, the career capital of the followers is one of the major aspects that needs to be considered by the leaders (Brown *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, leaders consider their own symbolic capital and their followers' capitals in maintaining their positions and in decision-making. Considering the cultural and religious contexts, Bettiza (2020) identifies that some countries such as India, Saudi Arabia and Israel have sacred capital (significant religious resources by virtue of hosting the historical, cultural, and institutional centres of major faith traditions and communities), which can be used as a means of influence in different contexts. Similarly, leaders can use the sacred capital in either positive or negative ways at a workplace, which can have a significant impact on the outcomes. In Saudi Arabia, a conservative country with great importance given to religion and culture, it may be possible that sacred capital could be one of the important resources of influence for the leaders. Toxic leadership is another important aspect that can act as a threat to the well-being of people in a workplace (Mergen and Özbilgin, 2020). It can be adopted using Bourdieu's concept of illusion to attain and retain followers. Therefore, the ideology of symbolic capital carried by the leaders would define their success and the well-being of their followers in the workplace and at an organisational level.

Symbolic violence is another factor that leaders might unknowingly adopt in their daily lives. However, there can be various influencing factors for developing the ideology of symbolic violence by the leaders. For instance, emotions are identified as having a strong influence on authentic leadership (Alshammari *et al.*, 2020); using emotions (appraisal of others' emotions) and making employees work more for the same level of pay are forms of violence that are not known to either employees or managers. Moreover, some types of symbolic violence are rooted

in organisational culture and human behaviour. For instance, Schlamp *et al.* (2021) identify that although both men and women exhibit the same amount of agentic and communal task- and relations-oriented communication and are equally eligible to emerge as leaders, men experience an emergent leadership advantage. Similar to sacred capital, Al-Eid *et al.* (2020) identify that a leader's spiritual intelligence and religiousness can affect their performance, indicating the impact of socio-cultural beliefs on the leadership style. For instance, Jamjoom (2020) in a study state that 'majlis or diwaniya' (a large reception room that is used for male gatherings), an important part of Saudi men's culture into which women cannot enter, is being used in Saudi Arabian organisations. This approach, although guided by the culture, is infringing the rights of women employees in taking part in the important meetings and discussions being carried out in diwaniya. In addition to male dominance in Saudi Arabia, the cultural and traditional practices are also leading to symbolic violence on women at workplaces. Thus, it can be observed that the leaders' ideology of symbolic violence on women at the workplace is deeply rooted in religious and socio-cultural traditions in Saudi Arabia.

3.7 Saudi Society Characteristic and Cultural View

Saudi society is characterised by a strong family culture that allocates different gender roles to men and women. In the past, Saudi society used to underestimate women's value in the workplace and culture, and the institutional and systematic exclusion of women's work viewed it as less than that of men in society. Patriarchy can be defined as:

> A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women, and is particularly reflected in various social and institutional settings, for example, capitalism, work, the state, gender, culture and violence (Elbby, 1990, p.20).

Nevertheless, patriarchy can provide an illustrative institutional and cultural blueprint in gender relations and substantial incentive success in many matters. In recent years, the characteristics of Saudi society have changed profoundly. Since the death of the former ruler, King Abdullah in 2015, radical changes and challenges have swept through the country under the new leadership with a different vision for the country in 2030, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has tried hard to portray a new image of itself to the world. The government has been among the pioneers and supporters of these changes and reforms. Prince Muhammad bin Salman expresses the country's desire to return to moderate Islam as contemporary Saudi Arabian Islamic practices have allegedly been hijacked since 1979. He alleges that Islamic practice at the beginning of the Kingdom was different from today and expresses the opinion that the

country should return to more moderate Islam characteristics and be open towards all faiths. He stated that:

> We believe the practice today in a few countries, among them Saudi Arabia, it's not the practice of Islam. It's the practice of the people who have hijacked Islam after '79. And also, it's not the practice of the social life in Saudi Arabia even before '79. And even it's not aligned with the idea of Saudi Arabia that it's a country following the religion of Islam from the first Saudi Arabia. You see the idea that the first Saudi Arabia tried to tackle. For Islam, it's totally different from what the extremists are trying to promote today (Time Magazine, 2018).

The notion of returning to the original form of Saudi Arabian Islamic identity co-occurs with the social and financial reform projects launched as 'Vision 2030' by the Crown Prince, requiring massive foreign investments and international goodwill. The idea of returning to the original Saudi Islamic identity coincides with the social and financial reform projects launched by the Crown Prince in the name of 'Vision 2030', which require massive foreign investment and international goodwill. The current Saudi affairs present a fruitful case for exploring the concepts of tradition and traditionalism concerning: modernity, modernisation, and challenging the overly divided concepts of modernity. They are inherently inconsistent with the promotion of religious values and constitutional provisions. It was conceived as the pursuit of human freedoms, the enhancement of the range of options, and the individual's ability to assume responsibility for oneself (Madan 1987, p.748). Traditions have been perceived as being in opposition to the values of modernity. Current developments in Saudi Arabia provide exciting insights into the complex interrelationship between religion and modernity at the state level by discussing the visions and flaws of older and more recent formulations of modernisation theory in relation to state changes and by combining more recent and comprehensive theories such as post-Islamism. Furthermore, the current thesis aims to provide a better understanding of the achievement among gender practices within cultural influences and social aspects, experiencing work and life family relationships since the initiation of the new reform, agendas of modernisation and empowerments by:

1. Observing religion and traditional paths in the current reform project of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and 'Vision 2030' within the Saudi leadership.

2. Witnessing the nature of the family and societal system in Saudi Arabia; this thesis will shed light on the occurrence of capital as a resource and violence as a strategy and power among the most economically pioneering leaders in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has historically bureaucratised its institutions while maintaining its core nature of traditionalism, which will be explained further in the following text.

Modernity and Traditionalism

Modernisation in Saudi Arabia occurred based on economic development, bureaucratisation and the centralisation of power. Hence, this state has realised the need for financial and administrative modernisation. Therefore, it created and institutionalised modern education, political and economic systems to shift from the tribal political union into modern statehood (Quamar, 2015, p.72). Even so, the state remained loyal to the traditional and religious doctrine to maintain the subjects' allegiance (Commins, 2006, p.106). Commins, argues that there were several aspects to the Saudi Arabian modernisation, which was political, where modern institution-building served non-liberal modernist objectives (Commins, 2006, pp. 109-110).

Therefore, Saudi Arabia has historically bureaucratised its institutions while maintaining its core nature of traditionalism. A critical case concerns the women driving ban issued in 1957; no moral law stipulated this ban. This issue has been addressed by the majority of human rights organisations and most countries in international forums. The driving ban was lifted only during September 2018 after 61 years. Previously, women were not allowed to drive and had their families hire private chauffeurs, or a male family member drove them. Another critical scenario involves hiring male managers even in women's fields such as in girls' universities and schools. Female sub-managers working under the male hierarchy would update the male managers periodically without making any decisions on their behalf; today, these full male dominance scenarios have rapidly changed within the society view.

Saudi Arabian Modernisation

Islam has an enormous influence on the essence of the Saudi people's society in most aspects of life; all is based on the religious impact, including values, beliefs, behaviours, rules and morals. Community and business relationships are based on Islamic principles (Aseri, 2015). It is believed that two main extents shaped the Saudi culture: Bedouin culture with its tribal traditions, customs and values, and Islamic culture in terms of modernism and development. During the 1950s, Saudi Arabia experienced an oil revenue boom; oil has been a contributing factor in allowing Saudi Arabia to be an active member of the globalised economy. Hertog (2010) explains the influence of the oil boom on the process of bureaucratisation. Furthermore, he demonstrates how the Saudi state modernised when relying on natural resources as its primary income source. As predicted, massive capital availability led to a reduced ability to

build legal and rational institutions, hence restoring uncontrolled expenditure, which again led to inefficient state institutions (Hertog, 2010, p.49).

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia sought modernisation, as the relationship between modernising the state and other social influences became more complex over time. This led the government to be keen on reforms and their role within the economy, labour and religious aspects of society (Nevo, 1998, p.36).

Saudi Arabian National Identity

Nevo (1998) argues that religion as an identity often diverges; it has been used to forge a Saudi Arabian national identity. Throughout the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it has become more recent to have, on paper, modernity and religion/sharia merging into the same state. This blend of religion and state was appropriate for establishing the modern Saudi Arabian state identity, as there is an absence of other types of unifying identities (Nevo, 1998, p.34). The Saudi society comprises religious and political elites' and leaders' cooperation with symbiotic dependence that builds an intense scene of religious discourse and politics developed over a number of years (Alsaif, 2013, p.376).

3.8 Symbolic Capital and Violence and Gender in a Saudi Context

Symbolic violence is defined as the power exercised by individuals and groups against others due to their higher position in a society's social structure. Symbolic violence does not necessarily require holding onto physical violence and those considered inferior accept it as if it were an ordinary matter. Symbolic violence does not necessarily need visible physical violence to be upheld and those deemed defective receive this as though it were natural. According to Hofstede, Saudi society represents a highly masculine society; historically, it has been known as a very masculine-based society and context until recently as the regulations have slightly changed within the past few years (Hofstede, 1981, 1990, 2001, 2018). Kanter argues that the male moral image associated with managers' and leaders' early vision accompanied by their careers would not be necessarily related to ideas about themselves but is adopted by the way they lead and manage. This masculine ethic elevates the characteristics believed to belong to certain men as requirements for successful management. These characteristics include a tough-minded approach to problems, analytic abilities to abstract and plan, a capacity to set aside personal emotional concerns in the interests of mission accomplishment, and a cognitive dominance in problem-solving and decision-making. Consequently, Kanter adds:

> When women tried to enter management jobs the 'masculine ethic' was invoked as an exclusionary principle (Kanter, 1993, p.22).

O'Kane (2010) states that the Saudi business structure is traditionally based on family-dominated ownership and management, maintaining family and family-related values above any professional demands. Families own and keenly control the majority of trading corporations. However, Saudi Arabia has a patriarchal nature in terms of family businesses as men have easy access to the upper echelons. Therefore, gender has a fragmented nature in terms of symbolic violence and symbolic capital. Besides the patriarchal features of Saudi society, it is also essential to consider the Saudi management culture's paternalistic characteristics. In terms of the cultural aspect, paternalism regulates the relationship between the superior and the subordinate. Consequently, it is expected that superiors will make decisions concerning their subordinates' welfare. In response, associates are expected to obey and to show commitment and respect to their leaders (O'Kane, 2010). Paternalism's roots can be positioned in patriarchy and feudal relationships. Due to the growth of family businesses and the state's traditional decisive role, one can argue that this can strengthen Saudi business management's paternalistic approach. Furthermore, paternalism is directly associated with family ideology in Saudi organisations, where the superior is likely to be a father, a close friend or a brother (O'Kane, 2010).

However, according to Burton (2016), due to the nature and the recent growth of organisations, businesses also need companies to professionalise and recruit professional management (Ali, 2006). Therefore, managers are recruited from among those who are well-known and close to the family due to their long-standing relationships (Yıldırım-Öktem, 2010). Human resource management and employee selection practices in Saudi Arabia are influenced by several factors ranging from nepotism, lack of qualified employees, political considerations and rigid bureaucracy, to the growth in the number of state and private organisations that have increased since the 1970s (Achoui, 2009; Ali, 2009; Mellahi, 2006).

Furthermore, this also shows the unique structure of family ideology and its conflict with professionalism, governance and society in big businesses in Saudi Arabia. One of the essential solutions to solve this conflict is education, which can play a significant role in becoming a professional manager and serves as a vital form of capital that can be mobilised to join the experienced leaders in Saudi businesses. As a result, most of the founders or senior owners of Saudi holding corporations usually want their children to have a graduate degree and similarly highlight the importance of symbolic capital among the leaders. At present, it is above all

essential to remember the call of Broadridge and Simpson (2011) to examine the relationship between gender, hierarchy and power while uncovering seemingly neutral and legitimate gendered practices embedded in the values and traditions in the context of Saudi Arabia.

Although most studies on gender at work have focused on the paradox of women on either side of the educational spectrum (Tatli *et al.*, 2008), little attention has been paid to the privilege and penalty accorded to both men and women in the Saudi boardroom or to corporate leaders. Moreover, this research will address this gap and focus on gender privilege (capital) and penalty (violence), rather than ignoring the complexity of gender by simply attributing privilege to men and disadvantage to women. Bourdieu does not embrace much of his research specifically about women or gender although most of his writings are framed pre-eminently in class or society. Until 1990, Bourdieu drew upon his ethnographic research on the Bedouin Kabyle; the study he adapted on North Africa show how 'masculine domination assumes an intuitive, Normal, obvious status by its enrolment in social structures' objective structures, which are then embodied and replicated in the habits of individuals' (McNay, 2000, p.37).

Symbolic violence is imperceptible, insidious and invisible. Invisibility constitutes a useful tool of silent domination and silencing the dominated. Bhambra and Shilliam (2009) argue that dominant discourses at work often work to silence all other peripheral or subaltern addresses, and silence is not overcome simply by allowing the subaltern to speak or voice their concerns. Such acts are futile in overcoming the silence. Instead, systemic/structural change needs to occur to ensure that they are heard and accorded agency. It is about identifying the structural complicity in silencing particular sections of society. Moreover, with recognising the workings of institutional silencing, Bhambra and Shilliam (2009, p.6) suggest that 'silencing also operates in the very construction of our reality by framing dialogues of inter-subjectivity that one particular voice becomes monolithic and thus naturalised'.

The language itself is a form of domination. Language can constitute violence and be co-constituted by it. Language includes and excludes, it frames discourses which social reality is constructed, and consequently has implications for power. The domination that arises from symbolic violence is less a product of direct coercion, but more a product of when those who are dominated stop questioning the order of things; they stop questioning existing power relations as they perceive the world and the state of affairs in social activity as a natural given and unchangeable aspect. Yet, at the same time, individuals do not question their role in the

production and reproduction of domination and subordination (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Symbolic violence and domination are exercised over individuals through everyday social habits; it is generated through the 'subtle inculcation of power relations upon individuals' bodies and dispositions' (McNay, 1999, p.99). Therefore, symbolic violence can occur through the mundane processes and practices of our everyday lives. To gain a depth understanding of the Bourdieusian phenomenon in the context of Saudi Arabia and within the leader's characteristics inside the organisation, it is necessary to explore its context (Bryman, 2001; Cassell and Symon, 1994). This thesis's targeted context is Saudi Arabia, which is significantly influenced by the Islamic religion and oriental culture.

Furthermore, religious belief and cultural values inform how individuals in Saudi Arabia act. This thesis seeks to understand Saudi Arabia's culture, which is typically known as an Islamic-based culture and influences, to establish whether organisations' perceptions of their fundamental cultural diversity might hamper individuals' behaviour or even inspire them further. Based on the Bourdieusian approach, a framework based on the related context has been developed, as figure 3.2 shows, to explore what would be an influence on the Saudi context in which the research will take part. This can be achieved by adapting the Bourdieusian approach and observing the:

Legal factors; As the social observation of laws and regulations towards essential rights.

Socio-cultural factors; Cultural and Saudi factors that lead to social inhibitions and limitations.

Traditional gender roles in the society and related obstacles.

Gender and Patriarchy

The easiest way to observe gender issues is through the practice of patriarchy, which prevails in most countries around the world. Patriarchy is understood as a government system where men control society through their positions as the head of the family (Weber, 1947 cited in Walby, 1990, p.27). As a result, the other family members worship the head of the family, namely the father, who possesses the highest authority. Patriarchy is a socio-political system

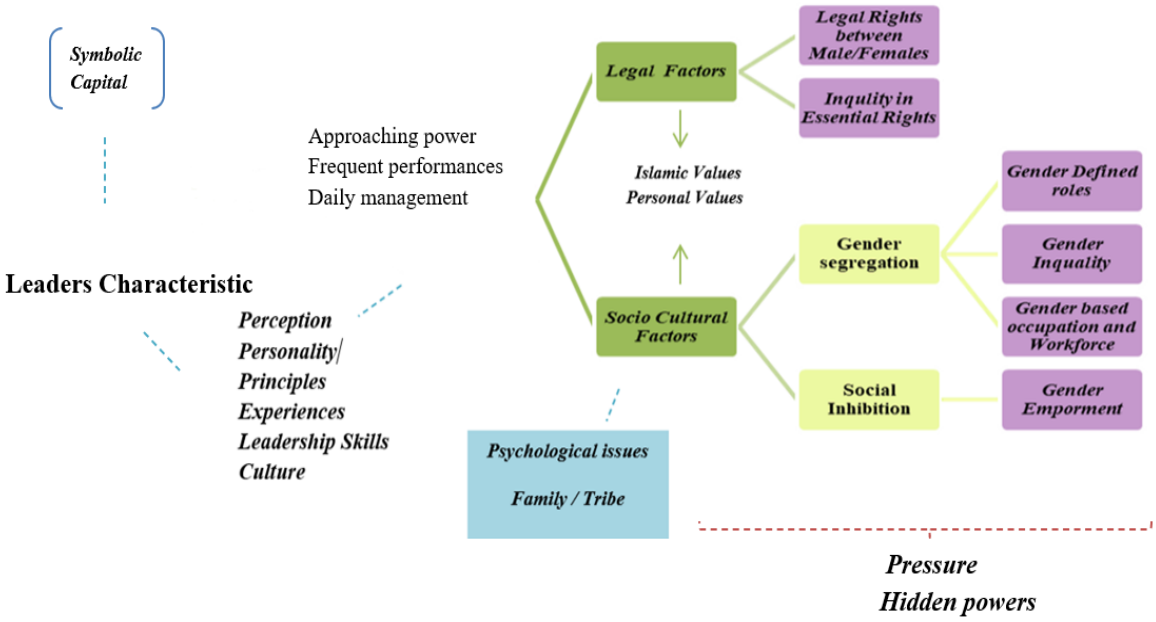

Figure 3-2. Contextual framework

that places men in the dominant position, making them more superior in every aspect to those who are regarded as weak, particularly women. Therefore, men think that they are entitled to make rules for the weak and always preserve their domination through psychological terrors and violence (Hooks, 2016). Weber as cited in Walby (1990, p.27) illustrates the concept of patriarchy as a governmental system where men control society through their position as the head of the family. Viewed from this concept, it is natural then that symbolic violence is easier to legitimate in the name of the marital institution/family; the norms of men are the most authoritative, whereas women only listen and obey. This is a very classic impression in Saudi society, or at least it used to be. Women's ideas are not considered; when women attempt to voice this inequality, the communication controlled by the masculinist element tends to be unfavourable for women (Griffin, 2006, p.497). According to Bourdieu (2001), patriarchy is a form of symbolic violence that is preserved by society. This concept is sublime in every context of life and is considered regular practices because it is legitimised by institutions such as family, marriage, religion and education. This is the case even though it contains symbolic violence that perhaps manifests in various forms. As explained above, as the ruling norms are that of men, society's structure shuts women out and leaves them alone in their monotonous private life.

Saudi Arabia has a great potential of sacred capital (Bettiza, 2020), which can be harnessed by the leaders in achieving the 'Vision 2030' objectives of gender equality and increased female

participation in the economy. In addition, there are other capitals such as power and honour, which are considered as the symbolic capitals of leaders. However, it is interesting to identify that these symbolic capitals also lead to symbolic violence in Saudi Arabia. For instance, there is a tradition of mistreating people who pose a threat to one's power (Prasad, 2019), as a result of which repressive measures are carried out, reflecting the symbolic violence. Similarly, the patriarchal societal norms that are embodied in workplace practices and organisational culture in Saudi Arabia can reflect both symbolic capital (for example, allowing gender segregation at work for promoting women's participation) (Sian *et al.*, 2020) and symbolic violence (refraining women from complete participation in organisations). An example here is the discussions carried out in majlis or diwaniya in which women are not allowed (Jamjoom, 2020). The duality of practices representing both symbolic capital and symbolic violence can be attributed to the changes being made within the religious and cultural boundaries, which limit the role of women's participation and leadership. For example, female empowerment cannot be achieved completely by segregating women in workplaces and limiting their roles and career progress, which reflects gender inequality although the opportunity to participate is provided. However, the resistance towards the patriarchal society and gender inequality has been growing as Saudi women are using their resistance and persistence as symbolic capital through their expressions on social media platforms (Khalil and Storie, 2020).

The Role of Group Feeling in the Society

The roles of the tribe (qabeila) and kinship (qarâbah), which means family siblings and being a related member of one family, are crucially important in understanding the system of values in the Arab countries (Barakat, 1993; Joseph, 2000). Qarâbah, for example, is the kinship systems' solidarity based on the concept that kin relations are sources of security on various levels, including emotional, social, economic and political (Barakat, 1993; Joseph, 2000). Hofstede (2001) argues that the Arab culture is a collectivistic culture that emphasises strong group commitment and loyalty to group members; families are the key players who secure a strong connection. Hutchings and Weir (2006) suggest that when building a community and cumulative interconnection, the role of environment and geography is based upon people and shaping the human condition. This is a group feeling shaped by the environment and community, and the world. The word Aṣabiyyah is from the word Asab, which means to bind. Baali (1995, p.140) suggests that Aṣabiyyah is when an individual belongs to a unique blend of belonging to a group. The Encyclopaedia of Islam defines aṣabiyyah as originally meaning

‘spirit of kinship’ within the family or tribe; the male relations within the male line (Gabrieli 1986, p.681).

Aṣabiyyah in general can be understood as an individual supporting their own people, to whom he/she belongs, to a family or particularly the tribe whether they are wrong or right, fair or unfair; it reflects a symbolic social capital. However, supporting the group in wrong or unfair situations could reflect symbolic violence by the individual against other groups. Belonging to these people and obeying them can be due to parents, family, race, skin colour, birthplace, citizenship, school of thought or even a broad number of people of the same kind of interest; this is a very traditional and typical Saudi case. Humans need intimate bonds and family to survive and eventually thrive. As a result of this, societies unite families. A typical scenario is when individuals want to ease an injustice or pain and they turn to their immediate families for support and justice; hence, the reason is because of the blood bond, as Ibn Khaldun in his research suggested (Ibn Khaldun 1967:151).

Rabi (1967) argues that in respect of blood ties, this is a natural visible feeling that humans feel along with their family circle:

> Love of family and one’s own is natural in humans except in the most debased and sinful of men. Respect for blood ties is something natural among men, with the rarest exceptions, it leads to affection for one’s relations and blood relatives, the feeling that no harm ought to befall them nor any destruction upon them. (Rabi, 1967, p.49).

Biologically, and geographically, it is natural to care for one’s blood family because they are, in some sense, you. You come from the same parents; this interdependence strengthens the intimate bonds that bind family members with each other over the years. The family expands and the brothers share mutual feelings of support from their families and friends. Thus, this is how the tribe is established and emerges. Together, through this intimate bond that Ibn Khaldun calls group feeling or is known as alasabiyya or alqabaliyyah, people begin to preserve themselves and overcome their environs. Group feeling produces the ability to defend oneself, to protect oneself and to press one’s claims. Whoever loses his group feeling is too weak to do any of these things (Khaldun, 1969, p.111). In all these situations, the sense of Aṣabiyyah implies that someone in their group is superior and looks down on the others; the sense of Aṣabiyyah is condemned by Islam.

The term Aṣabiyyah is an act linked directly to an individual act where sometimes the person has to do things imposed on him/her by his tribe or family, even if he/she does not want to do

them or does not accept them; therefore, it supports symbolic violence. One critical example of this, which is evident in the Saudi organisational context, is that some managers and those in positions of work and mediation are often family members, even if they lack degrees and scientific experience. This is due to the hiring of sons and daughters. Another scenario is when an employee supports another employee only because he or she belongs to the same area or tribe.

3.9 Chapter's summary

This chapter has discussed the main philosophical paradigms in social science and the adopted paradigm for this study, which concerns critical constructivism and focuses on the Bourdieusian approaches to symbolic capital and symbolic violence in examining the leader aspect in the Saudi context. The method of the Bourdieu theory provides us with a perspective on organisational action that can serve as a foundation for these investigations in observing the society and its factors. The conceptual Bourdieusian framework has been developed through iterations and inductively includes the necessary constructs to investigate Saudi leaders' strategies, the particular context, and individual leaders' unique situations and their own personal factors and settings. It was constructed through critical evaluation of the existing research and successive rounds of exploratory interviews. It includes the constructs and relationships sufficient for the investigation.

This conceptual framework is expected to deliver the expected empirical contribution. How the conceptual framework will be operationalised is detailed in the following chapter: research methodology (Chapter 4). This involves designing the empirical investigation to collect data that can validate the conceptual framework, requiring converting or operationalising the constructs and their relationships into collectable data.

Chapter 4. Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design of this study, beginning with the nature of the research and its philosophical stance, followed by an explanation of the research methodology and data collection method. The research access, sample, implementation, limitations, ethical considerations and trustworthiness will then be discussed, the role of the researcher examined and the data analysis presented. Hence, this chapter aims to develop the empirical research further by designing a research methodology to meet the aims, objectives and research questions of this thesis. The research plan and the process of conducting the study are discussed and the philosophical, epistemological and methodological stance is justified. This chapter also describes the data collection phase and the approach taken in the analysis of the interview data. Finally, an overview of the findings and how they link to one another is presented.

4.2 Philosophical context

Understanding the philosophical assumptions in the research is important because it relates to the nature and development of a specific knowledge. It focuses on understanding the things that exist in this world and the properties that can be understood (May & Williams, 2002; Saunders et al., 2012). Based on the philosophical approach, details such as how the researcher perceives the surroundings and the world can be understood, which forms the foundation for developing different approaches in conducting the research study. There are various philosophical approaches such as positivism, pragmatism and interpretivism etc. Positivism philosophical approach focuses on employing structured order to facilitate the replication of results and often involves empirical testing using scientific methods in order to derive specific conclusions (Strauss & Corbin, 2009). In contrast to positivistic philosophical approach, interpretivist philosophical approach explains that world is a complex entity and it is challenging to fully understand it. Interpretivists believe that reality is socially constructed; whereas positivists believe that reality can be objectively determined. Interpretivists therefore, focuses on comprehending the perceptions and experiences of people by placing them in the correct social context by adopting the qualitative approaches leading to the development of rules and theories, unlike positivists who prefer quantitative approaches which lead to the specific conclusions such as validation of existing theories (Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Saunders et al., 2012). Considering the nature of this study, which is to analyse the extent to which the Saudi leaders have progressed in achieving gender equality in cultural influences and social aspects, experiencing work, life and family relationships since the initiation of the reforms,

agendas of modernisation and empowerments, there is a need to focus on obtaining the reality from the world in the social context. Therefore, this study adopts interpretivist philosophical stance, and the relevant methodological approaches are explained in the following sections.

4.3 Research Design

Conducting an effective, semi-structured interview requires comprehensive planning, including identifying and selecting participants, deciding on the number of interviews, preparing the interview schedule and ensuring that the participants are ready. The interview participants are often selected based on the focus and content of the research. When the researcher has identified the study population, various methods can be used to select a sample from that population. In this thesis, 'snowball sampling' was employed to identify the research participants who met the criteria (Etikan et al., 2015). I recruited a purposive sample of 33 Saudi leaders, all of whom are leaders and hold senior management positions. Some are well-known in Saudi society, appearing in the media, for example. I found their personal contact information from my business network and some biographies from web sources. The initial contact was mainly by phone or email, and the interviews were used in part to recruit further participants in a 'snowball' effect.

The number of interviews was not initially determined because the sample was limited to a group of Saudi individual leaders, a category meaningful to people in Saudi Arabia. Purposive samples are often used in semi-structured interviews when time restrictions prevent second interviews or a larger random sample; they prioritise qualitative findings from particular perspectives within the population rather than quantitative findings from larger populations. In this thesis, the sampling strategy combines purposive and theoretical sampling, the latter because the framework informs both the sample to be accessed and the themes to be explored, and the former because although the sample to be accessed falls within a specific cultural domain, the purpose of the research is explicit in the research questions. This strategy also enables the analysis of 'critical *cases', which in epidemiological or randomised research are regarded as unrepresentative 'outliers' (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Bernard, 2000; Barbour, 2001) but, in this thesis, provide an illuminating context for a qualitative study. Notably, my choice of participants was influenced by the purpose of the research, which was to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of 33 Saudi leaders; thus, selection criteria were used in recruiting the participants. The results of a qualitative study cannot be 'generalised' to the wider population; Miles and Gilbert (2005) emphasised that the method used to select a population sample should be dependent on the level of generalisation that the

researcher hopes to be able to achieve, based on the data collected. It was reasonable to expect that Saudi leaders would share similar circumstances and experiences, enabling plausible connections in reflecting and measuring how far the state has progressed towards achieving gender equality and economic empowerment for both genders in the implementation of new policies and modernisation agendas.

Miles and Gilbert (2005) suggested that the researcher identify the differentiating features within the sample population and then select participants likely to provide the widest variation. This strategy was used to reflect the diversity in participants' fields of work and socio-economic backgrounds. The wide range in the participants' careers facilitated the recruitment: finding participants in a narrower range would have been more difficult because a smaller number of women would have met the criteria. Potential recruits who were interested in participating were given my contact information to arrange a time for data collection. Flick *et al.* (2004) asserted that it is necessary to contact the participants in advance to explain the objectives of the research and to agree on the interview location, which should be free from distractions and easily accessed by the participant. It was also necessary to send the participants copies of the interview schedule in advance so that they could review the purpose of the interview and the types of questions they might be asked. In this thesis, the participants were informed about the research goals and the potential questions that they might encounter during the interviews, so they were fully aware of the nature of their participation (Arksey, 1999). When they agreed to participate, appointments for the interviews were made, and these took place mostly at the participant's workplace or at their preferred location.

Some participants asked to be sent the interview schedule in advance to understand the topic and become familiar with the research questions. Additionally, a few participants declined to answer specific questions because they were not comfortable at that point.

4.4 Research Method: A Qualitative Approach

A researcher has a range of options to choose from when carrying out research. Decisions on methodology are based on theoretical and empirical frameworks in relation to the main aims of the research, as different methods of collecting data result in different findings. In this thesis, the research methodology adopted was qualitative, and the procedures and techniques were applied from the perspective of gender research (Reinharz, 1992). Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with 33 leaders in senior management roles in a range of civil

society and public sector organisations, including those specialising in women's rights and gender equality. The previous chapter outlined the framework designed to respond to the main theoretical question posed by the thesis:

> RQ1: How do corporate managers and leaders in business organisations experience work and life in a rigid masculine and patriarchal society in the Saudi Arabian context?
>
> This chapter returns to the remaining three research questions posed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.5) which relate to empirical, methodological and ethical aspects:
>
> RQ2: What identifiable forms of symbolic capital and symbolic violence are experienced in Saudi Arabian organisations?
>
> RQ3: What schemes of perception, appreciation and action constitute the leaders' ideology/structure as part of symbolic violence, and how are such powers/structures reproduced and maintained?
>
> RQ4: What social roles and gender stereotypes are these leaders expected to uphold in their workplaces?

Despite the substantial number of recent studies in the field of leadership and gender, there are remains a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between leadership, gender and cultural perspective within the Saudi context. Scholars including Broadbridge *et al.* (2011:25) underline the importance of future research focused on 'monitoring gender in management' to identify discrimination and disadvantage. Furthermore, Chin and Hucles (2007) (cited in Pegues and Cunningham, 2010:13) assert the need to investigate the 'potential leadership style and effectiveness' resulting from 'gender'. Finally, Oshagbemi (2008:1908) suggests that it is useful to examine 'the gender of managers whether it is associated with the use of any particular styles of leadership', the Saudi cultural interpretation of leadership by both genders and current changes in this area. In choosing a qualitative approach, my aim was not to confirm a sociological theory but to provide insight into the respondents' career experiences at a time when the Saudi government was encouraging further developments in the social and economic well-being of the country. Hence, rather than analysing only how gender is practised in different organisational contexts, we draw on a relational perspective to explore the varied ways in which gender serves as a resource of capital and a form of penalty 'violence' in many aspects.

The attitudes of the leaders who participated were analysed in relation to these changes to provide a useful picture of the economic rights and equal opportunities provided in the workforce. The choice of this research design helped to develop a sound argument that offers a compelling explanation of the 'lived experience' of the participants and how it contributed to

their personal development. In this regard, the semi-structured questions are not merely theoretical but are focused on the everyday lived experiences of the leaders in their leadership positions, their memories of life transitions, study and work, their career progression, and the challenges they may have encountered along the way.

The opportunity to hear the voices of the participants who give meaning to their own experiences became crucial to the research. Face-to-face interviews entail synchronous communication in place and time. As a result, interviewers and interviewees can take advantage of social cues and nonverbal expressions such as facial expressions, voice, intonation and body language, using these to understand how and what to do next (Lavrakas, 2008). This research method provides reliable, comparable and qualitative data because it ensures that each participant answers all the questions (Appendix A). The participant does not need assistance from others in formulating the responses and is given the freedom to talk through any topic that they may consider distressing or uncomfortable with the interviewer. Moreover, they can ask the interviewer questions during the process and are able to stop at any time (Miles and Gilbert, 2005).

4.5 Research Approach

The approach chosen gives a voice to those unheard, due to 'the fear of expressing their feeling', including leaders and managers facing extended and current challenges in their field or firm. The qualitative methods used allowed the researcher to consider the complexity surrounding gender, facilitating the exploration of the phenomenon through 'what', 'where' and 'why' questions. The researcher perceives the phenomenon of gender as a socially constructed subjective reality. In-depth interpretive methods foster rich insights into this phenomenon in leadership roles in the context of Saudi Arabia while considering the theoretical approach used within this search – in this case, the Bourdieusian approach – alongside existing factors. Therefore, a qualitative research methodology was chosen for various reasons.

Firstly, a qualitative research methodology was adopted to ensure a rigorous consistency between theoretical and philosophical assumptions. As the research problem is concerned with understanding how issues develop in reality, and is interpretive in nature and context-driven, qualitative research methods are appropriate for conducting this empirical research. The philosophical perspective for this research will be interpretive, to gain a 'knowledge of reality' by studying and exploring social constructions. Consequently, a qualitative methodology will be applied because it is consistent with the main aim of this research thesis, the interpretation

of the phenomenon under investigation. In making this choice, the researcher perceives social properties and realities as the outcomes of social interaction (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This is particularly a phenomenon in the adoption of the gender leader, developed through interactions between individuals and their contexts, rather than existing and developing objectively.

Secondly, the present research will explore in-depth complexities and factors in a less acknowledged phenomenon, using qualitative methods to generate an in-depth understanding of the barriers and challenges facing female Saudi women leaders compared to their male counterparts, in the context of local social and cultural values and symbolic and violence inequalities. Empirical qualitative studies are scarce, and few studies have examined this phenomenon. Thus, a qualitative research methodology is considered the most appropriate choice for this investigation, which aims to contribute to filling this epistemological gap in inter-organisational relations studies, allowing the researcher to understand the nature and the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation.

Lastly, a qualitative methodology was adopted because the data was collected in its natural setting, thus facilitating the effects and richness of the environment under consideration (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) and allowing the researcher to understand the social and cultural contexts within which the participants were working and their different job positions, in order to compare and understand their points of view.

4.6 Demographic Profile of Interviewees

Similar to the study conducted by Oshgbemi (2008), this research has included data on context, working environment and qualifications, all important characteristics when looking at questions relating to gender leadership style and career experience. The 33 participants in the study ranged in age from 34 to 61 years. Eleven were single, 17 married, four divorced and one widowed; all but four were born in Saudi Arabia, in different cities. They had a wide range of education levels: 11 held doctorates, two MBAs, 15 master's degrees and the remaining five bachelor's degrees.

The participants were employed as managers and leaders in different fields, including business, sociology, arts and humanities, media, health, education and various managerial sectors. All participants worked with both male and female employees at the time when the interviews took place, and the sample, described in Table 4.1, included both genders. This was a purposeful choice borne out of the fact that this research concerns the experiences of both genders based

on their expertise in leadership and management positions. Within the sample, interviewees were selected from a range of firms, positions and experience levels, thereby providing a more comprehensive view of experiences across sectors. All the candidates interviewed were educated at least to degree level (BA) and their management experience varied from five to 44 years.

4.6.1 Research Implementation

Thirty-three interviews were conducted with managers and leaders of both genders amid data collection to gain insights about their leadership practices and answers to the interview questions. To ease access for participants, the researcher approached them personally by email or telephone, or through their personal PR managers. Most of the interviews were conducted in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, and the remainder in Dammam and al Khobar, on the eastern coast, with the exception of five conducted in London while the leaders were travelling. For the remaining twenty-eight interviews, the researcher had to travel to Saudi Arabia. All leaders were employed as managers and leaders, including CEOs, and included both genders. The interview process lasted four months. Participants were contacted before interview to obtain permission and arrange a convenient time; some of the leaders contacted welcomed participation in the study, while others declined on the grounds of other commitments, such as being away for training or having limited time available. As outlined in the research methodology chapter, this research is underpinned by an interpretive research stance using a theory-building approach. Interviews were used as the research tool.

Table 4-1. demographic information about the participants' age, marital status, number of children, educational level and occupation

No	Gender	Position	Type of Firm	Future of Firm	Qualifications	Career Experience	Other previous experience	Future perspectives considered
1	M	Bank CEO –Private consultant	Public sector	Fast-growing phase	MBA	15 years of experience	Academic sector	Regional CEO – further progress at a personal level
2	F	Director-General of International Relations at the Ministry of Culture, est. 2018	Governmental sector/ public to private firm	Fast-growing phase, education ministry was separated from the media into cultural ministry	PhD in Leadership Administration	17 years of experience	Public services/ education	CEO – further development on a personal level
3	M	CEO – IT / Business company	Private sector – corporate with a governmental aspect	Transformation phase	BA	13 years of experience	Freelance IT specialist, designer and programmer – public services	Further development in the business – future branches
4	F	Academic Coordinator and Executive Director for Quality Affairs for Studies	Educational sector/ Public firm	Organic growth, learning organisations	PhD in Management	8 years of experience	Public services/ educational sector	Further educational position to be gained in future
5	M	CEO – Private sector Regional Director	Private sector – corporate with a governmental aspect	Fast-growing phase – organisational	MA in Finance	22 years of experience	Business/economic evaluator	Further development in the field – personal development
6	F	Vice Dean for girls/ Coordinator for Science Programmes at the Public Health department	Educational sector/ Public firm	Organic growth, learning organisations	PhD in medical and laboratory science.	6 years of experience	Public services/ educational sector	Further educational position to be gained in future

7	F	Politician – G20 Woman chair leader	Governmental Sector – politician	Self-growth	PhD in English literature	44 years of experience	Political – governmental representative; UNCIF Saudi representative	None at the moment – already reached retirement age but still recruited as a contractor
8	M	Secretary-General of the National Dialogue Centre and member of the Shura Council; Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University	Governmental Sector/ Educational sector – social figure	Transformation phase – learning organisations self-growth	PhD in Sociology – Researcher	40 years of experience.	Political – governmental/ Adviser Consultant/ public figure	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development/ further publications
9	F	Vice Dean for girls/ Medical Sciences Programmes at the Public Health department	Educational sector/ Public firm	Organic growth, learning organisations	PhD in medical and laboratory science.	10 years of experience	Public services/ educational sector	Further educational position to be gained in future
10	F	Academic Coordinator and Executive Director Administrative Sciences	Educational sector/ Public Firm	Organic growth, learning organisations	PhD in medical and laboratory science.	15 years of experience	Public services/ educational sector	Further educational position to be gained in future
11	M	CEO –Business company	Private sector – corporate with public aspect	Fast-growing phase – organisational	MBA	17 years of experience	Businesses / Financial inspector	Regional CEO – further progress at a personal level
12	M	CEO - Private sector / Firm Director	Private sector – corporate with a governmental aspect	Fast-growing phase – corporates with public and municipal labour	MSc Public International Relations	23 years of experience	Public services	Regional CEO – further progress at a personal level

13	M	General Director of 2030 vision office/ Ministry of Health	Govern-mental Sector – Public Health Sector	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	MSc General Health / Management	17 years of experience	Public – services/ hospital	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
14	F	Director of sector / Bank Firm Director	Private sector – Corporate with public aspect	Organic growth	BA in Business Management	20 years of experience	Businesses/economy evaluator Private	Regional CEO – further progress at a personal level
15	M	General Director of 2030 vision office/ MCS	Govern-mental Sector – Public Health Sector	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	BA in Business Management	11 years of experience	Public – services/ Personal Business	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
16	M	CEO – Private sector / Firm Director	Private sector	Fast-growing phase – corporates with public and municipal labour	MSc in Business & Finance	23 years of experience	Private sector – services	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
17	F	Department Manager	Govern-mental Sector – Public	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	MSc in Management	10 years of experience	Public services / Ministry field	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development/
18	F	Department Manager	Govern-mental Sector – Public	Organic growth, governmental Ministry	BA in Marketing	12 years of experience	Public services / Ministry field	Further personal development
19	F	General Director of 2030 vision office/ MCI	Govern-mental Sector	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	PhD in Philosophy – Business Management	21 years of experience	Public services / Ministry field	Further development on a personal level

20	F	General Director of PR Public firm	Govern-mental Sector – Public firm	Fast-growing phase	PhD in Medical Sciences	27 years of experience	Private Hospital sector	None at the moment – almost reached retirement age
21	F	Vice Dean for Business Sciences Programmes/ Private sector University	Educational sector/ Private firm	Fast-growing phase / Educational	PhD in Business Administratio n	22 years of experience	Private sector – services	Further development in the field of expertise- further personal development/ further publications
22	F	General Director –HRM	Government al Sector – Public firm	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	MSc Human Resources Management	5 years of experience	Public services / Ministry field	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
23	M	CEO – Private sector / Firm Director	Private sector	Fast-growing	MSc in International Business	7 years of experience	Businesses / evaluator Private	Regional CEO – further progress at a personal level
24	M	Director-General of International Relations	Govern-mental Sector/ Public firm	Transformation phase – self-growth	MSc in English Literature	5 years of experience		Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
25	M	Member of the Shura Council; Dean of the Faculty of Medical Health Sciences	Govern-mental Sector/ Educational sector/ social figure	Transformation phase – learning organisations, self-growth	PhD in Public Health Management	10 years of experience	Public services / Ministry field	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
26	M	Director-General of International Diplomacy	Govern-mental Sector/ Ministry firm	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	MSc in International Politics	12 years of experience	Ministry field/ political firm	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
27	F	Director-General of International Organisation	Govern-mental Sector/ corporate with private	Organic growth	MSc International Business	9 years of experience	Ministry field/ political firm	A further position to be gained in future

28	F	Department Manager	Govern-mental Sector/ corporate with private	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	BA Politic Studies	5 years of experience	Ministry field/ political firm	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development
29	F	Department Manager	Govern-mental Sector/ corporate with private	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	MA in International Law	7 years of experiences	Ministry field/ political firm	Further development in the field of expertise- further personal development/
30	M	Director-General of 2030 vision international education	Govern-mental Sector/	Organic growth, Governmental Ministry	MSc in Business	10 years of experience	Public – services / Ministry field	Further development in the field of expertise- further personal development/
31	F	General Director of PR Private Firm	Private sector	Organic growth,	MSc in Management	12 years of experience	Private Hospital sector	A further position to be gained in future
32	M	CEO – Private sector / Firm Director	Private sector	Fast-growing	MSc in Human Resources Management	6 years of experience	Private sector – services	A further position to be gained in future
33	M	CEO – Private sector / Firm Director	Private sector	Organic growth,	MSc in Management	9 years of experience	Private sector – services	Further development in the field of expertise – further personal development

The researcher reached these results with the participants in their offices and business fields. Furthermore, additional data on the impact of COVID19 on work and employment were gathered later from participants 2, 7, 8 and 25.

The data which emerged from the interview phase was value-laden and very rich. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of interview participants. A couple of the interviewees initially refused to allow their interview to be audio-recorded; however, they agreed when the researcher reassured them by clarifying again the ethical principles observed in this research: anonymity, confidentiality and that the data would be used for research purposes only, not for public use. This misunderstanding could be explained by the fact that these leaders were not familiar with the notion of academic research, as not all had an academic background, in contrast to the interviewees who welcomed and encouraged the project and, indeed, were keen to see the research implications and contribution to the development of their practice.

4.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data documents were used as an additional data source to help understand the managers' circumstances, the leaders' role, and policies and content related to the organisation and field of work. Information gathered from secondary data supported the findings from the interviews and the visits to organisations in the field. It also helped the researcher to validate, clarify and compare data provided by participants. Documents collected included the Ministry of Labour annual reports, SAMA and other reports, and the managers' and leaders' CVs, personal publications.

4.7 Limitations

There are limitations in this study, as with any other empirical research. Data collection was conducted through interviews, in which participants were asked about matters concerned with pedagogical leadership and management practice, which depended on their memories and expertise. Some participants were uncomfortable talking about serious issues in the past. Furthermore, this study relied on mono-method approach, employing only interviews for data collection. However, adopting mixed-methods could have various benefits; for instance, collecting data from larger representative sample, analysing the data using statistical techniques, increasing the reliability and validity etc. (Appiah-Yeboah et al. 2007). These issues may constitute limitations, as the study data depend on the accuracy of participants' recollections. Moreover, while the research gathered information from both genders, as mentioned earlier, culturally, the managerial and leadership sector is dominated by men in the Saudi context. The issue of gender and leadership in the literature is controversial. The research was grounded within the western literature, whereas the context studied was Middle Eastern;

thus, cultural differences may be considered a limitation. However, as stated earlier, there is a lack of literature on pedagogical gendered leadership in the Saudi context, whereas western research in this area is well-developed, as samples and references are easier to find.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that the research conformed to appropriate standards, it was reviewed by the Brunel University Faculty of Business Ethics Committee, which granted ethical approval (Appendix B) to facilitate the process of data collection; ethical approval was also obtained from the Ministry of Commerce in Saudi. Ethics are principles that govern human behaviours and relationships. They should be adhered to in any research to protect the participants' rights; for instance, to ensure that their careers are not damaged by sharing information (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this research was clearly explained to participants to ensure that they understood both the purpose and their rights with respect to participation. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw whenever they wished if they did not feel comfortable.

In addition, the researcher assured the participants of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected, and avoided risks to the participants. Prior to the interviews, it was clarified to all participants that the data recorded would remain anonymous and confidential, and the steps that would follow the interview were explained: the transcripts would be shared with participants, who would have an opportunity to confirm that the content accurately represented their views. Such clarifications encouraged confidence and awareness in the respondents, so they were more likely to feel able to make the full and frank disclosures needed for the research to be trustworthy.

4.9 The Role of the Researcher

This section provides an analysis of the fieldwork I conducted to show the influence on the research process of the researcher's role during and after the interviews and during the interpretation of the data (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). It shows the importance of the researcher's identities and strategies in gaining access to the research participants and highlights the researcher's role in forming close relationships with the participants and the subsequent effects on the research process and findings. It is important to strike a balance between accounting for the researcher's subjectivity and focusing on the research participants. In ethnography, the researcher has to account for the unique role of the self in research (Merrill and West, 2009). In qualitative research, the researcher is central, influencing the collection,

focus and interpretation of the data (Kvale, 1996). My researcher identity was that of an insider, for the reasons explained below.

As discussed in previous chapters, the cultural and social norms of the Saudi people have been shaped by their religious background, customs and traditions. Various groups of tribal families with different backgrounds and traditions influence their decisions and choices in everyday life. Under the current political leadership, Saudi society has experienced recent socio-economic development, which has changed the social structure by raising the standard of living and providing healthcare, education and employment opportunities for all its residents, particularly Saudi men and women. Many Saudi tribes have adapted to the country's social, political and economic progress, and this has influenced some traditional cultural values. The shared socio-economic status of the researcher and the research participants was crucial in accessing the sample because it greatly influenced the outcomes of such interactions. Mruck and Breuer (2003) underlined the relevance of subjectivity and reflexivity in increasing knowledge, articulating how subcultural, social, professional, biographical and personal characteristics influence what is perceived, experienced, interpreted and published. These characteristics tend to influence the knowledge generated in the research process.

In this research, I was also an insider because my identity played an important, clear and constant role in the interview process and influenced the practice and the findings. The fact that I am a Saudi woman working and pursuing my education abroad (through a PhD degree in the UK) attracted the participants to take part in the research. It also helped to build a trustful relationship between the research participants and the researcher. Most Saudi leaders encourage postgraduate students because they are aware of the importance of education within the country and the importance of supporting such activities to develop their roles within the public sphere. During my fieldwork, in the process of recruiting research participants, I gained access to other participants likely to accept my invitation because they were part of the original participants' interpersonal network. The participants provided much support in recruiting other research participants, introducing me to many people in their personal networks, who were keen to help me as a favour to their friends and did not consider me a stranger. I met some leaders who would have been much more difficult to access without my current work and research role and the help of participants in 'snowball sampling'.

My strategy for meeting and engaging with the research participants was straightforward. My main activity in the fieldwork (i.e., visiting leaders in their work and public places) helped

participants feel open and at ease. The research participants were very helpful in returning phone calls and making appointments according to their schedules; some participants invited me to their workplaces or their preferred meeting places, such as the library. They were very welcoming, even though not all felt comfortable meeting new people. Indeed, being a guest in the participant's preferred place took up the majority of my time during the fieldwork. For Saudi leaders, the ability to be a host is extremely important. Although there are many acceptable alternative spaces, offering hospitality is considered a virtuous activity in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the interviews in the participants' workplaces often involved hospitality, with cups of tea and meals offered. In this context of being a guest in the participant's workplace, rather than in a public space, it was easier to ask questions about their lives and the details of their experiences of gender roles and leadership progress. Very few participants suggested that we meet in public areas, such as shopping malls, cafes and restaurants, because they were more comfortable talking about their career experiences outside their working environment.

As a result of my insider identity, I obtained comprehensive data. The research participants were willing to reveal their perceptions and experiences regarding the topic. During their interviews, they answered most questions with no hesitation, which greatly helped in collecting the information needed for my research. My experience suggests that women often found ways to convey the information they wanted to add, while men followed the questions more closely.

I was always listening, and mostly agreed with the interviewees which facilitated the research process and my understanding of what the participants said during the interviews, in interpreting their perceptions of gender role and all aspects of their experience in this regard. It also helped me to expand the research topic in order to analyse and interpret the data. Furthermore, the topic of the thesis played a role in my ability to develop relationships with the participants, who were impressed by its connection to their current roles as leaders in institutions and departments. They were given the opportunity to discuss their situations and the challenges they faced and answered questions related to their experiences and their perceptions of the state's role in providing economic rights and equal opportunities. This focus seemed to make the participants eager to talk about their experiences in education and the workplace. Throughout the data collection process, I tried not to reveal my prior knowledge of the interviewees' career experiences in order not to influence their responses and the research outcome. I personally experienced the development of the leaders in the workplace; I pushed aside what I had learned from my reading of the literature, and I tried to engage in open-minded listening to the participants' responses about their experiences.

When they asked my opinion, I responded that there was still much to be learned about the topic and that I was interested in learning from them as well as from other sources. On the occasions when I was asked about my own career experiences, my answers were simple. I gave a general explanation with reference to a leader's career, theoretical theme, education, paid work, leadership positions, social life and related topics. I invited the participants to discuss these experiences and to ask questions. In the discussions, I emphasised that many questions about employment in leadership positions and career progression were still unanswered, and I invited the participants to express their opinions. Although I was concerned that these explanations might disrupt my own ability to learn about the participants' beliefs and ideas, they appeared to have little impact. In some cases, the participants' ideas of traditional gender roles were simple; in other cases, they expressed a good deal of knowledge and experience about gender inequality issues and legal rights. Surprisingly, this insider position did not shift during the interviews. I might equally have been considered an outsider because of my academic and work experience, my professional status in the field as a young researcher and, to some extent, a female who works in a political field with no connection to the research participants before the interviews. My research addresses different research systems, searches for recent academic studies and struggles with complex global issues. However, my 'outsider' identity was not employed because it would have hindered me from accessing information and could have affected the data collection. I wanted to establish close mutual relationships with the research participants. I achieved close relationships with some by reflecting on and describing myself and my actions in the context of this research. This closeness led to positional conversations with the interviewees about their lives, beliefs and opinions, through which I developed a deeper understanding of Saudi society, Saudi leaders' experiences of leadership and the development of further empowerment.

This understanding also led to the scientific outcome of the research process whereby new knowledge was generated. For instance, I clearly described the research process: I explained the aims and objectives of the research, the type of data to be collected and the collection method, the research participants targeted, the time and location of the data collection process and the starting point of the data analysis to make them more aware of the process. The voice-recording of interviews and noting my own ideas and thoughts during the interview process is considered the beginning of the data analysis process. I gained much insight into the findings, and I decided on the research direction as the connection between theory and practice became evident.

With regard to data interpretation, I contributed my personal experience as a Saudi woman who has experienced the developmental process of empowering leaders' strategies in my country, as have many other women in various fields. The influence of my experience regarding the participants' perspective was represented in the data interpretation process, which resulted in scientific findings that generated new knowledge about gender equality in Saudi workplaces. Overall, as a female researcher working with a sample of leaders, I was perceived as an insider. I gained the participants' trust and consent to discuss their experiences of gender equality in the workplace. My research identity encouraged them to build a professional relationship to expand their social networking, gain access to other research projects, and exchange resources.

4.10 Data Analysis

The data analysis of the interviews is a crucial part of every research process. It was conducted by transcribing the semi-structured interviews, and translating and analysing the data with the assistance of ATLAS.ti 8 software (see Chapter 5). According to Barriball and While (1994), each phase within the research process can potentially affect the results of the study; therefore, researchers must avoid committing errors at each step to enhance credibility. An accurate analysis of the data enables the researcher to find answers to the research question or hypothesis and even to predict future implications. The ability of the interviewer to stimulate and elicit responses from interviewees has a strong effect on the quality and depth of the data analysis process. A further period of analysis followed during which the analysed data were brought together with the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. The subjectivity of the data remained in focus at the micro-level. The link to the macro, structural level of analysis was maintained by analysing the tensions, contradictions, transitions and crises of the participants as they encountered social structures, institutions and power relations (see Chapter 6). Following Bourdieu, the approach used was fundamentally 'relational' (Crossley, 2010). A final critical analysis was carried out to triangulate the data at the theoretical and empirical levels (Denzin, 2009: 297–344).

The results were used to make recommendations for social policy. The interviews were transcribed in Arabic (i.e., conversations in Arabic were translated into written Arabic texts) and then translated into English. This process was complex because it involved translating from Arabic conversation with one set of linguistic rules to English which has another set of linguistic rules. However, I tended to emphasise the exact meaning of the interviewee's answers and limited my interpretation of the data in order to produce coherent written texts. The translation from conversations to written texts made the interview conversations accessible

for analysis. Although the procedure seems simple and reasonable, the transcriptions raised a series of methodical and theoretical problems. The quality of the transcriptions was improved by checking their validity. Considerable time and effort are required in the transcription of an interview. Following Kvale (1996), the data analysis involved three main steps. The first involved structuring the often large and complex interview material for analysis. The computer programme ATLAS.ti was used to assist and facilitate the analysis of this qualitative material, structuring the interview transcripts for analysis and further interpretation of the data. It also enabled me to concentrate on meaningful interpretations of the interview texts. The programme allowed for various operations, such as writing memos, writing reflections on the interviews for later analysis, coding, searching for keywords, performing word counts, creating graphic displays and note-taking while reading the transcripts.

The second part consisted of clarifying the material to make it amenable to analysis. For example, flaws such as digressions and repetitions were eliminated, and distinctions were made between the essential and the non-essential (see Chapter 5). The third part involved developing the meanings of the interviews by shedding light on the subjects' understanding and providing new perspectives on the phenomena (Kvale, 1996). The common mode of presenting interview findings is through selected quotations, as they give the reader an impression of the interaction in the interview conversations and exemplify the material used for the researcher's analysis (Kvale, 1996). Chapter 5 presents a framework of clearly interpreted quotations, shaped by explaining the participants' perspectives and personal observation. It presents all standpoints but concentrates on the similarities in the participants' perspectives that might influence an understanding of the process of gender and leadership in the Saudi labour force.

I selected statements that described differences or similarities in the participants' perspectives in order to avoid compiling too many pages of interview material. Hence, the quotations were chosen from subjects with similar or different styles of expression. They sometimes connected to other statements, while others could not be related. I used well-structured quotations and eliminated statements that indicated the same viewpoints and opinions. If the participants' viewpoints were different, I presented the range of viewpoints in a clear quotation format. An interview quotation should not exceed a maximum length of half a page, as readers can lose interest if quotations are too long (Kvale, 1996). I removed all repetitions, digressions and pauses and transformed the quotations into a well-structured written style and provided my own explanations. The writing of interview reports is key in an interview inquiry and is not

simply representing the views of the interviewees accompanied by the researcher's viewpoint in the form of interpretations.

The interview report is itself socially constructed by the author's choice of writing style and, thus, provides a specific view of the subject's 'lived' words. An interview report aims to inform other researchers and the public of the importance and the trustworthiness of the findings, and should contribute new knowledge to the development of a field (Kvale, 1996). In this thesis, the main findings of the qualitative interviews were presented in the form of quotations followed by interpretations; that is, I presented my comments on and interpretations of the quotations. My aim was to make a well-structured, rich report of the data; therefore, the main themes and the researcher's perspective were presented (see Chapter 6). I presented the quotations and interpretations in accordance with the theoretical model of the research, and I reported the main findings. The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts led to the main findings, which are mainly related to gender equality in the workplace. Each interview transcript was analysed using ATLAS.ti 8 software and categorised into corresponding, cross-cutting main findings. Thus, the main findings emerged from the participants' points of view and are presented in a form that gives a clear and well-structured overview. The reliability, validity and generalisability of the findings were critically evaluated (Kvale, 1996) in a documented manner that illustrates the main concerns of the research.

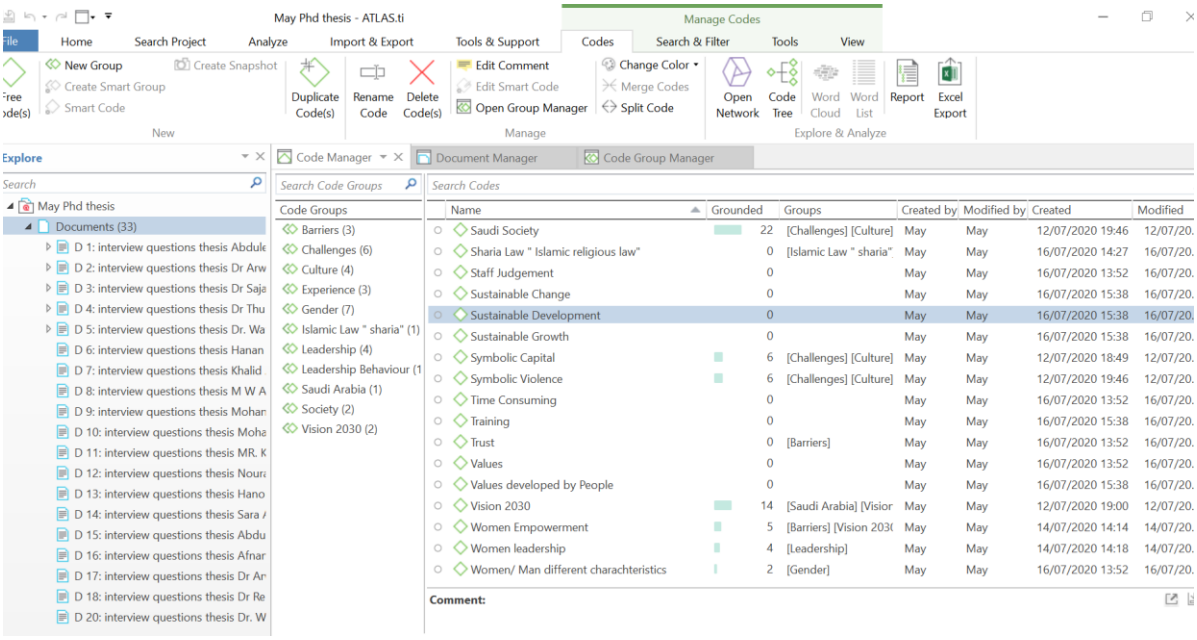

Figure 4-1. The coding process through ATLAS.ti 8 software. A sample snapshot of the data analysis approach taken when conducting the data analysis

4.11 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the research design of this study and identified the philosophy and methodology employed to explore the gender leadership phenomenon in the organisational context of Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this research was to explore the gendered leadership challenges, expertise and practices involved in this environment. It involved close interaction with leaders and managers in these settings to deeply understand and interpret their personal experiences and practical behaviour. Interpretive and constructivist philosophical stances best matched the nature of this study, on account of their ability to reveal the complex details of diverse inner phenomena, such as people's experiences and perceptions.

In terms of methodology, a qualitative, inductive approach was employed in order to seek meaning and achieve a deep understanding of the perceptions of leaders of both genders and insight into the current context in which leadership operates. General pilot interviews were conducted initially to assess the clarity and appropriateness of the interview questions, and these were followed by semi-structured interviews related to the literature review and theoretical approach conducted with 33 leaders. To ensure that all data were recorded, and nothing was missed, the interviews were all audio-recorded and notes were taken.

In conclusion, in this chapter, the most appropriate research methodology for this explorative study of gender leadership has been explained and justified according to the research philosophy, the approach (induction) and current literature gap, the strategy (Bourdieu's theory), the methodological choice (qualitative) and the context field (Saudi Arabia). The next chapter will present and discuss in detail the findings of the study.

Chapter 5. Data Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and describes the data analysis. The data are presented with respect to answering the research questions of this thesis:

> RQ1: How do corporate managers and leaders in business organisations experience work and life in the rigidly masculine and patriarchal Saudi Arabian society?
>
> RQ2: What identifiable forms of symbolic capital do leaders bring to their field of work, and what symbolic violence is experienced in Saudi Arabian organisations?
>
> RQ3: What schemes of perception, appreciation, and action constitute the leaders' ideology and structure as part of symbolic violence? And how are such powers and structures reproduced and maintained?
>
> RQ4: What social roles and gender stereotypes are these leaders expected to uphold in their workplaces?

The next chapter, Chapter 6, is concerned with the theoretical aspect of the research, exploring the relevance of the Bourdieu framework, 'symbolic capital and symbolic violence', among Saudi leaders, especially with regard to their society, employment, current positions, education, cultural aspects and other related factors. The interpretivist approach within the Saudi administrative context offers a productive understanding of how individuals lead, and how they reflect on their workplace experiences through interaction (Holmes and Stubbe, 2015). To adopt this approach within Saudi society, the current research presents an understanding of the backgrounds of individual leaders, as collected through participant observation, and semi-structured interviews as previously discussed in Chapter 4 (Methodology). The informal creation of different aspects of the characteristics of society was determined, along with the challenges which had influenced leaders and managers in their career. It is very important during the observation process to pay close attention to statements by leaders of both genders to establish their interactions. Managerial power is an important concept, including in relation to interdisciplinary work, yielding an understanding of diverse types of leadership (Holmes, 2007, 2012).

This chapter analyses several social, religious, cultural and organisational themes, and within each of these themes, factors were identified which impact on individuals' experience and the

practice of leadership in Saudi Arabia. As discussed in chapter two, an increasing volume of the literature is concerned with management practice and stereotypes. Furthermore, the current chapter will also analyse how gender interacts with practice in the careers of leaders – investigating a non-western context and exploring whether there is evidence that gender affects the behaviour and practices of leaders. Challenges and barriers in Saudi correspond to the construct of leadership styles; expertise, and the differentiation between the practices of the genders was discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

The results are presented in several main sections; the arenas of family and socialisation outside the workplace are analysed separately. The main implication of this approach is to recognise the possibility of interaction or overlap between the leader's practices in society, cultural factors that affect leaders, the challenges that face leaders, and leadership behaviour reflected by the Bourdieusian approach. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the growing area of research by investigating a non-western context and exploring whether there is evidence that the behaviour and practices of leaders, and the challenges and barriers in Saudi correspond to the construct of leadership styles, expertise and the differentiation between the genders.

The participants, in their answers, cover a variety of themes when describing their leadership styles, and in this section, the main topics will be presented along with significant extracts of interviews. The critical issues related to leadership styles highlighted by the participants are connected to culture, flexibility, business orientation and ethics. The challenges and opportunities are similar (people, HR and economic aspects), but divergences in the perception of leadership due to gender are evident. Additionally, the participants underline specific environmental constraints influencing their leadership approaches during their career, from their early parental education, then higher education and career development. Data were collected by interviewing 33 leaders, managers and CEOs of both genders from private and public sector administrations and institutions. All interviews were audio-recorded, with permission, transcribed into Arabic and then translated into English; the transcripts exceeded 35,885 words. They were then coded and clustered thematically using ATLAS.ti 8 software to manage and organise the data. This chapter outlines the relational method of analysing power at work, in particular the implications of power within the Saudi labour sector.

5.2 Social Factors

This section explores data obtained in the home and social arenas. It touches on the participants' family backgrounds, their position within the family and the responsibilities and

duties that they carry out within the family. In Saudi Arabia, the family is seen by the government as a pillar of stability in society. The well-being of families is fundamental to a sound social structure that should hold moral and religious values and humanitarian ideals. Therefore, personal, marital and parental responsibilities are crucial to a healthy, cohesive family. However, one of the core aspects of gender inequality is the unequal family and work divide, which is based on the social expectations that men are generally expected to work outside the home and women are expected to be responsible for family life. The Saudi government is deeply involved in upholding traditional familial and cultural values. However, it has shown increased dedication to further enhance leaders' capacities and promote their progress in the labour force through initiating equal opportunity legislation. To identify whether or how societal factors would influence leaders and leadership practice in the Saudi context, respondents were asked to identify what they found influential, how and why. A number of these aspects appear to be personal and leadership-related, while others are contextual aspects related to where or how leadership operates in the organisational structure. As has been mentioned before (Chapter 2–section 2.4.2), Saudi Arabia has a 'fairly homogeneous' culture; it is an oriental-based culture, even if it is not directly linked or attached to the religion. Religion, as a significant social institution, is strongly influential throughout a wide spectrum of social life and human behaviour (Chapter 2–section 2.5.2) as it creates important career expectations and constraints that most people respect if they want to be accepted in society. Human practice is socially constructed, and the exercise of managerial power differs between Saudi and western contexts. However, previous studies on gender, managerial power and ethical business practice focused only on the differences in practice between the genders. This current research therefore contributes to the literature by adopting a critical approach developed from Bourdieu's sociology by looking at leaders from both genders; in contrast to the conventional approaches dominating contemporary international business/management studies, the Bourdieusian (1977) sociological approach provides insight into the cultural contexts of managerial values and daily practice.

Chapter 5 furthermore contributes to the understanding of Saudi culture by developing a critical approach to the operation of power within Saudi organisations. Bourdieu's theory offers a social ontology of human practice, including an emphasis on the human body as central to the non-essentialist view of the self. Bourdieu's views on practice as controlling the entire body, with practice structuring the material and corporeal level of dispositions such as feelings, attitudes, thoughts and perceptions, generating meaningful human activity. Bourdieu's theory

(1977, 1990) leads to an improved understanding of how human practice can restructure a subjective relationship to one that is objective, in particular in relation to time and space (Winchester, 2008). In adopting Bourdieu's (1977) theory, the current researcher considers symbolic capital and violence as an embodied set of values serving to increase and generate practices structured by patterns in Saudi society and social life, described by Bourdieu as a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 61).

The primary objective of this current research is a critical interpretation of the social background of leaders, their behaviour in leadership, and their use of power, and Bourdieusian sociology is beneficial for achieving this goal. Chapter 5 employs the interpretivist approach to analyse the routine practice of Saudi leaders in their career and social life, in order to obtain an insight into their practice of power. This focuses on the views and experiences of a culturally diverse range of Saudi leaders and managers within public/private organisations, including in relation to divergences, such as the gap between family values and perspectives.

The literature review in Chapter 2 revealed the importance of business leaders applying appropriate business values, such as establishing the principles to control and direct the behaviour of individuals (Elsayed-Elkhouly and Buda, 1997). As noted in Chapter 2, in the Saudi context, traditionalists usually preserve strict, traditional views while modernists are more flexible regarding gender equality in the public sphere. Because of current societal changes resulting from the state's gender-sensitised legislation to encourage more women to participate in the labour market, the community's perceptions have shifted to accept women and men together in the modern lifestyle. When some families realised the importance of creating an enabling environment for both genders for professional and personal growth, they valued and respected women's choices to study and pursue careers because they felt confident in their capabilities.

Recalling their education and first job, some participants reported that they were influenced by traditional views in their study and career choices, such as when choosing their university degree majors and career. Other participants were fortunate to be able overcome societal limitations and obstacles because they were part of the very first influx of Saudi leaders who were able to enjoy career opportunities. They were part of the force that led to recent societal changes in the country (Saudi vision 2030).

In Saudi society a huge cultural shift has taken place over the past twenty years; the participants indicated that their generation struggled in the past in terms of career opportunities in

comparison to contemporary Saudi Arabia, where women now enjoy a wide range of career opportunities created by Saudi's economic development. However, Saudi leaders' choices of education and career are mainly related to traditional values, tribalism and Islamic principles. According to the World Bank (2004), gender roles may influence men and women to aspire to and select jobs and professions that they believe to be acceptable, respectable, or appropriate. Saudi traditional social norms also affect personal and societal tolerance for gender discrimination and shape the opportunities that are open to women (Chapter 2–section 2.8).

Saudi Women have made a lot of progress in their work environments where they get equal treatment to men and special treatment in relation to childbirth. However, despite more Saudi women being willing to immerse themselves in the job industry or to being presented as leaders and managers accepted in the workforce, their responsibility in the home remains. Furthermore, several men in the Saudi community are not willing to help with household chores; they are firmly believed to be the responsibility of women only. The lack of help to women by the men in their lives when it comes to home responsibilities is a hindrance to their involvement in the workforce (Berrebi Martorell and Tanner, 2009) which causes pressures and burdens.

However, the majority of female participants claimed that they employed full-time domestic helpers in their homes, to perform housekeeping duties. For instance, *Participant 9* expressed that her duties included supporting and nurturing all the members of the family, tracking her children's homework, protecting, valuing and teaching them religious and cultural beliefs, but other domestic chores were mostly done by a domestic worker. She stated:

> In Saudi Arabia, we live in extended families, not just nuclear ones. Therefore, our social responsibilities and obligations create more duties for me as a wife and mother; my husband would not allow me to work an additional job with the house duties unless I progress equally (Female Vice Dean, 43 years old).

An example was given by *Participant 4*, who explained how her home situation affected her mood and caused anxiety, in the same way as work pressure did:

> The pressure from home and family and even work does affect me psychologically which for sure is reflected in my mood, just as if I am comfortable/at ease it is reflected in my mood … Work pressure concerns me too and affects my outcomes and my free time with my family (Female academic coordinator and executive director, 39 years old).

It is evident from the above statements that symbolic violence is also identified in families by limiting the women's role to household duties, limiting the power of decision-making of women in the home, as the father or male head is the superior in taking decisions (O'Kane,

2010; Özbilgin 2005). These practices show that the concept of gender inequality is entrenched in the habitus of the people from childhood through family relations and upbringing at home. Therefore, gender inequality may be considered as socially ingrained among the Saudi people. The role of culture as one of the main social factors shaping and influencing the leader's approach has been noted, as *Participant 2* reported experiencing significant conflicts with the cultural view on gender roles and home demands because of their position as manager:

> The HR board at my previous workplace did not consider my work experience, efficiency and ability to direct a particular position because I am simply a woman … Instead, the board appointed a male employee who had no relevant previous experience, but only based on gender preference (Female general PR manager, 48 years old).

The majority of the participants in the study highlighted that cultural and social aspects, such as family values and personal views on gender roles, were influential, in some cases positively and negatively in others. As mentioned earlier (chapter 2–section 2.4.2), Saudi Islamic culture has significant career implications because the influence of the religion infiltrates all decisions, including those related to work and personal matters; even if the individual is not attached to the religion, the influence of Islam remains visible and the views would be identified in society as traditional and conservative to an extent. In addition, sacred capital leads to the symbolic violence of gender inequality by limiting the roles of women in the economy; this supports the findings from other studies (Allam & Shaik, 2020; Al-Otaibi, 2020; Sian *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, due to the radical changes taking place in the Kingdom in the light of recent developments that are not directly related to religion, some values are directly linked to social disadvantage, which is the most significant concern of the majority; social expectations about gender relations are based on traditional values and the stereotyping of gender roles and responsibilities in society. These expectations limit women's choices to government ministries and social institutions, which are perceived as acceptable workplaces for women. In some contexts, strict family circumstances that strongly preserve gendered Islamic identity stem from the dominant patriarchal discourse promoted in Saudi society (O'Kane, 2010;Al Asfour, 2017). This finding strongly echoes *Participant 7*, who observed that Saudi society is mainly a male-dominated society, and it cannot fully accept the presence of women in leadership positions, even if the current government supports such changes strongly. She highlighted that:

> Traditional gender relations are rooted in our patriarchal society and religious setting... The man will always have the right to lead, control, impose his authority and express his thoughts and opinions, but a woman is always a

> follower and encounters more pressures in the society and in her workplace. (Female politician; chair leader, 67 years old)

Seven participants highlighted that family and personal issues were influential, including family support and leaders' ethics; they feel frustration and depression after being enthusiastic and keen to advance in their practice and make changes under challenging circumstances. The link between these leaders is that there was top management above them, and they felt that they needed more support from home, family and society to prove that they would achieve and accomplish. *Participant 31* related a similar experience:

> Some male staff at work looked at me as if I am weak and less capable of performing my duties, while others encouraged me on various occasions. I always display the spirit of a good female colleague and manager who is strong and can deal properly with conflicts and manage work tasks (Female general director, 43 years old).

Another social factor was mentioned by *Participant 15* when he described his family's feelings towards his job at the beginning and their reaction towards him working in a mixed environment. He asserted his passion, love and enjoyment of managing and leading. It appeared that the way he perceived his job encouraged him to be a creative person and lead change in his setting (field), among many successful female colleagues and other leaders, reflecting a significant change in the habitus of male domination and perception of women as weak, suggesting the change was motivational and supporting capital for developing female leadership. He stated that:

> When I was employed in a mixed-gender workplace, I was required to deal with female colleagues. This was a great challenge for me [coming from a conservative background] as I was not used to dealing with women in the workplace. I am influenced by my Islamic morals and faith in situations where I have to co-work with them … In some cases, I avoided all interaction; however, the situation in the past was very different from what it is now … Today, I tend to develop working relationships that depend on a respectable manner and Saudi social norms (Male general manager, 37 years old).

Participant 4 was able to transform her family's value and support, as from the beginning she faced many obstacles to become the primary source of knowledge, fairness and being a role model for other women and even representing the Kingdom in international forums. She stated that her family were the reason for what she has achieved today and added:

> I was always told that I could gain my education, work and achieve a successful career like my brothers. [My father] used to tell me that he educated me for two main reasons: not to be dependent on my husband as my mother used to be dependent on him … And so that I can run my own life if my marriage did not

> work out … You will make your own decision, and not to wait for someone to do that. (Female education administrator, 39 years old).

The change in habitus is observed among families as is evident from the previous statements. The patriarchal nature of leading life with male dominance at home is slowly disappearing by treating men and women equally and encouraging them in every area of development, supporting the Bourdieu theory of managing change in habitus. Results also show that leaders' and managers' beliefs and values from their own culture influence their behaviour, so their style of leading is influenced by their background and previous experience. *Participant 1* expressed his perception of the influence of culture on his leadership; he stated that:

> As a social factor, it's my personal vision of what professionalism is and what is a professional leader that drives me internally as well … A combined group of both men and women employees can lead to active team and productive work if it is based on Saudi traditional rules with great respect and commitment as well as rational and emotional skills. (Male bank manager, 47 years old)

Participant 6 believed that her role as a leader was reflected in everything in her setting. The way she perceived and focused on her role allowed her to build and improve her leadership skills to create a thriving working environment for the members of staff. She successfully managed to lead a large number of staff to improve her setting. She stated:

> I am focusing on my leadership role because it reflects on everyone in my setting and even in my home with my own family and kids … My husband has always respected my decisions and has stood by me to overcome cultural influences (Female, manager, 36 years old).

Personality was another influential social factor that is related to and inspired by culture and society. Some seemed anxious about their work problems and took them home, for example, *Participant 23* stated that:

> I continuously think about my personal issues in my job, even at home, and how to achieve my own goals around my culture without forgetting who I am and my family values (Male firm director, 39 years old).

Other leaders stated that positivity is a personality trait that influences the setting, especially when adopting new strategies with concern for cultural aspects. For instance, *participant 5* stated that:

> The positive person affects their surroundings in the development of the organisation, spreading happiness, clarity of responsibilities and systemisation … You will face various circumstances but instead of considering them as barriers and being their prisoner, use them for development of the organisation … A critical example that I have faced as a manager in my department was when I was recruiting women for the first time in the history of the company –

> including them in the surrounding male environment, and creating a healthy working concept, adapting to the changes, as Saudi Arabia is facing a new era of extreme optimistic changes (Male CEO, 49 years old).

The findings furthermore provide evidence that the view of Saudi women held in society is a significant barrier to them moving into leadership positions, which will not be changed easily. Participants believed that women in leadership were constrained by the view in society that women lack the capabilities for coping with the demands of leadership, as traditionalists usually have strict patriarchal views while modernists are more flexible regarding women's equality in the public sphere. This was described by more than one participant, as follows:

> Women are considered to be weak, not able to handle sophisticated tasks and needing to be looked after by men. *Participant 18* (Female department manager, 42 years old).

Such views were felt by other participants due to the attitude that women should stay at home rather than pursue their careers; such opinions were not just from men but also from other women, stating that working with other men is more flexible than being under female supervision. *Participant 28* stated that:

> I believe that working with men is much more flexible and creative as men tend to think more outside the box, whereas most women stick to the project as a guide sheet which is hard to penetrate … Sometimes the project does not work, and you need to be in charge if something goes wrong; you always have to think about an alternative plan (Female manager, 32 years old).

Other leaders stated that it is frequently effective to encourage young leaders, especially when adopting new strategies with concern for cultural aspects. For instance, participant 23 stated:

> I always try to make sure when we get new managers to be sympathetic with them. Supporting them, encouraging them and influencing them continuously to achieve the company goal … now with the rapid changes and the full government support for women, many felt that it is time to ride this fast train and rock it! Others wondered how leaders with fewer involvements could lead us? And those questions arise from both women and men in the field (Male firm director, 39 years old).

5.3 Internal Factors

The success and future of individual careers and organisations is due to the effectiveness of the leader's behaviour (Lussier and Achua, 2009). Leadership style is crucial to achieving success, and some researchers have argued that it is an essential component. Internal factors within the company and under its control, whether tangible or intangible, affect the company's strengths and weaknesses. The researcher will outline a number of the most critical factors that affect leadership within Saudi society and the circumstances and obstacles surrounding it.

Family Values

The majority of participants discussed various family matters and factors that have influenced their work and career, as well as the influence of Islam on all aspects of work and social life for Saudi individuals, including the relationships between a person and his/her parents. The traditional values and discriminatory gender stereotypes that hinder the careers and advancement of Arab women, in general, are reinforced in Saudi society.

In Chapter 3 – section 3.7.1 the researcher mentioned that the patriarchal structure in Saudi Arabia includes the centrality of the family rather than the individual as the main unit in society, in which men and women have a complementary role. Both men and women view the family as a cultural asset. The man is recognised as the main breadwinner of the family (guardian), even with the new roles that have been established since late 2018 by King Salman himself and the Crown Prince, where previously these rules put restrictions on society.

A code of modesty rests on the dignity and reputation of the woman, with restrictions on interactions between men and women which may reflect their later career. An example that illustrates this was mentioned by *participant 22*:

> My family had sets of values right and wrong and moral values. I always remember my mum said, 'don't lie because when you lie God won't be happy and you won't get what you want; be honest because honesty makes a good person or a good Muslim'. Those values would guide us and developed our personality … My family taught me to be clear about my ambitions, be truthful and punctual, and if I promise I stick to my promises and now I work with such values during my career. All of these restrictions and values have always kept me protected, and later made me think about strengthening up and becoming more independent to succeed further in my career and reach my desired goal (Female HR director, 32 years old).

Family values do motivate individuals in their personal life and in their career life; *participant* 33 stated that:

> My family has affected me in terms of sincerity and dedication to work and never to give up and always aspire to get the best; they encourage me to always obtain excellence [before you fail you must remedy the situation], bring everyone in the house to solve the crisis you are going through, as failure is not an option. All of this pressure has inspired me a lot to do my job to the finest high standard (Male CEO, 37 years old).

Fathers have a significant role in almost every family, even for males, and this was mentioned by *participant 3* is he was one of the reasons that led him to accomplish what he does today.

> My father, who had an impact role in my life, has always made sure that we learn and gain the knowledge that would lead us in life. Ever since we were kids, morals such as apologising and respecting differences and other cultures. Nobody is better just by belonging to a specific background or religion. Even in Islam, being racist is not an acceptable act. So, I try to treat everyone the same with no differences or special treatment, which made me think out of the box and create other ideas out of nothing (Male chief executive, 44 years old).

From the first moments of the child's introduction to life, new parents should pay attention and listen well to what pleases them and encourages them as it will reflect later on their business career, as *participant 8* said:

> My parents always encouraged me and inspired me to achieve my education and gain my certificates for my career. My father never pushed me into a specific choice … although both of my parents were uneducated, they both respected my options and were never terrified of my decisions (Male Member of Shura Council, 62 years old).

Other respondents agreed that their family were the reason for their achievement and their inspiration in leadership. *Participant 13* stated that:

> My family taught me to be ambitious about my motivations and to dream, to achieve, as everything can be accomplished (Male general manager, 45 years old).

Moreover, *Participant 29* recalled the support and encouragement she received from her family, relatives and friends, who respected her brave decision to continue in her chosen field:

> My family value is considered to be traditional, and one of their concerns was how to move to another town and another country, which has changed over the time … They were not secure at the beginning that I would be working in the field with men and dealing with other men and workers … Now they talk about me in front of our family as their own hero (Female diplomatic councillor, 39 years old).

Family values inspire traditional thought in the opinions of society. *Participant 24* argued that:

> My family is a moderate family that does observe a few customs and traditions but are not very attached; having mixed parents I guess it makes you think further outside of the box, you have a mixed cultural view maybe two languages or even dialogue in the house but I felt lucky to have this experience as it made me look further and more deeply into things that maybe others would not see as I do, such as dealing with my sisters or working with women (Male deputy of chief executive, 35 years old).

Furthermore, family values and morals are demonstrated visibly in a leader's attitude and actions, based on moral or religious thought. *Participant 27* revealed that:

> My parents always told me to never lie because when you lie God won't be happy and you won't get what you want, be honest because honesty makes you a good person (Female general manager, 41 years old).

Additionally, *Participant 25* stated that education and family enthusiasm is an important factor that affects an individual's career even if the parents were not very educated:

> Both of my [parents] were religious and brought up with traditional values and both were uneducated, so they did everything to fully support me … On the day I received my PhD degree from the UK I felt that they were the ones who obtained the doctorate degree because of their intensive care, and not only due to my efforts, but their prayers as well (Male Member of Shura Council, 40 years old).

Individuals may have great abilities and intelligence revealed by training, encouragement and the environment, and in their view, parents are the biggest example of traditional ideals and behaviour due to the feelings they demonstrate, and they are the first teachers in their actions and feelings, as has been shown in *Participant 14's* statement:

> Watching my mother as a school manager, and how independent she was as a single mother without waiting for any member of the family to help was a big influence to make me a strong woman (Female Regional Bank director, 44 years old).

Participant 11 agreed that families prepare their children for certain gender roles and on gender segregation from a young age, and this would impact them later:

> My family never treated me differently to my sisters just for being a male, we were all the same, and this has greatly influenced me to deal later in my life and precisely in my career fairly without no restrictions on gender (Male CEO, 46 years old).

Participant 6 believed that your current role is based on your family's judgement and expectations about you:

> My father worked very hard so that my three sisters and I can reach these positions and now in front of our family and tribe he calls himself 'the father of her excellency the deputy and the three doctors' (Female, manager, 36 years old).

Thus, family values can be considered as symbolic capital for both men and women in developing various personality traits of leadership; however, they are also considered as a form of symbolic violence by limiting the role of women (Özbilgin, 2005).

Religious Beliefs

Religious traditions reinforce the cultural constraints which affect individuals' perceptions and experience of leadership in Saudi Arabia. Many of the female leaders in the study were struggling to see themselves as leaders, since culturally they had been brought up to see themselves as inferior to males. Chapter 2 section 2.4 stated that Saudis are expected to work under the Islamic structure, and oriental and traditional ethics, in a place where they can perform their religious rituals efficiently and in organisations where work conditions and practices do not conflict with the teachings or ethics of Islam. Islam provides the moral framework which guides the behaviour of all individuals in their daily activities, including work matters, as it lays great emphasis on work. In various places in the Quran, it has been made clear that time should not be wasted. Consequently, religion is a very consistent aspect of Saudi culture, as the researcher perceived during the interviews, even if the individual is not religiously committed. For example, *Participant 21* showed her religious beliefs as it influenced the way she dealt with her staff; she stated that:

> I am afraid of being unfair when dealing with my staff, so I pray to God every morning to be fair with others and for others to be fair with me (Female Vice Dean in University, 48 years old).

Another example is *Participant 29*, who believed that Islam is always a source of standards, respecting other beliefs and standards, and a technique for integrity; she stated that:

> Nobody is better just by belonging to a certain background or religion, even in our Islam religion being racist is not acceptable (Female general manager, 39 years old).

The role of religion is one of the main factors shaping or influencing the leader's approach. For instance, *Participant 11* mentioned that:

> Being adapted to conservative values to an extent did not forbid me to recruit female employees and treat them with equality; my beliefs have given me an approach to be fair with every single person (Male CEO, 46 years old).

Participant 22 mentioned that the reflection of the religion could be witnessed powerfully in the culture even if the person is not overly religious.

> Holding moderate Islamic values did not forbid me to blend in with everyone, although at the beginning, I was one of the few who did not cover my face entirely with a veil. Being different did allow me to blend in more easily, with all of the judgment for such an act! Now the majority of the girls don't cover their faces as they did before (Female HR director, 32 years old).

Sacred capital stemming from religious beliefs as identified by Bettiza (2020) was perceived as capital for opposing social norms such as racism and gender inequality; however, the social changes and resistance being exhibited by women in defending their rights reflected a change in habitus and the field in terms of using the sacred capital for increasing women's participation in leadership and empowerment.

Family Background

About one-third of respondents discussed how some in senior positions had used their family connections to access management positions and how their privileged backgrounds encourage them to exercise (undue) power over other managers. These senior managers tend to resent junior leaders and sometimes deliberately hold them back by not offering any support. One respondent, *Participant 24*, commented on this attitude by saying:

> Some leaders enter a high position through the window with a parachute or even a rocket, rather than through the door of the organisation. This is known as *wasta*. These leaders tend to come from an influential family who supported them … Financially and socially; they display arrogance and see themselves as being above the system as they just want to be the one in charge and not to achieve that position gradually, which is selfish! and maybe it is a feeling of 'superiority' (Male CEO, 39 years old).

Another response to the family connection, and the family's impact in achieving the leadership position was from another leader; *Participant 26* stated that:

> Previously it was common to see individuals only from certain and known families [those who have the right *wasta*] obtaining a high position, even if their knowledge or education was not enough for them to be capable of such responsibilities … While now the compelling circumstances have been changed as the government and the sovereignty guarantee the survival of the most competent and those having the right competency, yet family connection interfering still exists … [subsequently] if you do not prove yourself, in no time you will leave, principally because the desired goal was not achieved (Male general director international diplomacy, 40 years old).

Family background connections and networks in most Arabic regions, and especially in the Saudi context, are built on the notion of tribal affiliation and solidarity. 'Alasabiyya Alqabaliyya' or Aṣabiyyah, as has been mentioned before in Chapter 3 section 2.7.2, means interfering for your own people which will result in *wasta*. *Wasta* could be defined simply as the use of the right connections to obtain necessary resources. Additionally, *wasta* is an act that associates directly with the family or father's connections, which is an informal system used habitually by CEOs/leaders through contacts, links, and personal relations that provide social

support to themselves, family members, and close friends. Additionally, *participant 14* commented on the *wasta* attitude as the main reason that she gained her current high position:

> Family, relatives, and even friends' networks are significant for women and men, which helped me get the job (Female Regional Bank director, 44 years old).

However, *participant 20* argued that this act may sound unfair. However, unfortunately, most governmental sectors still work in such a way, even if the current reforms do not support such arrangements. She offered:

> In this life, as you give [you will take]; if you help someone today, you guarantee that you will get the favour back another day … As *wasta* involves someone mediating on behalf of a family member or a close friend, its purpose is to help them achieve their goals … while obtaining yours later on, just like a debt (Female general PR director, 52 years old).

Based on the participants' reflections, family backgrounds reflect the symbolic violence of using the power factor in ascending the social ladder and occupying privileged positions, limiting the opportunities for people with no influential ties. This approach affects both men and women equally, reflecting a form of symbolic violence emerging from the habitus of influential families.

Socio-cultural Aspect

Saudi culture is a polychromic society mainly subject to tradition, customs and religion in numerous settings and circumstances. Several participants admitted that culture, family and traditions play a significant role in their personal and career life. *Participant 1* stated that:

> Our culture controls our society … The society we live in and the setting in which we have grown up are linked to the tradition and heritage … while noticing the current changes and reforms yet [I am not entirely satisfied]. There is still cultural and social dominance controlling the basic leading concepts … The primary driver of these matters in the administrative, educational leadership world is the culture of the society in which the leaders live (Male bank manager, 47 years old).

Family and controlling parties and different intellectual leaders have exceptional conflict with their own culture. The visible modification of culture is one of many in which leaders must be enthusiastically engaged, requiring personal reflection related to an individual's own cultural heritage and influences. *Participant 12* argued that leadership interaction with others begins with acceptance of self and respecting other cultural aspects:

> As a leader, you are in the middle or even surrounded by opposing parties … However, in such obligations, cultural awareness would affect people personally while keeping them aware of risk that may occur in their future professions (Male CEO, 50 years old).

Based on the participants' opinions, it is evident that cultural factors have a significant impact on the habitus and field reflecting the social dominance (symbolic violence) of particular groups, which still exist even after implementing the changes and reforms. This process indicates that symbolic violence is being managed and carried forward through the cultural influence on the habitus, despite reforms and changes. However, the changes are being noticed for achieving gender equality and promoting female leadership, but it may take considerable time to minimise the impact of symbolic violence emerging from the cultural influence.

Tension between Tradition and Change

Continuous changes in the Saudi structure and character of society and status might be attributed to urbanisation, industrialisation and education, as has previously been described in chapter 2, the literature review. Such changes have further occurred in the tension between modern approaches to developing leadership, such as adopting additional reforms, empowering a specific gender, or hiring a young leader with insufficient knowledge. These changes have occurred through leaders' responses to their perceptions of their leadership development experiences under the cultural influence of traditionalism and modern approaches. Research participants agreed that it is essential to keep social values in place and encourage further development and promote leaders to present themselves respectably to improve the mixed-gender workplace. Furthermore, the participants expressed their intention to change, through the tension between younger and older leaders' perceptions regarding the organisational factors that influence leadership, and the importance of leadership for the knowledge transfer between former and new leaders. *Participant 25* argued that:

> New changes … make me feel very optimistic, and I began to feel that leadership is an interest and not only [a research topic] ... leadership is very necessary to any change in any field, and as proof is your interest in this research … Over the last seven years, I have witnessed this by observing development and transformation by taking care of the organisation's members' abilities and the organisation's leaders to prepare them (Male Member of Shura Council, 40 years old).

Participant 15 agreed with the above perceptions on these unfolding changes:

> Things are changing quickly and developing over the last five or six years … The reason is that we have a new generation of leaders and a young ruler who cares and seeks for professionalism … However, another reason behind such

> change is related to the availability of a new generation of business leaders who [recently entered their careers after receiving their education in western societies] which made them think out-of-the-ordinary way (Male general manager, 37 years old).

Although it was not widely noticed in the data, this pattern in relation to the tension between 'old' and new' was also noticed where young leaders were believed to be more flexible and open-minded when dealing with change. Also, this argument seems to be related to the result of social and economic changes unfolding in the country that support the national development plans and the *Vision 2030* which heavily relies on modernisation of the country with new generations. Moreover, *Participant 4* supported this claim of a growing awareness of the recent trend in leadership development and referred to it as follows:

> The modern approaches to developing the entire leadership process, such as empowering the young generation of leaders, would bring new ideas to management that reflects the tension between traditional models of developing leaders and their co-workers and other leaders in the field (Female academic coordinator and executive director, 39 years old).

Another issue that has arisen from such a statement is the fear of losing the position to competitors. Furthermore, this competition between the previous generation and the current generation is currently taking place in the organisational arena, which would be considered as a kind of pressure and violence to which leaders and managers are subjected, and we shall explore that later in the chapter section 5.7 and 5.8. The changes are perceived as capital by the new generation who are reflecting the new ideas of increased participation, entrepreneurship and professional development. As discussed in the previous section, though these changes are being welcomed, the concept of symbolic violence is still being carried forward by the sections of society who are strongly associated with traditional and cultural ideologies in leadership.

Leadership Preparation and Qualities

Leadership happens when there is a link between the leader (the person who intends to lead) and the others (followers). This is a process of exchange relation built over time between the leaders and individuals or groups of followers depending on each other to attain a mutually desired goal. Furthermore, leadership practices are essentially individual characteristics and role requirements necessary for leadership to perform a non-gender-linked leadership style. The majority of the participant leaders considered that flexibility, vision, preparation and knowledge transfer influences leadership behaviour. Among these qualities are also honesty and cooperation with the staff which power the positive energy that the leader creates.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants agreed that leaders would be self-assured enough to stand alone, have enough courage to make difficult choices, and be compassionate to listen to others' needs, becoming a genuine leader through equality and fairness. As an example, *participant 27* commented on the transformation that occurred in her knowledge and how her beliefs changed through her career:

> Practising is based on personal effort and experience … There is neither reading nor awareness, no transfer of experience … You speak with other managers about different managerial topics and find they do not know many of these concepts. [It is depending on practising and experience] which will result in beliefs changing after two or three years of experience as a result of practice (Female general manager, 41 years old).

The participants stated that those who supported them in such positions and helped them in progressing up the leadership ladder were the following: family members, leadership role models and professional and governmental support resources in organisations that implement equal opportunity legislation aimed at increasing leaders' participation in higher-level management roles. In addition, many Saudi leaders were influenced by the Crown Prince, Prince Mohammad bin Salman, who is considered a role model for Saudi leaders. His Highness emphasises the importance of supporting the well-being of Saudi leaders and their education in order to create an ambitious, healthy and well-educated generation of leaders. *Participant* 3 expressed:

> I seized the opportunity that the [Crown Prince] has provided to us through improving the education system in the country and leadership preparation such as learning different aspect of positions, and political reforms. [Prince Mohammad bin Salman] also inspired me to obtain a further higher degree, expand my career experience and leadership capability in order to achieve my leadership ambition (Male chief executive, 44 years old).

Other aspects that motivated participants to progress to their senior management roles included organisational support resources at work such as equal training opportunities and recruitment strategies for both men and women employees. *Participants 2, 14* and *9,* for instance, observed that they had received several organisational rewards and promotions and accordingly were designated by their managers to be leaders based on entirely meritocratic and fair grounds according to their academic qualifications, scientific expertise and work experience. Furthermore, *Participant 6* expressed that her direct manager was wise, humble and caring:

> I was well-qualified … [The vice president] at work used to observe my performance, my excellent appraisals, my academic background and my work experience certificates and used to certify these achievements. He then decided to improve the overall university structures and efficiency through applying

> developmental strategic plans to leaders … As a result, he appointed me to my current decision-making role which is very challenging at such an age (Female, manager, 36 years old).

The participants' opinions reflected the transformational, participative, and collaborative types of leadership reflecting the need for changes at workplaces, creating supportive and collaborative environment, as identified by Alsubaie (2021) and Alharabi (2020). It is evident that leadership traits are being used as social capital against the symbolic violence of gender inequality in the workplace. However, it is also important to consider the factors influencing leadership while acting against symbolic violence.

5.4 External Factors

Several external factors influence leadership styles, such as personnel dynamics, organisational attributes, finances, economic and political conditions, technologies, and corporate culture. The Saudi government's role in fostering gender equality in the workplace was considered a source of motivation by some participants. As noted in Chapter 2, the Saudi government is formally committed to implementing legislation to eliminate discrimination against women and encourage their access to leadership roles by initiating strategies such as Saudi *Vision 2030.* In relation to this, in recent years numerous Saudi women have achieved further higher educational and professional qualifications because of the government's efforts to promote their equality. *Participant 7* mentioned the effect of governmental policies on women:

> Saudi women today … must prove that they deserve the equal rights granted by the government … they should prove their efficiency and take advantage of all available current opportunities. (Female Politician, chair leader, 67 years old).

The establishment of *Vision 2030* has increased the number of women and young people in leadership positions by providing leadership programmes designed to develop male and female managers according to their roles and needs. *Participants 13, 15, and 19* have taken advantage of leadership programmes and courses on strategic planning, assessment and evaluation and managerial skills due to their position associated with the vision. *Participant 19* offered that:

> I have trained in how to chair a department and an organisation before obtaining such responsibility … being in one of the *Vision 2030* government offices made me obtain this confidence efficiently. (Female general director, 49 years old).

The influence of external factors reflected an approach supporting transformative and collaborative leadership, by promoting capabilities capital through the creation of higher education opportunities and providing training, which can help in overcoming symbolic violence against women. Moreover, increased persistence and determination to fight against

symbolic violence as identified by Jamjoom (2020) indicates persistence in the symbolic capital of women leaders in overcoming gender inequality.

Personal Factors

The participants defined their perceptions of practical leadership, and personal factors such as gender and personal circumstances were influential, in some cases positively and negatively in others. Their responses suggested simultaneously interacting attributes that described their leadership philosophies, such as the extent of individual and organisational characteristics and gender-linked leadership style.

The degree of gender differences in leadership styles while employing 'masculine' or 'feminine' leadership approaches in their management roles is based on personal factors. Additionally, chapter 2 (p.60) stated that the 'masculine leadership approach is known as a commanding and controlling style', whereas the 'feminine leadership pattern includes ethics of attention and communication'.

A related essential aspect was explained by *Participant 29*, who considered her feminine leadership approach has inspired her leadership role, and is an asset in performing her current role as a general manager, which involves helping and understanding others:

> I am a participative leader. I do not put aside my natural feminine values and behaviours to adopt a 'masculine' leadership style (Female general manager, 39 years old).

Another personal factor was suggested by *Participant 4*, who emphasised that her practical leadership approach to career ambition consisted of the power of productivity, creativity and continuous improvement. She expressed:

> Any leader should have a clear plan to improve the organisation to better achieve occupational goals and demands.... I always try to manage my work differently and carry out my job requirements perfectly because I have the power of creativity (Female academic coordinator and executive director, 39 years old).

Other factors, such as family and environment, affect personality and personal achievement. Another example was stated by *Participant 24*, who explained how his home situation affected his mood in the same way as work pressure did:

> The pressure from home and work has affected me psychologically, which continually reflects in my mood … The work pressure concerns me as the time goes by fast while visiting all of the organisation facilities and other offices to attend meetings daily, as I need to meet the weekly planned schedule.

He further added:

> One of the examples of attacks that I had to face and was pressuring me almost daily is that my brother works with me at the same organisation … I used to hear comments such as 'You are lucky!' or 'Do your own the organisation, to hire a family member?' … or 'Where is your father and mother to join the rest of the team?' That was not causing me personally much pressure, but my brother used to complain every day, and he thought about quitting more than once (Male Deputy Chief Executive, 35 years old).

A further three *participants, 4, 22, and 10*, highlighted psychological and biological issues that they found influential, focusing on gender differences, include the leader's temper, enough sleep, tiredness and frustration or depression, after being enthusiastic and keen to add to their practice and make changes. Furthermore, the link between those female leaders is that they work in a large organisational structure; usually, a higher male official decides on their behalf.

Another personal factor was mentioned by *participant 9* when she described her feelings about her job. She asserted her passion, love and enjoyment of managing and leading in her setting. It appeared that the way she perceived her career encouraged her to be creative and lead change in her environment.

Furthermore, the result also indicates that factors surrounding the leaders influence their behaviour and thus their emotions of happiness, anger, or violence in their settings. *Participant 33* believed that his role as a leader reflects on everything within his setting and work environment. He stated:

> I am focusing on my leadership role because it reflects on everyone in my surroundings … For example, when I attend work while happy, I see how much my colleagues contribute to me, and they approach me instantly … I can also see how they would avoid me on some gloomy days, so that we don't get involved in a misunderstanding (Male CEO, 37 years old).

Therefore, the way he perceived and focused on his role allowed him to build and improve his leadership skills to create a thriving labour environment for the staff and employees. He successfully managed to lead individual training and still sought to strengthen the skills involved in his leadership. Furthermore, *Participant 17* furtherly expressed her perception of being a female in her leadership practices and did not deny that she usually follows her natural feminine compassion and empathy in relationships and her ability to influence people. She considered these features beneficial for a female leader who possesses different informational resources and acts according to her feminine values and attitudes. She stated:

> As a participative leader in one of the government sectors... I do not put aside my natural feminine values and behaviours to adopt a masculine leadership style because of working mostly with men... Being a woman in a leadership position would make me work harder than a man to prove to my surroundings, my family, society and personal circle that [I am capable]. Men were previously considered to be a hegemonic power in many aspects of life, but this is not the classic scenario anymore (Female department manager, 40 years old).

Moreover, within this theme, dependency and control emerged from the interview responses; it seemed that power was permanently attached to men who had the ability to exercise power over women. Management is usually associated with command and a strong personality. Physical violence against women is also a critical issue at work. Still, in some cases where both sexes experience harassment at work, the leaders reflect on their position at work. The government commitment to minimising violence and harassment has been a matter of concern, and new laws and awareness programmes have been established. However, individuals sometimes do not pay attention to the violence that occurs in social practice. *Participant 31* related an instance of harassment and being dominated because of her gender:

> Previously, I worked in a lab-related environment that held both sexes, but there were more men than women. I worked long hours, spending a lot of time in the office, even outside working hours. I cannot forget that one day while I was working, one of my colleagues approached me and revealed his feelings towards me, which were not accepted... I could not face my family with these fears until today. Instead, I have chosen to transfer to another institution.

She added further:

> Being in this situation made me feel terrified and not able to confess to my family... I know for a fact that they would have blamed me and ask me to leave; although it was not my fault, it could be because I was too friendly and warm (Female general director, 43 years old).

Based on the analysis of the participants' opinions, it can be noted that most of the participants felt that both men and women can equally perform as leaders, supporting the findings of Fernando *et al.* (2020). In addition, the idea of adopting different types of leadership according to the context was identified. While most of them preferred a participative type of leadership, the use of feminine and masculine leadership traits varied according to the contexts.

Culture and Society in leadership

Culture is a crucial factor that thoroughly changes our perception of work, achievement, personal goals and social aspects. The cultural influences on leaders' characteristics and their leadership skills, or the way they lead, need to be recognised to achieve effective leadership. The participants openly shared their views about how Saudi culture affects their authenticity

and discussed how such values had influenced the Saudi perceptions of authenticity and decision-making. An example was given by *participant 8*, who explained how culture and society have affected and influenced some of her decisions in the same way as in organisations:

> We experience intense pressure from society when [we refuse anything]. Our culture and society control our morality, background, personal values and the community.

He added further:

> We lead and make decisions according to our culture … honestly, I am not truly satisfied because there is still cultural and social dominance controlling the basic leading concepts … The primary driver of such matters in these administrative leadership worlds is the culture of the society in which the leader lives (Male Member of Shura Council, 62 years old).

Another respondent was *participant 20*, who referred to the direct influence of culture on leadership practice, and the failure to prevent it from influencing their working life:

> Each leader tries to manage their role, but he/she is interrupted with mediations, which is a problem with no solution; regardless, we fight to prevent interventions from entering our organisational life.

She further added:

> The interventions in our decisions could come from the work environment, or even from external factors such as 'employing someone related to another manager in the company' known as the *wasta* (Female general PR director, 52 years old).

Another area of societal reflection inside an organisation is the perception of cultural values and religious aspects. In contrast, personal values are affected by culture among the participant leaders presented at a lower level. *Participant 5* referred to his Islamic values and cultural aspects as an ideal model of behaviour that leaders should follow:

> As leaders, we should take care of our Islamic principles and values such as loyalty and transparency, and make sure that integrity is visible (Male CEO, 49 years old).

Another example was *participant 24* who referred to such pressure from society as a hidden power that implies a sense of soft power constructed on culture and society:

> Many social parties interfere with our work … while each one attempts to dominate the culture in their own way … these powers could be a colonial, family, or political figure … Dissimilar intellectual networking and corporations have conflicts among them … As a leader you may [fall as a ball, get thrown between the opposing gatherings] (Male deputy of chief executive, 35 years old).

Additionally, *participant 8* referred to the family as a power that influences leaders based on the family culture, knowledge and education. Such reflection is derived from tribal values and family contribution to society. Furthermore, he suggested the need for societal and cultural adaptation and that affects the organisational culture of leaders:

> The most crucial factor in the heart of the society is culture … during my 40 years' experience in [leadership] I have noticed that our society has changed in its culture of communication and organisation inspiration, whether internally or externally … even through the changes that we witness today we have to adapt even if we were not accepting the fact of change — this transformation has become a compulsory decision to be observed (Male Member of Shura Council, 62 years old).

The term '*wasta'* mentioned earlier among the internal factors exists as a term and as an act. While the government has been eliminating corruption and maintaining the desired reforms in the country, *wasta* still exists even if it is not very visible, *participant 16* highlighted that:

> [*Wasta*] is known as the magician's trick that smooths the way to jobs, promotions, university places and much more in business and government … even if some individuals do not acknowledge that it exists in every sector … at some firms you notice that certain names reach only specific positions (Male firm director, 45 years old).

Another issue related to the culture which came across in the results was *gender patriarchy*. Five women who participated in the study mentioned that gender-related issues are still a concern based on cultural knowledge and thought. *Participant 6* stated that:

> Previously, Saudi women faced trouble in relation to work and patriarchy based on their male guardian which was the former system in society until recently when all of these aspects [have vanished] … I was lucky that my dad was a decent man who trusted me and respected my choices … I have seen some cases where fathers, husbands or even brothers were demanding and did interfere in their daughters and wives' future and career (Female, manager, 36 years old).

Participant 2 clarified that during her career she witnessed a dramatic change in gender patriarchy — by being one of the first women in the country to hold a leadership position which was held usually by men:

> Women working with men as a team is an infrequent occurrence … there was always segregation and gender inequality in some families and some work environments … while there was no clear law that forbade these actions, even if I wanted to obtain a legal form or paper, my father or my guardian had to support my request until recently … Today Saudi women are appointed to senior governmental roles and leadership posts, which were traditionally male-oriented (Female general PR manager, 48 years old).

As was stated in chapter 2 in the literature review, Islamic customs and traditions continue to play a major role in influencing leaders' workplace behaviour. The cultural attachments shape the social behaviour and attitudes of employed leaders and heavily affect their conduct at work, especially in their dealings with the other gender, which is regarded as a challenge for most individuals. Islamic principles and traditional aspects at work, and the relationship between men and women, is based consistently on respect and professionalism.

Preferential treatment of relations or known people in leadership and gender segregation in workplaces are types of symbolic violence derived from the influence of culture on leadership, supporting the findings from recent studies (Dinh, 2020; Sian *et al.*, 2020; Alobaid *et al.*, 2021).

5.5 Leadership-Related Factors

The leadership style methods and the perceptions of effective leadership differ from one leader to another as others adopt no single leadership approach. As stated in chapter 2, the ideal leader is the one who observes, and takes the entire risk (Judge & Long, 2012). Additionally, a leader would not use threats to achieve power; leaders' practices depend on individual characteristics and role requirements necessary for performance in leadership.

Managerial Factors

Ten leaders discussed organisational factors that they found to be influencing their leadership behaviour. An example that illustrates this is that of the participant who reported her experience with her previous work, where she found that the constantly changing leadership was problematic from a managerial perspective. *Participant 14* said:

> I worked as a Branch Manager in another Bank for seven years … the problem was the instability of the bank leadership … The employees were changed constantly during that period by the head office, and each time we had to make sure that we communicated with them regarding the decisions of the new management, the training of the new staff and the assurance that they were really suitable for the branch … frequent changes of staff responsibilities created [a lack of cooperation and sensitivity] and resulted in an uncomfortable climate (Female Regional Bank director, 44 years old).

Participant 32, a leader in a private organisation, highlighted three factors that he found affected the role he had to perform, which were administrative pressure, supervisory pressure from chief executives, and pressure from third parties such as companies and individual clients that cooperate with his company. He also characterised the type of relationship between himself and the colleagues as influential:

> Holding such responsibility is not as easy as it sounds … although having privileges such as a high salary and connections and a prestigious position in the company and society, still this obligation is not a stress-free and calm experience. Furthermore, my personality and the way I deal with my employees definitely influences my management strategies (Male CEO, 34 years old).

Participant 5 raised the issue of the pressure caused by the conflict between individuals and companies with the company's economic committee, and the aspect of the government departments that dealt with their company; he stated that:

> The way families view and trust the company directly affects you, as well as the conflicting perception of this stage between individuals and companies … Ministries and government agencies focus on the importance of implementing the company's approach, which is to provide service and not change the regulations, while some individuals focus on obtaining the service without regard to the difficulties and constraints that accompany the application, which means a lot more formality than anything else (Male CEO, 49 years old).

Some cases were observed as psychological pressure sources, while other situations highlighted the psychological pressure on leaders. *Participant 9* revealed that one of the administrative factors that has positively impacted her leadership style is hiring an assistant administrator. She explained how hiring an assistant helped strengthen her leadership role by focusing more on administration than only on her duties. She said:

> I split the work well amongst workers in the working sense … Since having an assistant, I have become more relaxed because of the workload that I had within the department … Even my decisions have been taken placidly, and these little changes make a big difference (Female Vice Dean, 43 years old).

Nevertheless, the participants acknowledged that pressure and how they respond to it affects leaders' attitudes and relates directly to symbolic violence with relation to symbolic capital. Leaders can use 'rules of the game' to disseminate capital for their own advantage to gain added value and self-development. In contrast, leaders relate to social and cultural domination differently, as the unnoticeable and partially unconscious authority that people maintain in everyday life is symbolic violence. Due to symbolic and daily violence, people do not know that there is symbolic violence in certain acts or attitudes.

For instance, *participant 15's* response to pressure from the executive was different from the response of *participant 9* to workload pressure, which reflects the influence of the personality of each leader, as discussed previously. Personality, therefore, influences leadership behaviour. In this regard, *participant 15* gave an illustration of certain qualities that he thought leaders need to have in order to successfully influence their institution:

> Transparency, integrity, justice, intelligence, loving and compassionate feelings will be transferred to others... Such qualities I believe will aid in gaining the confidence of others and hence their esteem and support, resulting in good organisation and justice around the leader (Male general manager, 37 years old).

Decision Making Process

Several interviewees pointed out another axis that affects leadership and decision-making. The vast majority concentrated on internal (operational) decision-making, engaging staff and society to advise their choices. On the other hand, other interviewees emphasised their obligation to external considerations, representing the government's intention of involving leaders to reach the country's vision for advanced growth; examples of organisational decision-making by interviewees were, as *participant 28* stated, at the limit of implementing the organisation's culture and the business in decision-making:

> The role of leader is a factor in some matters, but not in others, such as corporate laws and legislation. Many corporations' management boards serve as sources of advice and guidance, have some discipline, and operate in times of crisis, such as when the president dies unexpectedly or is forced to resign due to poor management...We get some advice from outside board members, but management manages the business, and the board executes its actions (Female manager, 32 years old).

With respect to the views of the community in the decision-making process, *participant 10* added:

> When taking decisions, you should be aware of your organisations' community, employees, and social class. Your leadership, decisions and implementation must be under the umbrella of the traditional values in our society, which are most likely related to Islamic values (Female Vice Dean, 43 years old).

Such a statement illustrates how beliefs and values influence leaders' decisions. Additionally, several leaders consider societal values even if they are not religious; eastern society remains different in nature from western culture, as previously stated under 5.3.2 *Religious Beliefs*.

Social beliefs are difficult to change unless the concept of social change is accepted. Additionally, if the individuals are not attached to their religion, they would deal with this structure as a social pattern. Freedom of choice can be as simple as taking a decision on any personal matter related to you. *Participant 1* presented his statement by considering his societal values to raise the organisation's practical and national knowledge of organisational culture:

> Previously, banks mostly appointed men and did not ask them to complete any formal education related to financial or economic programmes.... as the employee is required to complete a training programme to improve his technical

> banking skills after joining the office... Following the government's shift toward empowering women, I started to employ further women in various offices, including my own deputy … I was asked whether such a female candidate possessed the requisite qualifications. The continued conflict between my vision as manager and CEO has resulted in a fraught relationship in general decision-making... Such a transition would not have occurred without the government's full support and approval (Male bank manager, 47 years old).

While Saudi male leaders take these measures without fear, many women now have to make decisions and show that they can take those decisions and actions in order to succeed. *Participant 22* showed her frustration at having limited scope for decision-making:

> Being the [HR director] in one of the ministries is a major career move for me, but my decision-making power is still limited; I do not have full authority in recruiting or nominating without consulting the chief executive.

Her job was specifically described as being in charge of managerial decisions in the department, such as organising, upgrading staff, recruiting an employee, or even transferring them to a better and more knowledgeable position:

> For example, I worked with a female employee on my team who comes from a well-known family whose father held a significant role in the country and to whom I couldn't apply the scheme at all! She was missing and did not show up, and even when she did show up for work, she did no work at all. I tried to speak to her several times to figure out what was wrong, but there was no point, and when I brought this up with the board, what they said was, 'We can't do anything, you know who her father is!' I decided to go to the anti-corruption commission – quietly – to inform them that there was an unethical employee, and in the end, there was an investigation (Female HR director, 32 years old).

Since leaders will face obstacles throughout their lives, the support of those around them is necessary. Under the new Saudi era and the region's success, the government is firmly committed to enforcing sanctions on any activity that may endanger the operational framework, and reforms will continue to advance and other inventions will be adopted. Regarding the work environment decision-making period, cultural differences, and regard for religious values were evident in the responses of both male and female leaders as part of the process. Additionally, the participants further asserted that change is necessary in every aspect of life and, specifically in the business world to compete with others. The difference may be related to the decisions of the leader in one form or another. Another example that appeared in the interview was about how the employees may react towards any communication and networking.

Communication with staff

One of the most critical challenges confronting any company is the networking of management and staff, which requires open and stable dialogue that can lead to making priorities and advancing ideals, goals, and dreams. Communication between management and employees can be difficult where there are barriers to conversation and communication. Improving contact between management and workers is critical in every organisation in order to build a cohesive and collaborative environment; knocking down walls, avoiding blockages, and engaging honestly and frankly with the employees will be a great accomplishment.

The findings showed that regular contact with the workers, as well as clarifying their duties and responsibilities, was beneficial as it leads to accountable employees that foster meaningful, constructive contact and outcomes. Communicating in groups can be daunting to some people; a successful manager may have alternative communication channels for their workers; however, employees are not always interested. *Participant 30* explained how he supported his staff to be responsible. His regular communication with the team resulted in a number of beneficial outcomes. According to his experience, the key to his communication with the staff was:

> Make a positive contribution most of the time; if [I detect] that any employee feels nervous or worried about an upcoming report or an event that we are preparing … I try to discuss this matter with them in private to make them feel better and more comfortable … Alternatively, lighten the mood by sharing positive comments and previous encouraging responses from past supportive reviews, or something recently shared on [Twitter] about one of the events (Male general director, 38 years old).

Another point was made by *participant 15*, who expressed that the leader hires each team member based on their roles:

> For the most part, it is beneficial if you attempt [to be transparent with the employees about the standards that they should meet in their roles] ... when everyone is aware that the conference date is on Wednesday, for instance ... I make certain that I meet with everyone on a daily basis so that they are mindful of their roles and duties … being constantly engaging with the staff members makes them aware of their responsibilities and their ability to meet or exceed them. (Male general manager, 37 years old).

Furthermore, *participant 1* mentioned that the challenges she encountered regarding the consistency of duties and obligations necessitate cooperation and readiness on the part of staff, executives and leaders. Employee promotions, for example, require effort and commitment,

but if the manager sees that you do not perform, this process can be stressful and time-consuming.

Like *participant 15*, *participant 4* focused on acknowledging her employee's positive attitudes and ignoring the negative ones to reinforce their positive attitudes. *Participant 4* was not the only leader who described the relationship among her staff as being similar to the family, which does leave a positive impression:

> I do try to communicate most of the time with my employees, even outside our working periods and even participating and communicating on personal matters such as attending and celebrating someone's engagement, weddings or a birthday party (Female academic coordinator and executive director, 39 years old).

Participant 11 similarly emphasised that understanding the staff's psychological needs is a part of communication. He declared his concern about 'careful' communication with his team in which fairness was his main concern:

> Communication with others concerns me ... I try to make sure that I do not abuse any individual or misunderstand them as this will leave a record (Male CEO, 46 years old).

Similarly, *participant 13* also highlighted the importance of understanding others' positions by stating:

> It is best if you put yourself in other people's situations to understand what they're going through. Understanding and appreciation for the differences and establishing an environment of awareness would influence kindness and generosity (Male general manager, 45 years old).

Participants 20 and 27 both agreed on the importance of careful communication, including equality.

Leaders need to know how to manage people carefully … Their relationship needs to be loving, transparent and take equality with fairness into consideration … If you have these qualities and the staff see you practising them [you will gain their trust] and their respect will be built spontaneously which consequently will lead to success.

She further added, linking years of experience as a leader with the growing skills of communication with others:

> Communication skills are gained by long experience of communication with a variety of people. … When you've been a leader for years [18 years at least] your communication skills with individuals have been built smoothly, as these

> values will be translated into their own ethics (Female general PR director, 52 years old).

Leadership behaviour and style

The participants were concerned about their particular leadership styles as well as their views of successful leadership. Their responses indicated two interacting characteristics that represented their leadership philosophies: 1) the level of individual and organisational traits, as well as a non-gender-related leadership style; 2) the degree of gender disparities. The literature in chapter 2 focuses on gender differences in management styles, arguing that women's ways of managing focus particularly on identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, which is essential for the development of effective leadership skills. In addition, in order to achieve a high standard of work, *Participant 7* believed that a leader should maintain good managerial skills, such as teamwork, tackling challenges, problem-solving and policymaking:

> I do not consider myself a director, controlling the staff, but a colleague employee who works in a friendly environment with employees (Female politician; chair leader, 67 years old).

The result further found that the participants observed that good managerial talents, both male and female, have common human characteristics. They did not seem to support the idea of masculine or feminine approaches to leadership. A constructive feminine style often involves caring about staff abilities and needs as *Participant 31* described:

> *Diplomatic communication* is a process of persuading an individual to change an issue without harming the relationship... One of the skills of diplomatic communication is kindness and compassion... By adopting such leadership skills, the leader tends to be more flexible, friendly and balanced in dealing with employees to ease any misunderstanding and show respect for other individuals (Female general director, 43 years old).

Nonetheless, leader efficiency and achievement are not always linked to their leadership styles since such a method is dependent on a variety of work-related factors. However, *participant 28* noted that women's leadership styles can outperform men in some situations; she thought of herself as a good organiser and multitasker who focused on getting things done. Another feminine quality was suggested by *participant 4*, who emphasised that her effective leadership approach consisted of the power of renewal, productivity, creativity and continuous improvement. She expressed:

> To meet occupational needs, a leader should have a reasonable agenda for improving the institution's objectives... Since I have the ability to be creative, I handle my jobs in a unique way and carry out my job responsibilities flawlessly (Female academic coordinator and executive director, 39 years old).

Nonetheless, it was clear that these leaders tended to employ particular qualities based on their abilities and surroundings; furthermore, they did not feel a conflict with their innate attributes. As a result, for instance, *participant 19* expressed the importance of a woman's leadership model lying in her particular strengths and her ability to combine masculine and feminine skills. The results, however, showed a clear desire for a 'masculine' boss, as is often required even from women in positions of leadership. Some women leaders employed traditionally masculine power strategies such as aggressiveness and forcefulness; *participant 14* additionally expressed that several female leaders use a dictatorship tactic and take a masculine approach.

Traditional stereotypes aim to prove that leadership is not affected by feminine qualities, such as being emotional and sensitive. These patterns are considered to relate to the leader's personality, values and attitudes in response to challenges in the work environment; for instance, women's leadership behaviour can be affected by male dominance in some managerial roles under certain circumstances. *Participants 23 and 33* stated from a male perspective that the feminine leadership approach is applicable in traditional women's fields, such as the educational and medical sciences profession. However, in specific work conditions and certain career fields such as politics, engineering and law, adopting a masculine approach is required. *Participant 20* elaborated that her media and PR field, which is considered a male-dominated profession in Saudi, made her change her feminine behaviour to adopt a 'command and control' style to socialise efficiently with the public.

5.6 Context where Leadership Operates

Staff Absence

Highlighting an employee's absence is one of the internal factors affecting a leader's behaviour and interaction with their employees, which may negatively affect their relationship. These facts would include the leader's concerns about work and work-related behaviour. Some employees' frequent absences are due to an emotional issue, such as work congestion and intervention by others in management. *Participant 29* expressed how she suffered from a lack of staff. Her position has helped her team to feel more responsible, while having regular communication as discussed earlier in section 5.5.3. She added:

> Help the employee to feel better and have a decent day with the workload … you want them to feel as good as they can, and to think of themselves as capable individuals who know what they're doing (Female general manager, 39 years old).

Recruiting

Another problem with staffing is finding the best applicant in a pool of unqualified talent, which is another internal obstacle that leaders may encounter during their professional careers. Many organisations fail to employ and retain applicants, and implicit prejudices are often the source of the problem. *Participant 3* highlighted these challenges by stating:

> Most external factors are influenced by the decisions as a leader … you must be fair, relaxed, and secure if you want your workers to feel comfortable working for you … as a businessman and owner, I have made it a priority to ensure that everybody has jobs that match their abilities (male chief executive, 44 years old).

An additional recruiting case was highlighted by *participant 9.* She relates finding how the team interacted with the strategies developed by the leader, which were policies influenced by its leadership behaviour:

> One of the visible factors is when it comes to hiring … and I have noticed that most new individuals suffer at the beginning of their careers … that others might think, some individuals are hired in the leader's particular interests (Female Vice Dean, 43 years old).

Participant 4, who shares the same establishment with *participant 9*, as a manager in another department, added another matter regarding recruiting:

> One of the negative things is losing a colleague or an employee for any reason. If you have staff who cannot take responsibility or you have any issues with them, you might want to discuss them, but you need to wait until you have an alternative. Even finding the alternative is not an easy task ... attracting suitable candidates, engaging qualified candidates and hiring quickly is one of the biggest challenges you may face as a leader (Female academic coordinator and executive director, 39 years old).

The nature of working hard

Working hard and being challenged can be a great motivator because it keeps people interested and active in their careers. In contrast, other individuals may face professional challenges and obstacles, and such feelings would excite them rather than them becoming bored with a routine and a comfortable career. However, this difficult influence may become complicated that it is almost impossible for an individual to believe that they have the necessary expertise, tools, or managerial support to solve these difficulties. Such a situation may diminish staff enthusiasm

and have a negative impact on employee morale. *Participant 30* highlighted the view that enormous effort and time is required in the field of work, by stating,

Setting challenging deadlines may be efficient, but only if they are reasonable and manageable. Therefore, if any task goes in the wrong direction, it might trigger a crucial distress and tension problem for individuals.

He further added:

> Because of the essence of our work, our environment is exhausting. Despite the exhaustion, there is psychological relaxation within the deadline's time frame (Male general director, 38 years old).

Focusing on the analysis of leadership-related factors (section 5.5), symbolic violence in relation to managerial factors (recruitment, frequent changes, lack of support), decision-making (limiting the role of women in decision-making, male dominance), communication (lack of support, male resistance) was identified, supporting the findings from recent studies (Almathami *et al.*, 2020; Dinh, 2020; Hodges, 2017; Al-Asfour *et al.*, 2017; Al-Otaibi, 2020; Jamjoom, 2020). In addition, a few aspects such as competencies, using feminism as a tool to oppose male dominance, and participatory and collaborative leadership were identified as symbolic capital used by the participants in the workplace, supporting the findings from recent studies (Bekus, 2021; Salehi *et al.*, 2021; Bettiza, 2020; Alsubaie, 2021; Alharabi, 2020). Moreover, the participants adopted different leadership styles according to different contexts and different followers or subordinates, justifying that followers' traits may also influence leadership styles (Matthews *et al.*, 2021).

5.7 Alasabiyyah Alqabaliyyah

The word *alasabiyya* or *aṣabiyyah* has risen in popularity among most participants due to the finding that it is prominent in Saudi society. The tribe and family lie at the core of society and play a key role in the economic, political, religious and social spheres. In this region, individuals are conscious of each other's family membership, status, and identity. Certain individuals have risen to higher positions and won the government's confidence in prestigious contexts because of the capital value they have created and earned from their families. These leadership positions have been synonymous with those individuals for years because of their worth and the resources they have in their tribe. *Participant 8* argued that:

> *Alasabiyya* is a well-known phenomenon in our society even though many people reject such actions, but I suppose this is how Middle Eastern cultures are created. Growing up in another area made me realise how difficult it is to prove

> my culture to my other colleagues in the capital city. *Aṣabiyyah* is concerned with bigotry in ourselves and our deep commitment to our communities; for instance, rather than pursue a career in Riyadh, I returned to my hometown to establish a sociology department and serve as Dean of the University of Hail to help my own society (Male Member of Shura Council, 62 years old).

Alaṣabiyyah is recognised in culture as a natural sense of life and family solidarity, some people regard *Aṣabiyyah* as an essential feeling of life; *participant 23* argued that:

> [*Aṣabiyyah*] is a sensation based on human experience. Emotions and attachments based on race, class, or community are a part of our culture and any society, which is why we identify individuals based on their roots and backgrounds.

He further added that:

> Being a member of a well-known family or the royal family gives you the impression that people are only interested in you because of your family name and status … Another case would be making *wasta* [which is a person's contacts and influences in making recruiting and promotion decisions] to a family member in order for him or her to get the job even though they are not eligible (Male firm director, 39 years old)

Alaṣabiyyah as a philosophy seems to be needed if society is to sit together, struggle together and solve common challenges, regardless of context and political disagreements. Such sentiment is often seen as likely to escalate to the point of ethnic strife and fighting, as has happened throughout history. Furthermore, *alasabiyya* provides no assistance in maintaining harmony, since tolerance among classes and races is needed, according to *participant 7*:

> Certain aspects of [*alasabiyya*] in my opinion, need further investigation. It is necessary to preserve the identity and culture of a particular group so that it is not confused with other cultural elements [or affected] by other irrelevant practices, if this word only refers to peace and power. However, if any bias emerges, racism must get eliminated so that individuals can coexist peacefully (Female politician; chair leader, 67 years old).

The respondents mostly correlated the term *alasabiyya* with negative rather than positive characteristics, although a few thought that this feeling might be seen in helpful ways. Some leaders felt it could be used positively and beneficially as stated by *participant 12*:

> *Alasabiyya* tends to unite people. It brings out individuality at the same time if we look at it in an optimistic way … we can assume that racism destroys racism. [*Alasabiyya*] brings feelings of brotherhood, patriotism and nationalism (Male CEO, 50 years old).

Chapter 3 suggested that the expression *alaṣabiyyah* connected directly with society and groups of people and feelings: when an individual feels a unique blend of belonging to a group, it may

cause a type of pressure or form of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence can be related to discrimination and antagonism, which exists due to hierarchical power relationships that allow and legitimise it.

Alaṣabiyyah Through the Bourdieusian Violence Lens

The results emphasised the presence of *Alaṣabiyyah* in organisations, politics and culture. These highlighted issues were more relevant to political extremism, social and moral issues, cultural solidarity, authority weakness, changes, and reforms. Furthermore, the participants' outcomes demonstrate societal symbolic violence, including individuals who feel pressure and tension due to any action or feelings. The respondents focused on the potential causes in such a scenario; the main themes emerging from *alasabiyya* were linked to religion, individuals' attitudes, politics, family status, organisation and other external factors. The religious factor is the most commonly mentioned by the majority of respondents, as religion plays a significant role in Saudi society. The absence of symmetrically balanced religion and accurate knowledge or education and the lack of understanding and practice may cause some forms of symbolic violence.

According to such a context, symbolic violence can be seen as non-physical violence between social classes; this was agreed upon by all contributors and manifests itself in the imposition of significant social influence over those of an inferior group. The statements of one participant emphasised that the lack of education from parents may lead to a decrease in the level of knowledge of management or a lack of experience of the individual. However, this rule varies from person to person depending on their lifestyle, tribe, social and cognitive status, and the boundaries set through lifestyles cannot have precise limits; they are necessarily unspecified and ambiguous.

An example that illustrates the symbolic violence in relation to *alasabiyya* was *participant 18*, who reported her experience while dealing with pressure and gender preference, where she found that such pressures are constantly changing:

> I was the only female consultant in the department. When I asked to go to the USA to do further training my male supervisor did not allow me to go, but my father who has big networks and our big family name, helped me to obtain approval (Female department manager, 42 years old).

Additionally, *participant 6* agreed with this sense of symbolic violence, which often carries racial overtones about her female identity:

> I qualified for a scholarship based on my job … but was denied it many times by the key administration at the male section, while my male colleague got it so easily. I had to use my brother's [the deputy minister] contacts to get scholarship recognition (Female, manager, 36 years old).

Another comment that illustrates the challenges related to the symbolic violence and *alasabiyya* was by *participant 9;* she described *alasabiyya* as a type of abuse—*alasabiyya* can require severity or create a form of brutality centred on the views of the 'other', the individual who is discriminated against:

> Many obstacles awaited me as a contractor at the start of my career, including being treated differently from most official employees. Since I was of a different ethnic background, some thought I was less understanding of work, and the different features of my face that were not of Arab origin caused some to see me as unpatriotic or disloyal to Saudi Arabia. Such challenges are hidden in our culture and society. However, anyone may face them on a daily basis at work.

She further added:

> Those feelings of being different helped me to think seriously about my [leadership style]. I worked very hard and learned the necessary skills to accomplish what I have today. At the moment I lead in one of the government sectors, and I manage certain former colleagues who were very racist against me at one stage (Female Vice Dean, 43 years old).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the term *alasabiyya* is a feeling that emerges in infancy. Children are likely shaped by parents' personal values. This ideology is influenced by education, family values, and the perception of society, determining success or failure. In certain instances, parents and family values serve as the foundation for people to pursue perfection and prosperity, and hence their achievements are connected to society. On the other hand, others may refuse to express their views for fear of being shamed or dismissed based on their beliefs, which results in symbolic violence.

Symbolic violence has relied on the legislation of principles, values, and practices issued by socially and politically dominant forces to conceal power dynamics. Language, culture, ideology, signals, and meaning all play a role in spreading this veiled violence. Convictions entrenched in the minds of its victims and perpetrators inevitably lead to other forms of violence. Violence becomes a systematic process that is initiated not by individuals but by the social and legal framework and structure.

The concept of violence links closely to *aṣabiyyah*, depending on the individual's perspective and personal views. *Participant 11* expressed:

> [H]ow depressing would it be if someone classified you into a different group based purely on your gender, age, and, in some cases, the city you come from...You will be wondering, what is the difference? — especially if you have the same qualification and similar social values. (Male CEO, 46 years old).

5.8 Symbolic Violence Between Fiction and Reality

Violence has troubled human societies throughout history. There are various types of violence, both physical and symbolic. Symbolic violence is characterised by verbal assaults, malicious deportations, astute and polite denials, and intimidation. These methods are more distressing than the most severe physical punishments, both at work and home. Symbolic violence is a type of hidden violence that can reflect more dynamic and normal social behaviours and relationships — Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.2.

Symbolic violence is a pattern of attitudes, words, actions and movements that can disrupt and poison a person's psychological or physical balance, endanger his or her work and life, and disturb and poison the working environment. In the work scenario leaders may destroy someone without those around them knowing why; words may appear harmless; yet such methods are more painful than the most severe physical sentences. The results showed that *symbolic violence* is used by people or groups who practice it against others because of their higher status in the social structure of society and does not necessarily require the support of physical violence. As the researcher stated, the structure of Saudi business traditionally relies on leaders' social value, dominated ownership and management relationships. In the context it has appeared that *symbolic violence* is always used against females rather than males, but both are exposed to it differently depending on work situations. The Saudi social construction of women and their view of them as 'others' stipulated that women's activity in Saudi Arabia in the past was poor, their behaviour was weak, society did not need their presence outside the house, and their actions outside the house were less important. All of these things are part of women's experience of symbolic violence, which has seen tremendous improvement in terms of social structure which will be discussed later in the chapter.

An example that illustrates *symbolic violence* in the workforce is the characteristic of charismatic leadership; the leader has a 'vision' that can be used to rally supporters, which may lead to pressure, anxiety and frustration. *Participant 15* stated that:

> At my former job, I had complete authority to adjust and monitor, and several workers were under my oversight, simply listening and following my orders, but now that I've moved on to a new sector, there is [a CEO], I have to get his consent on the majority of activities, even though we both operate large divisions. This made me feel uncomfortable and anxious; I even began to get

> really frustrated and defensive as I spoke with my employees, which made them feel stressed at a point (Male general manager, 37 years old).

This statement draws attention to the relationship between the leader and the employee, which will decide whether the employee will be happy or operate under problematic and difficult-to-control situations that cause a form of stress, violence and harm. It reveals that the leader cannot take workers into account in a manner that satisfies their emotional needs above the usual.

> [Being happy doesn't mean that; I have to give everyone an upgrade] …

Participant 31 expressed her perception at the beginning of the interview with this sentence, when she was exemplifying how emotion may reflect in a leader observing employees' emotions. She added further:

> Any individual will take advantage of the person in charge.... they compete to take your spot one day, they do not consider how you will get a promotion or be promoted, but rather how will you fail so they can take your place (Female general director, 43 years old).

Participant 10 also mentioned the stresses on the leader's leadership as well as the pressures on the workers. She brought up the topic of strain resulting from a clash between families' perceptions of work institutions, labour organisations, and family social customs:

> The way your family views your jobs and positions directly impacts you, as does the conflict in understanding between families and the way you work … it's a way of manipulation if they are relying on your success nonstop, which ensures that disappointment will be not tolerated, and focuses only in a role they consent to … whereas the work focuses on the importance of implementing the company's approach, which is based on the desired results … some employees' families focus on their status, position, and salary, which means a lot more than everything else, and this phenomenon extends to social position … whereas when you want to propose to a girl and ask for her hand a family [would object] to your income and profession of your religion … whether you do it at home or in mosques (Female Vice Dean, 43 years old).

It seems that leaders' attitudes are influenced by coercion or violence, as well as how they react to it. This may represent the power of each leader's personality, which, as a result, affects leadership behaviour. In this regard, *participant 5* gave nine descriptions of characteristics that he believes leaders must possess in order to positively influence their institution:

> Transparency, integrity, justice, group activity, intelligence, love and care, ability to delegate, being a role model, and being strong listener (Male CEO, 49 years old).

He concluded that such qualities would aid in winning the confidence of others, and hence their esteem and support, resulting in a prosperous organisation. The participants were asked to

identify what they considered to be important to their organisation, as well as how and why they believe this *symbolic violence* impacts the organisation's leadership in the Saudi context.

Some of these issues are related to personal responsibility and leadership, while others are related to the contextual aspects of leadership. The lack of opportunities and resources for working individuals causes stresses of social and emotional significance. In addition, other factors, such as race and gender, contribute to a more significant influence, either negatively or positively on leaders and human resources directors within the institution. The symbolic form of violence illustrates how the prevailing act is practised in everyday life; and how it affects individuals and leaders. In contrast, these aggressive and influential Saudi leaders' acts may become a habit and values that are deliberately or unintentionally maintained, sometimes without feeling.

5.9 Symbolic Capital Through the Lens of Gender and Violence.

This analysis revealed further that the Saudi business structure is traditionally based on masculine-dominated management and ownership, which upholds community and family-related traditions above the demands of professionalism, based on the findings and qualitative questions. Men have better access to the upper hierarchy of Saudi society due to the masculine structure of the society, while gender has a fractured nature in terms of symbolic violence and symbolic capital. Roots of dominant and invisible power are located in society, networking and personal values. It would be argued that state-dependent growth of businesses, and the role of the culturally dominant state tradition, reinforce masculine approaches to business and management. Government growth and the presence of dominant cultural norms in Saudi Arabia, which promote masculinity, are responsible for the businesses' success. Masculinity is synonymous with national ideology and culture in Saudi institutions. A leader is most likely a man from a well-known tribe and a close family friend.

Even though Saudi society has historically and systemically undervalued women in some social circumstances, it further forces men to assume pre-defined positions. It limits their career options to a specific position. As a result, the interaction between culture and society continues to be a source of symbolic violence that affects both men and women. This situation indicates a male preference among Saudi families, particularly for corporate and government power.

Few female participants who were able to achieve a government leadership role had no family difficulties in terms of acquiring expertise and work experience. Later in their careers, two of them shared influence with their husbands. *Participant 18:*

> My family had always embraced my decision to pursue my desired career goal, but time came to get married … I faced some difficult pressures such as my husband's reaction towards my work at such a high level of responsibility... I was surprised to find that my [husband] shared my ambitions and desires completely (Female department manager, 42 years old).

Participant 27 recalled the support and encouragement she received from her parents, family, relatives, key role models and individuals, who respected her brave decision to continue in her chosen field:

> My relatives persuaded me to show my face in newspapers and local magazines ten years ago … a time when our society did not allow women to show their faces in the press, as it was disgraceful … when I appeared with my name and photo, I received negative attitudes from certain people... despite this my family have respected my decisions and have stood beside me in difficult times in order to overcome cultural influences (Female general manager, 41 years old).

Furthermore, gender and personal appearance play an important role in both the social component and symbolic violence. *Participant 2*:

> I remember that when I joined the organisation. some of my colleagues said to me [it is impressive that you are still working while your father is a known figure!] while others mentioned that they never thought of me being pretty and educated … as always, known families do not encourage their daughter to study as much as getting married to a known prestigious family member (Female general PR manager, 48 years old).

The result further showed that cases of leaders 'being male' do not have the same symbolic power over female family members or how society represents females. As a result, the Saudi context and relationships tend to be critical components in determining whether gender is symbolic capital or not. Gender-based symbolic violence is not a one-sided manifestation of male dominance over females. While men appear to be the dominant actors in gender issues, men are often exposed to gendered types of symbolic violence as a result of the research findings. The majority of male interviewees stated that they had been obliged to take on responsibilities given to them by their families, tribe and society when they were selected as the leaders and managers. Dialectically, most of the men who took the most influential leadership positions were those whose choices were very limited concerning their daily lives, by virtue of the fact that most of the power was granted to them inside the institutions, just as their presence outside the family due to their constant preoccupation makes them less likely to be involved in family decisions, or their own decisions.

Participant 3 stated that while he was working as a consultant, he had faced issues in the interaction over his career choice:

> I have always been a workaholic person … Ever since my father was working in the military when we were young, he always made sure to put pressure on us like a burden on our shoulders – we were defiantly working out of fear most of the time … he was always the person to decide everything, sometimes even without informing us.

he added further:

> When I thought of joining an academic career as a scientist he laughed and said [what are you going to achieve?] Although his reaction was so sarcastic it did not control my ambitions … I remember one of his comments was about why don't you join the army just like me … our families sometimes pressure us just to fulfil their own desires (Male chief executive, 44 years old).

The influence or dominance of fathers is not only part of daily life. It is a basic ideology which, while subtly reshaping thought, transcends society and individuals. With women succeeding in such a patriarchal system and gender challenges, they often turn their backs on opportunities to promote their equality, and support the position of patriarchy and gender, which shows the power of the ideology of patriarchy and Saudi gender issues. The results explore further how men did not report restricting regarding their male identity in society, while some women participants discussed how they have tried to hide their female identity.

Participant 17 described how she managed to ignore her emotions and never tried to show how she felt toward her work and others around her because of fear and lack of gender confidence:

> [Saudi women] have faced many difficulties and obstacles in society up to this stage to prove themselves … despite the government's complete support for women … I confess that I am always terrified of people not agreeing with my career choices because I am a [female] … Women battle men because they feel underappreciated for their abilities and experiences … and women fight other women out of jealousy … Women are known for their sensitive disposition and their ability to diagnose most problems … It is well-known that female attractiveness is often regarded more highly than her personality, culture, education, and experience. (Female department manager, 40 years old).

Moreover, even if women take positions of authority, they seem to be fervent defenders of the ideological system that makes them dominated secondary citizens, and a socially designed tactical setting for action that increases gender in symbolic capital. Gender as symbolic capital is aligned with a framework of male or female dialectics of dominance. *Participant 31*:

> Women in many matters are subject to domination and social violence, or what it is known as defeat enacted by society, even when they occupy positions of power that enhance their role … they remain subject to a problematic perspective as many women face pressures within organisations … so if she were beautiful she would be classified as having reached this stage by virtue of her beauty … and if she belongs to a known family she would be classified

> based of her social status which is the reason she was given this opportunity … [To be honest] many females reach such leadership position because of their status as daughters and wives of known public figures —as daughters of ministers and political figures (Female general director, 43 years old).

Despite the fact that the time has come in Saudi Arabia for women's empowerment and support, Saudi women are still being abandoned and abused, especially by their female colleagues. Another example of female competitive oppression is *participant 5*, who revealed:

> Toxic masculinity is when women model their male peers' behaviour to lead successfully, which then becomes a part of their leadership style. Women emotionally lose themselves over time or the character of who they are at the core, sometimes to fit in with the senior CEO. In many cases, if a female were new at this profession, she would do whatever it takes to be the selected person that fits into this specific position and organisational culture.

He added further:

> I've found that it's unusual for a woman to assist another woman for no apparent cause … Men are now even more worried because of the help that women have got from the government of further empowerment … This has led some men to fear that they will lose their status to ladies … [it is not common to be a male and your boss is female, as many men do not support this] … A colleague of mine in another governmental sector, after spending 11 years in his position, a female boss was assigned to him which made him resign the next day on the grounds that he couldn't handle this fact (Male CEO, 49 years old).

The findings further showed that in Saudi Arabia patriarchal attitudes and expectations of gender roles persist. For instance, some conservative individuals still consider that home is the women's place because women are not able to reconcile the responsibilities of home and work. They believe that women's empowerment will lead to liberation, changed family dynamics and altered social traditional values. Women, therefore, are taught to be submissive housewives, submit to the domination of male relatives, carry out domestic chores and refrain from socialising with men in public — *participant 8*. *Participants 11, 20, 25 and 33* indicated that legislation to empower women faces several obstacles. *Participant 11* expressed:

> Saudi society's misconception of the term 'women's empowerment' has negatively affected the process of implementing women's empowerment projects in some public and private institutions. Society still believes that [women's empowerment] is a process that calls for [women's liberation] which affects the role of men and threatens their power … The liberation intended here is related to women's liberation from constraints that prevent them from obtaining their social, economic and political rights without affecting the role of men (Male CEO, 46 years old).

Accordingly, upholding the social norms would limit the applicability of the process of promoting women to leadership positions. In the Saudi Arabian context, a modernisation

process as a means to eliminate social and cultural barriers would help to build an egalitarian labour market. Even though women's participation in the Saudi labour force has increased greatly, they still do not hold a proportionate share of the top management positions, and they do not have access to certain sectors and fields based on gender role stereotypes. This means that stereotypical masculine and feminine traits have affected the process of gender equality in the workplace. All of these examples demonstrate how the cultural context of leaders' dominant masculinity in Saudi creates a gendered context for the leader, and the framework of gender as symbolic capital and violence changes along with different types of relations, whereas both male and female individuals face the social contextual dominance of symbolic violence and symbolic capital in the context of their home and work.

5.10 Working under unspectacular circumstances - COVID 19

One of the most acute labour crises was COVID-19, which has imposed many challenges at an international level, for organisations and individuals, as has been mentioned previously in section 2.12, chapter 2. Many nations and businesses modified their strategies due to the pandemic and its challenges. This research spoke with some officials during the pandemic, who have spoken about their experiences from their point of view. Many leaders and managers were exposed to changes in habits at work since the beginning of the pandemic, as follows.

Changes in the Organisational Atmosphere

Working remotely and social distancing were suggestions due to the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. Remote working has presented many challenges. Individuals who are not used to working from home may not be accustomed to isolation from their colleagues and offices, and they may not have a home office or adequate home space to do the desired work. The video call with *Participant 7* demonstrated that the new technology has certainly helped her to practise the daily activities similar to being around in the office. She indicates that:

> The government worked all its efforts to control this pandemic … the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was at the forefront of countries that changed laws to limit the spread of the pandemic … it closed airports, disrupted international and domestic flights, and equipped hospitals with the necessary ability to heal the largest possible number of cases. Many ministries and companies changed laws for everyone's safety, so representation in the workplace did not exceed 25% of employees, while the majority worked from home.

She further added:

> The biggest challenge of remote work may be the absence of personal interaction with colleagues during the pandemic period … When I worked

> remotely, I cannot see my colleagues in the organisation's corridors, or socialise in coffee breaks. As a result, regular communication via email, phone calls, and virtual meetings has become crucial; to compensate for the absence of the social aspect as a result of working remotely, for instance, I have managed to set aside a specific time at the start of any meetings to allow colleagues to interact with each other (Female politician; chair leader, 67 years old).

An additional illustration was by *participant 24*. He mentioned that the change has encompassed all aspects of life:

> Some issues have been raised through the pandemic such as that employees were required to obtain the latest technology and devices for the ability to communicate and attend meetings which may cause [financial distress for some] … Employees who are not used to be working from home may not be familiar to isolation from their co-workers … and they may not have offices or enough home space to do the work, with being around other family members also in the home, including children or husband/wife, it can be difficult to avoid the distraction and continued interruption … In their pursuit of privacy, employees may find themselves in an awkward situation and hold meetings from the bedroom or even the kitchen … It is not always easy to set virtual meeting technologies to work correctly, and these challenges may cause anxiety, stress and frustration … Moreover, the fear of laying off many employees and being laid off causes constant pressure and fear, as many international companies and stores announced their closure and bankruptcy (Male deputy of chief executive, 35 years old).

While the changes through reforms as a part of vision 2030 were considered to be effective in addressing the issues of symbolic violence against women, the changes in the workplace due to the Covid-19 pandemic have created an environment of stress and increased work burden on women, as they are supposed to work from home and carry many household duties along with their professional work, reflecting an increasing symbolic violence from two different fields (office and home), which were at different locations but now have become integrated.

Telework and its Relationship to Work Balance During the Pandemic

To avoid the anxiety and fears caused by the pandemic, there are plenty of measures to obtain a balanced life for those who work remotely by setting boundaries between work and personal obligations. *Participant 4* stated:

> Being stuck in another country for a few weeks made me feel constant anxiety, but after thinking deeply and trying to separate the events from the horrific news, I knew that it would hit us all. So, I thought about alternative solutions, such as establishing a consistent routine and creating habits that help to determine the start and end of my workday. Organise your room and home and get dressed every morning as if you were going to the office … take a long walk to simulate your routine activity. Attempt to join activities with your family and take care of yourself; you will build a solution to help you when you need

> discipline in separating your work from your personal life and crises (Female academic coordinator and executive director, 39 years old).

Additionally, *participant 22* expressed her fears about the pandemic by saying that:

> We are living amid the first event in several decades that constitutes a global shock, and it can be assumed that the impacts are the first of its kind since … [World War II] and it will likely be the first of its kind in the life of modern humankind … So far nearly three million people have died, and the cases are still increasing.

She added further:

> Many concepts have also changed, starting from social aspects, the global economy, and international relations networks [to individual mental health issues]. Nothing has escaped this crisis … After the pandemic is over, I guess the effects of the crises will affect societies for years … causing a trauma which is known as a gap between a person and the traumatic event in the way that dismissal from work would be painful … The impact of COVID has caused human and material losses … hopefully after the end of this pandemic things will go back to normal … but I guess at the end everyone will feel the size of their losses, and they will lose a lot of internal, personal values, which would lead to hidden pressure and changes in concepts (Female HR director, 32 years old).

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a sense of fear and anxiety among both men and women, affecting their leadership roles and outcomes. However, no form of symbolic capital or symbolic violence have been identified due to the pandemic, but it has affected the competencies of both genders due to increased stress, anxiety and work burden, indirectly affecting the social capital of skills, competencies and communication skills.

5.11 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the experiences of participants were examined in relation to their performance at work and home as well as in relation to the state's role and cultural influences. The findings showed that most participants had encountered several opportunities and barriers in their households, in their workplaces and in the wider community, which called other aspects into question. Nevertheless, these obstacles did not prevent them from succeeding as managers. This chapter discussed several main themes related to Saudi leaders' perspectives, social factors and the key challenges that face leaders and leadership behaviour in the Saudi context, and investigated how such challenges and barriers may affect leadership practices within the Saudi leaders' perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, it illustrates that gender challenges still exist, despite beliefs that equality in rights, education, skills, knowledge and job performance may liberate Saudi women and men from gender-based outcomes at work, by

adapting the theoretical approach of Bourdieu's arguments to the field of gender, work and organisation concerning leaders, by exposing the social and cultural dynamics which impact on the gendered experiences of businesses and organisations. Additionally, the leadership role was explored, and the personality traits: behaviour, personal values, and internal and external factors. This chapter has provided initial indications of social and cultural emphases within an organisation. The findings from these results will be discussed further in chapter 6, 'Discussion', in the light of the literature review.

Chapter 6. Critical Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the extent to which the main findings could be incorporated into Bourdieu's theoretical framework, to explore changes in Saudi Arabian leadership positions, especially with regard to employment and education. In this chapter, I shall discuss the findings in order to better understand the experiences of those in leadership positions in Saudi workplaces, and also to alter Bourdieu's theoretical approaches towards symbolic capital and violence. This is meant to provide a theoretical context, orientating the research towards the macro-features of the 'social process' and the 'lived experience' of Saudi leaders. These features are discussed in relation to the society and structural gender inequality in Saudi Arabia, in order to avoid the pitfalls of 'abstract structuralism'. In addressing RQ1 (How do corporate managers and leaders in business organisations experience work and life in a rigidly masculine and patriarchal society, in the Saudi Arabian context?) and RQ2 (What identifiable forms of symbolic capital do leaders bring to their field of work and what forms of symbolic violence are experienced in Saudi Arabian organisations?), various internal or personal factors (section 6.3) – including the values, beliefs, and experiences of the participants – were analysed, along with the external factors of influence (sections 6.4 and 6.5). These factors may be thought of as symbolic capital and may also exhibit symbolic violence, which can then be carried into workplaces, as is analysed in section 6.7. The analysis of these factors should help in addressing RQ1 and RQ2. In addition, leadership structures and ideologies are analysed in section 6.6, in order to address RQ3 (What schemes of perception, appreciation, and action constitute the leaders' ideology and help build the structure of symbolic violence? And how are such structures reproduced and maintained?) and RQ4 (What social roles and gender stereotypes are these leaders expected to uphold in their workplaces?).

The research described in Chapter 5 is used to compare the findings to Bourdieu's theory, which is explained in his most prominent studies. Specifically, in order to utilise the epistemological spectrum of the research, this chapter is based on Bourdieu's traditional view of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, which makes the case that that the problem of gender revolves around the dual system of patriarchy and masculinity when observing the structuring of society.

The analysis is conducted via extensive observation of employment gender patterns in Saudi Arabian labour forces, which were extracted from the analysis of the interviews in the previous

chapter. Therefore, this discussion aims to determine the extent of gender practices and dominance among Saudi leaders' perspectives and business structures, as well as assess what progress has been made in removing the limitations of social and cultural presuppositions, using Bourdieu's framework.

6.2 Reflection on the main findings with Bourdieu's framework

Bourdieu's structure of symbolic capital and symbolic violence features a set of patriarchy and domination linked to gendered 'relations' and 'practices', which either exclude or marginalise genders. These are found in any society, including Saudi Arabia, where a significant historical transition from private to public patriarchy has occurred.

Bourdieu's work has been criticised for presenting an androcentric representation of society (Huppatz, 2012). As with much social theory, there is an issue in gender theory regarding the relationship between agency and structure. Every society is structured according to the dominant powers of government, regulations, customs, traditions – and in several contexts religion also plays a major role. Bourdieu's social theory offers an accurate representation of gender dynamics in cultural life, which has strongly influenced a 'cultural view' in class theory. Furthermore, his theory of *symbolic capital* offers a new way of understanding class through socio-economic and cultural interpretations. Despite the fact that these characteristics and privileges are not gender-specific, women in Saudi Arabia have been denied access to such titles and privileges, due to the social obstacles and cultural boundaries encountered.

Furthermore, it has been argued that men have gained more authority and control than women in Saudi society because they were more readily available. This resulted in tribalism which favoured males over females, giving males a sense of superiority and exposing females to further violence and class discrimination. Bourdieu insists that any approach which dichotomises structure and agency is problematic. The classic dilemma is that, if women are seen as having agency, then they must be seen as choosing their oppression, and if they do not choose it, according to a structural account, then they are merely passive victims, producing a kind of violence known as symbolic violence. Patriarchal domination leads to an account where structure and agency are seen as mutually compatible, co-existing and complementary, thanks to the change from private to public patriarchy that has occurred for both genders. In theorising patriarchy, Bourdieu explains that the changes are not only structural – particularly the changes in the capitalist economy, which led to an increased demand for wage labour – but also the result of further gender empowerment (focusing on the empowerment of women) at the turn of

the century, and women's successful campaign for political citizenship. This focus on the importance of gender clearly provides for discrimination in the creation of new structures of gender relations and new forms of patriarchy in Saudi society.

In attempting to apply Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital and violence to gender practices in the specific context of Saudi leaders, it is apparent that the changes in gender relations have led to a new form of public patriarchy and domination based on several factors. Given the current circumstances in Saudi society, the gradual process of cultural and political change via national reforms concentrates primarily on the social image of women and their empowerment. The government has socially and economically empowered women in different areas since 2015, which has led to gender preference in various aspects of social life in Saudi society. This includes the process of forming, constructing and adopting gendered identities, perceptions and notions about masculinities and femininities, such as in the family, the media, workplaces, and so on.

The Saudi Arabian government aims to preserve Saudi identity and its moral and cultural principles through building social cohesion and striving for equality and balance in society. Remarkably, the specific goals that the state has attempted to achieve are to foster gender equality, grant women a share in high level management and reduce discrimination against them in the workforce. Hence, the official reforms by the Saudi government included policies of gender equality in mainstream society, which have led to changes in gender relations and have also affected the form and degree of patriarchy in the Saudi context. Furthermore, those gender relations were primarily within the private, domestic sphere, but thanks to a tribal society, they extended to a wide range of areas that included politics, power and leadership within organisations. This caused a shift from gendered roles in the household, for instance, where female duties were limited to family and childcare, to the emergence of new types of patriarchy and dominance in the public sphere, which is accessed by both men and women. As a result, gender representation at work remains low.

In this broad sense, I accept the statement that the apparent historical transformation in Saudi Arabian society has led to new approaches, which fits Bourdieu's theoretical model of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, but through a new approach. The Bourdieu approach to symbolic capital and violence allows for an analysis of individual experiences and of unique, but formal, class interactions in relation to gender. Bourdieu's argument is based on social and political economy, and his work examines how changes in gender regimes have been

moderated by age and class structures, as well as by the political sphere. His theory intended to capture how gender relations are restructured, especially class and ethnic differences. However, these do not align with the structure of gender relations in Saudi's economy, because the degree of gender on political and leadership activism is low. Therefore, changes in the gender of leadership in Saudi Arabia are often articulated as legal, organisational or educational changes.

6.3 Personal and social factors that are impacting leaders

Several factors seem to influence leadership and management in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As discussed in the literature, leadership is concerned with linking desired results to the surrounding social reality. To determine whether and how social factors influence leadership in the Saudi context, the participants were asked to identify which aspects had an influence on their career, as well as how and why. Many of these aspects are psychological, biological, and related to leadership and management, while others are contextual aspects of the region in which their leadership operates. Figure 6.1 below summarises the main aspects highlighted by the participants and identifies internal factors, which have influenced leaders in business sectors.

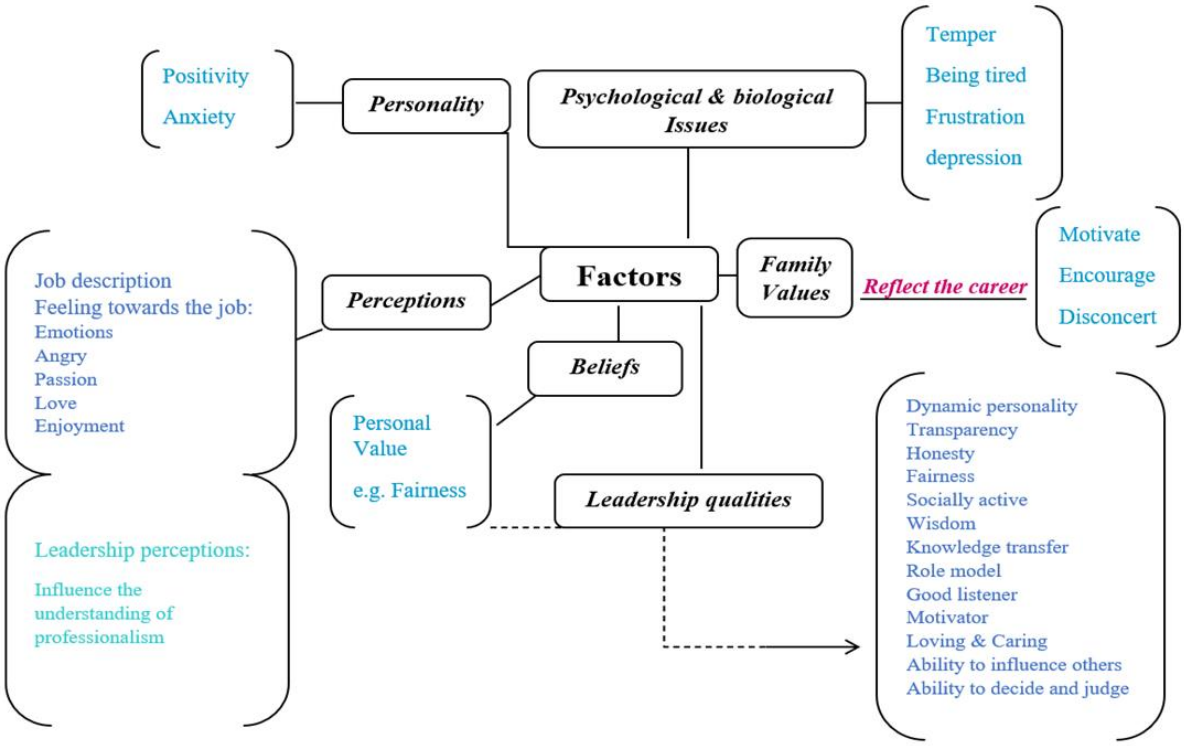

Figure 6-1. Factors that are impacting personal and social identity

These themes evolved from the results and an in-depth analysis to identify the various factors that influence leadership in Saudi Arabia, based on the interviews conducted. These factors can be classified as either internal or external. In this section, I will discuss first the internal factors and then the external factors. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2017), internal is something 'situated or existing in the interior of something; interior'. It is also something 'existing solely within the individual mind: internal malaise'. The present study considers the following factors to be internal:

6.3.1 Internal factors

The research found several internal social factors that affect the Saudi leadership psychologically and may also affect performance. Seven interviewees out of the 33 study participants (21%) stated that the leader's social and psychological status is significant at work. Meanwhile, other factors such as personality, values, and beliefs directly affect the working relationship between the leader and employees. This may include having a positive personality and the ability to manage family issues, or psychological factors such as dealing with mood and depression. The majority of participants asserted that family and public relations primarily affected the quality of the decisions and the leader's practices inside organisations. In addition, nearly 70% of the participants stated that the leader's personal relationships outside work have a prominent role in guiding his or her decisions, as the leader is linked to others via family relations, while the ties of tribe, group and neighbourhood all exert pressure on the leader to shape his or her decisions.

These pressures are clearly visible at work and may be noticed: when, for instance, vacancies are announced, or promotions and transfers are made, or the stakeholders try to use their connections with the leader to serve their interests regardless of the established rules and regulations. As for Saudi women leaders, they face a noticeable challenge when their orders are rejected or their staff are not convinced by a female leader, as women are considered peaceful and prefer not to create conflict inside the work environment. Furthermore, the essential biological aspects of a leader such as sleep, fatigue, and stress directly affect their behaviour and the environment inside and outside the organisation. According to the analysis, stressors impair human performance and affect mood more than cognitive and motor performance. This may partially explain the mood changes the study participants experienced.

Moreover, this study found that the environment and the family influence the leader more than the institutions themselves. Leadership, motivation, and encouragement measures stem from

within the family first. Constant criticism from those close to a person may lead to stress or even violence. Additionally, values and beliefs in Saudi Arabia play a part in every personality, as ten participants (30%) asserted that beliefs and values impose on the leader a commitment to thinking within his group and influence his feelings towards the job. Management decisions are also affected by social traditions, inherited customs and religious values; this can be seen through leaders' behaviour and their attitudes when making decisions, as there are many social customs and traditions practised in Saudi Arabia that extend to government agencies and affect their leadership. Hence, the commitment of senior employees in these agencies to help the people of their community and to prefer them over others, because fulfilling their needs and interests is part of the social traditions that impose these obligations on them. The lack of a sense of responsibility, the refusal to recognise the importance of time, the indifference to appointments, the lack of persistence, and the low level of accuracy in performance – these are all considered an extension of some groups' customs and traditions. When participants were asked questions about the major theme of internal factors, it was found that the following factors influence a leader's personal practice: family values and background, followed by the personal and religious beliefs, the influence of societal culture, the tension between tradition and change and, finally, leadership preparation and qualities; which will be discussed further.

Family values and background

Personal and family values begin to take shape at a very young age: from the time that individuals start observing and interacting with other people. Twenty-five of the interviewees (75%) agreed that family values are the first step in shaping our principles and learning the codes for how to behave in life. Furthermore, many families are the basis of success or the cause of failure, while many of our individual values are related to the community, making them difficult to uproot because they are ingrained deeply inside our personalities. In addition, 15 participants (45%) added that some habits and behaviours are acquired with time, as a result of later environments. For example, participant *22,* mentioned that her family spoiled her and were very protective. Therefore, when practising her work, she often showed an indifferent and robust character, which is the opposite of what she used to deal with inside her home and her family.

Beliefs

Beliefs are a very important factor in shaping a personality. As has been found in other cultures, there is a strong link between religious practices and behaviour (Geertz, 1973; Weber, 1963).

During this study, 60% (20 out of 33) of the research participants listed the things they considered ingrained in their Islamic belief. Values can be defined as 'principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgment of what is important in life' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2017). While some leaders clearly referred to religion, others mentioned it indirectly through their discussions and justifications. This result is compatible with many studies showing the strong impact of faith on leaders' practices (Strachan, Akao, Kilavanawa, and Warsal, 2009; Striepe, Clarke, and O'Donoghue, 2014). Religion is seen as the process of meaning-making that guides people and gives value to their existence. It is also perceived as a system of beliefs and symbols that is difficult to disregard.

Influence of Societal Culture

Saudi culture is fundamental, traditional and conservative; only recently has the conventional image begun to change slightly. Still, Islam has an extensive influence on society, guiding people's social, familial, political and legal lives, even if they are not religious. The Saudi people generally share a robust moral code and cultural values, such as hospitality, loyalty and a sense of duty to support their community and tribe. Ten of the participants (30%) stated that the national culture was a motivation for them when seeking to deliver effective leadership. Meanwhile, five participants among the female leaders (15%) suggested that national culture is one of the biggest challenges that any women leader would face, even though societal culture can be the first supporter of their career.

Tension between traditions and change

Participants' reactions to culture reveal the challenge of contemporary cultural values that must be assimilated into the traditional framework of Saudi businesses and organisations. Tensions were evident between the leaders over idealistic values and actual practices, as well as the need for a new generation of leaders. This supports contemporary intra-organisational conflict, between the need to change and adapt to international trends in developing society (as we have seen in the National Vision 2030), and the need to consider Saudi society's unique identity due to the presence of specific cultural factors, such as the policy of employing more Saudi citizens in all sectors and replacing foreigners with citizens, which is known as 'Saudization'.

The data that emerged regarding the influence of cultural factors on driving revealed some of these tensions, reflecting the social nature of cultural transformation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Similar tensions between tradition and change are revealed in repeated patterns of behaviour shown within organisations, such as the attitude towards new thinking, and the new

generation of young leaders that threaten many of the veteran leaders who have been in the field for decades. This issue reflects leaders' awareness of the need for change and their dissatisfaction with the current situation. It also indicates that they are affected by the ongoing transition that is taking place in the country. In contrast, 12 of the participants (36%) agreed that this is now the challenge to prove to be successful, while eight of the leaders (24%) welcomed new ideas and out-of-the-ordinary inspirations for success.

Leadership preparation and qualities

Preparation and organisation are other key themes related to the major theme of addressing leadership practices, with a considerable influence on leaders' performances. This section contains a discussion of the findings, explaining the impact of preparation on a leader's practice. Leadership is an emergent property of effective systems design. According to this perspective, leadership preparation 'consists of using social (i.e., relational) process to help increase commitments among members of a community of practice' (Day, 2001: p.583). Concerning the leaders' preparation, the participants expressed a positive wish to customise current training to address the organisation's actual needs. There was widespread agreement about the training necessary, based on cultural and organisational factors. The impact of formal training programmes, in terms of actual leadership development, has been challenged in the literature (e.g., Alnaser, 2016; Gonaim and Peters, 2017; McCall, 2004; Raelin, 2004). New leadership development dimensions have emerged, because leadership is deeply rooted and embedded in the context. Thus, more effective leadership can be developed within the organisation and be linked to organisational and societal cultures (Al Dabbagh and Assaad, 2010). This claim is also supported by Moxley and O'Connor's study (1998), which found that the nature of development is a continuous process rather than a series of separate incidents, and therefore the emphasis should be placed on improving the opportunities to learn from real-life employment experiences, in order to help individuals to learn from their work, rather than removing them from their workplace to learn. Burgoyne *et al.* (2004) supported this finding, arguing that leadership preparation should be aligned with the organisational context, objectives and culture, among a broad range of other factors. To this extent, it could well be argued that many opportunities to improve leadership are currently being squandered, and that the effort would be better directed towards enhancing the quality and precision – rather than the quantity – of provision. Thus, as a factor influencing leaders' practices, the argument above makes clear the need for leaders' preparation programmes to consider the contextual factors influencing their leadership practice and development.

The majority of the participants (75%) agreed that their leadership prior qualifications were weak. In comparison, a small number (18%) pointed to the effect of a leader's personal efforts and environmental factors as substitutes for this deficit. As for female leaders, 19 participants (57%) suggested that little attention has been granted to female leadership training, despite the current efforts towards empowering women and the government support for female leaders. Previously, women leaders were estimated at 1.6% in the public sector, and they have now reached (2.5%). Meanwhile, in the private sector, the percentage of female leaders has increased to 25%, according to the latest statistics from the Ministry of Labour. One of the most important reasons for this was the late entry of women into the workforce, limiting their access to leadership roles.

6.4 Influence of external factors

An indicative example of the complexity of leadership is seen in the way that leaders manage pressure from external factors. In this research, managing pressure was considered an internal aspect that influences leadership actions and is linked to personality. However, the pressure was seen as being rooted in an external context, such as culture and family status. Management pressure can also come from the conflict of interest between the leaders and their families, which overlaps with internal factors because they are rooted in personality and leadership qualities. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) showed that leading under pressure is an essential factor in leadership and that being tough and resolute under pressure is a short-term strength of leaders. Leadership-related factors included instability, which resulted in inconsistent responsibilities and unpredictable practice. This is considered an external factor because leaders often assign other leaders based on the current governmental reforms. The government is continuously changing those who occupy key positions to ensure the best possible decision-makers and practices for Saudi leaders. The Saudi Ministry of Labour has issued constant changes in their policies, procedures, regulations, and recruiting during the past three years. These changes have influenced the stability of all leadership levels and trickled down to the level of empowering women.

Communication is also considered a key factor in leadership (Moyles, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2009, Clark and Murray, 2012; Rodd, 2013; Davis and Ryder, 2016). Of the research participants, 20 out of 33 (60%) agreed that successful communication with staff was vital for strong teamwork, which results in a stable, working environment. However, the literature has shown that a greater emphasis on communication is necessary for leadership and management. Meanwhile, 15% of participants (5 out of 33) argued that communication in an organisation is of relatively low

importance, perhaps because Saudi culture rarely acknowledges or emphasises communication among people in the workplace.

Other external factors were the effect of the leader's family, social life and status, which can influence them positively in some cases and negatively in others. In total, 36% argued that one of the challenges that they had to face was their family's views on their method of leadership; while 48% of participants stated that their status of their family was a privilege to reach and to act based on their leadership status. Furthermore, the family was always a source of support in their career. In Section 5.3.1 there were *participant 13* references to the influence of his family value as a continuous factor in his work context, particularly regarding his leadership and career choices. Whereas 15% argued that family value, status and interventions have affected their personal progress and career path; 5% mentioned that the influence of other factors such as culture, beliefs and personal aspects impacted their career growth more.

Culture and society in leadership

The majority of the interviewees agreed that culture and society affected and the leaders' decision process; while some agreed that an organisation's protocols may also affect these processes, because they change our perception of the work and personal goals. In addition, the cultural influences on leaders' behaviour and their leadership skills – or 'the way they lead' – need to be taken into account to achieve effective leadership. In total, 60% (20 out of 33) interviewees raised issues related to some social causes, such as the *Wasta*, as a societal factor influencing their leadership, particularly concerning their relations with top management, which exert a level of influence on their organisational environment. Another aspect that the interviewees came across was the patriarchy; as has been mentioned in section 3.6, Saudi society is a highly masculine society, but following the latest government reforms, it has changed slightly in the past few years. Out of the 33 participants, 17 (51%) mentioned that the recent government reforms supported further leadership achievement for women, and other reforms had to come soon, as the Kingdom is preparing for competition between itself and many neighbouring countries in various sectors. Ten out of 33 (30%) argued that those reforms and cultural reorganisations in society only made a difference in female leaders' successes and many men have not been subjected to such considerations. Moreover, six out of 33 (18%) argued that most men are now being marginalised, because women have stolen the spotlight from many men, and most companies and establishments prefer to employ women over men.

Although other individuals thought that these were the government's current plan and reforms, men still remained the pioneers in senior leadership positions.

Impact of Islamic culture on leadership

As the study participants are leaders from Saudi Arabia, their religion is Islam, and their interview responses contained various references to Islam as an influence on them and the society. For example, they contained verses from the Holy Quran and from the Hadith (the Prophet Muhammad's sayings), which is the second most important source in Islam after the Quran. Some of this study's crucial findings relate to the Islamic perception of authenticity in society, as several participants expressed revealing views on this subject. Ten participants out of 33 (30%) argued that their work has been influenced by religion, and by adapting Islamic values and principles. Additionally, five out of 33 leaders (15%) argued that religious values and Islamic influence have been entrenched within the society and culture over several decades. Despite the new image of Saudi Arabia that would attempt to separate daily life from religion, the connection to the values that families had cultivated from childhood remains present, even if the participants were not fully committed to the faith.

According to Rafiki and Abdul Wahab (2014), religion is one of the most influential social institutions, and is significantly linked to attitudes, values and behaviours. Based on the previous quotes from their interviews, the participants generally believe that Islam encourages people to be honest and fair, and that by acting upon Islamic teaching and values, people will be authentic in their actions. Thus, Islam promotes and inspires individuals' authentic behaviours, and their religion directly influences the authenticity of their acts.

While several female participants mentioned that Islam has never been unfair to their gender role, it has given them the full right. Another significant barrier to female leaders in Saudi Arabia is that they are significantly constrained from moving into leadership roles because of the impact of the social laws on the culture that are far away from the views of religion. Although many individuals assume from the outside that the stereotype is the actual religion, and that religion is one of the reasons for women not obtaining equality in their rights and not receiving full support to reach the positions they want to achieve. The first obstacle involves their role in supporting the family, and the second involves the social norms that they are subject to, such as many women having a fear of working with men or mixing with men – an issue that many assume Islam has forbidden. Correspondingly, the fear of not adhering to Sharia law would frighten some people from work, especially if the work included regulations

or companies subject to non-Islamic law, which is sometimes seen as transgressing religion but is a purely social viewpoint far from the religious authority.

Religion's influence appears to be at the root of women's societal views, as it reflects on women in Saudi Arabia. This was summed by a few female interviewees who mention that they were viewed as people who needed to be protected, or provided for, or limited as members of society by males. Even if this image has recently changed, women still face such restrictions when it comes to religion. In contrast, other participants (75%) explained that the reason for such religious debates was related directly to the social restrictions imposed on the individuals by the strictest interpretation of society, family and tribe in daily activities – such as being segregated in education and the workforce.

This was supported by other interviewees (20%) who argued that women's marginalisation, which affects their ability to move up to senior management levels, resulted from religion being turned into a nationalistic state ideology. The impact of this was summed up by 3% of female participants, who mentioned that previously the ideology affected education, work, and the right to travel alone. From such comments, it would appear that religion has been used to marginalise and exclude females from attaining leadership positions and being part of society, but now the society imposes such restrictions based simply on individual's feelings and judgements about such roles. Lately, around the past few years, the government has enacted additional laws and regulations that would limit unfair behaviour against individuals' rights and legal rights related to gender.

6.5 Influences of organisational culture on leadership style

Culture and leadership are linked elements in any organisation, working in conjunction for the organisation's success, as both culture and leadership influence how the organisation will function and how leaders will achieve their desired goals. The participants' responses to the theme of organisational culture show the challenge that is faced by leaders in contemporary organisations. Organisational culture encompasses values, norms, and behaviours; it describes and determines both the organisation's socio-cognitive and socio-cultural environment. Strong culture leads to a strong identity, which gives a certain feeling of security to employees, as if their corporate structure protected them, and also encourages them to be committed to this identity.

Traditions reinforce the cultural constraints that affect organisational culture, women's perceptions, and leadership experience in Saudi Arabia. Many of the leaders in this research

struggled to see themselves as leaders because they were brought up to see themselves as inferior to others. The majority of respondents (65%) reported that organisational practices are a crucial challenge for leadership opportunities within their career, limiting their progress in the organisation. Participants argued that they were discriminated against in terms of selection, training, and development, therefore the wish to reach such positions would not encourage personal development. Five out of 33 (15%) interviewees argued that they were never encouraged to apply for training programmes, as they were expected to leave employment and have children when they got married, meaning they would be less capable of becoming leaders or even continuing in such positions. While nine participants out of 33 (27%) had attended professional development events, far fewer had ever written a personal development plan (10%) or been advised or supported by a mentor (5%). Participants also pointed out that the opportunities to get a promotion that would move them into a leadership role, were limited. One of the participants described how 'women are passed over for promotion, as they are not seen as being able to lead departments.' Other participants suggested that this was because of society's view that leadership should only be practised by men, which means that women are prevented from being promoted into leadership roles despite their ability.

Interviewees also reported that job appointments were often not based on personal qualifications and competencies, but on an individual's relations and family networks. In other words, those coming from well-connected, wealthy or prominent families had more opportunities than those less privileged. This suggests that class and status may be as important as gender in determining access to leadership positions. In addition, interviewees emphasised that the lack of opportunities to make decisions, as well as the impact of cultural, was a significant challenge for women aspiring to move into influential positions. A few of the participants also argued that women in Saudi Arabia influence, but don't make decisions.

A further organisational challenge identified in the findings was the insufficient HR support for individuals and in particular leaders. Participants talked about 'out of date' HR policies and procedures for employees. They also expressed their frustration at the lack of HR support to make the right candidate – male or female – the norm for leadership positions, rather than the exception. Organisations reflect the broader societal views that a woman's role is primarily at home, with overt resistance to women moving into leadership positions. The findings on the theme of organisational culture provide evidence that the original obstacles that prevent individuals moving into leadership positions are societal, religious, cultural, and administrative. Results also provide support for the argument that the experience of leadership

for women in Saudi Arabia is focused on what Brah and Hoy (1989: p.72) defined as the struggles around 'relations of power between different social groups and around cleavages such as racism, class, gender and sexuality'.

Questions on this subject found that leaders in Saudi draw upon various relationships for their leadership practice, including their relationship to self, others, place, and work, based on their organisational and cultural views.

The majority of the 33 participants (75%) agreed that organisations tend not only to manage and lead employees, but also inspire them to make cultural strengths part of their process of learning, capability development, performance enhancement, and self-motivation. Meanwhile, 39% argued that strong and effective organisational culture leads to strong identity, which gives a certain feeling of security to employees, as if their corporate structure protected them, and encourages them to be committed to this identity. Furthermore, 18% of contributors highlighted the fact that leaders should take necessary measures to allow changes in the organisation and appreciate the goals of their high-achieving staff; which are essential steps to enable teamwork strengthen the work ethic and organisational practices; and these dimensions would lead to better norms, values and beliefs. These measures won't be centred on personal thoughts only, but also around the knowledge transfer that can be shared by the organisation's members.

Organisations face challenges from changes in both the internal and external environment, which encourages leaders to alter their behaviours to adapt to these environmental changes. The research indicates that leadership behaviour would also affect the employee's job satisfaction along the internal and external factors mentioned previously. Additionally, organisation-wide factors such as organisational culture affect job satisfaction and goal achievement. Moreover, the majority of the participants (85%) suggested that it is essential for leaders to create an excellent corporate infrastructure and improve the work environment to increase employees' job satisfaction.

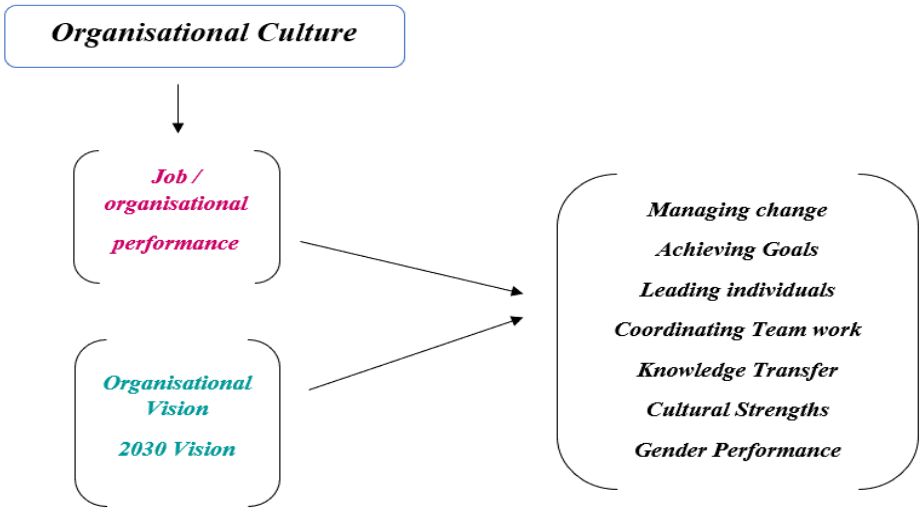

Figure 6-2. Relation between organisational culture, leaders, and leadership style

Figure 6.3 shows how leadership behaviours affect the organisational culture and influence job satisfaction, the association between organisational culture, leadership behaviour and job satisfaction.

6.6 Leadership-related factors

Leadership was the overarching theme of this research. The interrelationship between leadership and other themes and concepts discussed in this research is as follows: 1) Leadership becomes nurtured in families where gender equity exists; 2) The father or another male figure serves as a role model for leadership; 3) Effective leadership necessitates that the person acts rather than remains inactive; 4) Leadership or positions of leadership are often better for men since they are granted freedom and responsibility as a rule, while women cannot easily access such liberty; 5) Additionally, Saudi woman leaders continuously need male support at work in order to achieve success and trust.

The dialogue between management and workers is one of the most important issues facing every organisation and its leaders. A critical example of leadership complexity is that the leaders running the organisation are under pressure from external and internal factors. Stress management was considered an internal aspect, which has appeared in 60% of the answers: 20 out 33 participants cited that stress management affected their leadership skills and work, which is related to the leader's personality and the extent of his/her interaction within the institution. However, further work pressure was rooted within the external and social context,

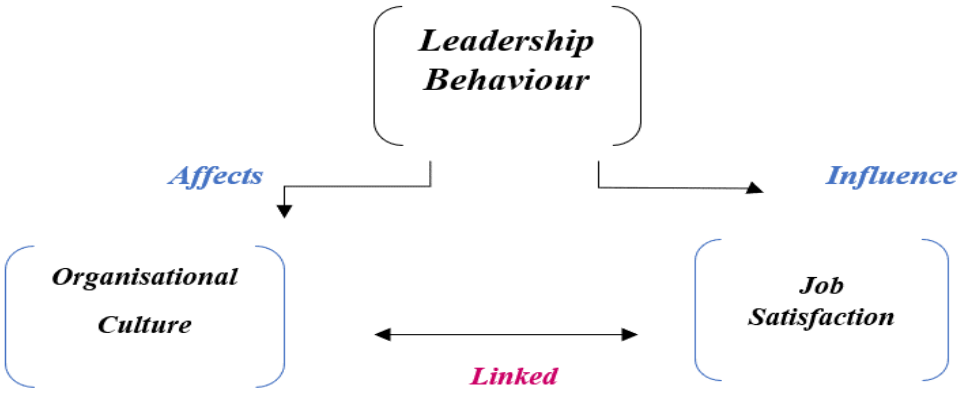

Figure 6-3. Relationship between leadership behaviour, organisational culture and job satisfaction

such as dealing with management and leading employees, or a conflict of interest between the organisation, the workers, and the field of work. These pressures interfere with internal factors, as they are rooted in the personality and leadership qualities of a leader.

Hogan and Kaiser (2005) showed that driving under pressure is an essential factor in good driving, and similarly being tough and assertive under pressure is a strength for leaders in the short term. Another leadership factor that was identified was the instability of leaders and managers in their appointed positions, resulting in inconsistent responsibilities and unpredictable practices. In total, 90% (30 out of 33) argued that instability could be considered an external factor, because the management appoints leaders according to their personal knowledge or they're being a part of a known family. Another reason would be because of the stream of ongoing reforms, with the government continuously changing those in critical positions to ensure the best possible decision-makers and practices.

These changes affected the stability of all leadership levels, as well as infiltrating the institutions' systems and bringing about continuous policies and procedures. Constant contact and communication appeared to be a significant influencing factor, as 75% (25 out of 33) of the participants discussed the fact that the leader's successful communication with employees would strengthen their teamwork, resulting in a stable and happy environment. Therefore, focusing on direct communication is an essential component of leadership and management skills. The participants highlighted the importance of communication with employees as an influencing factor; however, communication is considered a low priority for workplaces because Saudi culture rarely recognises or confirms communication between people in the

workplace – a trend that was noticed in the answers. Several interviewees stated that both clarity and regularity in communication build a sense of responsibility among employees, along with the leader's positive attitude. Others stated that the standards of modesty in society necessitated communication only during work hours and regarding work.

Another factor involved in decision-making was the planning, organising, and community involvement of the internal day-to-day practice. All participants paid attention to the organisation's community to inform some of their decisions; for instance, respecting their complaints and suggestions, 21 participants out of 33 (63%) highlighted that decision-making was considered an external factor that affects leaders and organisations. Meanwhile, 36% argued that sharing knowledge and information, and extensive use of technology – 'mainly Twitter' – enhances communication with the community. In addition, meeting on regular basis to observe the latest developments in the workflow and the organisation's recent achievements would have an effect on confidence in the decision-making. Additional factors revolved around the leaders' attributes and limitations, and whether or not they sought continuous self-improvement.

Personal factors also featured when discussing internal and external influences. For example, an internal factor might relate to the leader's positive personality; this factor is also related to communication, via positive communication messages and a positive energy around the work environment. Setting the critical positive example and being a role model for how leaders want their teams to act is crucial as 'All eyes are on you' – an expression that explains many employees' expectations. Furthermore, the participants agreed that these expectations would expose leaders who succumbed to restrictions, obstacles, and invisible forms of violence. For example, if the leadership team is punctual in the mornings, this will encourage the staff to replicate their behaviour. Individuals will see how leaders communicate at all hierarchical levels and analyse how accountable they are if moving in the wrong direction. Being a good role model for the organisation is vital if the leader wants staff members to be professional, as it can be challenging to reprimand a member of staff for something if they are a habitual offender.

6.7 Aspects of Saudi society that contribute towards symbolic capital and violent practices

The phenomenon of male domination of society was the main focus of the theoretical framework, adapted to the Saudi context. In Chapter 3, I suggested that Bourdieu made significant contributions to contemporary social theory within individuals and through

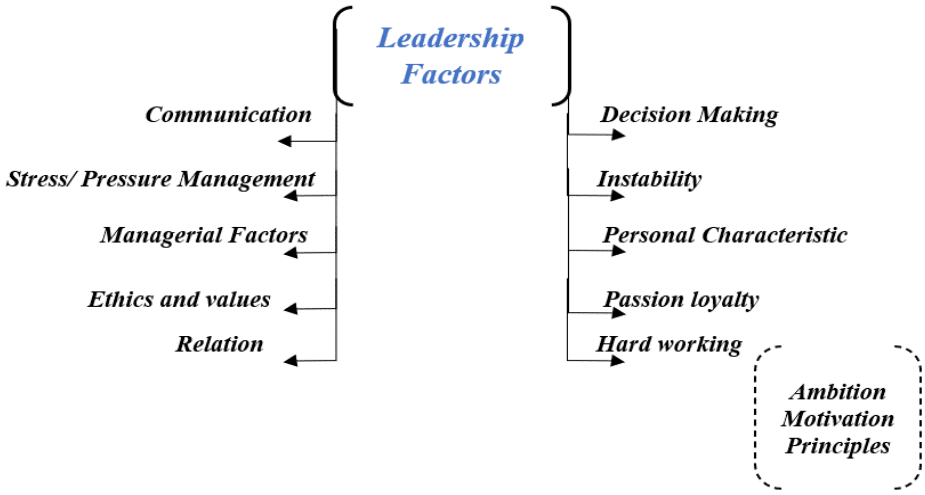

Figure 6-4. Leadership factors within the personal characteristics'

institutions. Bourdieu's originality stems from reconfiguring Marxist concepts into a more culturally oriented analysis, and then carefully differentiating them to derive a theory better adapted to the complex social life of individuals. He argued that the most effective domination occurs when a culture is appropriated to exploit it as a strategy, rather than its mechanical determination by economic infrastructure. To understand this in the context of Saudi organisations, which is embodied by observing from a Bourdieusian context the role of Saudi society by observing gender characters would be described further as the result of the findings.

Saudi context from a Bourdieusian perspective

Saudi society is characterised by a patriarchal practice that assigns different roles to women and men; it institutionally and systemically undervalues women's work, relegating them to a status lower than that of men in political and economic conditions. Saudi Arabia has shaped the philosophy of the 'rentier' patriarchy, in which the family depends on the father alone. This fact has given the father the absolute power in making decisions, at the expense of every other family member. The ideology of the father's role in society gives him the absolute power to make decisions about other family members; their fate depends entirely on the father's mood and the level of his awareness. Hence, the ideal father became a kind of lucky charm, while the cruel father presents a political dilemma for the family. Similarly, the curmudgeonly father is a potential economic crisis, while the foolish father inflicts this weakness on all other family members.

Situations like this have led modern philosopher to demand freedoms at the expense of dismantling traditional familial structures. As has been mentioned in section 3.6.1, the patriarchy can be defined as social practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women. This is particularly reflected in different social and institutional contexts, such as work, violence, gender and culture (Walby, 1990: p.20). The patriarchy provides a crucial model for explaining Saudi culture in regards to gender relations. As a cultural characteristic, the findings of this study have suggested that paternalism determines the relationship between the leaders and their cultural roles. For example, a leader's view on the role of the father in the family would influence their perspective in other areas. The thematic analysis findings display the influence of the complex interplay of patriarchy, family ties, work aspirations, and education on gender dynamics and representation among leaders. These contextual forces then influence whether gender is a matter of symbolic capital or violence.

Bourdieu's theory of capital forms a lens by which we can assess these leaders' and managers' strategies. Bourdieu asserted that there were three necessary forms of capital: social, cultural and financial, which operated based on social fields such as society, leadership and organisation. Bourdieu proposed that, if any of these forms of capital are socially legitimated or recognised, they turn into a state of 'symbolic capital'. In fields such as leadership, internal and external factors may be patriarchal and therefore resistant to change, but they are not fixed. Consequently, the 'rules of the game' can be utilised by male or female leaders to deploy existing capital to their leadership resources.

The majority of the participants – 27 out of 33 (81%) – argued that the patriarchy has traditionally underrated women's social status in Saudi society. It has also forced men to assume pre-identified roles and reduced their career choices. Hence, the interplay of patriarchy and family relations appears as a source of symbolic violence, which is not confined solely to women but also affects men. This situation suggests a male preference among Saudi families, particularly regarding access to power in organisations and leadership positions. Four out of 33 (12%) female respondents who were able to attain leadership positions argued that their family was supportive because they had no brothers to challenge them within the family. In contrast, their colleague had witnessed how women sometimes go unnoticed by their family members, and especially by their fathers. The results also illuminate related issues around devaluing women's status, even in the leadership positions entrusted to them. Female figures are placed at the bottom of this order, relegated to minor status when there is a male sibling. In terms of access to prestigious positions in the family, these are traditionally limited to men, as

they are usually in charge of the family in terms of financial responsibility. Recently, many homes that are dependent on females have instead relied on siblings to be the main supporter of their families.

In such a purely masculine context, gender explicitly functions as symbolic capital; in other words, as a reference to an ideological order of merit in professional life, which transcends formal institutional power structures and effectively defines parental relationships. The patriarchal hierarchy dictates that fathers, sons and males are prioritised over females. Previously, Saudi law was essentially sighting at the religious and masculine concept from a personal perspective, depending on the political regulations already existing in the region, giving power to some statesmen and clerics according to their personal interests. All of these statements contain a naive view of the role of women, becoming an aberration of the original Islamic vision.

In the context of gender status, 22 out of 33 participants (66%) argued that masculine domination is a social stigma that must be highlighted as the main restriction for all society members. Although members of Saudi society like to express their feelings, the expectations of the family and tribe also silence individuals, people and society. In addition, seven out of 33 participants (21%) highlighted tribal conflicts: tribes tend to govern via tribal cultures, customs and associated social practices. At the same time, male domination by its nature restricts expectations, emotion, and expression, so that some men and women behave unexpectedly in order to escape from such pressures. Eventually, when masculine dominance disappears, most government regimes become equal and fair in their treatment of all citizens, meaning the different genders become equal in their status, rights and duties.

Therefore, being a male gives symbolic capital in a society that maintains control over production relations, and which is efficient enough to reproduce the dominant gender system. As a result, females are placed in a relatively low rank in society and some classes. This situation extends to institutions that do not consider females as a competitor to males. They nonetheless place women in lower and weaker positions, claiming that women are not financially committed like men. Even if women work, the husband or father – as the main breadwinner – usually gives them a monthly allowance and is fully responsible for them financially. This indicates the entrenched nature of the system's gender bias and the low status of certain professions among Saudi leaders. Therefore, if 'male' professionals do not have the

same symbolic power over the members, then context and relationships appear to be essential components of whether or not gender is symbolic capital.

In total, 16 out of 33 participants (48%) agreed that leaders are expected to make decisions concerning personal factors that influence their role. In return, subordinates are expected to obey and to show commitment and respect to their leaders, regardless of the consequences, which is somewhat similar to a patriarchal system. The changing roles of the different genders in the Saudi context have followed from the government's new policies and further reforms to existing structures. The respondents' statements regarding the changing roles of men and women in their society often included seeing the recent changes as a personal opportunity, or a burden, or a challenge for the country, or a new wave of modernisation, or part of a positive global trend. A substantial majority of both men and women, 17 out of 33 (51%), argued that the development of gender roles was a unique opportunity for additional self-awareness and growth, while a new wave of modernisation would benefit the society and culture. At the same time, six out of 33 participants (18%) viewed the changing roles as a burden in their lives, and that challenges to the current system would lead to further tension between tradition and change. In particular, Saudi women had developed their engagement with modernisation and globalisation related to leadership roles. Women's rights are a sensitive subject in Saudi Arabia, as the traditional gender roles are often seen as part of the country's cultural identity.

The majority of female participants – 19 out of 33 (57%) – suggested that female leaders are required to combine high levels of capital across broad fields if they are to be taken seriously in the leadership and executive arenas. Capital could be found in various forms, such as visible powers, relevant knowledge, and belonging to the right class within society. Women may accrue symbolic capital through various forms of labour, but the female form of capital in Saudi Arabia is often constrained by male-dominated concepts of value, particularly in leadership positions and managerial practices. Saudi women's symbolic capital form may into a power capital comes at a high correspondence rate; the reason being that leadership is gendered as male-dominated, meaning that the presence of men in this field is accepted as 'natural'.

However, women are required to justify their suitability for participation in the field of leadership. The family appeared to be influential in most aspects of life, like career and personal choices, for female participants. In total, 57% stated that family was a significant factor that helped them gain such knowledge. Similarly, in selecting a future spouse, the family always had an opinion about commitment and marriage, with 15 out of 19 females having arranged

marriages. Additionally, for the male participants – which were 14 out of 33 – nine of them acknowledged that their family had arranged their marriages, whereas five others stated that their family had not interfered in their choices, but been concerned about other matters such as education and career.

Saudi men also accrue and deploy symbolic capital in their managerial careers and leadership practices. The symbolic capital that women have access to may not be valued as highly in the leader's field as men's symbolic capital, therefore higher levels of achievement within other fields are required if women want to compete with men. Thus, Saudi women may have to reaffirm the legitimacy of their femininity, as a desire to be involved in power and leadership positions may be considered 'improper' by men, and by other women in competition for those places. The complex and typically invisible ways in which gender operates within institutions means that leaders, traditionally men, have acted in such a way to establish a gendered logic of appropriateness within leadership arenas. Accordingly, the government has enacted reforms based on women's issues and gender equality in an effort to make them equal to men, while embracing these changes as part of a new national policy and philosophy. Regardless of the role of gender in society, it has been observed that Saudi women's main challenge is how to be simultaneously 'above' the people, so that they can lead them, but also 'of' the people, so that they can understand them and connect with their issues. While Saudi men face other challenges, such as convincing other women, their male status remains at the top of his previous advantages, which happened in the past in other western countries that have adopted gender equality precisely.

There is a strong correlation between perceptions of the need for change and whether those changes are beneficial or reached very late. In total, 27 out of 33 participants (81%) argued that, when changes are considered necessary, they are expected to be valuable, beneficial and treasured. In comparison, the majority of participants believed that Vision 2030 had been the primary factor in making such dramatic changes, led by the ambitious Crown Prince who adopted this new and innovative way of thinking. The government was clear and explicit about the advantages of a comprehensive renaissance, which would achieve further success in all sectors and classes, whether for individuals, leaders, institutions, or society as a whole.

The Saudi leadership is a practical and symbolic institution that generates devotion, generosity and solidarity. Women leaders in Saudi Arabia tend to be more sensitive and emotional, while Saudi men remain masculine and dominant. The concept of 'emotional capital' concerns the

‘private’ sphere of the family, arguing that associations with family and children make converting emotional capital into cultural and leadership capital difficult. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia’s new vision for the future makes for a culturally and economically unique set of circumstances, enabling them to convert symbolic emotional capital into leadership capital, thereby shoring up their reputation as trustworthy, even morally superior, leadership candidates.

The majority of participants argued that gender doesn’t explain everything, because society and culture overlap in sophisticated ways. Increasing the representation of Saudi women in leadership positions and the government has been a priority; increasing women’s representation in politics is a goal for the organisations working towards Saudi Arabia’s vision for the future. In the absence of gender quotas and other temporary special measures that seek to vary gendered cultural norms via institutional mechanisms, Saudi women must negotiate the systemic barriers that currently exist. In contrast, their capacity to overcome these barriers depends on their status and power as leaders.

Five out of 33 female participants (15%) suggest that Saudi women leaders should act as vanguards and support other women by shifting norms, modelling strategies and building networks that are important for generating support – locally, nationally and internationally. Leaders may get hired, but how they accrue symbolic capital and translate it into leadership capital is a personal issue that they have to overcome. This does not mean that structural barriers become invisible. The obstacles to reaching a high position are not insurmountable for leaders, but the experience and strategies that these leaders employ can make the barriers invisible. While reformers often focus on changing formal institutional structures, without noticing the various forms of symbolic capital that can be mobilised in the leader’s field, informal institutions are central to the ‘game’ of leadership. A total of 25 participants (75%) argued that supporters of representative leadership ought to pay more attention to building up symbolic capital through education and the financial support of others in the field.

In comparison, 20 participants (60%) argued that leaders of women who are active in their roles might resist change and lead differently. Additionally, other female leaders are concerned that women without the requisite capital and the skills to use it strategically may become less valued. Established women leaders with strategies for translating symbolic capital into leadership capital are central to understanding the relationship between gender and representation. Additionally, the majority of participants agreed that women in management

positions focus on gender differences in management styles. Abbott, Wallace and Tyler (2005) argued that women's ways of managing are particularly appropriate to contemporary organisations and that women's skills in multitasking and interpersonal communication are ideally suited to management and leadership.

The participants in the research have successfully demonstrated how they transform social, cultural and symbolic capital into leadership capital. The majority of respondent's experiences are unique and shaped by the context; nevertheless, there were several common lessons based on their experiences. These include:

a) Employing their family resources wisely. While family resources matter, knowing how to utilise them is vital. Each of these leaders drew on their family resources to advance their careers, and made wise use of their family background to achieve success.

b) Investment in education. The skills and profile gained from education enabled each of these leaders to set themselves apart as one of the primary methods of establishing capital status.

c) They kept their community close. This goes a long way to explaining these leaders' longevity; by remaining actively involved in community activities, this effectively enhanced their authority as leaders.

d) They developed a reputation as an expert in a substantive policy area. Each leader has a reputation for mastering their portfolio and becoming a respected authority in their area of contribution, frequently outperforming their counterparts.

e) They developed strategies for working in a male-dominated environment. Navigating a male-dominated context was an important consideration, and this often manifests as knowing how to perform culturally acceptable versions of masculinity and femininity, while also pushing gently against the boundaries.

f) They knew how and when to take appropriate action. Each of these leaders has challenged the patriarchal system in which they operate, but they carefully pick and choose their battles and are intentional about what they do and do not tolerate from their colleagues.

g) They built strategic networks with the international community. The international community was often more supportive of these leaders and their work than their domestic colleagues. Each leader identified the need to be strategic in how they engaged with this community, while not spending too much time away from home.

h) They overcame challenges with the least losses to organisations and personnel. Additionally, they acquired experiences from former obstacles to themselves or the work.

None of these strategies were necessary or sufficient conditions for success; nonetheless, they point to the various ways these successful leaders have built substantial social and cultural capital, which, in turn, is accrued as symbolic and ultimately real capital. It is evident from such cases that no amount of training can substitute for such skills, or for the slow and steady engagement required to forge the reputation necessary to succeed.

Work aspirations, gender and symbolic violence

Symbolic violence through gender is not a simple one-way form of domination of men over women. Men seem to be the dominant actors in the gender order, but men are also subject to gendered conditions of symbolic violence. Most male interviewees stated that they had been obliged to deal with their power without showing any emotions towards their job or responsibilities. While ten out of 33 (30%) suggested that their status in the family and tribe imposes obligations, these must be dealt with under the norms which are hard to ignore. The majority of participants claimed that harmonious family life was essential to their success. However, they also regretted that they could not spend much time with their family. Thus, men seem to have experienced violence by being denied an active part in parenting. It is also worth noting that female Saudi leaders also think that their main task is to take care of their families. Consequently, when they choose to work, they end up with a double career: one in business, the other at home. However, such multitasking is not just related to the balance between work and home; women leaders are also expected to multitask at work. As such, their success is contingent upon their ability to accommodate various competing demands simultaneously. Working Saudi female leaders claimed to have hired maids for traditionally female roles such as cleaning the house, cooking, serving food and taking care of the children. However, they were still responsible for the overall organisation of these tasks in their houses and within their families. In contrast, two out of 33 (6%) argued that holding such responsibility as a leader

made them feel less available around their families. So, having a maid or nanny for the children was not the appropriate option to cover for their absence.

Symbolic violence is a risk in Saudi society faced by leaders of both genders. Tribe and family play a prominent role in society; it has been mentioned earlier that it is remarkable to see how influential individual's leadership positions are also beneficial to their family. Additionally, leaders face obstacles and pressure from their family and tribe, such as favours needed for them to gain prestigious offers and jobs. As has been mentioned in section 5.6, the term *alasabiyya* or *aṣabiyyah* was raised throughout the interviews. Five out of the 33 participants (15%) argued that such acts are entrenched in Saudi society, even if others may deny that such acts are forms of hidden violence. Additionally, 17 out of 33 participants (51%) argued that *alasabiyya* is also a kind of bondage to our own group, family and society, and therefore a form of racism.

Such burdens and pressures are concerns to be impending out of self-belief and family relation and compression out of society. These burdens and pressures exist due to the state of relationships within the family, social anxiety, and the fear of a person leaving the herd or the tribal circle. Cases of violence are numerous; for instance, a male leader rejects a case involving a family member in the organisation because of the negative associations with him and the pressure he will face from his family. Whereas, if a female leader is realistic with her peers and causes stress while dealing with them, she would face additional pressures, such as people questioning why she is behaving this way, or asking whether she is fighting against other females for fear of their success. Internal cultural boundaries, like conventional conservative beliefs, may also be part of the *alasabiyya* and could also be expressed in the form of symbolic violence during the decision-making process. However, contrary to the frequent assertion, leaders in Saudi Arabia report that cultural complexities are not among the most significant challenges that individuals face. Most leaders generally agree that the more significant problems are socio-economic, while cultural issues are considered less critical. This demonstrates the evolving role of leaders in society, and it reflects the organisational framework strategy. The findings of this research indicate that, although the image of leaders is changing in Saudi society, it is only to the degree that women are also leaders, and that cultural elements, while significant, are not the greatest barrier to male/female leadership.

The key aspect highlighted by the participants was the connection between symbolic violence and *alasabiyya alqabaliyyah*.

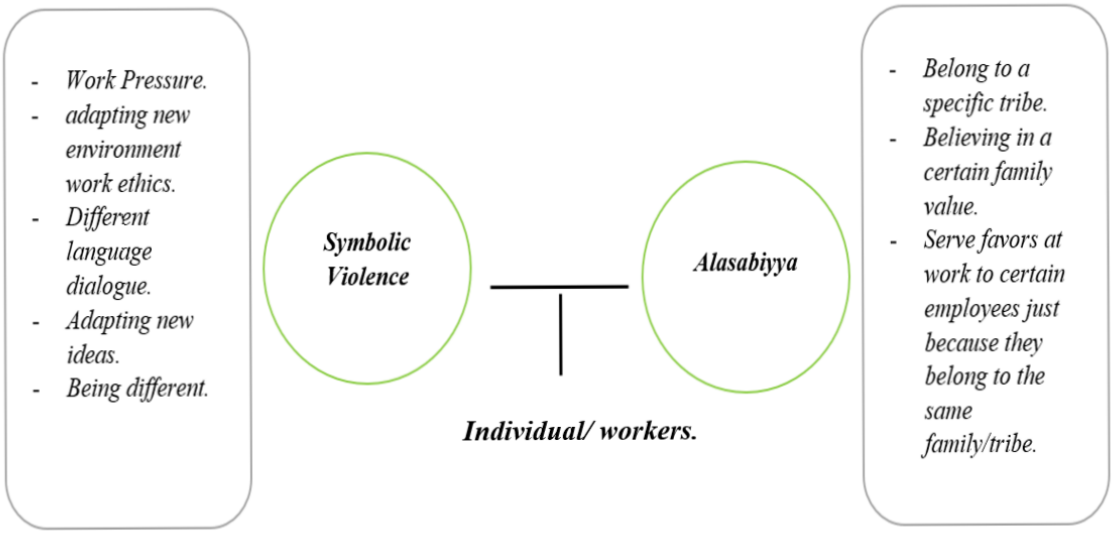

Figure 6-5. Relation between symbolic violence and alasabiyya

The cultural challenges, including the traditional conservative mentality, may also link to *alasabiyya* and symbolic violence by playing a role in the process of decision making. Nevertheless, contrary to the common argument, cultural challenges are considered one of the least important challenges faced by individual leaders in Saudi Arabia, based on these interviews. Contrary to the prevailing perspective, cultural challenges are less important compared to the other challenges faced by leaders, which is an indication of the changing perception of the role of leaders in society and a reflection of the new policies for organisational structure. The interviews for this current study confirm that there are signs of change in the general view of leaders and especially of female leaders in Saudi society. Therefore, cultural aspects, despite their importance, are not the most serious obstacle to male/female leadership.

Additionally, one of the most prominent aspects of this study was the fact that Saudi women increasingly play a full leadership role in organisations. In total, 73% of male participants argued that Saudi women leaders now enjoy complete support in their vision from the leadership and the government. In contrast, the position of women as leaders in this field has become shaky, which makes them more vulnerable to symbolic violence, pressure and hidden anxiety to prove that they are still in command. Whereas the majority of female leaders (89%) argued that, although most of the resources become more flexible and accessible to them as leaders, they do face significant sources of stress, such as a lack of self-confidence, a fear of failure, and unfair competition. In addition, the competition between the genders has become more stringent in order to prove who is more successful in this field, which could lead to a kind

of symbolic violence. There are also personal challenges that are attached to culture, including social pressure, family responsibilities and personal capacity, and they may all fit into the model of symbolic violence. The difficulty of balancing family and professional responsibilities, psychological pressure, physical and health factors, the fear of leadership responsibility and the lack of self-confidence can also be barriers among leaders.

Gender, Education and Symbolic Capital

Education is highly valued and is considered an essential route for social and economic class movement in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi context presents an excellent contrast, however, where leadership status cannot be easily achieved through education alone. All the same, education is considered essential for leaders in holding onto corporate power. A Saudi leader's educational background also helps their career, and the government actively provides support for their education and scholarships to study abroad. The majority of interviewees in the study had at least one undergraduate degree and had also graduated from prestigious educational institutions abroad. In fact, 12 out of 33 participants (36%) had a PhD from abroad, while most holders of master's degrees also graduated from an overseas institution. Additionally, the majority of the participants spoke a minimum of two languages: Arabic and English. Being a woman in a leadership role, higher education from prestigious institutions tended to be a prerequisite, while male leaders can hold such positions without having completed a postgraduate degree. In fact, five of the 14 male participants only had a BA degree, indicating that this was not an acceptable level of education for women seeking leadership positions.

This study's demographic aspect supports the stereotype that women need to be more educated and perform better than men in order to become leaders. Therefore, while gender represents capital for Saudi males, compensating them for a lack of academic credentials, it also commits symbolic violence against women, because only highly qualified women are allowed to access prized positions among corporate elites. From the interviews, it may also be observed also that the sons and daughters of leaders from known families are increasingly given equal chances for such positions.

6.8 Challenges and barriers among leaders

Although leaders in Saudi Arabia face many challenges and barriers, a constant among the 33 participants was that the main challenges were personal, socio-cultural and organisational. The majority of participants (more than 79%) reported that organisational barriers are a key challenge for leaders and female leadership opportunities. Saudi women stressed

discrimination against females in terms of selection for leadership positions, promotion, and training and development.

There was a total agreement among the majority of participants that organisational issues create obstacles for male and female leaders. Issues such as requirements for leadership practices and advanced training for leadership positions affected both genders; both genders lack the required expertise, especially women, if they have only recently entered the leadership path. The 33 participants agreed that training courses exist, but are not sufficient, and that continuous development through the work process must be used instead. Several leaders from both the public and private sectors claimed that the organisational policy focus on outcomes only did not include as much leadership training as was needed. In total, 27 out of 33 (81%) argued that there some leadership preparation and practice was provided, but it was not sufficient. Additionally, the 33 participants agreed that most training programmes revolved around organisational procedures and functions, which externally resembled self-development. However, not all the organisational sectors participating in the study were at the same level for providing training. The private sector provided planned leadership training for both sexes, while the public sector mainly focused on training female leaders because of their late entry into leadership positions. The second organisational barrier was the lack of decision-making opportunities. As a result of marginalising women in leadership positions, they have been prevented from taking any decisions within their organisations. Participants suggested that leaders should be given decision-making responsibilities from an early stage, in order to prepare them as they gain experience. Saudi female leaders face being marginalised in many aspects of the organisation, even if they were being supported by the government and the Saudi Vision 2030. The majority of female participants (57%) agreed that female leaders are absent from organisational activity and achievement. In comparison, most decisions are taken by male counterparts, regardless of how important they are, as the main role for women is to implement men's decisions. Meanwhile, five men out of 33 (15%) stated that it is difficult for female leaders to make decisions, because men are more experienced and knowledgeable, and have more influence.

The third barrier that has arisen is the organisational culture, which promotes a rigid career structure that is inclined to support male rather than female leaders, as well as male domination, meaning that men feel superior to women. The majority of participants additionally argued that the male candidate is seen as superior for a leadership position in the eyes of both the men and women. Since Saudi culture is heavily male-dominated, leadership is seen as a role for men

rather than women (Alomiri, 2015). Often, the authoritative leadership style is masculine, and this style has consistently been identified as a constructive and productive one. According to Al-Otaibi *et al.* (2016), men perceive that, other men are more naturally well-suited to the role of leading than women. It's also interesting to note that women also feel men have greater talents and abilities than they do. If that is the case, it can be inferred that Saudi society values traditional, stereotypical masculine qualities.

The fourth organisational barrier was found among managerial selection and promotion procedures. A quarter (25%) of participants stated negative attitudes toward leaders, and particularly towards female leaders in the work environment, which showed discriminatory organisational practices through the managerial recruitment and selection processes. Furthermore, 7% of female participants argued that management and leaders' positions are always outside the selection for women, and executive positions such as vice-chancellors, deans and leaders are often men. Additionally, they believed that qualifications, experience and leadership competencies are not the first criteria for the selection of leadership positions, but that gender is a fact to be considered when it comes to appointing leaders. Despite the existence of policies to promote the empowerment of women, female leaders still suffer from marginalisation.

Recruitment and promotion to senior positions depend on networking and connections. Additionally, most females (57%) believed that male hierarchies are more likely to promote men for managerial positions than females because of the fear of competition. The majority of participating females believed that Saudi male leaders receive more support and trust from the organisation than females; they get more and easier chances for networking. Until recently, females could not mix with males in organisations because gender segregation was a fact; previously, men and women contacted each other through a video conference system, or else met through phone calls. Another organisational barrier cited by most of the female participants was the lack of connections with top-level decision-makers. Some women suffer from fewer connections and opportunities for networking because they could not accept the need to communicate with men regularly.

Therefore, empowering women into leadership positions should be treated as a national scheme, rather than leaving it to an individual's choice and preference. It should come as a top-down decision to allow females to be appointed into leadership positions. The only factors for

recruitment and selection to leadership positions should be efficiency and capability, rather than factors like gender, networking, external interference and personal favours.

Cultural Barriers

National culture is one of the most frequently cited reasons for the 'glass ceiling' in Saudi Arabia. A few of the men participating in this study (20%) expressed their concern about women's leadership, not just their characteristics or traits or leadership style, but also the idea of working under a woman. Various male leaders argued that they don't trust women as leaders, as female nature was different to male in many aspects; the concept of leadership has often been associated with particular traits such as power and directness. Additionally, 10% of participants argued that, if women desired to lead, they needed to have some masculine characteristics; women are often associated with the stereotype that they are weak, sensitive and unable to handle sophisticated tasks. Other male participants argued that female leaders are emotional when it comes to decisions. In comparison, 7% of participants considered that cultural and social factors were still highly influential in restricting women in many careers.

Our society still prefers women to be segregated from men — *Participant 33*

Women's social role is entirely different from that of men in the Saudi context. Wives are expected to dedicate themselves fully to their families, while husbands are expected to devote their energies to providing the financial resources for their family's survival. Alternatively, most male participants supported women being appointed into leadership positions and believed that they would contribute tremendously to government development plans. Although feminine leadership styles tended to be more interpersonal and democratic, relying on people-based behaviour, they can nonetheless lead as well as men. Women may be better multitaskers, and also more emotional, compassionate, relationship-oriented, consensus-based, collaborative, and communicative. Given the right opportunity, they might even lead better than most men. Additionally, Saudi women are characterised as relationship-oriented, which is the main difference between management and leadership.

At first, Saudi culture and society were against the appointment of women in leadership positions, based on the assumption that women should remain at home, protected by their hijab (veil) (Al-Otaibi *et al.*, 2016: p.9). Therefore, the significant leap from staying at home to emerging attitudes, like the idea that if women were allowed to lead, or that they would lead better than men, show that the empowerment of women in Saudi Arabia is heading in the right direction. This conclusion supports the idea that cultural challenges are less important than the

other challenges women leaders face, which indicates a changing perception of the role of women in society by the men in the government.

Personal Barriers

Another organisational barrier against women in leadership positions lies in their leadership skills. Many female and male leaders, but specifically female leaders, simply perform decisions and do not have sufficient power to make those decisions themselves. Women suffer from a lack of necessary skills to fully exercise a leadership role: skills such as planning, organising, following up and evaluating, and managing time and prioritising. Consequently, their decisions can easily be disputed and overturned, which affects their confidence as leaders. Importantly, it causes them to build a bad reputation for the efficiency of their leadership – the most challenging obstacle for women seeking positions of authority. According to some 25% of participants, society considers that women do not seek top leadership positions, and therefore they are not granted them. More than 30% of participants, most of them men, suggested that in Saudi Arabia women are traditionally considered for social roles rather than professional positions, hence even those who work in professional settings are supposed to prioritise domestic responsibilities. Additionally, 5% of the participants found that women were a 'poorer fit' for leadership positions, due to their family responsibilities. Furthermore, the main issue with women is the difficulty of balancing professional and family obligations, which leads to them feeling that they cannot take on a leadership role (Hodges, 2017).

Only 3% of participants argued that women could not lead in a male environment; it is challenging to lead men while being more comfortable in the female domain. Consequently, the historical understanding of leadership as 'command and control' is considered the main factor impacting women becoming leaders in a Saudi workplace.

Most participants (male and female) asserted that the new generation is optimistic about the future, willing to take on more responsibility and also take advantage of the vision for 2030. The Saudi Vision 2030 increases the ambition of both its male and female citizens and has the potential to provide equal opportunities for both genders. However, just 5% of the participants argued that diversity in management and leadership of organisations creates positive and sustainable benefit, as diversity brings new perspectives and unique skills, as well new styles and ambitions that would strengthen an organisation.

Impact of the 2030 Vision on the empowerment of leaders

The majority of participants were optimistic about the 2030 Vision, which has influenced all the government and country sectors. In fact, 57% of female participants argued that this vision is a significant change, which brings them closer to achieving their desired dream, and that without a top-down decision nothing would have happened. All thirty-three participants confirmed that gender segregation was part of history; for the new 2030 Vision, many practices had already been quietly introduced, with several organisations and other meeting places no longer enforcing segregation. Also, this change has affected people at all levels and circumstances, and, because of the vision, it was achieved efficiently with less pressure and potential damage.

Among the participants, 26% argued that the 2030 Vision is an opportunity for the country, as it would inspire and empower more women in the Saudi labour market to participate in various fields, which could be the beginning of a brighter future. Despite the optimistic outlook for the majority of the participants, 4% of participants were more conservative and had some concerns about the programme. They believed that this was not enough to empower women in the labour market or to make them ministers, executives and directors. Some of the participants (15%) considered that the changes which had happened in Saudi Arabia lately were not fundamental ones, arguing that the government has just encouraged the public sector to empower women, and nothing more. There was no clear plan accompanying the ambition on the 2030 Vision to change Saudi society's masculine culture; therefore, according to some participants, what happened a short-lived disruption, which will not continue permanently. Just 5% of participants suggested that the male-dominated structure of Saudi society is unlikely to change rapidly, and such changes must originate at all levels: politically, socially and economically. Additionally, they believed that, because of social bonding it's difficult to impose new changes and ideas, especially given that the attitude towards change will vary by culture, according to Hofstede (1980). Furthermore, avoiding such cultural changes would lead to additional complications in society.

The main issue in changing such a culture is the time factor. However, this thought about women working or appointing women as leaders come from their religious views; Saudis believe that women should be 'encouraged to remain at home to serve their family' – a view that the majority of participants agreed with. Consequently, if the government is serious about empowering women, they have to provide a comprehensive plan for dealing with such cultural

obstacles; even if all women have been empowered to challenge men, there will still be resistance from society against the empowerment of women.

Comprehensive Reform

Participants highlighted several reforms to overcome the obstacles and challenges that leaders face, considering the Saudi Vision 2030 as a solid foundation for further improvements within such organisational aspects. They asserted that the primary barrier to empowering women in Saudi Arabia is the organisational barrier. Among the participants, 31% agreed that Saudi society still needs more awareness of the role of women leaders, observing their effective impact in society. However, because policymakers are less confident about the performance of working women, due to their lack of required expertise, this dominates public thinking. Even though most of them hold high degrees from postgraduate studies, many men feel insecure around women leaders.

Career advancement, to some extent, has not been fully explained to society. Although the 2030 Vision is progressively aiming to create a highly competitive and productive workforce, the public and private sectors still lack comprehensive professional development opportunities to empower women leaders with the necessary technical skillset. Consequently, to achieve such an ambitious target, the government needs to have a five-year plan that will effectively integrate additional female employees into the labour force. In total, 67% of the participants asserted the need for the reform of organisational structures and policies. They argued that all parties – policymakers in the private and public sectors – should collaborate to develop an approach that executes what has been planned for in the 2030 Vision. Further encouragement is strongly required to assess existing structures, policies, and programmes, aligning expectations with actual needs for leaders of both genders.

Working in unspectacular circumstances

There have been notable changes in the way organisations and businesses operate within the Saudi context since the beginning of the year. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted most organisations to use modern technologies and tools to communicate and perform daily tasks remotely. The pandemic has imposed several changes globally, especially in light of countries adopting lockdowns, whether partial or total, which greatly affected the working style of different jobs, with hundreds of thousands of business owners, workers and employees staying at home for long periods. The participants who have taken part in research regarding the challenges of the pandemic stated that this crisis made them observe and think differently,

while turning them into different people. They added that working from home has become almost the only way to save some projects from failure, which was expected to continue for several months. Despite the fact that most countries are still under lockdown, the current trend in Saudi Arabia is to ease restrictions and gradually return to normalcy. Just 2% of the participants stated that they began working remotely a long time ago, having adopted this approach to give a more significant role to electronic systems in marketing their project. Another participant argued that he managed to provide the expansion of part-time approaches in his organisation, adapting an online transaction policy for everyone so that their work was not affected.

The possibilities of turning to remote work will rise sharply if the crisis continues for a few more months, due to what is known as the 'new normal' theory, which means that most people gradually accept new developments and adapt to them over time. One of the participants provided several tips that helped with remote work, especially given that video meetings are sometimes conducted without breaks – unlike working in everyday situations. This necessitates scheduling the meetings and ensuring that there are gaps of 10 to 15 minutes between each call, as well as changing position between calls. Another participant argued that now is the most challenging time during the pandemic; but being close to family and friends would limit the occurrence of mental illnesses, stress and anxiety. Moreover, the majority of the participants argued that many parts of life have changed, starting from social aspects, the global economy, and international relations networks, to individual mental health issues – nothing has escaped this crisis.

6.9 The conceptual framework through the lens of symbolic capital and symbolic violence

This study elaborates Bourdieu's theory of capital in relation to gender aspects through the lens of leadership. A conceptual framework was developed by the researcher (Chapter 3, Figure 3.2) in order to investigate the gendered aspects of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, by considering leadership characteristics and approaches as social capital and assessing the outcomes by considering legal and socio-cultural factors. It was identified that the leaders experienced various challenges, which can be considered a form of symbolic violence, in their goal of moving towards effective leadership. For example, this study has identified that internal factors like patriarchal family values, lack of support from family, and strong conservative beliefs led to the symbolic violence which affected the leaders and their performance – a similar conclusion to other relevant studies (Almathami *et al.*, 2020; Dinh, 2020; Hodges, 2017; Al-

Asfour *et al.*, 2017; Al-Otaibi, 2020; Jamjoom, 2020). The study has also identified the influence of external factors such as the adoption of traditional practices, patriarchal culture and a male-dominated society, as identified in recent studies (Hodges, 2017; Al-Asfour, 2017).

There are a few factors – such as religious influence in the form of sacred capital – that had a positive impact at workplaces by improving the work culture and gender diversity, but that also led to symbolic violence in the form of gender segregation. Thus, the findings have extended the ideas of Bourdieu about symbolic capital, reflecting the socio-economic and cultural factors that are considered, as symbolic capital may lead to symbolic violence. However, the findings have revealed that leaders have been adopting various strategies – such as participative, collaborative and transformational leadership styles – while using their knowledge, social value, and reputation as symbolic capital in order to improve their performance, come closer to power, and manage their positions (as shown in Figure 6.6).

Moreover, the findings have indicated that personal, cultural and religious values influenced legal and social factors. For example, socio-cultural factors such as *alasabiyya* (favouring one's own tribe) promoted gender inequalities. Similarly, traditional practices such as *Wasta* and *Majlis* or *Diwania* resulted in favouring the use of power politics as capital, promoting gender segregation and leading to symbolic violence against less influential people and women. In addition, psychological aspects such as male perceptions that women were weak, or that their

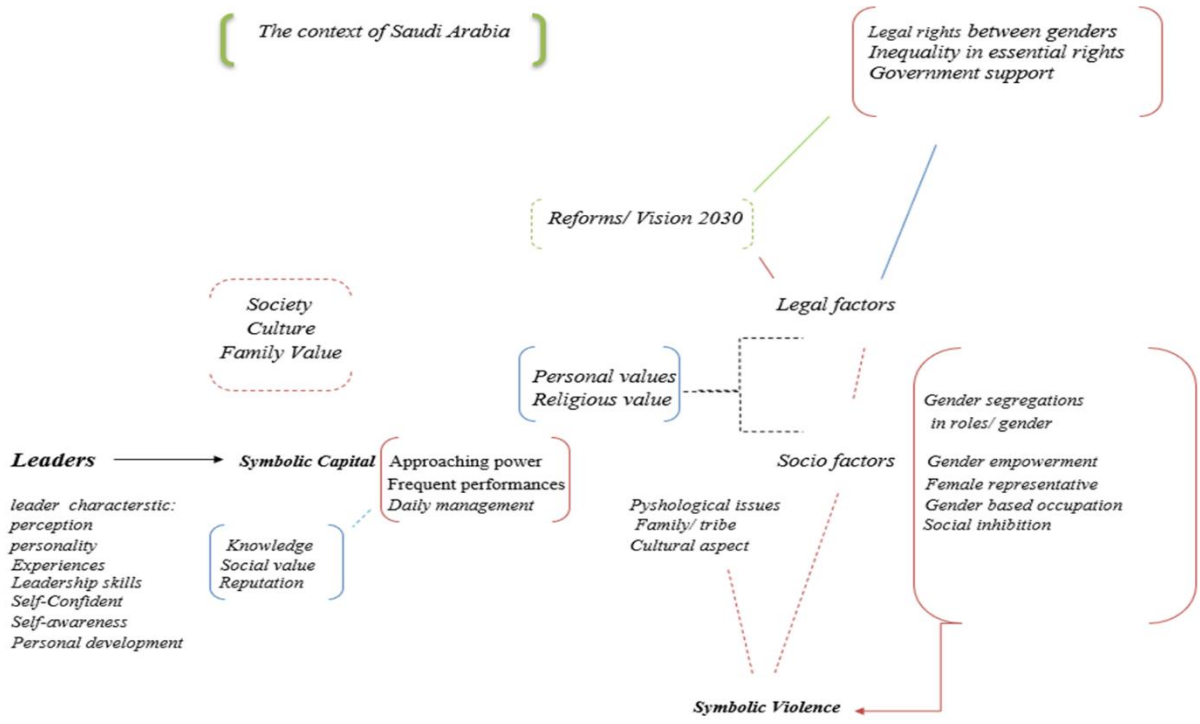

Figure 6-6. Evaluation of contextual framework

role was limited to household activities, have still been identified at many workplaces, resulting in a lack of support for the empowerment of women and their participation in decision-making. These practices led to the creation of gender-based roles and gender-based occupations, which reflected the already existing gender inequalities. In addition, social inhibition affected gendered empowerment, especially the promotion of women into positions of leadership.

In a similar way to socio-cultural factors, legal factors are also influenced by personal and religious values. The reforms promoted through the 2030 Vision supported the concepts of gender equality, increased participation of women in the workforce, and the promotion of female empowerment. However, the sudden changes in organisational structures and workplace cultures through these reforms have led to hesitation towards change from a few leaders. Differences were observed in recruiting and promoting women, gender diversity in the workplace was opposed by some, and women were kept out of decision-making. It is interesting to observe that, in some areas, these changes are being influenced by religious and cultural factors. For example, though legal reforms led to women participating more at workplaces, they are segregated and barred from mixing with men at some places due to religious and cultural reasons. This is directly preventing women from participating in decision-making and accessing various higher roles in organisations.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, despite the efforts made through legal reforms, symbolic violence has crept into the workplaces as leadership is still influenced by various socio-cultural, religious, and personal factors. Moreover, the symbolic capital resulting from these reforms is being used to accommodate symbolic violence at the workplace by practising *alasabiyya* and power politics. In addition, it has been identified that the symbolic capital of power has resulted in symbolic violence (male dominance and gender inequality), which has been carried forward through various modes of transmission, including vertical transmission (the role of the family), horizontal transmission (the role of peers), oblique transmission (the role of teachers or role models), hierarchical transmission (the role of unequal power structures), and historical transmission (through time). However, the participants representing the current generation of the workforce showed various strategies for overcoming the symbolic violence that they have experienced. Thus, the relationships defined in the conceptual framework (based on the literature review) have been evaluated and justified using the findings from this study, supporting Bourdieu's theory of capital and how it is managed and carried forward.

6.10 Policy recommendations for managing gender inequalities

The findings in this study have identified various forms of symbolic violence and capital, which have been used as an advantage for few in the organizations, creating inequalities and restricting inclusiveness. Based on the findings in this study, policy recommendations are provided, which can be considered as an important practical contribution of this study. It is evident from the results that inequalities exist in both public and private organizations. Therefore, in order to streamline the recommendations for both public and private organizations, a framework for policy recommendations is developed as shown in figure 6-7.

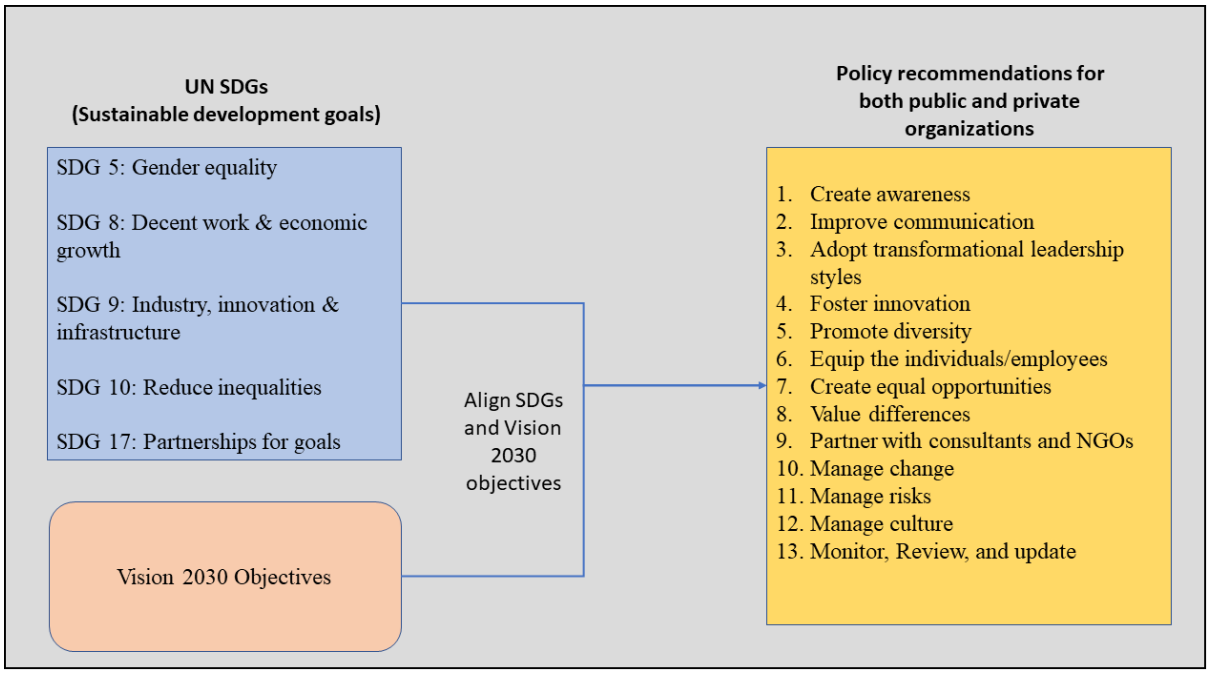

Figure 6-7. Framework for policy recommendations for managing gendered inequalities

As presented in the framework, it is essential to recognize both SDGs (sustainable development goals) outlined by United Nations, and align with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme, which aims to transform its economy into a knowledge-based economy. In the process of transforming economy, businesses (both public and private organizations) play a key role in achieving certain objectives such as employment, empowerment, and sustainable development. Five SDGs were identified as sown in the figure, which can be considered for aligning with Vision 2030 objectives. These are further analysed in the context of the findings in this study to derive thirteen policy recommendations, which are explained in the following points.

1. **Create awareness:** It has been identified in the results that there is a strong influence of socio-cultural norms and traditions on the practices adopted within the organization and also in the development of workplace culture. Few practices such as alasabiyya were

identified to be acceptable standards of practice by the leaders in few organizations, though it is considered to be unacceptable according to the international standards affecting inclusiveness and sustainable goals such as gender equality. As the change has to be brought from behavioural perspective, creating awareness about gendered equalities and good leadership practices can be one of the effective approaches, as awareness can change one's attitudes towards good business practices at workplace (Bennett et al., 2000; Fisher & Purcal, 2016).

2. **Improve communication:** Communications play an important role in managing the workplace and organizational culture. An effective procedure to remove communication barriers within the organizations must be adopted, where every employee can openly present his/ her views without any fear. This would help in improving collaboration among the team members and also among the teams, which can result in collaborative and supportive working environment. Furthermore, it helps in providing support to employees, creating employee motivation, satisfaction, and aids in retaining talent within the organizations and effective decision-making (Alyammahi et al., 2021; Holmes, 2017).

3. **Adopt transformational leadership styles:** As identified from the results, most of the leaders reflected the practice of authoritative style of leadership in their respective organizations. As the aim is to transform the workplace culture, promote inclusiveness, diversity, and equality, adoption of transformational leadership styles in the organizations can be one of the effective approaches, which focuses on promoting the changes among the individuals for their own good and development (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2018). Under transformational leadership, practices such as preferential treatment, corruption, gender inequalities can be effectively addressed as the leadership focuses on improving and supporting the employees at workplace.

4. **Foster innovation:** New innovative models of managing workplace cultures may be developed in specific to the conditions within the organizations (internal environment) and external environment (socio-cultural factors, religion, market conditions etc.). As both internal and external environments can influence organizations, the workplace models need to be developed in specific to these situations. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, influence of religion, culture and social norms is clearly visible in the internal environment of the organizations. Therefore, models that minimize the influence of external factors and promote inclusiveness must be designed in specific to the organizations.

5. **Promote diversity:** Diversity at workplace is an important factor that can have various benefits such as improved productivity, increased creativity, improved cultural awareness, and increased marketing opportunities (Chidiac, 2018). For instance, including both male and females, and individuals from different countries may create a positive work experience, where each employee can contribute differently to the organizations. For example, while doing a business with China, if a Saudi Arabian company has a Chinese manager, it may be easy for the company to communicate and negotiate deals. Similarly, a broader diversity means a broader set of skills and competencies, which can significantly improve the productivity.

6. **Equip the individuals/employees:** This is to initiate and prepare the individuals at workplace in order to minimise the differences. Various approaches can be followed in this context. For example, create a team with employees of equal experiences so that all can perform as equals. In the context of Saudi Arabia, the issue is different, as the concept of inequalities arise from socio-cultural and economic aspects. Therefore, creation of diverse team with individuals who are alike in their thoughts and ideals may be of benefit. Furthermore, it is also essential to prepare the leaders and employees who follow authoritative or unacceptable practices by the top management to prepare for a change by adopting transformational leadership styles. Therefore, preparing the leaders and employees for the positive change is one of the important steps to achieve diversity and gendered equality at workplace.

7. **Create equal opportunities:** This one of the most important recommendations aiming to remove structural and procedural barriers within the organizations that aid gender inequalities. All the factors that promote gendered inequalities such as male dominance, gender segregation, alasabiyya, authoritative leadership practices etc. have to be removed from the workplace culture. As SDGs and Vision 2030 promote inclusiveness and gender equalities, these must be effectively implemented in both public and private organizations. However, it may not be appropriate to change all of a sudden, therefore, a clear plan for implementing the changes must be developed by all the organizations to create equal opportunities at the workplace.

8. **Value differences:** The leaders and employees must be trained to value the differences among them. Valuing differences creates a work environment where people can and want to do their best. Working effectively in this diverse world starts with self-awareness–

considering how you handle bias, poor treatment, and conflict, and demonstrating that you value others (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017). Recognizing and respecting the value that different perspectives and cultures bring to the organization is an important attribute that need to be integrated into the workplace culture in every organization.

9. **Partner with consultants and NGOs**: With long history of adopting the traditional workplace cultural models which are against gendered equalities in both public and private organizations in Saudi Arabia, it may be assessed that it would be challenging for the companies in adopting sustainable development activities such as gender equalities, inclusiveness etc. Therefore, partnering with NGOs, or consultants who are experienced in managing workplace cultures can reduce the burden on both public and private organizations in implementing the changes. Training programs by the consultants on workplace behaviour and practices, and the importance of diversity and equality may help in creating awareness among the leaders which may lead to self-realization and initiate the change.

10. **Manage change**: As implementing the structural and procedural changes across the organizations can be very challenging. Therefore, an effective change management model/process must be adopted by the organizations, which focus on requesting change, analyzing the impact, approving or rejecting the change, change initiation, change implementation, and reviewing the change process.

11. **Manage risks:** As the change process for creating equal opportunities and promoting gender equalities involves complex challenges as the practices are rooted into socio-cultural, traditional aspects of the Saudi society. There may be many risks that emerge in the process of implementing the changes. Therefore, an effective risk management model must be adopted to track, address and mitigate any risks that may arise.

12. **Manage workplace culture:** As the change process requires collaboration of various activities such as change management, risk management operations in order to implement the structural and procedural changes, it is evident that workplace culture undergoes rapid transformations. There is a possibility that the process may roll back if there are any failures in managing the risks and changes. Therefore, it is important that the workplace culture has to be effectively managed during the process of change.

13. **Monitor, Review, and update:** The overall process of implementing the policies must be effectively monitored, reviewed and updated. For instance, audits can be conducted on the

existing practices by a committee instituted by the government in both public and private organizations. The practices can be regularly reviewed, and the progress can be tracked against the specified targets. Based on the reviews, the policies and strategies can be updated to streamline the process of creating gendered equalities in public and private organizations.

6.11 Assessing the contributions of this study

This study has made both theoretical and practical contributions. Firstly, it addressed the gaps in the literature regarding the gendered inequalities through the lens of symbolic capital and violence. Most of the concepts of gendered equalities are investigated in the western context, and their application in the conservative country such as Saudi Arabia is poorly researched. This study provides a valuable contribution to address these gaps by linking the issues identified with the Vision 2030 programme which aims to implement inclusiveness and gendered equality practices. In addition, consideration of social, cultural, and legal factors improved the quality of data collected and analysed, which supported the objectives of this study in the context of Saudi Arabia to deliver interesting findings. Furthermore, the voices of both men and women are considered in this study in contrast to other studies which mainly focus on the inequalities for women.

Similarly, this study has various practical contributions. Firstly, it provided a comprehensive view of current practices at the workplace in Saudi Arabian organizations highlighting the existence of gendered inequalities. Secondly, it highlighted the need for these organizations to act on creating awareness among the leaders and employees on the benefits of diversity, and gender equality. Thirdly, this study provided a framework for policy recommendations for promoting gender equality in both public and private organizations in Saudi Arabia.

6.12 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a broad discussion of the theoretical framework and its relevance for the main findings in relation to the research questions. The chapter draws the study together and links it to the existing literature where possible. The empirical findings were related to the theoretical framework suggested by Pierre Bourdieu, a remarkable sociologist who shaped his perspectives mainly in the field of masculine domination, hidden powers and resources, and who established a credible theory of practices. The overall conclusion is that Bourdieu's framework of symbolic capital and symbolic violence is valuable in establishing the general reasons for the phenomena that are observed in Saudi Arabian society in terms of gender

relations today This study further reveals that the perception of a leader's symbolic capital and symbolic violence in the Saudi context is different from the western cultural viewpoint, because of the society's traditional aspects. Additionally, although gender is associated with male domination in the Saudi context, by placing men in apparently superior positions, both sexes are subject to entirely different processes of subjugation through the systemic use of symbolic violence. As such, symbolic violence serves as a tactical tool for ensuring the reproduction of the gender order among men and women in the upper echelons in Saudi Arabia. However, this framework can only be partially accepted because the symbolic violence of masculinity is hidden and not always applicable to gender inequality in Saudi society.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This research has investigated cultural and social factors that influence or allow men and women leaders to become leaders in Saudi Arabia. It has also examined the values that are synchronous with cultural and social factors, which may improve access to leadership opportunities for both genders. Furthermore, this thesis has provided comprehensive conclusions on whether Bourdieu's framework is relevant to gender and leadership qualities in the Saudi labour market. The historical context of this study is the societal transformations that have taken place in the last five years, thanks to the government-initiated policies and agendas for modernisation and reform. This chapter discusses the study's original contributions by explaining the relevance of (western) scholars for Saudi leaders and describing how these findings challenge the taken-for-granted theories of change using Bourdieu's theory of social practices and forms. The chapter concludes by identifying future research questions and recommends changes to government policies that might improve genders right and the working conditions of leaders in the Saudi labour force. Understanding Saudi leaders' experiences in leadership roles and their relation to state policies have supported the theoretical framework and the methodological approach of this study in various ways. For instance, it has opened up a space to gain further theoretical insights into questions on gender equality and roles in the Saudi workforce. This understanding was also necessary to identify the focal points for further action, which can guide policymakers in Saudi Arabia to avoid any obstacles and barriers that may prevent the country's future development.

7.2 Addressing research questions and objectives

This section begins by returning to the research questions and objectives posed in the introductory chapter. A substantial literature review was carried out in chapters 2 and 3 on various aspects, including the role of gender in societies and organisations; the factors affecting women in leadership roles; different types of gendered leadership styles and their relation to symbolic capital and violence; and leaders' ideology of symbolic capital and symbolic violence. In addition, various factors influencing leadership were identified and evaluated in the context of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, which resulted in all the major objectives specified in section 1.7 being achieved. In addition, the design of the conceptual framework (in Chapter 3) for the study of existing approaches through the lens of Bourdieu in the Saudi social setting was established, focusing on forms of symbolic capital and hidden

violence that are faced by Saudi leaders. Its evaluation in Chapter 6 was the last major objective.

The research revealed that culturally based constructs related to gender impacted on leaders' journeys towards leadership positions. Whilst men are given responsibility and favoured for positions of leadership, women are not inferior to men in terms of performance. Significantly, the women regarded themselves as no different from men in terms of their ability to cope with responsibility, act independently and achieve success. It confirmed the expectation outlined in the conceptual framework: that leaders' social attributes and values are critical in their successful journey towards leadership positions. Secondly, the overall implications of how the recent governmental reforms could change the position of leaders, particularly the challenges they face in the labour market, were considered. After that, the limitations of Bourdieu's theory were addressed, with suggestions for how it could be refashioned to follow the patterns developed in a traditional and, to some extent, Islamic society such as Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 6).

In 2017, the Saudi Arabian government committed to developing national growth while also introducing policies aimed at fostering gender equality. They also committed to overcoming the obstacles that agendas for equal opportunity tend to face in the country (see Chapter 2). These policy reforms have slightly improved the position of individuals as leaders, and especially women, by enhancing their traditional image and increasing their contributions to society in general.

Chapter 2 showed that the latest country developments and recent reforms were aimed at increasing gender diversity in leadership positions and promoting gender equality in the Saudi labour market. These priorities are all included in the Saudi National Vision 2030 strategy. However, the fact that women leaders have increased their participation in the business sectors much more has not meant that their experiences of work or their working patterns have been the same as men's. This research showed how occupational segregation and gender roles discourage women's participation in leadership positions, and also showed how both genders are pressured to follow hidden structures and obligations. The Saudi Arabian labour market remained heavily gendered, despite all of the recent reforms and government support for the empowerment of women, as some jobs are still seen as women's work, while others are seen as men's work. Although these factors are economic in nature, they are also a result of social norms and cultural values.

In addition, the data presented several factors that constrain women's ability to combine work and family duties. Moreover, gender roles within the household affect women's progress, especially with regards to their employment and education, on account of the individual's personal values and family motivations. Nor has the implementation of these policies guaranteed fully equal rights for both genders, which means that the effect of public legislation seeking to control what happens in the private sphere (at home) has been less than expected. Although Islam as a religion does not discriminate against women or deny their equality, the institutions embodying the religion within the state have ensured that these beliefs become cultural barriers to women's equality. The literature review revealed how cultural regimes and gendered expectations of leaders can also hinder their progress within the labour market and society in general.

The question that must be answered is: why make use of Bourdieu's theoretical framework of symbolic capital and violence when there are newer theories available? The answer is that I believe there is a structure of masculine domination within Saudi workplaces, as the empirical findings demonstrated. To some extent, the framework of capital and violence is valuable in establishing the general reasoning for the phenomena observed today in gender relations in Saudi society. Some patterns and elements of gender discrimination partially support the relevance of the framework, while others require additional theoretical elaborations. In fact, Bourdieu (1986) argued that the state has provided many changes that facilitate women's entry into the public sphere, but there are not so many that improve women's position in it. Bourdieu further insisted that, while equal opportunities legislation might have been thought to enhance women's position in this respect, it is widely considered to have had only a marginal impact, due to the forms of symbolic violence that are preserved by society. This concept is present in every context of life and in everyday practices too, because it is legitimised by institutions such as family, marriage, religion, and education. And, as explained above, since the ruling norms are those of men, society's structure shuts women out and leaves them alone in their monotonous private life (see Chapter 3).

Since the Saudi Arabian labour market is deeply rooted in traditional views of gender relations and cultural expectations, in certain circumstances, both leaders tend to face a degree of gender discrimination in the labour force. According to the empirical findings, Saudi men, with all of their permitted powers and resources, are now are facing one of the most serious challenges, because they see the empowerment of Saudi women as a threat to them, even though women's ability to access specific academic disciplines and professions, as well as practice leadership

roles, remain restricted and limited. This finding aligns with Bourdieu's major statement concerning forms of violence and the challenges that leaders face in the workplace. The participants further described how society tends to perceive their talents and professional work, aiming to disempower them despite their effectiveness and positive contributions. Furthermore, the participants debated whether the organisation's success within the field is linked to sociological actors, such as getting access to the elites, leading through crowds and having access to the right forms of capital. This raises one of the research questions regarding the identifiable forms of symbolic capital that leaders may bring to their field of work, as has been mentioned in the introductory chapter and Chapter 3 section 2.3.2.

Bourdieu's theory is therefore helpful as a theoretical background for assessing gendered differences among Saudi leaders' use of symbolic capital in areas such as accessing, gaining education and reaching the labour market, and to some extent the code of conduct prescribed for leaders in the workplace. In addition, the influence of internal and external factors, as well as cultural, religious, and legal factors, can all be assessed in relation to symbolic capital and violence. However, the thesis has also found that Bourdieu's theory has significant shortcomings related to the explanation of forces of gender inequality in the society, community and positions of power in Saudi Arabia. The individual behaviour of leaders and their motivations for success in the workplace, and the factors that they are exposed to as a result of the influence of the patriarchal society – reflecting the impact of both symbolic capital and symbolic violence – begin within the family and in shared gendered responsibilities

The findings in this study identified that leaders are bound to experience various forms of symbolic violence in relation to gendered inequalities, such as lack of support, limited participation, gendered segregation, and a restricted role in high level decision-making at workplaces. Leaders also use different types of capital – including sacred capital, skills and competencies, personal values, family values, education etc. – for managing and improving their leadership practices. In addition, they adopt various strategies such as persistence, participative and transformational leadership styles, in addressing the issues of symbolic violence hidden in the organisational structure and among peers. Thus, both RQ1 and RQ2 are addressed in this study.

Furthermore, it can be argued that symbolic capital is embodied by the leaders occupying their positions, which is observed as an added value that will raise individuals' or leaders' social status. Throughout the study, it has appeared that leaders and managers do not usually reach

such positions of leadership without obtaining graduate certificates or practical experience that they have acquired over time, even if many positions focus on leadership skills that depend on the leader's position and social status, reflecting the practices of *Wasta* and *alasabiyya*. However, the use of such capital can lead to symbolic violence against those who are less influential.

In Saudi Arabia, numerous high-level professions are based on individual reputation and public relations. In some positions, the government is an integral part of the leader's approach, particularly when it comes to high status governmental positions. The royal court and the King himself may nominate individuals and leaders, based on some preferences and networks. Despite these integrations, education remains the most important quality or form of capital, followed by years of experience, as well as the family or the tribal name to which the leader belongs, which is often the first thing that attracts people's attention, it highlights the tribal nervousness somewhat without even getting it intentionally or intentionally. It is interesting to note that various reforms are being carried out to improve gender equality, but that those reforms are implemented within the legal framework of Sharia law, and are further influenced by local culture and traditions. As a result, the reforms are not completely effective in achieving gendered equality, because of practices such as gender segregation, which is a traditional practice and a social norm. Moreover, the strong cultural and religious inclinations of people in Saudi Arabia have led to the reproduction and maintenance of symbolic violence through traditional practices, using various modes of transmission including vertical transmission, horizontal transmission, oblique transmission, hierarchical transmission, and historical transmission. Thus, these findings address RQ3, focusing on leaders' ideology and how such structures of symbolic violence are reproduced and maintained.

Bourdieu provided a theoretical grounding for the growing trend of genders entering masculine-coded fields in higher education and making independent decisions in leadership. At the same time, some participants in this thesis revealed that they were forced to choose particular studies or even to ask their parents for permission to enter higher education. Moreover, some stated that the situation had changed drastically in recent years, as career opportunities have opened up for women. Referring to this study, the majority of the leaders emphasised that human society and the family are an integral part of working life and cannot be separated from the working environment. Even if one tried to do so, it is difficult to escape the customs of society and tribe, which would lead to stress and certain forms of hidden violence with time. Assuming that symbolic violence is permanently reflected in individuals'

and leaders' lives, this means that they must work around or within these institutions, through the traditions imposed on them.

Bourdieu also provided the argument that women have fewer opportunities to participate in the labour market due to family responsibilities that are mostly placed on their shoulders. In addition, most men are reluctant to accept such dramatic changes and other pressures like accepting women as competitors. This argument is extremely valuable and applicable when analysing how Saudi leaders manage to combine the pressures of work, family, and society, as well as hidden responsibilities and obstacles. The previous chapters of this thesis outlined the significant steps taken by the Saudi government to facilitate the presence of women and gender equality at work, although the government has retained a traditional orientation, maintaining the family at the core of national development and promoting local traditions (Gray, 2013). This situation has put additional pressure on women, because as more women have gone to work, the government has not made any attempts to diminish the burdens related to family.

The issue has been exacerbated by the ambiguity of the Saudi Arabian government's agenda regarding the promotion of leader's values and the encouragement of female participation in the labour market. Even though Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital and symbolic violence was introduced into a masculine society, it still aligns with his assertion that the lack of gender equality exposed the specific problem of gendered behaviour in the workplace. He later eliminated the theory's shortcomings with the introduction of the concept of embedded knowledge. In this case, Saudi society tended to distance women from men in the workplace, and such behaviour is attributed by some individuals to the strong, pervasive religiousness and independence of society.

This issue was extensively assessed by Bourdieu from the perspective of the benefits of informal communication and the totality of normative systems, social pressure and symbolic violence. However, various strategies were adopted by the leaders in order to overcome the challenges, such as effectively managing household responsibilities and duties, sometimes by using domestic help; investing in education; improving networks and contacts; contributing to decision-making in order to develop a reputation; adopting strategies against male dominance; building networks with international communities etc. These approaches reflect the participative, collaborative, transformational styles of leadership that have been adopted by the leaders. Thus, the above discussion addresses RQ4, focusing on the social roles and gender stereotypes which leaders are expected to uphold in their workplaces.

In addition, the findings in this study revealed that the system of patriarchy is relevant, as Saudi society follows a dominant system of male interpersonal relations which undermines women's role in informal communication by establishing a gender-biased normative system within the labour market. It does so by ensuring that women are excluded from formal communication in the workplace, as they are not thought to perform as well as males. The second explanation is that men have created a specific normative system that keeps women from interacting with men in higher positions on the career ladder, which decreases their chances for promotion and reinforces men's dominant position in any organisation. Here, the framework of Bourdieu appears to be relevant when we address the issue of the strict communication burdens in Saudi leadership that were explicitly discussed by the participants.

Chapter 3 presents many criticisms of Bourdieu for using the social system to explain gender inequality, alleging that the world and society are much more complex. The framework has been criticised as an exclusively global, male-based scheme. At the same time, female dominance and subordination in private and public binary criteria also exist, while gender is known only in relation to the female, covering men to an extent. Therefore, on assessing the relevance of Bourdieu's framework to the main findings of this thesis, it has been shown that such a framework is relevant to the case of gender inequality in the Saudi workforce when referring to the leader's preparation, code of conduct and the specific organisation of time, as determined by the government's agenda on the promotion of women's rights and the position of the family at the core of national development.

Even though Bourdieu's theoretical framework had a revolutionary effect on gender studies in general, based on the social lens and individual practices, his theory was also criticised, as he neglected the tension between agency and structure necessary to understand social processes. To address this tension, the present analysis is embedded in empirical, sociological research of lived experience – in this case, the experiences of Saudi leaders of home, work and the state. This study's empirical data revealed other patterns of gender discrimination in the leadership of Saudi Arabia, which creates additional questions about the explanatory ability and relevance of Bourdieu's framework of symbolic capital and symbolic violence for this particular setting. Those elements are related to social classes, codes of conduct, motivation for change in the labour market and gender leadership styles, as well as gender roles in society and the acceptance of successful leadership, which has been found in this study's empirical material.

In this thesis, the empirical findings identified certain patterns in leaders' social behaviour and motivation for career success in Saudi Arabia. More specifically, participants described the importance of role models, and of family and government support in driving them to achieve specific job-related goals. Hence, a historical consideration shows how society typically demonstrates an androcentric reality, because men have generally held power and authority, and historical accounts have been written from a male perspective. Therefore, whilst this androcentric account is flawed and undermines the achievements of females, it is not an inaccurate representation of how (some) men have benefitted from patriarchal dominance. Furthermore, Bourdieu is aware of the intricacies of gendered identities, whereby masculine domination is a 'double-edged privilege' (2001: p.75) and men can also be held prisoner to gendered norms and expectations. This is consistent with my conceptualisation of gender as having negative consequences for both men and women. Furthermore, Bourdieu's work is seemingly guilty of collapsing gender into masculinity, based on the fact that individuals who possess masculine traits are often in a position of dominance, implying that anyone demonstrating masculinity can hold power. However, this is not the case historically, given that power has been held almost exclusively by males as a sex, regardless of their presentation of gender.

Bourdieu stated that '[T]he masculinisation of the male body and the feminisation of the female body...' (1990: p.55). Therefore, the theory provides only a limited explanation of the dynamic mechanisms of interactions between men and women in Saudi Arabia, from the point of view of sociology and visible actions related to a desired scenario. For example, some participants mentioned that male family members and male bosses at work encourage them to take on leadership roles. Bourdieu used the idea of symbolic capital and symbolic violence to emphasise how a leader's gendered habitus is influenced by previous experience, which allows consideration of gender relations as influencing the knowledge of the gendered habitus.

This study further has shown how many leaders are 'trapped' in reproducing traditional binary gender norms (Chapter 6). In contrast, the present research found that particular obstacles, such as ideologies of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, could be generalised to almost all leaders; therefore, these exist on the social level and require additional theoretical analysis. Thus, it can be concluded that, in a conservative society like Saudi Arabia, various factors influence leadership practices. As a result of which, symbolic violence continues its existence through various modes of transmission, despite the reforms that have been implemented. At the same time, an increase in persistence and resistance has been observed among women in

the fight against gendered inequalities. Therefore, there is a need for research to examine the changes in leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia, using Bourdieu's theories.

7.3 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This research makes an important contribution to the theoretical understanding of gendered differences through the lens of leadership in the context of Saudi Arabian organisations. As indicated in Chapter 1, the majority of research on gendered differences analysed using Bourdieu theory is reductionist and simplistic. By delving deep into the voices of both men and women leaders, and by using thematic analysis, this study identifies alternative forms of knowledge and reveals the advantages and barriers in a broader social, legal, cultural, and psychological context. This study is one of the first to use the opinions of both genders in assessing gendered inequalities in leadership, at a time of significant reforms being introduced to Saudi Arabia through the Vision 2030 programme; hence adding to the scarce literature on gendered differences in leadership in Saudi Arabia. The way male/female leaders experience challenges, prevent them to achieve equitable representation even though male leaders appear to be advantaged, which are contradicting with vision 2030 programme. Understanding the importance of social, cultural, and legal factors in Saudi Arabia, and their influence on gender equality, is a significant contribution made by this research to raising levels of awareness. This study has identified significant shortcomings in Bourdieu's theory related to the explanation of forces of gender inequality in the society, community and powers at work in Saudi Arabia. This study has identified that the argument often made about commonly held theories of change – that they reflect western feminism and cannot be applied to Saudi Arabia – is a myth, as both women and men's perceptions about gendered equality are changing thanks to the various reforms being introduced, increasing education levels among women, and increasing awareness among both genders. In addition, this study has developed a conceptual framework for studying gendered differences at work, which can be used along with various theories relating to gendered inequalities, in addition to Bourdieu's theory of capital.

Furthermore, this study also has practical implications. By understanding the values that help leaders to achieve, sustain and evolve their leadership skills, and by understanding which social and cultural dynamics enable or inhibit them in becoming leaders, and which organisational factors are critical for their success, this research had contributed to better knowledge of the role of gender in the achievement of Saudi leaders. Though the Saudi constitution asserts the principal of equality among all citizens, and the government has undertaken significant reforms in promoting gender equality, the changes were slow due to the influence of socio-cultural and

traditional factors. While the legal framework supports the greater participation of women, the socio-cultural and traditional factors led to acts of symbolic violence such as gender segregation, limiting the role of female leadership, reduced participation in decision-making, and the practices of *Wasta*, *majlis*, *alasabiyya*. Therefore, it is identified that the mere facilitation of reforms and rights will not be sufficient, but there is a need to create greater awareness among the population and oversee the implementation of policies aimed at increasing female participation and empowerment at ground level. These findings can support leaders in creating efficient organisational policies and changes in the culture by limiting the influence of male dominance emerging from the habitus of the leaders and overseeing the initiation, implementation, and management of the changes with a more focused approach. Furthermore, this study contributes to both the academic and practical arena by suggesting a framework of policy recommendations to embed gender equality in everyday life practices and social policies.

7.4 Recommendations for future research

The concepts of gender development, gender equality, empowerment and related issues are significant areas in contemporary academic research. This section aims to inform other researchers and policymakers about the trustworthiness of the findings. Future research could attempt to build on the empirical findings (i.e., drawing inspiration from the experiences of the participants who took part in the present study) which contribute to the field, especially regarding the improvement of gender conditions in Saudi society and Bourdieu's theory.

Based on the findings, an interesting question arising from the research concerns leader's perspectives once they have reached a significant leadership position. In particular, with reference to the research questions, do their values change or evolve once they have achieved their targeted leadership positions?

In particular, how do other forms of symbolic as symbolic culture would influence younger leaders aspiring to be leaders and who make these successful leaders their role models? Such research could attempt to increase the consciousness of young people who are in positions of power to highlight and challenge their gendered habitus, which reinforce traditional representations of masculinity and femininity. Developing and implementing schemes to challenge younger leaders' implicit assumptions about gender can bring the habitus into consciousness, potentially leading to discord between habitus, field and experience in the effort to make the change a reality.

A set of social policy recommendations for policymakers could pave the way for a more gender-equal society by laying out concrete guidelines for removing obstacles to gender advancement in top management positions. The Saudi Arabian government, for example, has adopted a number of human rights and gender equality policies. However, there are no precise mechanisms to ensure that, for instance, governmental organisations are implementing state policies precisely, and there are still individual obstacles and personal views that would delay this change. This lack of awareness does not help in the long-term achievement of the gender equality goals stipulated in the Saudi National Vision 2030 strategy. As a result, concentrated, procedural measures should be taken to compel governmental agencies to adhere to frameworks and amend current legislation to address the challenges faced by women. One step would be implementing the following social policy guidelines:

> *Establishing and financing gender-related civil society organisations.* These organisations could develop a policy framework to raise public awareness about the importance of understanding gender and the need to change existing stereotypes around gender preference, which may help to achieve more equality in Saudi society. However, creating more influential organisations requires financial resources from the government.

Raise awareness of gender-related issues to change traditional stereotypes against women.

This could be done through public campaigns and national and international media, aimed at challenging assumptions about the proper roles of men and women in society, as well as portrayals of femininity and masculinity in the media.

Invest in additional government data to determine the efficacy of gender equality legislation, evaluate its results, and disseminate information to the public and private sectors. Further studies should focus on both women's and men's equity-based needs for revenue-generating initiatives and income regulation, as well as educational and training opportunities, innovations, and other means of enhancing the assessment of gender equality policies and legislations.

Initiating a campaign of fair feminisation in government and business sectors. The primary goal of this strategy will be to encourage gender equality in leadership positions, payments, and training programmers, as well as to perform regular reviews that completely prioritise gender equality. This strategy would crack the glass ceiling for women's involvement in top management roles by: 1) appointing eligible men and women based on meritocratic requirements (i.e., appropriate academic degrees, technical credentials, and administrative

knowledge); and, 2) requiring frequent assessments of leaders' performance in both governmental and private institutions.

As a result, a feminisation strategy would ensure that top management roles are filled on qualifications only, so that the right individual, whether a man or a woman, is in the right position. This would put an end to the recruitment of unqualified leaders by nepotism, favouritism and social value. Finally, this thesis points to further gaps and areas which should be researched in more detail to advance gender equality and gender rights in the workforce, and also to promote business equity. In future studies, focus and attention should be given to determining the most appropriate field of work, study group, and data collection period.

Methods of research and sampling

This study's qualitative method necessitated a significant amount of time and effort. Despite the qualitative approach's utility, it required scheduling interviews and meetings with participants prior to the start of data collection. Given that some of the associations in the current study's qualitative analysis came from small samples, it would be worth examining the validity of such findings from quantitative studies with larger samples. Researchers have suggested that associations discovered in small sample size studies may be less reliable than those discovered in large sample size studies. However, there is an opposing viewpoint: because the current study has a small sample size, the quantitative approach can statistically prove additional findings not discovered in the current study.

It's also possible that the findings aren't representative of the Saudi population in question, given that the participant conscription strategy used here only yielded a small number of non-randomly selected participants. As a result, researchers should keep in mind that conducting a large number of tests increases the likelihood of obtaining valid, significant results in future studies.

Research into other perceptions and fields of study

Researchers interested in learning more about the perceptions and challenges that female leader face, could look into the attitudes and perspectives of the executives and other levels of personnel, as their behaviours might differ from those of the participants interviewed in the current study.

Another significant challenge in the research was gaining access to conduct semi-structured interviews with leaders in senior management roles in civil society organisations, due to the

difficulties of arranging appropriate interview times and locations. During the interviews, however, they appeared to be extremely welcoming and eager to share details about their experiences and daily activities (as explained in Chapter 4).

7.5 Concluding Remarks

This study has highlighted significant results, which go beyond Bourdieu's framework. Understanding how social, cultural, and legal factors in Saudi Arabia influence gender equality is a significant strength of this research, and a major contribution towards raising awareness. One of the main claims of the thesis is that the commonly held theories of change in (western) feminism do not apply to Saudi Arabia, which is a traditional, Muslim nation. When Bourdieu's theoretical paradigm of symbolic capital and symbolic violence was extended to the empirical results of this research, and covered leaders from both genders by observing their personal experience.

Nonetheless, sophisticated conclusions about the role of women in leadership positions may be drawn. Women must promote reform one step at a time in order to achieve social change and gender equality. Furthermore, leaders must overcome strong cultural barriers in the structures of the state to achieve gender equality in the future. These conclusions point to the need for a review of Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital and symbolic violence, which has dominated throughout the careers of leaders.

In particular, the Saudi Arabian government has a different role from western governments in changing women's positions and moving from a masculine, patriarchal culture to a more equal one. As discussed, throughout its various phases, feminism has been critical to initiating social change in the west. Also, there exist or have existed, strong feminist movements in some Islamic countries, such as Iran, Egypt, and Turkey (Karaca, 2009), which have been helpful in women's fight for social, political, economic and intellectual rights equal to those of men. However, the forces of change in Saudi society are different, as there is no clear tradition of women's activism (or even feminism). The Saudi constitution and law regulate the freedom of peaceful assembly and association and impose strict conditions on the establishment of private societies. At the same time, the constitution asserts the principle of equality between citizens in their rights and responsibilities, and the Saudi government has continued its efforts to improve the status of women and grant them equal rights. Consequently, women's increased involvement in the public sphere has created a different approach when attempting to change the patriarchy. For instance, according to the women interviewees, they are primarily supported

by the state, along with their families and Saudi role models, to rise up in the leadership hierarchy, which means that some gender roles are changing within Saudi Arabian society.

This study has examined how leaders hold solid principles and standards that are significant in achieving leadership success, such as their strength of character and their ability to adapt to particular contexts. Additionally, a leader's family and society determine their values, ethics and personal goals. Support from the family, particularly the father, has a bearing on the level of leadership ambition that the individual sets for themselves, as does their spouse's support, the balance between professional ambition and family commitment, and the tribal connection. Thus, values and the family interplay between society and the organisation. There is no clear boundary between the two; by understanding society and culture, as perceived by Saudi leaders, their roles in organisations becomes clearer.

This thesis has also identified features in Saudi society which were not covered in Bourdieu's analysis, such as extended family relations, the influence of tribes on family members and social obstacles such as *Wasta*, family pressure on individuals, and hidden social pressures to reach such positions. Accordingly, this thesis recognises that discrimination in the workplace (public gender discrimination) and in the home (private gender discrimination) in Saudi Arabia, which has been extensively criticised by postmodern feminism. Public patriarchy has reinforced private patriarchy, not eliminated or supplanted it. For instance, most Saudi women wear the veil in the public sphere, even though it is not obligatory. Moreover, according to the participants, a leader's experiences in the (public) workforce might differ according to their (private) family background and socio-economic circumstances. A leader's workplace experiences can depend on how strictly their family and society employ such gender roles, whether they are married and have children, whether they have extended family responsibilities and whether they hire domestic servants to help with household chores.

However, women in Saudi Arabia also experience numerous obstacles in reconciling the patriarchal implications of gender roles and interpretations of Sharia law with their individual aspirations for education and employment. With all of the recent government development, they still experience segregation in the workforce and are under-represented in certain professions and leadership roles, even when they have qualifications equal to or better than their male counterparts. Indeed, cultural obstacles hinder women's career progress and limit their rise up the leadership hierarchy. Furthermore, the state's role in initiating a shift in the masculine discourse and gender discrimination is obvious. But women's own contributions to

further changing patriarchal relations should be taken into account in order to achieve fundamental social change and overcome cultural limitations in the workplace and elsewhere. This process involves creating a new form of gender movement, which seeks to achieve change in a step-by-step manner. In other words, both genders need to maintain fair principles of justice and social manners within the public domain (e.g., respecting the national image, dealing professionally with counterparts) in order to gradually overcome strong cultural barriers and advance gender equality within the workforce. Moreover, men's behaviour towards gender equality must change. They need to understand that feminism and women's empowerment require their involvement in childcare and housework, not a preference for one category over another.

As a result, I believe that future generations of women leaders should cultivate a tolerant feminism that allows them to practise their equal rights while also distinguishing between gender traditions, without being overly patriarchal. Furthermore, if equal gender rights are exercised, a distinction should made between patriarchal tradition and Islam itself. New generations of Saudi leaders and officials must shift their perceptions and values about their position in society and reject male dominance in order to change Saudi Arabia's conservative culture from the bottom up.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Semi-structured interview questionnaire.

In the beginning can we please begin with yourself? Tell me about you?

1- (Whole set of demographics)

-Age (if you don't mind) - M-F/ Status - Family value - Ethnicity/City

-Background - Education - Work/Years of experience

- Current position - Career development - Society contexts.

- How does your family values may relate to your work/career?

- What kind of influence and impact has your family inspires you to reach this current role?

- Family, husband/ wife, society reaction towards being a leader now or in future and what's their reaction in the beginning?

- Criticism you most.

About your Career / Experience

2- Could you discuss further about your previous positions and the current? Where they related the (jobs) and how?

3- Would you describe your own self the same person? And what have you gained?
   - Could you take me through a typical Professional day of yours?
   - Which department and team are you leading? And how many employees are under your administration?
   - How to achieve your objectives?

4- What do you think about gender symbol in senior management position at present days? And why?

5- What are the existing changes at the current government vision 2030 as leader perspective? Provide examples from your past/present experience?

6- Being a leader to what extent, would you consider the talents, strategies, successes challenges and barriers that you have been facing until approaching these positions?

7- As leaders, how leaders motivate organisation, administration, managing? (Examples from the field) Leadership style?

8- Is leadership gender nature? Nurture

9- Leading through: social, cultural, changes, how is it related with gender?

- Vision 2030 advantages, disadvantages (personal views).

10- Expose the social and cultural dynamics, which influence on the gender experience? Through religion, beliefs, capital and cultural (education) social symbolic factors?

- Influence of Symbolic Capital / Symbolic Violence related to the context of Saudi Arabia? Describe symbolic Violence as a barrier? Being male or female?

11- Do you think there are more woman leadership positions? Because of the 2030 vision? If yes? Why?

- Gender efficient? If not why not?

12- In your own opinion and personal experience from your experience what the different between the male/female leadership?

13- Being a leader, how could you describe gender differentiation in the Saudi Context? Do you believe it's related to the gender differentiation worldwide (western societies)? How?

14- How would Success may be measured as leaders? How (examples) Developing innovative into success, how?

15- Do you believe that gender man/woman has an impact in your career as someone holds such responsibilities?

16- Identify the opportunities and prospective of success that may be achieved and (examples of future plans).

Appendix B: Ethical Approval

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Brunel University London

Kingston Lane

UxbridgeUB8 3PH

United Kingdom ***www.brunel.ac.uk***

19 June 2019

LETTER OF APPROVAL

Applicant: MISS MAY AL DUBAYAN

Reference: 16942-LR-Jun/2019-

19409-2

Dear MISS MAY AL DUBAYAN

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- ***The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.***

<u>Please note that</u>:

- ***Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.***
- ***The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.***

- ***Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.***
- ***The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.***
- ***You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.***

Professor David Gallear

Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social

Sciences Research Ethics Committee Brunel

University London.

Appendix C: Participant information sheet

Study title

Gender as Symbolic Capital and Symbolic Violence in Leadership: The Context of Saudi Leaders.

Invitation Paragraph

My name is May AL Dubayan. I am a researcher at Brunel Business School, at Brunel University in London. I am researching the role of Saudi leaders in organisations while observing their leadership obstacles and challenges, witnessing the current changes and development among the society, culture and investigating how holding such positions of dominance in business in organisations with functioning under certain circumstances and conditions.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study will expose the social and cultural dynamics which influence on the gender experiences of business leaders, both male and female, in the context of Saudi Arabia where conservatively gender is thought to apply only to women. Understanding how holding positions of dominance in different sectors and organisations under certain circumstances, experience work and life at the rigid patriarchy and family relations in the Saudi context. highlights the present scenario of what are the present obstacles that may causes resistance in women career development as leaders, and what are the current barriers for both gender in the leadership.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Participants are being chosen based on their high positions, and managerial level and their relevant experience in the field.

Do I have to take part?

As participation is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to be kept and be asked to sign a consent form later. If you decide to take part ***You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.***

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to participate, an interview would be arranged at a time and a place of your convenience (preferably your office or the organisation that you are working at) the interview will last 1 hour - 45 minutes approximately depending on what you would like to share and explore. During this interview I will be asking questions regarding your personal practices, work and experiences and how do you feel about the current position, why do you feel that way an what changed would you hope for future. I would like to know more about you and your personal data such as: age, educational background, family values.

Are there any lifestyle restrictions?

Face-to-face interviews would be much appreciated (Participant may act according their nature, the interview may be taken in English or Arabic if they feel more comfortable).

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

None as all of the personal info as name and identity is kept confidential.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Sharing your personal experience with everyone.

Learning from others knowledge and experiences.

What if something goes wrong? You may withdraw at any time during this interview.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which leaves the University authority premises will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be identified from it.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?

Your voice with my voice would be recorded through voice recorder, and then the equivalent part would be summarised and finalised into the project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The result of the study would be applied into my PhD thesis to be examined and later academic journals would be published related to the findings. A copy of the thesis would be given to you if you desire.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Self-funding.

Who has reviewed the study?

My supervisors.

Research Integrity

Brunel University London is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from the researchers during the course of this research.

Contact for further information and complaints

Researcher name: May A. AL Dubayan

Supervisor name : Dr . Selcuk Uyger**.**

Appendix D: Consent Form

Brunel University London

Gender as Symbolic Capital and Violence in Leadership: The Context of Saudi Leaders.

May Ahmed Al Dubayan.

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH THIS THESIS.

The participant (or their legal representative) should complete the whole of this sheet.

	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	☐	☐
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	☐	☐
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	☐	☐

[Where relevant] Who have you spoken to about the study?

Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?	☐	☐

Do you understand that:

- You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.
- You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing.
- Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your Rights.
- You can withdraw your data any time during the interview.

[Where relevant] I agree to my interview being Choose an item.	☐	☐
[Where relevant] I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published	☐	☐
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me	☐	☐
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in this study.	☐	☐

Signature of research participant:

Print name:

Date:

Witness Statement

I am satisfied that the above-named has given informed consent.

Witness signature:

Print name: Date: