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SAUDI ARABIAN WOMEN'S LIVED EXPERIENCES ATTAINING HIGHER EDUCATION
DEANSHIPS: PATHS, SUPPORTS, AND CHALLENGES

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College
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Sarah Abdullah Alhoian, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2020

Saudi Arabian women are underrepresented in higher education leadership positions. To take advantage of opportunities and have lasting effects on future generations of women, women must learn to attain leadership positions such as academic deanships. Deans are in a uniquely influential position as they engage in many significant aspects of educational leadership, such as academics, operations, and administrative aspects of colleges and universities.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the lived experiences of female deans to understand the specific supports and challenges they faced in attaining their leadership positions. These challenges and supports are embedded in the unique structural, cultural, and familial aspects of Saudi Arabia and its higher education system. This study helps to highlight what types of supports and challenges may lead to more females attaining the deanship. The research question guiding this study was: How do Saudi Arabian female deans experience attaining their leadership role?

This study was unique in that I interviewed women working in the position of the deanship, while other studies have examined different facets of general leadership. Specific structural, cultural, and familial aspects of higher education and how they are significant for female leaders to attain the deanship have been largely underrepresented in academic studies.

I used a phenomenological approach to study ten female deans, and I interviewed them using open-ended questions from five regions in Saudi Arabia.

Through the data analysis process, I developed nine significant themes: (a) path to the deanship; (b) structural supports; (c) structural challenges; (d) cultural supports; (e) cultural challenges; (f) family supports; (g) family challenges; (h) other challenges; (i) other supports. Under the theme of *the path to the deanship*, I found that female deans believe having significant academic and administrative leadership experiences, serving on service committees, and working on academic accreditation increases their chances of becoming a dean. Under the theme of *structural challenges*, I found that they faced unique barriers, including the criteria for selection, centralization, and lack of authority for decision making. Under the theme of *structural supports*, the women deans received external and internal leadership training prepared by their universities or the Ministry of Education that allowed them to engage with leaders of different levels at various universities, and who demonstrated various leadership styles. Other structural supports included the advantages of all-women colleges and universities. Another structural supports is succession training. Under the theme of *culture supports*, deans described a variety of supports, including the absence of a gender wage gap. Other findings under the theme of *other supports*, included (a) the Saudi's new *Vision 2030* governmental policy for women's empowerment, and (b) personal characteristics and experiences. Characteristics included the ability to mingle and work with others. Experiences included excellent relationships and active mentoring. There are more challenges and supports identified in this study that could guide policymakers in supporting female deans.

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Sarah Abdullah Alhoian

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has made great strides in education and empowerment for the country's women. In particular, from 2005-2015, King Abdullah initiated reforms in education and government, specifically for women. These reforms included developments in study abroad scholarships, appointments to government councils, and the right to run for office in municipal elections (Al Ghamdi, 2016). The country's new *Vision 2030* program has many goals to improve education and the economy in KSA, with one goal to increase the percentage of women in the workforce from 22% to 30% by 2030 (Pritchett & AlKudair, 2017). These goals have had effects on the country's growing institutions of higher education. For example, in years past, there were restrictions on women's leadership mobility in higher education. But female leaders in Saudi Arabia today are slowly becoming more prevalent in higher education (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). However, despite the increasing leadership of women in KSA, it is still a phenomenon in its infancy. In a survey of over 300 companies in KSA, 52% of them reported having less than 1% of women in a leadership role (Pritchett & AlKudair, 2017). In addition, many companies only recently started hiring women after 2010 (Pritchett & AlKudair, 2017). Specific to academics, according to the 2016 World Bank report, only 6.1% of Saudi women have academic leadership positions, such as the position of dean (Al Ghamdi, 2016). Even the Saudi Minister of Education wrote that women with the highest academic qualifications still have voices that remain quiet when it comes to their participation in the development of higher education (Al-Issa, 2010).

In nearly all KSA colleges and universities, males and females are separated, and most of the female-led institutions of higher education are still overseen by male leaders (Al Ghamdi,

2016). An exception to this norm is Princess Nora University (PNU), the world's largest women's university (Ajbaili, 2011). Here, women hold many of the top administrative positions. In fact, of the 27 dean positions at PNU, only one is held by a male (Almansour & Kempner, 2015). This is unique compared to similar universities in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries.

Because KSA functions under Sharia (Islamic) Law, there are social, cultural, and legal norms that directly affect women's ability to lead. Despite some Western beliefs and stereotypes, women in KSA have many rights to education, property, and other aspects of life. For example, women now make up over 56% of all Saudi university students (Almansour & Kempner, 2015). The number of women enrolled in a bachelor's programs increased by three times between 1995 and 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2011). Additionally, Hamdan (2005) found that over 16,000 businesses are owned by women and that women own 40% of private wealth in the country. In 2000, a woman was appointed as assistant undersecretary of Education Affairs, the highest position ever held by a female in government until that time (Hamdan, 2005).

On the other hand, some traditional beliefs and stereotypes serve to restrict women's upward mobility in the workplace in KSA, creating challenges for female workers. For instance, the original purpose of education for women in KSA was to prepare them to be mothers and wives or to prepare them for traditionally female jobs such as teaching or nursing (Hamdan, 2005). Even today, women are pressured by society to work in the healthcare or education fields if they are working outside the home (Pritchett & AlKudair, 2017). Also, because women could not drive until 2017, transportation for work was difficult and women had to rely on male relatives or private drivers. With the recent legal changes to this, women will need to learn how to drive, but it is likely that more independence will make transportation to and from work much

easier. A cultural challenge for women includes the fact that male guardians are able to permanently remove girls from school at their discretion (Hamdan, 2005). Other challenges include the inability for some women to read and speak English, the status quo of male senior leadership, and the negative stereotypes that persist about women's leadership abilities.

Examining similar difficulties for women in other Middle Eastern countries is also helpful for understanding the challenges facing women leaders in KSA education. For example, Al-Jaradat (2014) summarized the challenges that women face in educational leadership in Jordan, including organizational challenges, under-empowerment challenges, cultural challenges, self-challenges, and physical or technical challenges. He found that these challenges directly impact women in academic leadership in KSA as well.

Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern institutions of higher education are not alone in these challenges. In fact, in the top 200 universities in the world, only 17% are led by women (Bothwell, 2016). In China in 2007, only 4.5% of university presidents were women (Wang, Yue, & Yu, 2013). Additionally, across all 27 countries that were part of the European Union in 2012, only 10% of university presidents were female (Peterson, 2015). Standing out as somewhat of an anomaly, Sweden has had one of the highest rates of female university presidents with 43% in 2010 (Peterson, 2015). While this number is much higher than other countries, one should remember that this still means less than half of all the country's college presidents are female. The United States also has an underrepresentation of females in academic leadership positions. In 2016, only 30% of university presidents were women (American Council on Education, 2017). So, while women are increasingly beginning to hold leadership positions in colleges and universities, they are still underrepresented both in the U.S. and on a

global scale. The focus of this study will center on how females become deans in colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia.

Female Deans

Deans in higher education are in a uniquely important position as they engage in many of the significant aspects of educational leadership. For instance, deans take part in the academic, operational, and administrative aspects of the university or college.

Expectations for deans have developed to include understanding how all their decisions impact the faculty, students, and future of the college. In fact, Hacifazlioglu (2010) notes that the deanship has become as crucial as the presidency of a university since they are the "bridge between those in upper and lower administrative positions" (p. 2259). Additionally, the dean position is more encompassing than other positions, such as department chairs, since the dean must have provided many years of work with sacrifices in academic, professional, and personal life in order to undergo complete socialization into the university or college (Hacifazlioglu, 2010).

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Problem Statement

</div>

Historically, women have had fewer leadership roles in higher education compared to men throughout the world (Tuttle, 1996; Hoeritz, 2013). Women are underrepresented in academic leadership positions and face numerous challenges, which prevent them from becoming academic leaders (Scales, 2011).

Even in contemporary times, women still often face a "chilly" environment on many campuses (Tuttle, 1996). This is an issue around the world. Nguyen (2012) notes similar findings about women in academic leadership in countries such as the U.S., Australia, the UK, China, and Malaysia. Nguyen's (2012) own study found similar issues in Vietnam. In a 2009

study, Dominici, Fried, and Zeger (2009) found that women are still underrepresented in

academic leadership positions and struggle with such challenges as a lack of reward and

recognition for their work, as well as the sexism of networking in higher education.

With further difficulties of work and family conflicts, poor work relations, stereotypes,

and lack of leadership skills and training, women have a great deal to overcome in order to take

their place as leaders in higher education (Ballard, 2010; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009;

Hough, 2010). In particular, only about 36% of deans in the U.S. are female (Hoeritz, 2013).

These numbers are even smaller in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where women have only

recently acquired more educational and leadership opportunities on a grander scale in the midst

of cultural barriers. According to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), only about 1% of

women in GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, hold senior leadership positions (Alsubaie &

Jones, 2017). Additionally, Table 1 shows recent figures of female leaders in higher education in

Saudi Arabia.

Table 1

Saudi Arabia's Female Leader in Higher Education (Ministry of Education, 2017)

Position	Number of Women
Director of University (President)	1 (of 34)
Vice President	12 (of 140)
Dean	61 (of 391)
Deputy Dean	228 (of 770)
Total	302 (of 1,335)

Saudi Arabia is a country that more obviously reveals these challenges since it maintains its traditionally masculine society, which still tends to limit women's progress in some ways. Despite this, more women than men make up the student population in Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, 2017). For master's degrees, more women are studying education, human studies, and nursing than men. For Ph.D. studies, more women are studying human studies, social studies, law, economics, and community services than men (Ministry of Education, 2011). Increasingly, women are being appointed to government positions and leadership positions in education. For instance, in November of 2017, the Shoura Council discussed allowing women to hold diplomatic leadership positions abroad. Noura Al-Fayez was the first Saudi women to have a Cabinet-level position, and Fatimah Baeshen as the first spokesperson for the Saudi Embassy in Washington D.C. (Estimo, 2017).

Review of Studies

Studies have shown that women in various countries face many obstacles in attaining administrative positions, such as that of dean. For example, Dominici, Fried, and Zeger (2009) found that women's paths to leadership in higher education are often slow, blocked, and less attractive to women overall. Exclusion from networking and unequal rewards and recognition for women in these positions also adds to their lack of success (Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009). Likewise, in a study of 183 female administrators including deans, Hough (2010) found that problems such as a lack of networking opportunities, a lack of knowledge of institutional culture, a lack of professional development are all barriers to higher leadership positions. Even a "queen bee syndrome" in which women fail to support other women was regarded as a barrier (Hough, 2010).

Ballard (2010) looked at four individual women in leadership positions to reveal their challenges in attaining their positions. The main findings included the fact that women usually take longer to reach higher positions of leadership in higher education and that women are usually "propelled into it by others" rather than seeking the job successfully themselves (Ballard, 2010, p. 21). Gender was found to negatively affect administrator experiences, and female administrators encountered difficulties in their leadership, such as a lack of respect and more stress (Ballard, 2010). Other challenges to female advancement in higher education were marriage and family responsibility conflicts that occur with career expectations, gender norms, sex discrimination, the "good old boy network," and a lack of mentors and role models (Ballard, 2010). Findings show that stereotypes about gender, socialization, organizational structure, and women's status within a country can all lead to underrepresentation in leadership in education in places such as the United States (Ballard, 2010; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Hough, 2010; Madsen, 2012).

Other researchers have attempted to discover the factors that positively influence success for female administrators in education. For example, Sherman, Beaty, Crum, and Peters (2010) examined four women's experiences as university faculty and found that action-oriented mentoring is helpful for increasing their educational leadership skills. Likewise, McNae (2010) found that starting leadership programs earlier when women are still in high school has positive effects on their later leadership development. Other studies have shown that certain types of leadership styles, such as transformational, have been found to be successful for female leaders (Antonaros, 2010).

As noted by Al Ghamdi (2016), many researchers have been wary to approach the subject of female empowerment for Saudi women due to KSA's Sharia Law. Also, researchers have

noted that women's issues in KSA are obvious but difficult to address through individual actions in such a traditionally structured society and that women are learning to use "legitimate language" to attain their goals and spread their messages (Hamdan, 2005, p. 46). This "language" is one that is careful to remain culturally and religiously appropriate so that men cannot challenge the women as easily (Hamdan, 2005). Thus, these topics are still somewhat new and delicate in the culture, making it more challenging to discuss them in an appropriate and well-received manner. However, as more women become educated and able to discuss these matters with knowledge and legitimacy, it will become easier for women to address these issues in forthcoming ways.

Despite challenges, there have been studies to address female empowerment in Saudi Arabia at certain universities. Amani Hamdan (2005) examined the socioeconomic and political conditions to understand women in Saudi society with a focus on the field of education. Almansour and Kempner (2015) studied Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University in a case study examining the cultural and evolving educational issues for women. These studies found that women still face institutional, cultural, and economic challenges in education.

Deficiency Statement

While there are some studies about the lack of females in higher education leadership (American Council on Education, 2017; Bothwell, 2016; Caton, 2007; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Hough, 2010; Wang, Yue & Yu, 2013), about the barriers they face (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth & Dighrir, 2015; Al Ghamdi, 2016; Alhajjuj, 2016; Al-Jaradat, 2014; Almaki, Silong, Idris & Wahat, 2016; Ballard, 2010; Hamdan, 2005; Pritchett & AlKudair, 2017), and about important leadership skills (Aldawsari, 2016; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alomair, 2015; Antonaros, 2010; Ballenger, 2010; Braun, 2014; Curry, 2000; Unin, 2014) required to become leaders in higher

education, there are few studies that link all of these ideas. Moreover, there are no qualitative studies that bring together issues of culture, family, and structure in relation to female deans in Saudi Arabia.

Ballard (2010) found that within educational administration research, "the female voice and the female experience has been largely left out…" (p. 16). Braun (2014) found, "there has been no comprehensive study on how… recent generational trends are influencing the feminist leadership practice of women administrators who are at the mid-level, aspiring to senior-level, or in senior-level positions in higher education" (p. 6-7). Other studies have shown that there are many barriers, such as a lack of networking and the work/family balance (Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Hough, 2010). However, a comprehensive study that specifically focuses on women becoming deans and all of these aligning ideas does not exist.

Even more importantly, there are few studies to directly examine females becoming academic leadership in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As noted by Al Ghamdi (2016), many researchers have been wary to approach the subject of female empowerment for Saudi women due to KSA's Sharia Law. The cultural and political beliefs in the country can make this discussion sensitive. Thus, connections between the specific structural, cultural, and family aspects of higher education in Saudi Arabia and how they are significant for female leaders have been largely underrepresented in academic studies. However, with more women becoming educated and attempting to become leaders in Saudi Arabian universities, it is imperative that the obstacles are discussed and the supports are discovered and attempted.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this research study is to understand the lived experiences of female deans in Saudi Arabia to ascertain the specific challenges they have faced and supports they have had

in attaining their leadership positions. These challenges and supports are directly embedded in the unique structural, cultural, and familial aspects of Saudi Arabia and its higher education system. This study will help highlight what types of experiences and supports may lead to more successful female deans in KSA academia.

Research Questions

The research question guiding this study is: How did Saudi Arabian female deans experience attaining their leadership role?

Sub-questions include:

1. What cultural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

2. What familial challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

3. What structural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

4. What other challenges did the women experience?

5. What other supports did the women experience?

Conceptual Framework and Narrative

Saudi Culture

Greatest Challenges
- Culture
- Family
- Institutional structure

Potential Female Deans

Female Deans

Greatest Supports
- Culture
- Family
- Institutional structure
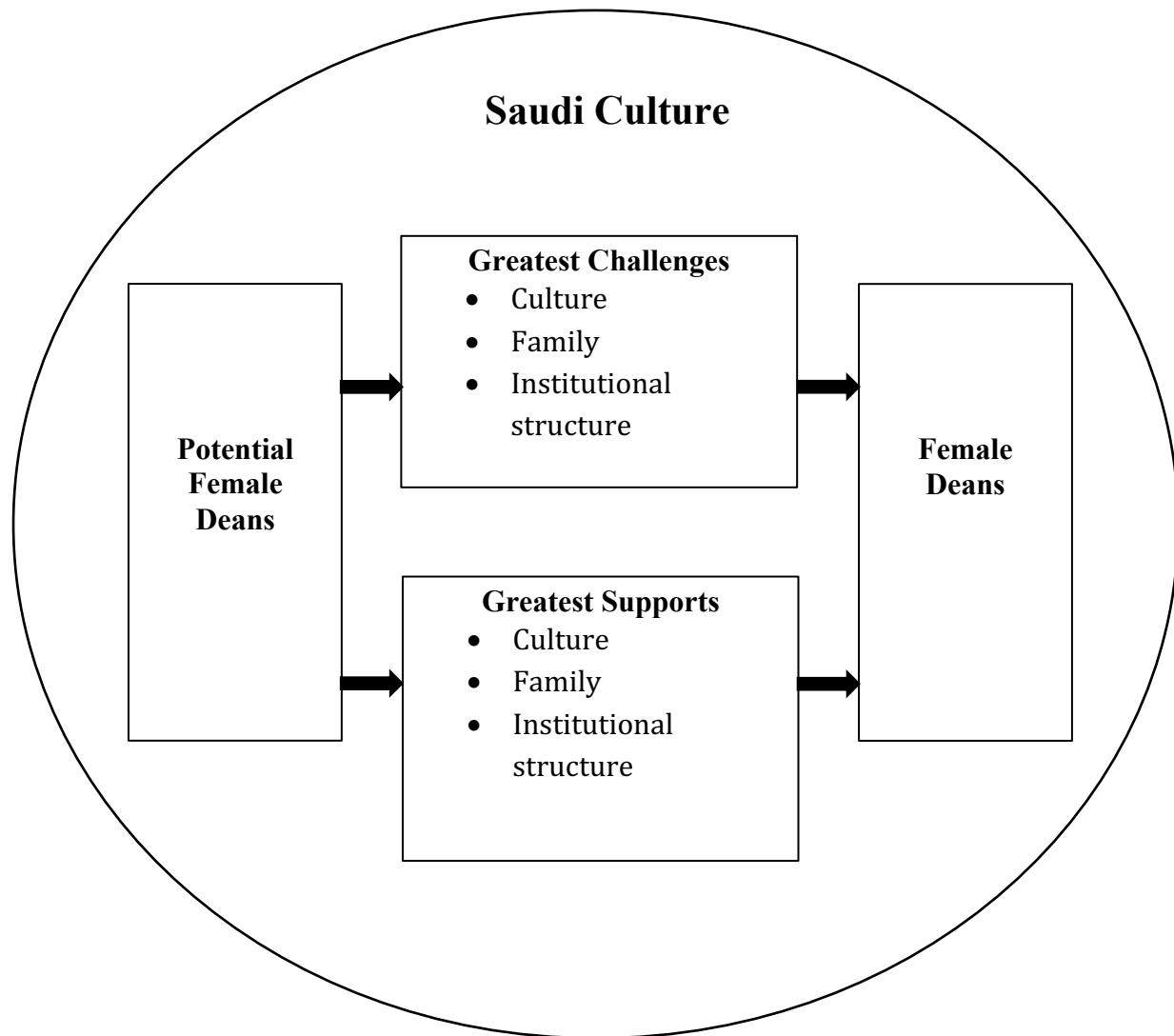
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

The framework depicted in Figure 1 summarizes the major ideas surrounding this research including the challenges and supports potential female deans face in order to become a dean. There are several challenges and supports that underlie becoming a female dean in Saudi Arabia. This research will narrow the focus on challenges and supports that are specific to the

culture, family, and institutional structure for the participants. Examining these challenges and supports will offer insight into what Saudi women must overcome and what specific supports can yield success in higher education leadership.

Many challenges have been described in women's attempts to become academic leaders. For instance, challenges include the process in which how deans are selected for their positions, the overall cultural biases and stereotypes about female leaders, and family obligations or the "work-life balance" that so many females struggle with around the globe. These challenges illuminate areas in which females need support and need to find methods to overcome difficulties in their journey to educational leadership. Further challenges include the women's relationships in the workplace, their own leadership styles, and their knowledge and training to prepare them in their work (Alsubaihi, 2016). If any of these areas are lacking, it can make it more difficult for women to become leaders (Alsubaihi, 2016).

Looking at the supports female deans have experienced in attaining their positions will provide insight and clues for future female deans' success. Supports in the form of leadership training, specific types of leadership styles, mentors, and family support have all been identified as helpful for female deans in Western studies (AAUW, 2016). By delving more deeply into the specific kinds of supports related to the work environment and participants' personal attributes, I will discover the most crucial provisions for female success in academic leadership with the culture of Saudi Arabia taken into account.

One must have an understanding of the overall culture of Saudi Arabia before delving into women's leadership positions in higher education. There are unique cultural customs and values about gender and work in Saudi Arabia that greatly affect this issue. For example, the male guardianship system in the country means that many critical life decisions for women are

made by their male guardians, including the decisions to travel or study abroad. Women are customarily homemakers who are expected to raise children and take care of the home as their primary responsibilities. Cultural stereotypes are also present in Saudi Arabia. For instance, the idea that women are not able to lead as well as men is still a common idea (Al Ghamdi, 2016). These, in addition to many other cultural norms, greatly affect women's ability to work or become an educational leader.

Related to culture, family dynamics in Saudi Arabia and how they may affect females' abilities to become leaders are significant. As previously stated, women have largely been expected to be homemakers raising children in Saudi Arabia, so their attempts to further their education and work outside of the home can be greatly affected by the support or lack of support of their family members. Because of the male guardianship system, a woman would need the support of her husband or other male guardians in order to study and become a dean. Having children early in life, as many Saudi women do, can also affect their career paths. Due to the time, money, and efforts in becoming a dean, a woman's family impacts her ability in this area.

Finally, the structural aspects of educational institutions in Saudi Arabia can also pose as both challenges and supports for aspiring female deans. Women can have difficulty with access to certain information and opportunities due to the gender segregation in public institutions, including universities. Also, even once a woman does become a professor or dean in these institutions, she must receive permission from male counterparts before making any critical decisions (Al Ghamdi, 2016). It is easy to see how structures such as this are challenging for women. On the other hand, some structural supports for women have been put into place, especially in recent years. For instance, Saudi Arabia's *Vision 2030* plan includes increasing the number of women in the workforce and increasing their presence in government decision-

making councils (Al Ghamdi, 2016; Pritchett & AlKudair, 2017). Also, the Minister of Education, Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Issa, wrote a book in 2010 in which he expressed his support for more women in the Ministry (Al-Issa, 2010). He acknowledged that although women make up a higher percentage of university output, this has still not led to more leadership positions and decision-making roles for women in education. He felt that the Ministry of Education should hire more women, and he followed through on this by appointing fourteen women as university agents in the Ministry of Education in 2018 (Okaz, 2018).

Methods Overview

A qualitative, phenomenological approach is the most appropriate for this research. By examining the lived experiences of female deans in Saudi Arabian colleges and universities, I shed light on the challenges and supports these women have had in pursuit of their careers.

A sample of 10 female deans were drawn from colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia for this study. Through interviews, I asked participants to respond to questions that were directly related to the overall research questions. I wrote an interview protocol that checked for trustworthiness through pilot testing. These questions included information about structural, familial, and cultural challenges and supports the participants had in their career aspirations.

In analysis of the data, trustworthiness was addressed by having peer reviews, code-recode and rich descriptions. Also, using memo-ing, coding, and theme generation led to useful conclusions about the data.

Significance of Study

By focusing on the unique aspects of the culture, family, and institutional structures in Saudi Arabia, this study can further our understanding about the challenges and supports for aspiring female deans. Those in leadership positions in higher education have a great deal of

power and responsibility; as such, it is important that women are included in this influence. As noted by Dominici, Fried, and Zeger (2009), deans are central in the ability of a university to become diverse and to undergo new approaches to recruitment of both students and professors. With such responsibility, it is imperative that women have the ability to obtain the position of dean. As of now, Saudi women are underrepresented as deans and in other positions in higher education, so finding ways to overcome this underrepresentation is important to the success of women and future leaders in the country. In Saudi Arabia in particular, women are quickly becoming a more educated, able resource for the country. In order to take advantage of opportunities and have lasting effects on future generations of women, it is imperative that women have access to leadership positions such as academic deans.

Chapter 1 Closure

This chapter provided an introduction to this study. It described the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership on a global scale and the specific purposes of this research to examine the lived experiences of Saudi Arabia's female deans and their challenges and supports in becoming a dean in relation to structural, familial, and cultural, and aspects. This chapter also included the conceptual framework that inform the research as well as a brief overview of the past research about this issue. Finally, this chapter provided an overview of the methods and significance of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides an overview of relevant studies about the challenges female deans face as well as the supports that have helped them in acquiring their positions in academic leadership. First, a brief history of female academic leadership and education in Saudi Arabia provides important background to understand the nuances of being a female professional in Saudi Arabia. Next, a discussion of the progress in female academic leadership in Saudi Arabia provides more context. Third, understanding the role of the academic dean is necessary to appreciate the challenges in becoming a dean generally as well as specifically for women. Fourth, examining the structure of the female dean's workplace as well as theory connected to the Spreitzer Model of Thriving at Work (Spreitzer et al., 2005) helps provide a lens through which to view and understand the challenges of Saudi female leaders. Fifth, understanding family relationships and their challenges and supports specific to Saudi Arabia provides further context. Lastly, understanding the Saudi culture is important to begin addressing the challenges of becoming a female dean in a unique culture and the stereotypes around the women in workplace. Broadly, examining these specific challenges and supports that females around the world face in becoming deans will either support or conflict with the findings of this study.

Brief History of Female Education in Saudi Arabia

Education for women in Saudi Arabia has gone through many different changes over the past several decades. As time has passed, women have been gaining more access to education and employment opportunities. After Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932, education was limited to private tutoring in the homes of wealthy individuals especially for the purposes of learning the Quran (Aldawsari, 2016). Finally, in 1953, public schools opened, but they were only available

for boys (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). In the early 1950s, King Faisal and his wife lobbied to include education for girls as well, but this was met with resistance from religious scholars who felt that it was immoral and would destroy the family (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). It was not until 1956 that the first private, primary school for girls opened, and the first state -run school was begun in 1960. (Aldawsari, 2016; Yizraeli, 2012). These concessions occurred only after reassurances that schooling for girls would focus on Islam and a purpose of making women into good wives and mothers or nurses and teachers. By the end of the 1990s, Saudi Arabia had established schools for girls throughout the country. Even though the number of institutions for girls was finally beginning to increase, the equity of education between males and females was still not established. For instance, schools for boys were larger with more extracurricular activities offered and higher quality curricula (Aldawsari, 2016). On the other hand, girls'classes included learning how to cook, knit, dress, and care for children to prepare them for family life as opposed to a career (Aldawsari, 2016).

In 1961, the first secondary school to allow females to enroll was King Saud University (Alhumaidhi, 2015). Also, in 1970, the first women's college opened in order to train female teachers, and, at this time, education policy mandated that men and women have equal rights to education (AAUW, 2016; Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Dighrir, 2015). However, even though women administered the daily operations of the school, it was managed by male administrators from off campus. It was not until 2002 that the Ministry of Education took over administration of female education as it had previously been administered by the Department of Religious Guidance (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017).

Currently, there are 24 public universities, and most of them accept females while keeping the gender segregation tradition (Al Alhareth et al., 2015). Women have attended

segregated campuses in all universities in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia's culture, most schools and public spaces do not allow men and women to be in the same classes or areas. An exception to this tradition is King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), a research university that was established in 2009. KAUST is the only co-educational university in Saudi Arabia, and it was established as an attempt to modernize the society and meet the need for more fields of scientific research.   However, throughout the country male faculty are not allowed to teach in female universities.

The government has been encouraging women's education by establishing hundreds of schools and universities that are not just for the young generations but that also offer literacy courses to older women in all districts across the country. In fact, 56.6% of university students in Saudi Arabia are women (Almansour & Kempner, 2015). Additionally, the Ministry of Higher Education has been sending many Saudi women to continue their studies abroad. (Hamdan, 2005).   The Princess Nora Bint Abdul Rahman University offers programs in science that were before limited to male students, so the situation regarding women's higher education opportunities has continued to improve. King Abdullah had an active role in supporting women's progress in Saudi Arabia. (Alhareth et al., 2015). In 2005, The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) provided the means to enroll in the best world universities to continue higher studies for both men and women. These graduates are expected to come back with their experiences, dreams, and aspirations to bring positive change in the country.

Progress in Female Academic Leadership in Saudi Arabia

In recent years, the Saudi government took several actions to promote the expansion of women's status in leadership. For example, King Abdullah has supported public recognition of women in medical, business, and finance fields as well as providing women with more

opportunities to participate in government (Almansour & Kempner, 2015). Also, King Abdullah allowed women to participate in the Shura Council, the Islamic parliament that proposes and interprets laws. As of 2017, there are 150 members of the Shoura Council, and 30 of these members are women (Estimo, 2017). These women now have the opportunity to vote and run for office in municipal elections as well (Almansour & Kempner, 2015; Al Ghamdi, 2016). In even more recent changes, King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud issued an order to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia on September 26, 2017.   He also set up a high-level committee of ministries (internal affairs, finance, labor and social development) to study the arrangements for enforcing the new order to take effect in June of 2018. The hope is that this new policy will improve the economy of the country by expanding women's participation in the workplace. Without the requirement to be driven to work by male relatives or hired drivers, women will have more freedom to work effectively. While the king and the government of Saudi Arabia have been making changes to provide even more support of females, many of the country's people fear these changes because of their culture and their traditions.

Specific to education, King Abdullah appointed the first woman deputy minister of girls' K-12 education in 2009, a role that had been managed by a male since 1960 (Almansour & Kempner, 2016). Also, women are working more and more as both faculty and administrators in Saudi universities (Al Ghamdi, 2016). In 2018, the Minister of Education appointed fourteen women to leadership roles in the Ministry of Education which "reinforces the participation of Saudi women in decision-making positions at the university level...[in the] highest academic and administrative position that Saudi women hold in public universities" (Okaz, 2018).

Despite changes in favor of female education and leadership, only 6.1% of women in Saudi Arabia have educational leadership positions in higher education (Al Ghamdi, 2016).

Males have historically held leadership in higher education and continue to do so. According to Bilimoria, Joy, and Liang (2008), organizations as a whole must assess and examine their culture, systems, and practices that are embedded in the foundation of the institution in order to allow for more gender equality. Thomas, Bierema, and Landau (2004) describe higher education as an environment that has offered only limited access for women leaders and administrators due to the culture and resulting lack progress of women in leadership roles. Women have certain types of functions that are considered to be female roles and are present primarily in lower ranks of administrative positions. Thomas et al. (2004) contend that the prominence of men in higher level and managerial roles decreases opportunities for women, resulting in fewer career and advancement opportunities. These organizational findings could be seen as even more true in the conservative culture of Saudi Arabia where males still hold a majority of educational leadership positions.

Dean, Bracken, and Allen (2009) defined the organizational culture as that of the values and beliefs that members share about exercises and relationship in the organization. In Saudi Arabia, the negative stereotype that women are less confident and competent in leadership positions is still prevalent (Al Ghamdi, 2016). Relationships between males and females in leadership are still based on male privilege. For instance, female leaders in many universities still must receive permission from male supervisors before making critical decisions (Alsubaihi, 2016). The effect of organizational culture on the abilities of leaders is widespread. Without the shared trust and respect of colleagues, leaders will have difficulty in being effective. Ballenger, (2010) argues that the rate of change has slowed in attaining women in senior leadership due to the glass ceiling and the exclusionary practices of women from the leadership. In his study, he also focused on exploring the cultural practices and structural forms in higher education against

women. In his view, a cultural perspective includes the "culture, ideology, and policies [that are] relevant in explaining women's limited access in attaining high-level positions" (Ballenger, 2010, p. 6). Also, the structural perspective concerns the nature of organizations such as the leadership styles used and bureaucratic policies (Ballenger, 2010).

So, while there has been some notable progress in female leadership, there are still many difficulties to address. When leaders attempt to inspire cultural changes, the culture may exercise its impact on the leader to either help or hinder the leader's changes. By examining which leadership practices are most effective in helping mitigate these issues, positive changes can occur.

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The Academic Dean Position

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Defining the Dean's Role in Higher Education

There are many studies that have described the roles and responsibilities of higher education deans (Hendrickson, et al., 2013; Bright & Richards, 2001; Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009). These studies have described how deans need to develop their skills in order to understand the weaknesses of their higher education institutions and to make improvements in those areas. According to Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, and Dorman (2013), an academic dean serves in a midlevel leadership position as a "bridge" between faculty and the chief academic officer (p. 279). Academic deans have a unique position in the administration as the connection among department chairpersons, faculty, staff, students, and university leadership. In this position, a dean has many varied responsibilities. The responsibilities and authority of a dean differ depending on the college or university, but, in general, deans' roles are very similar (Krahenbuhl, 2004). For instance, deans must be able to (a) collaborate with faculty and other administrators, (b) communicate a clear vision to students and faculty, (c) evaluate staff

performance fairly, (d) manage budgets, and (e) plan for endowments (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

Additionally, deans must not only advocate for their departments, but they must also confront

any problems and plan for improvements (Hendrickson, et al, 2013). As a participant in a broad

range of institutional discussions and decision making, deans must maintain perspective on the

entire field of education and research, including different kinds of service, various academic

programs, and supported research (Buller, 2007). A useful analogy put forth by Bright and

Richards (2001) compares the deanship responsibilities to a map or a puzzle. Like a map, the

dean's job is filled with useful information that they must explore, develop, and traverse. In

order to do his or her job, a dean must know where there may be possible roadblocks, rough

terrain, or good areas to build upon (Bright & Richards, 2001). Likewise, similar to a crossword

puzzle, the dean's job must be completed within a framework of constraints such as fiscal,

organizational, or political limits (Bright & Richards, 2001, p. 5).

King Saud University provided a guideline of describing the roles and responsibilities of

the president, vice president, dean, and department chairperson to support and promote the

highest quality of education. In this guideline, deans are directly responsible for administrative

and financial matters as well as academic affairs. Specifically, deans help to implement

regulations, work toward achieving university goals, pass Board decisions on to subordinates,

supervise the academic process, plan and prepare budgets, recruit faculty, approve transfers of

students, and many other various responsibilities (King Saud University, n.d.).

The Path to Becoming a Dean

According to Bright and Richards (2001), there is no best or clear way to become a dean

(p. 12). Depending on the type of department or college of the deanship, deans may need to be

creative and inspiring as for a college of fine arts or industrial with examples of funded research

as for a college of engineering (Bright & Richards, 2001). Often, the most direct way to become a dean is to serve as a department chair. As a chair, an individual learns many of the skills and completes many of the responsibilities he or she would need as a dean. For instance, department chairs must also work closely in collaborating with peers and negotiate with students, faculty, and administrators (Bright & Richards, 2001). Other ways to become a dean include serving in various positions within a school that provide experience with curriculum, program review, faculty searches, committee work, budgets, and so forth (Bright & Richards, 2001). Professional work outside of academia can also be helpful, such as working as a nurse before becoming a dean for a school of nursing (Bright & Richards, 2001). In doing this work, an individual is showing that he or she is willing to put in the groundwork and has valuable experiences to support further work as a dean.

Of course, cultural differences in various countries can make the path toward becoming a dean more or less arduous. In a study about male deans, Alsuood and Youde (2018) wrote that deans are appointed by the Ministry of Education based on recommendations of the university's President, who is appointed by the King. While there are no specific studies about becoming a female dean in Saudi Arabia, a study by Unin (2014) of six female deans in Malaysia has some possible cultural parallels. The social context for the Malay women was described as a "patriarchal and hierarchical" society which are terms that some would use to describe Saudi Arabian society as well. As in Saudi Arabia, leadership positions such as deans have mostly favored men in the past, and women must "work against the grain of social norms and values" in their attempts to gain leadership positions (Unin, 2014, p. 655). As described in Unin's (2014) study, the path toward becoming a dean for Malay women is often less about formal training and more about learning through experiences in the workplace. This "informal learning" includes

self-reflection and being motivated to learn whether intentionally or unintentionally, and overall the women's paths are described as "learning to lead as learning to learn" (Unin, 2014, p. 656). In other words, the female deans needed to learn how to balance their roles as both females in a traditional society and as professionals while also learning how to be a leader.

Structural Challenges and Supports

It is helpful to examine the structural elements in Saudi Arabia that affect women's academic positions. A structural perspective is more related to the specific organizational structure of the work instead of gender or the roles of individuals (Timmers, Willemsen & Tijdens, 2010). For instance, most public places, including schools, are structurally segregated by gender in Saudi Arabia. If female students have a male professor in a university, they can connect with him only through nonphysical means such as through email, phone, or video conferencing. The structure of higher academia in Saudi Arabian education directly affects gender roles. Often, female workers in these institutions must receive permission from male counterparts before making any critical decisions (Al Ghamdi, 2016).   Coordination and integration between male and female sections of universities are minimized leading to their experiences as "isolated islands" (Al-Issa, 2010). The overall organizational structure in Saudi Arabia is highly influenced by the tribal, collectivist culture leading to strict ideas about hierarchy and a lack of flexibility (Alsuood & Youde, 2018).

These issues of hierarchy and power within a university are not limited to female deans. In a study of 15 male deans in Saudi Arabia, Alsuood and Youde (2018) found that six of the deans felt the relationship with higher management was not healthy or supportive. Furthermore, when it comes to the hiring process, seven of the 15 deans felts that there are no efficient, reliable criteria for selecting deans (Alsuood & Youde, 2018).

The Minister of Education himself has noted that despite more female students in universities, there have not been enough organizational changes to allow for more influential participation of women in decision-making within Saudi universities. Also, certain university leadership positions are still not even open to women, such as the deanship of scientific colleges (Al-Issa, 2010). Government policies and structures are undergoing constant changes causing the very culture to change in certain ways as well. These changes will most assuredly affect female leadership in academia in the future.

Spreitzer Model of Thriving at Work

A helpful lens through which to view the challenges for Saudi female leaders is through Spreitzer's Model of Thriving at Work (Spreitzer, et al, 2005; Spreitzer, 2008). Since the culture and or organizational structure of Saudi Arabia are so impactful on female education and leadership, Spreitzer's socially embedded model is a particularly insightful perspective to highlight this research. The central premise of Spreitzer's work is that there are certain work environments in which individuals are more likely to thrive. For instance, environments with more access to opportunities, information, support, and resources all lead to more leadership opportunities in the workplace (Spreitzer, 2008). In a system such as higher education, empowerment for employees comes from such structural, social, and psychological aspects as participative decision-making, an open flow of information, decentralized organizational structures, self-determination, and feelings of self-efficacy and competence (Spreitzer, 2008).

Spreitzer (2005) describes thriving at work as "the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work" (pp. 538). Additionally, others describe thriving at work as being productive, feeling valued, and being open to challenges (Spreitzer, et al, 2005). When related to women's experiences in Saudi

higher education institutions, one can see where some of the structural and cultural aspects of

these institutions may make it more difficult for aspiring and current female deans to "thrive".

According to the Model (see Figure 2), success at work is dependent on several factors such as:

(a) participation in decision-making, (b) broad acquisition of information, (c) trust and respect in

the workplace, and (d) control over resources important for one's work (Spreitzer, et al, 2005).
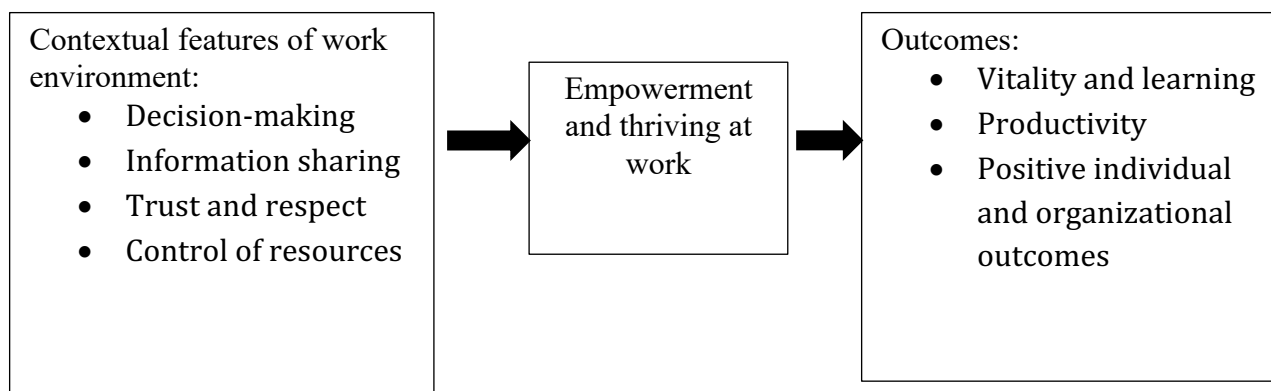
Figure 2. Spreitzer's Model of Thriving at Work (Spreitzer et al, 2005).

In looking further into each of these elements, it can be easier to understand which of the

specific elements are challenges for women in Saudi Arabia in attaining higher positions in

education.   For instance, the fact that many female deans do not have direct control over

resources for their work and must first ask male supervisors for access is one example of how a

missing element of Spreitzer's Model (control of resources) can illuminate the challenges faced

by Saudi female deans. Also, Spreitzer (2008) writes that empowerment is especially important

when there is a lack of face-to-face interactions.   This is an issue in Saudi Arabia where female

deans can be excluded from decisions and barred from attending university council meetings or

other face-to-face meetings with leaders (Almansour & Kempner, 2015). According to the

Model, this aspect of university culture results in several missing elements for thriving at work including a lack of decision-making, lack of information sharing, and a lack of trust and respect. Although women leaders at Princess Nora University in Saudi Arabia do lead independently of men, granting women this right in other universities would be instrumental in their ability to thrive at work (Al Ghamdi, 2016).

Overall, it is clear how this lens helps guide my study because the challenges for Saudi women hoping to become deans are related to workplace structures in Saudi universities that directly contradict some of Spreitzer's idea of thriving at work. In order to be productive and gain leadership roles such as that of dean, females need to have fewer challenges and more supports when it comes to the work environment.

Structural Challenges

Selection Process

As found in several studies such as Acker (2012) and Almaki et al. (2016), it seems that the selection process used by many organizations in Saudi Arabia limits women from advancing in their careers and more often favors men's advancement. However, as previously noted, issues of hiring are not limited to women. Male deans have noted a lack of criteria for hiring deans as well (Alsuood & Youde, 2018). This seems to mean it is even more difficult for women if men are also finding the selection process to be unfair and lack criteria. Studies highlight the fact that many women find this culture of organizations to be frustrating, and it discourages them from seeking higher positions (Acker, 2012; Almaki et al., 2016). The findings from these studies support the perception that the pool of women who qualify for promotion to dean positions is relatively small as compared to that of men. Therefore, women basically cannot get a promotion in many cases.

However, it is vital to establish why this is the trend, and the reviewed studies established that women lack general management skills as well as line experience. Indeed, this lack of skill and experience might be the cause of the discrepancy, but it cannot be concluded that all academic institutions lack qualified women as some of the studies assert. These ideas can still lead to institutional discrimination against female leaders. Al Ghamdi (2016) found that places of higher education in KSA can discriminate against women when hiring administrative staff, claiming that women do not have the independence and focus of men. Additionally, some have found that universities engage in nepotism, hiring individuals who may not be as qualified as the females already working there (Almansour & Kempner, 2015).

Another argument maintains that the present dean positions are mainly held by the men and continue to follow this tradition (Almacki, et al., 2016). Only 6.1 percent of women in Saudi Arabia have leadership positions in education (Al Ghamdi, 2016). Organizations have a tendency of promoting fellow men, thus denying women the chance to become deans. In Saudi Arabia, the status quo of academic leadership is that these positions are held by men, who in turn lead women in charge of their own sections (Al Ghamdi, 2016). So, for example, a woman may hold a position as vice dean in her all-female section of the university, but she still answers to and follows instructions from a male in a more senior position. Women are less likely to be promoted and to feel confident in their own leadership if they must always report to a male superior. In this regard, the selection processes need to be revised and re-examined in order to create a level playing ground for both men and women.

Workplace Relationships

Workplace relationships act as an organizational barrier since women often do not have beneficial relationships with their female co-workers, mentors, and bosses (Almaki et al., 2016).

Many institutional relationships tend to develop among individuals with the same interests and goals. However, due to the limited number of deans and women in leadership positions within higher education institutions, many of the women find it difficult to find female mentors (Almaki et al., 2016). Unfortunately, some women do not mentor other women as they are viewed as competition rather than support (Al Ghamdi, 2016). Limited access to mentorship inhibits women and imposes them to frustration. Obers (2015) writes that mentoring was found to facilitate career development and improve levels of self-esteem. Improved self-esteem enables women to promote themselves within their institutions. In addition, many individuals tend to prefer mentors belonging to the same gender due to the fact that they easily understand the challenges that they go through. This applies to higher education institutions. Thus, male deans and mentors do not face these same challenges, not to mention other obstacles such as family and personal issues.

Similarly, women's needs tend to differ from men's needs, thus acquiring a mentor who can facilitate these different needs becomes difficult. For instance, many women need more encouragement and role models to be and feel successful. Additionally, male mentors have a tendency to resist mentoring women because of the perception that they are emotional, unskilled at problem solving, and they fear sexual harassment issues (Madsen, 2012).

Some study findings indicated that women aspiring to senior-level academic positions need to complete their degree, develop strong networks, work closely with mentors, and take advantage of leadership training, whether it is in formal degree programs or leadership development programs (Krause, 2009). The solution to workplace relationships lies in the need to get more women in leadership positions, to address the various stereotypes about women, the

creation of mentoring programs and the need to motivate women not to give up as they seek for the dean and other leadership positions.

Structural Supports

Early Leadership Programs

Developing early leadership programs for women in high school positively impacts later leadership development, especially for higher learning institutions. Leadership development is a crucial aspect of healthy adolescent girls' development and should be taught from an early age. Studies highlight that developing early leadership programs provides many lessons to encourage their growth and prepare them for leadership positions in higher learning institutions (Williams & Dempsey, 2014; St Marthe, 2012). It also enables them to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, set individual objectives, get motivated, and gain the capacity to implement various goals. Such learning entails the capacity to develop support networks that can enable them to fully engage in school activities and bring about positive social change (St Marthe, 2012). Other considerations are public policies, which encourage women to be successful, institutions that reward them, and education systems, which educate women to the optimum standards (Dean et al., 2009: Ford, 2016). In other words, there is a need to re-invent the thinking in the society and give women the platform necessary to become leaders.

A study in Turkey found that women leaders believed leadership training programs would be helpful in helping more women become leaders in education (Hazifazlioglu, 2010). In Saudi Arabia, it seems this could also be an instrumental too. These programs would help in preparing women to work in partnership with their colleagues and climb the ladder of leadership in Saudi Arabian higher learning institutions (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

Leadership training programs for women are designed to enhance women's leadership skills and confidence and increase overall leadership diversity. (Levine, et al., 2015). In other words, such programs will empower women, sharpen their leadership skills, and motivate them to become leaders. This is because they particularly focus on specific proven methods which facilitate the development of leadership skills and spur positive change.

Action-oriented Mentoring

Action-oriented mentoring was a specific support measure that was hailed because of its ability to provide women with the action-oriented leadership traits possessed by men. Crawford (2005) writes that mentoring is a factor that leading to upward mobility in employment, success in education, and personal development. Additionally, McManus (2013) examined the experiences of seven California community college deans to understand their perceptions of the process involved in advancing from a faculty position into the academic deanship role by formal succession training and leadership development practices within California community colleges. The results of this study showed that training and preparations for leadership are actually more informal and that mentoring plays a more significant part in the transitions of faculty to the dean.

In the challenges section of this research, it was identified that women are more oriented to social leadership rather than the more traditional, strong leadership styles. This is a barrier that makes them unable to gain promotions in institutions of higher learning within Saudi Arabia. Skurzewski, et al. (2013) found how mentors enter mentoring relationships, particularly informal mentoring relationships, how mentors experience mentoring relationships and the meanings women hold regarding mentoring and mentor identity formation because of reflection upon their mentoring experiences. Action-oriented mentoring has further enabled women in senior positions to develop their management styles, people savvy and communication skills. A number of the

studies suggest that there is need for more women mentors to nurture upcoming women within the higher learning institutions.

Family Challenges and Supports

Many women remain the main caretakers of their families despite holding other roles in higher education institutions. Job demands and time pressures tend to become more significant with time, thus compelling them to choose between their careers and family (Robert, 1997; Hacifazlioglu, 2010). Sandberg (2013) writes that framing these issues as "work-life balance" basically means that work will always lose since the choice of life over work seems to not really be a "choice" at all. This is, of course, not only an issue in Saudi Arabia. Across the globe, women struggle to maintain a balance between taking care of their families and engaging in work outside the home. The studies highlight that only a few women deans have children because of the impact that they would pose on their career (Almaki et al., 2016). On the other hand, most of the women deans tend to voluntarily leave their jobs because of family decisions (Alomair, 2015; Eddy & Garza, 2008). In addition, after women have children, they become more unwilling to work for longer periods as a result of the home responsibilities. This excludes the possibility of getting promoted. Further complicating matters, the cost of childcare can be too demanding on families, thus requiring the mother to leave her work and her possible chance at promotion.

This work-life balance is further complicated by other factors in Saudi Arabia. For instance, women were granted permission to drive until 2017, so they had to rely on a male relative or a hired family driver. Even with the new law allowing women to drive, it will likely take quite some time for women to learn and feel confident driving and for cultural perspectives to change about this issue. This leads to difficulties in balancing both family obligations and

work. Many women cite their roles in the workplace and in their families has a large obstacle in their lives (Hacifazlioglu, 2010). This is especially difficult in more traditional societies. General views in Saudi Arabia are that a woman's place is in the home (Hamdan, 2005). This is true in other societies as well. For instance, in Vietnam and other more traditional societies such as Thailand, Turkey, Malaysia, and Singapore, women are expected to take on family responsibilities such has child rearing and domestic work which serve to slow career advancement outside of the home (Nguyen, 2012; Unin, 2014). In Malaysia, workplaces are male dominated and women's "duties as wives take precedence" (Unin, 2014, p. 656). Work responsibilities in academic leadership such as long hours make it more difficult for women to fulfill all of their work-life responsibilities. In fact, in a survey of female deans in Vietnam, family commitments were cited as their biggest barrier. With a heavy workload required of a dean, female deans find it difficult to "balance family life and university work" and note problems such as "…my children are sad because I am too busy" (Nguyen, 2012, p. 131). All of these issues lead to male academic leaders being more valued and respected since they are able to focus more of their attention on their work outside the home.

Cultural Challenges and Supports

Before examining how women in Saudi Arabia have gained leadership positions in academia, it is helpful to understand the basic cultural positions of women in the country and in academia. This understanding is important since women in Saudi Arabia have unique challenges in regard to their social positions that directly impact their ability to work.

As noted by Timmers, Willemson, and Tijdens (2010) a cultural perspective proposes that the context of the organization, such as the culture, policies, and ideology, are significant in the discussion about women's lack of success in attaining academic leadership positions. The

culture of women in Saudi Arabia is unique and continues to transform with each passing year. Power and policy in the country is linked to both cultural traditions and religious views, making for many conservative policies (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). For instance, it is only within the past 61 years that women have had access to public education in Saudi Arabia. Also, it was only in 2017 that women were granted the right to drive, thus greatly improving working women's independence and ability to travel to and from work.

Culturally, there are many aspects about gender that make Saudi Arabia unique. One of the most controversial and significant traditions is the male guardianship system. Under this system, women are considered minors and unable to make their own decisions (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). They must have the permission of their male guardian in order to do certain things such as travel or enter a higher education program. This cultural legacy can create barriers for some women who have a goal of becoming a leader in education. Male guardians include a woman's father if she is unmarried, her husband if she is married, or her son if she is widowed (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017).

Other expectations and stereotypes about women in Saudi Arabia are present in the culture. For instance, Saudi women are still often expected to only take the role of caregiver in the home, especially in the more rural cities (Aldawsari, 2016; Al Ghamdi, 2016). In fact, a major barrier to women's continued education and career advancement is early marriage and subsequent homemaking (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Dighrir, 2015). There is also a great deal of social bias about women in leadership positions and the feeling that women are unable to lead simply because they are female (Al Ghamdi, 2016). Additionally, as in many Arab and developing countries, women are mostly removed from decision-making for any of the country's

major policies (Al Ghamdi, 2016). It is these factors and more that make Saudi female leaders unique in their cultural positions.

As previously discussed, other challenges for women leaders in education in Saudi Arabia are the cultural bias or stereotypes that females face. Many of these stereotypes revolve around females being less capable or needing to be focused on motherhood and family rather than work. Women in academic leadership have been described as "indecisive, less active, limited in thinking, and dare not take risks" (Nguyen, 2013). Al Ghamdi (2016) found that there are negative beliefs about women's ability to lead in Saudi Arabia that lead to distrust and the tendency to ignore the issue of women's access to leadership completely. Furthermore, Gerdes (2006) notes that societal ideas about female leaders being unable to lead is the most challenging aspect for women in administrative positions. Unfortunately, social scientists have found that stereotypes can be somewhat prophetic. When members of a group are aware of a negative stereotype about themselves, they are more likely to perform their work in accordance to that stereotype (Sandberg, 2013).

Many of these stereotypes are not found in Saudi Arabia alone and studies in the U.S. and other countries have found similar bias. In a study of the U.S., Caton (2007) found that men and women both have negative reactions when female leaders do not have traditionally stereotypical behaviors. For example, female leaders who stand up for themselves can be viewed negatively as "obnoxious and aggressive" (Caton, 2007, p. 6). Unfortunately, women's psyches can be directly affected by the cultural biases and stereotypes in their society. In a survey of female university presidents, 57% agreed or strongly agreed that being female affects views of their credibility and 53% agreed that being female affects views of their abilities (Caton, 2007). Read

and Kehm (2016) write that there is a crucial need to challenge academic and cultural practices and dominant gendered conceptualizations of the 'leader'.

The culture in Saudi Arabia is still traditional in its focus on the female's place in the home to rear children (Al Ghamdi, 2016). This, along with the view that women are not as competent as men in leadership, is a cultural view held by both men and women in Saudi Arabia (Al Ghamdi, 2016). This is likely one of the most salient obstacles since cultural traditions and beliefs are deeply embedded into societies around the world.

Leadership Styles

Previous Saudi Arabian beliefs about leadership skills and assertiveness can deter women from succeeding as deans or in other positions within higher institutions of learning. Many higher learning institutions in Saudi Arabia believe that successful deans should have masculine characteristics including aggressiveness, assertiveness, as well as task-oriented leadership competencies. On the other hand, women are described as being selfless, modest, nurturing, and quiet (Almaki et al., 2016). These characteristics are perceived as being non-executive qualities since many higher institutions of learning desire leaders who can execute tasks, positively take criticism, and perform in the best way at whatever costs (Curry, 2000; Dean et al., 2009). Furthermore, the reviewed studies highlight that leadership studies connect with the common stereotypes and perceptions about women leaders. The studies suggest that in Saudi Arabia, men emerge as task-oriented while women emerge as social leaders. Because of the skills that a leadership position demands, Saudi Arabian higher learning institutions have a tendency of socially preferring men to women as deans as a result of the leadership styles. However, with time, the social leadership style popular among women has gained acceptance in some higher learning institutions.

Other significant challenges are the lack of networking opportunities, lack of professional development, and lack of knowledge about institutional culture. This research, however, argues that these are small barriers, and depend on the challenges as mentioned earlier. This implies that if the discussed barriers are tackled, they can automatically play a significant role in eliminating the previously listed problems.

The above-discussed findings are significant because they highlight specific barriers that impede women from getting into better management positions in higher learning institutions. If they are addressed, the resulting benefits would play a vital role in increasing the number of women in more top positions in higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia.

Some forms of leadership styles including the transformational leadership style were found to be successful for the women leaders. In the transformational leadership style, leaders inspire others with idealized ideas to acquire their trust and respect (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

While some argue that transformational leadership can be more about imposing a leader's ideas than having a democratic organizational structure, it would seem that this type of leadership could be helpful in promoting women's success in educational leadership (Bush, 2011). Among all the leadership styles, female leaders tend to choose the transformational leadership style. This is because the style is more linked to feminine than the masculine gender stereotype. In addition, the women transformational leaders developed varying behaviors that were instrumental in the development of appropriate organizational citizenship behavior (Dean et al., 2009). This aligns with the social leadership strategy which tends to work towards benefitting the community, teamwork, and organization. Therefore, organizations with transformational leadership styles tended to favor more women to get promoted. In transformational leadership, there is an emphasis on values and morality. As noted by Kraemer (2015), values-based

leadership empowers others to truly understand and appreciate what they do and why they are doing it in relation to the overall goals and objectives of an organization. The studies suggest that more institutions of higher learning should embed the four dimensions of this leadership style: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. Using individualized consideration, the leader played significant roles towards enhancing the prospects of women becoming deans and managers (Dean et al., 2009). This was through support and empathy to encourage them to accomplish the various tasks.

A woman's international exposure can also play a vital role in transformative leadership since it can be a source of invaluable exposure to other ways of thinking and culture (Cook, 2010). In countries like Saudi Arabia, this is of particular value since international ideas about women in the workplace can enable women to become dynamic and address various challenges that they immediately face. Through more shared power and responsibility with frequent communication about values and beliefs, a transformative leader can be more effective than other types of leaders (Carlson, 1996). On the other hand, intellectual stimulation enabled leaders to encourage women to think in creative and independent ways in order to learn. Idealized influence enabled more women to become deans because leaders became role models to the followers to demonstrate their capacity and garner respect. Finally, inspiration motivation enabled leaders to motivate women through the provision of clear visions. Through an understanding of the vision, more women were willing to pay more attention in the completion of tasks thus benefitting them and the entire higher learning institutions (Dean et al., 2009). As a result, there is need for more institutions of higher learning to adopt the transformational leadership style to motivate more women into higher positions of management. Despite the above experiences proving influential, the main concern is how to implement them in institutions

of higher learning found in Saudi Arabia. This is addressed in the next section to enable women to get promoted and retain the higher positions of management.

Chapter 2 Closure

This chapter has reviewed the unique challenges that Saudi Arabian females who are seeking academic leadership positions may face. Literature has shown that there are challenges that females around the world have had in attaining their leadership positions and completing their work in higher education. Throughout history until today, gendered stereotypes still abound in both Saudi Arabia and the world about leadership and female abilities. This chapter also described the role of the dean, as well as the unique structural, familial, and cultural challenges and supports women have. There is a lack of research to examine the challenges and supports of Saudi female deans specifically.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to understand the lived experiences of female deans in Saudi Arabia in order to ascertain the specific challenges they had faced and the supports they had in attaining their leadership positions. The research answered questions about how the unique culture of Saudi Arabia had either helped or hindered women in their pursuit of a deanship. Additionally, the challenges or supports of female deans' family life was also discussed. This research shed light on the institutional structures of higher education in Saudi Arabia to note how the structural characteristics affected aspiring deans.

Research Design

The method for this research was qualitative, as it was an appropriate approach for the purposes of the research. As noted by Creswell (2013), qualitative research involves interpreting ideas within a natural setting in order to find meaning, provide voice, and contribute to beneficial changes in the area under study. For this study, researching the specific challenges and supports that women had in becoming leaders in academia contributed to a better knowledge of how to support more women becoming deans of colleges and universities. Through the use of prior and emergent analyses and thinking, a qualitative method helped guide the research to form ideas about the keys to helping more women become deans.

In using a qualitative approach to analyze the lived experiences of female deans, I embraced multiple realities and experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013). To be sure, female deans had various realities that they had lived that should all be taken into account in forming conclusions about challenges for female leaders in education and what methods of support had worked for those successful in leading.

Specifically, phenomenological research was the most appropriate approach to conduct this study. As Creswell (2013) has written, phenomenology "describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences…to a description of the universal essence" (pp. 76). By utilizing the phenomenological research approach, I examined my participants' lived experiences in their path to becoming a dean in higher education. Seidman (2013) writes that phenomenology involves examining experiences of people in a specific area to learn about the specific subjective meaning the experiences had for them. Additionally, Marshall and Rossman (2016) describe phenomenology as "the focus is on life as lived" (p. 18). Thus, the study of the personal experiences of these female leaders allowed me to shed light on what it took and how it felt to become a female dean in Saudi Arabia. As described by Van der Mescht (2004), phenomenology portrays the meaning that humans ascribe to their experiences. In other words, this approach combined the lived experiences of the female participants in order to help researchers define the principle nature of what it had took to become a dean as a female in academia. In analysis, both the challenges the women had faced as well as the specific supports they have had, their experiences could lead to a better understanding of how Saudi women could achieve becoming a dean.

Reflections on My Identity

Of course, as a female researcher with aspirations to become a leader in academia myself, my own identity adds a conscious bias and a certain set of values to this study. As noted by Creswell (2013), a qualitative research study brings with it the idea of "reflexivity" in which the researcher's own experiences and biases must be addressed (p. 215). As a female studying educational leadership, I have encountered my own set of challenges and supports. Coming from the male-dominated society of Saudi Arabia, my American studies forced me to ask myself

reflexive questions about my culture, gender, education, family, and values (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). My perspective has been shaped by these characteristics, as I am accustomed to gender-segregated schooling and different approaches to dealing with men and women in society. I may be more inclined to a certain sort of censorship that I am more comfortable within my own culture. As already discussed, women in Saudi Arabia have only recently been experiencing changes in society to allow for more independence, education, and opportunities. Because these changes are so recent, many of us are still not comfortable discussing and focusing on gender differences and discussions of equality. While some individuals from other cultures may see this as a negative, I think being part of the culture I am studying allows for me to be more understanding of the difference of my society and the feelings of the participants. I may be better able to tell if participants were guarded in their answers to my interview questions, for example. Studies such as this need a delicate approach that someone from outside my culture may not have or understand.

Because I have never had a job in a university, I am approaching this study from a rather inexperienced state professionally. As an outsider, I do not have the experiences of working in a university to know how deans work in their daily lives and how the various leadership positions relate to one another. This inexperience could lead to a more open, generalized approach with fewer preconceived assumptions and the ability to ask more accessible questions. On the other hand, a negative of my inexperience is that I lack the context in which these women serve in their leadership roles.

As noted by Hamdan (2005), many Saudi women who are educated in Western universities return to KSA with a broader, unique vision for women and their future. The same could be said of me personally. After earning my bachelor's degree at Al Jouf University in

Saudi Arabia, I earned a master's degree in Educational Leadership and studied for my PhD at an American university. These experiences led me to closely examine female leadership in higher education. Knowing that I would return to KSA in hopes of gaining my own academic leadership position, researching the challenges and supports that could potentially aid or hinder my progress seemed only suitable.

Overall, my role as a female researcher came with certain predispositions. Creswell (2013) would argue that I must consider my audience and how this could also affect my own biases and interpretations of the phenomenon under study. Focusing on Saudi Arabian female leaders, my perspective may be deemed too biased. Will this study be useful for women in academic leadership in other countries? Or, as Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested, will my cultural biases affect my research, such as how honestly participants choose to answer my questions? By asking these questions, I am acknowledging my own "undecidability" and showing that my research was a representation of my own personal status at this place and time in history (Creswell, 2013, p. 215).

Population, Sample and/or Site

The population for this study included female deans of colleges and universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This population was appropriate since I live in Saudi Arabia and had more access and rapport with participants from the same area (Creswell, 2013).

The sample for this study was drawn using a purposeful sampling strategy using a "criterion" sample (Creswell, 2013, p. 148). All participants needed to be female academic deans of colleges or universities who were willing to complete the interview. In order to maintain the feasibility of the study, the first 10 deans that agreed to participate were used for the study. A sample size between 10 and 15 participants was common for phenomenological research and

having closer to 10 would increase the depth of information and experience (Creswell, 2013).

As noted by Creswell (2013), participants in a phenomenological study need to have experienced

the phenomenon, but a sample that is too diverse will lead to difficulty in finding common

experiences and themes. For this reason and due to the cultural uniqueness for the study, the

sample was chosen only from Saudi Arabian colleges and universities.

In order to acquire the sample and participants, inquiries were sent to Saudi Arabian

colleges and universities to discover the number of female deans there and the deans' contact

information. Previous research of the university dean demographics helped me in knowing

which universities to contact. I also used a snowball technique by asking female dean

acquaintances to take part in the study and to ask their colleagues as well. The participants were

invited to take part in the study voluntarily, so access depended entirely on participants'

willingness to be part of the study. Three of the participating deans automatically agreed to be

part of the study. I began the study with three deans, but with snowball sampling, the sample

expanded by asking the initial participants to provide me with other female deans' names that

could participate in the study. The first two deans sent me a long list of deans' names and their

contact information at various universities around Saudi Arabia. Dean 1 provided five deans, and

Dean 2 provided nine names of the current and previous deans, with some repeated names

between them. Therefore, I used snowball sampling by requesting these three deans to ask their

colleagues. I interviewed the first ten who agreed to participate.

Instrumentation

Data collection included interviews of the female deans. I wrote the interview protocol

after analyzing which questions were most appropriate from the overall research questions.

Interviews were most appropriate in phenomenology to gain in-depth access to the lived

experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, in using open-ended questions, I could "build upon and explore their participants' responses" in meaningful ways based on the overall research questions (Seidman, 2013, pp. 14). By sharing their challenges and what types of supports they received in gaining their position as a dean, the participants highlighted trends that underscore female leadership in academia. Creswell (2013) finds that conducting interviews requires patience in phenomenological studies since researchers must rely on participants to discuss the meaning of their lived experiences.

Interviews were conducted in person, skype, or call and lasted approximately one to two hours. Four of the deans participated in face to face interviews, and the other six interviewed through phone calls or skype video. Follow-up questions were answered either by email, phone, or in-person, depending on the logistics of the participant and myself (Seidman, 2013).

Research Questions and Interview Protocol

Table 2 shows the overall research question and sub-questions of this study along with the interview questions. See *Appendix A* for the complete Interview Protocol with all five questions and prompts.

Overall Research Question: How did Saudi Arabian female deans experience attaining their leadership role?

Table 2

Research Questions and Associated Interview Questions

Research Sub-questions	Interview Questions
1. What structural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?	1. Please tell me about how you became a Dean. 2. What role did the organizational structure play in your path to the Deanship?
2. What cultural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?	3. What role did Saudi culture play in your path to the Deanship?
3. What familial challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?	4. What role did your family play in your path to the Deanship?

	5. Please tell me a bit about your responsibilities now.
	   a. How do you spend your time?
	   b. What kind of skills do you need to have?
	   c. How many faculty members do you oversee?
	   d. Do you have an organizational chart?

Data Collection Procedures

Gaining access to the female dean participants required several steps. First, I examined the websites of each college and university in Saudi Arabia to discover which institutions have female deans. Next, I asked permission to perform the study from the formal gatekeepers which include the country's Ministry of Education and the institutions themselves (Seidman, 2013). I did this through email, phone calls, or both if necessary. Once permission was granted from

gatekeepers, I contacted the participants via email after finding the deans' email addresses on the university websites.

Of course, acquiring participants' written permission and willingness to be interviewed about their experiences was the next important step (Creswell, 2013). Of those deans who responded, I randomly chose 10 participants and invited them to participate in the study. If participants did not answer emails initially, I called the participants to attempt to arrange dates and times to meet for interviews.

As noted by Marshall and Rossman (2016), building rapport or a trusting relationship with participants in a qualitative study is of paramount importance. Since participants will be less likely to share truthful experiences or feel comfortable if there is any hint of insincerity, it is important for the researcher to build rapport. In order to build trust, I needed to share information about myself with the participants first. Marshall and Rossman (2016) found that rapport can be established if the researcher will "describe their likely activities while in the setting, what they are interested in learning about, the possible uses of the information, and how the participants can engage in the research" (p. 125.) I would argue further that even sharing some personal information about one's own career and education history or even some family information may help establish more trust.

My research needed to be approved by a Human Subject Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) since it involves the study of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In order to assure there is no manipulation or harm done to the participants in the study, the HSIRB reviewed the proposal first and recommended some revisions. Due to the low-risk nature of this study and the fact that all participants were over the age of 18, the review was not lengthy or required many revisions of the proposed study (Creswell, 2013). The only cost to participants was their time to

sit for the interview, of which they were aware of beforehand. Possible benefits for participants

and the general participant population could include increased self-awareness, empowerment,

and the provision of a voice. Confidentiality was to be maintained, and pseudonyms were used

for all participants both in the publication and in the storage of the data. Of course, consent

forms were provided for all participants to sign so that they were aware of the study's purpose,

procedures, risks, benefits, and that the study was voluntary with confidential responses

(Creswell, 2013).

As is common with phenomenological research, this research involved in-depth

interviews of all participants. Interviews were conducted in person and, when necessary, via

phone or video conferencing, particularly for follow-up questions and clarifications. Certainly,

follow-up emails and correspondence was necessary for further clarification of interview

responses. Additionally, introductory emails and possible phone calls were required to establish

rapport. The researcher field noted from the interviews, and any follow-up emails and phone

calls were an essential part of the data as well.

One's research is only as good as the trustworthiness of that research. In order to ensure

that the data collection is as trustworthy as possible, I used rich descriptions to help strengthen

the believability and usefulness of the study. Using rich descriptions involved noting the

demeanor of participants during the interviews as well as carefully recording their word-for-word

answers. For instance, if participants were hesitant or guarded in their answers, this was useful

information in the final analysis of their experience becoming deans. Creswell (2013) finds that

rich descriptions allow for abundant information with many details to interpret. This will help to

narrow ideas and allow readers of the research to make their own conclusions that may differ

from my own conclusions (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

Data analysis included an a priori and emergent approach since the research was exploratory in nature, so analysis was interpretive and interconnected (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). More specific steps as outlined by Marshall and Rossman (2016) included organizing the data, immersion of the data, coding, memoing, generating themes, interpretations, alternative understandings, and a final interpretation of the meaning of the women's experiences and how this understanding could help future female deans find success. Broadly, data analysis included coding, recoding, categorizing, and generating themes.

Data included recorded and typed transcripts in Arabic of the interviews as well as my own typed and handwritten field notes. In transcribing the interviews, I worked to include as much context as possible such as tone and body language from my field notes (Richards, 2015). Then, I translated all the transcripts into English. To review the accuracy of my translations, most of the transcripts were reviewed by bilingual colleagues who know both Arabic and English (peer reviews). Additionally, I provided thick descriptions with annotations or notes about things like hesitation or laughter as these would affect interpretations of the participants' answers (Richards, 2015). If a participant seemed guarded in her answer or I felt that my presence affected a participants' responses, I made notes to suggest this as well.

Storing the data organized into computerized files labeled with pseudonyms was fairly simple and efficient. I also ensured I had back-up copies saved to an external drive for any unforeseen technical issues. I used NVivo Coding software to organize the transcribed data and to serve with the coding.

To answer my research questions, I used a priori and emergent analyses . That is, I answered the research questions one by one, and I analyzed the interviews to find emergent

themes that answered those research questions (Creswell, 2013). The research questions were addressed based on the thematic analysis, using a matrix to develop categories in the data. By categorizing the data in a priori, the patterns emerged in a clear and organized way. The matrix started with planned categories (path to the deanship, structural supports, structural challenges, etc.), and then allowed additional categories (other supports and other challenges) to emerge through reading and rereading the data (Maxwell, 2013).

I immersed myself in the data through repeated listening and readings and begin to form the beginnings of noticeable in NVivo codes within the responses. For example, if several participants mentioned that occupational gender segregation difficulties made their ascension to the deanship even more challenging, I knew to begin coding the transcripts for when participants mentioned a lack of communication between man's campuses and women's campuses, and so forth. Using themes from the literature review and these NVivo codes, which were taken directly from participant responses, I coded all of the responses into appropriate categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This coding and categorizing of the notes into related groups such as "gender segregation" was managed through colored highlighting of the electronic responses and a folder system (Seidman, 2013). This step occurred over time and required critical thinking and constant changes. As Saldana (2016) writes, coding is rarely all correct the first time through, so I found that some of my codes were too broad or insufficient, and I needed to rethink the categories. For instance, with coding my participants' responses about their family and work and how it affected their path toward a deanship, I have categories such as "family challenges." However, this needed to be broken down even further depending on respondent answers to include subcategories such as "family obligations and work-life balance " and "feeling guilty being away from home" (Saldana, 2016).

At the same time, I wrote memos to keep track of how the data is related to themes and theories from the literature review, which would eventually lead to the generation of more formal thematic categories. Finally, I offered interpretations of the themes, any alternative ideas, and presented the final essence of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

As with the data collection, trustworthiness in the data analysis is also paramount. A study will not be useful if the analysis was biased or inaccurate in any way. To ensure the data analysis is trustworthy, I used researcher reflexivity, peer review, and code-recode strategy (Creswell, 2013).

One method to maintain the trustworthiness of my study was to engage in reflexivity about my own biases and experiences as the researcher (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), reflectivity involves a researcher self-reflecting about how his or her background, gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin could shape the study. While I have already discussed my possible bias earlier in the research, I reiterate my own relationship to the study as an inexperienced, Saudi Arabian female researcher. I note any bias or issue within the data collection due to my specific status. Likewise, in analyzing the data, my different cultural values and traditions when it comes to gender relationships and power, for example, could result in biased interpretations. By explaining this to the reader, my interpretations will be more transparent.

I used the code-recode strategy by reading and coding the data twice, giving one or a couple weeks' time between each coding to notice any changes (Chilisa & Preece, 2005). This strategy also helps the researcher gain a deep understanding of data and participants' stories, and it can provide the dependability and credibility of the findings.

Another method I used included peer debriefing, which involves one or more peers or mentors examining the data and checking the final report to provide feedback (Creswell, 2013). To ensure more reliable analysis, I asked two bilingual colleagues with Ph.D.'s (Dr. Alwiah Alsaggaf, and Dr. Somaia Mustafa) to serve as peer reviewers by looking through the transcriptions of the interviews (deans' names and private information deleted for confidentiality) in Arabic and English. In doing so, they reviewed the accuracy of the transcriptions in both languages as well as my data analysis. They gave careful attention to quotes and interpretations and assisted me as a researcher to test my perspectives, beliefs, and opinions so as not to include biases in the results and interpretations. Their feedback resulted in minor changes in order to make the data analysis smooth and clear. The colleagues experienced HSIRB training as a requirement by WMU's HSIRB terms. They have a high level of expertise with qualitative research and were knowledgeable about the topic of the study under examination. The themes were divided among the two reviewers, and I met with each one individually after reviewing their parts of the data. Ultimately, peer reviewers were crucial for not only assisting my own understanding and interpretations of the data, but to maintain trustworthiness of the data and research overall (Creswell, 2013, p. 251).

Limitations and Delimitations

As noted by Creswell (2002), delimitations of a study serve to narrow the scope of a study. A delimitation of this study was that it was confined to a small number of female deans of colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia only. The focus of this study was specific to Saudi Arabia and the study's findings were meant to provide Saudi females with valuable information if they hope to become academic deans or gain other positions in higher education. Additionally,

the small sample size may not be ideal to apply to all female deans in Saudi Arabia, but having a small number of participants provided richer data.

Limitations of the study included the fact that participants were self-reporting and the constraints in finding participants for the study. Because of the nature of this research, participants provided their own interpretation of their experiences. Of course, this may or may not match what others would note as important challenges and supports in the lives of these women. However, by giving voices to the women themselves, I hoped to discover themes that would be recognizable to other women seeking higher positions in academia. Because there were so few female deans in Saudi Arabia, this could also be seen as a limitation of the study. If there were a wider pool of participants to draw from, the overall findings may be even more generalizable to the Saudi female population.

Chapter 3 Closure

Chapter 3 covered the methodology of this study, including a description of the qualitative approach of phenomenology. The chapter discussed the research questions, design, sample population, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and the limitations and delimitation of the study. Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the study, including specific information about the data analysis and overall themes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study examined the lived experiences of female deans in Saudi Arabia to explore the specific challenges they have faced and supports they have had in attaining their leadership positions. I became interested in this research after advancing to graduate school with hopes of gaining my own academic leadership position. I found that researching the challenges and supports that could potentially aid or hinder my progress could greatly benefit both myself and other Saudi women seeking academic leadership positions. Additionally, there is a lack of qualitative studies that bring together issues of culture, family, and structure in relation to female deans in Saudi Arabia. A qualitative, phenomenological design framed this study with in-depth interviews and analysis of participant responses. The results are from a combination of ten Saudi Arabian female deans' voices. I interviewed five participants who presently serve as deans and five others who served in the past. I used prior and emergent analyses to answer the research questions and identify themes (Creswell, 2013). My research was established based on a primary research question and five sub-questions. The primary research question was:

How did Saudi Arabian female deans experience attaining their leadership role?

Sub-questions included:

1. What structural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

2. What cultural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

3. What familial challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

4. What other challenges did the women experience?

5. What other supports did the women experience?

Chapter Four presents finding from the interviews of ten female deans from four different universities in Saudi Arabia.

Participant Profiles

It is important to provide the participants' profiles. Table 3 provides interesting background information of these 10 participants who have served as female deans of colleges and universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The purpose is to show how long they have been in their positions as deans, how long they have served at their institutions, their highest degrees earned, the number of employees they oversee, and their university that they work at (Table 10).

Table 3

Participants Background Data of Female Deans in Saudi Arabia

Deans	Years Working as a Dean in Higher Education	Years Working in Leadership Positions at current institution	Highest Degree	Oversee Employees	University
D1	Almost 2 years	24 years	Ph.D.	5,000 Employees	University1
D2	4 years	Over 13 years	Ph.D. (Honorary degree)	2,000 – 3,000 Employees	University3
D3	Almost 2 years	Almost 19 years	Ph.D.	83 Faculty\ 20 Staff	University4
D4	2 years	10 years	Ph.D.	150 Faculty\ 70-80 Staff	University2
D5	2 years	2 years	Ph.D.	250 Employees	University2
D6	Almost 1 year	22 years	Ph.D.	50 faculty \ 50 staff	University1
D7	Almost 6 years	Almost 7 years	Master	44 faculty \ 250 staff \ 9 administrative	University2
D8	4 years	Almost 26 years	Ph.D.	300 faculty	University2
D9	1 year, 3 months	1 year, 3 months	Master	16 Saudi faculty\ 28 Non-Saudi faculty	University2
D10	5 years	20 years	Ph.D.	300 faculty \ 200 staff	University 5

Dean 1

Dean 1 has been in the position of dean at University 1 for almost two years. She has two months remaining in the system to complete the regular period of 24 months (two years) in this position. She oversees five medical colleges. Dean 1 oversees around 3,000 faculty members and 2,000 administrative staff for a total of 5,000 individuals.

In 1995, Dean 1 received her bachelor's degree which is the highest degree from University 1. She obtained a Ph.D. when there was a limited number of Saudi women who had Ph.Ds.

She had been working at University 1 since receiving her bachelor's degree, which means that she has been serving the institution for 24 years. The Minister of Higher Education appointed her to the deanship position for two years with the possibility of an extension. To renew her nomination, she will have to provide the dean's selection committee with her achievements in the last two years. Also, she will be required to submit a plan for her new vision for the next two years that also relates to the university's strategic plan. This year, the university has added plans from *Vision 2030* of Saudi Arabia that she needed to include.

Dean 2

Dean 2 currently works as a vice president at University 2, and I interviewed her as a former dean for four years at University 3. She oversaw approximately 2,000 to 3,000 employees of faculty members and staff of administration. Her highest degree was an Honorary Ph.D. from a prestigious University and a Ph.D. from University 1.

As far as her leadership positions, she has held various positions such as a dean at University 3, a vice president at University 2, and the vice department chair of the Department of Medical Programs at a country abroad. She has been working for over 13 years in administration.

What was unique about this dean was that she has always had a great sense of humanity and has focused on dealing with people humanly at all stages of her leadership positions. This ability led to her having a significant impact on people. She said, "When you lead with great humanity, people will be ready to give you [work with you] and [help you] achieve your goals and never forget what you did for them."

Also, she hopes that whoever is a leader, whether the vice president or president of an establishment, a factory, or a university, is the one who deserves the position and has the ability, regardless of being male and female. She said, "I wish we would reach that day on which there is no difference between a male and female in leadership position."

Dean 3

Dean 3 has been in the position for almost two years at University 4 and was appointed as a dean for a two-year term at the end of March 2017. She mentioned that she was unwilling to renew her contract as a dean and recommended another woman for the position. However, the university told her that they selected her for this task, and she had to continue. The decision has not been finalized as her period as a dean had not yet ended its first term. However, according to the university, her position as a dean would be renewed. In her deanship, she has twenty administrative staff under her in addition to overseeing 400 students. She oversees 83 faculty members in the three departments.

She graduated in 2000, and she benefited from her part-time work by getting her master's degree in only two years before starting to work full-time. Dean 3 earned a Ph.D. from an abroad university in 2010.

Dean 3 began to work in 2000 as a volunteer teaching assistant in the same year of her graduation. After three years, she continued her work as a paid teaching assistant, but without an

actual contract. She was working part-time and was unhappy with this system, as it seemed unfair. Then, she started to work full-time after she got her master's degree. When she completed her Ph.D. abroad, her university told her that she would hold an administrative position since she was the only Saudi female in her major. Then, they offered her the option to select from two positions. There was a need for two department chairs in two different departments. There was also a need for two vice deans for academic affairs and a vice dean for quality and accreditation affairs. Dean 3 accepted to hold the position of the department chair in the department that she had no knowledge or background and held the vice dean position for quality and accreditation affairs. Then, she entered the field of management actively.

What was unique about this dean was that she wasn't interested in renewing her contract due to the hard work and pressure in her institution. But, in the end, she believes that she got valuable experience.

> I was determined to prove to them that I was the best one to perform this task, so the task wouldn't be given to a man instead. Sometimes, I asked myself why I was so excited (angry). They [the upper level administrators] gave me tasks and benefited from me. I continued proving myself until I reached burnout. I had nothing to prove (She was disappointed). I think that this realization comes only with maturity. I might have worked a lot, but valuable experiences are so significant.

Dean 4

Dean 4 held the position of dean at University 2 for two years and currently works as a faculty member. Her highest degree earned is a Ph.D. as an assistant professor.

The development of a female university in Saudi Arabia passed through various stages. Prior to 2008, there were only small colleges around Saudi Arabia, and, later they combined to

one big university. Dean 4 had experienced working on both stages of university-development. Dean 4 worked at this university for almost ten years. Before that, she was involved in different administrative work. In the deanship position, she oversaw 150 academic members, approximately 70 to 80 administrative staff, and 8,000 students.

Distinctively, Dean 4 considers the dean position as an obligation and mission, not an honor. The deanship was a turning point in her life. She liked it, and she never felt that the difference in her specialty in Education caused her any problem, even when she worked at the College of Business. Her colleagues at University 1 think that the deanship doesn't mean one must be aware of everything in the college and that even "the president of the university does not know everything about all disciplines and colleges that are underneath him." Therefore, she believes that "leadership is an art about potentials, charisma, and humanity above all, and inspiring others."

Also, she was pleased with her excellent relationships and previous experiences of close connections as a dean with the students.

Dean 5

Dean 5 currently works as a faculty member, but she previously held a deanship that ended in May 2018. The highest degree she had earned was a Ph.D.

She was a dean for two years at University 2 because she was transferred by the institution to be in the dean position. She believed that her achievements and successes were what attracted the other institutions to select her. She supervised 250 employees, including 85 faculty members, lecturers, technicians, part-time members, and others. However, she thinks the number of female students present was "about 1, 500 in five departments – a small number compared to the significant number of staff as well as their big buildings in the college." She was

assigned to her position for two years, but she was unwilling to renew the dean position afterward. She felt that the working environment in the university did not correspond with her previous experiences and did not match her personality. She was working in two ways: she developed the study plans at University 1, University 2, and University 3, and she worked with the Saudi Commission of Engineers. In addition, she was attending workshops for supporting women. She aspired to support others at any consultation she gave and didn't feel she could do that in her deanship position.

Interestingly, Dean 5 thinks her experience as a dean in University 2 was different from her previous experience at University 4. The work environment was unusual for her, which made her "goals and achievements slower." Although she was satisfied overall with her previous experience as a dean, she was unwilling to renew her deanship. "It doesn't mean that my experience was a bad one. I achieved many things." She achieved many of her goals, and she encouraged a new identity for the college from one of education, to the college of art, and she was the only one who believed in it.

What was unique about this dean was that she focused on how to develop and change the culture of the community and the view of Saudi female engineers, as well as she believed that it is necessary to teach women in this field. She believed that using art and design would change the culture of this community.

Dean 6

Dean 6 was the first female dean at University 1 for female and male students. She became a dean starting in October 2018 and still maintains the position. She oversees 50 faculty members as well as 50 of those who belong to the administrative staff, for a total of 100 individuals.

Her highest degree is a Ph.D. She received her bachelor's degree in 1997. She joined the college directly after she finished an internship in different hospitals. Also, she had joined the master's program in the same department. Then, she received her master's degree in 2002.

Dean 6 has been at the same university for 22 years. She joined the department as a lecturer and gave lectures for different courses. She served in small work teams, such as the various committees in the institution, before entering the leadership position. She was given the position of chairperson for the first time when she was a lecturer. She had some administrative experience that many Ph.D. holders lack, and many had a belief in her and her abilities.

What was unique about this dean was that she believed that women's empowerment occurred through educating and providing free learning first, then providing leadership opportunities. She considers involvement with committee and volunteer work that doesn't lead to profits to be the most important thing in her path to deanship, and it was an accumulation process of comprehensive information about the university, including rules and regulations.

Dean 7

Dean 7 is a faculty member who was formerly the first female dean at University 2 in Saudi Arabia. During the seven years at University 2, she was not able to do her research. So, she decided to return to her faculty job again and focus on her research.

Her highest degree was a master's degree; then, she was ranked as an associate professor. Also, she has qualifications in medical education and medical informatics.

She was the founding dean at University 2 for around six years. She worked in the position of vice president for quality and development at the university for about a year and four months. Altogether, her leadership positions have spanned seven years. She had been in this institution for seven years because she was transferred to University 2 from University 1 for the

dean position. She claims her ability to meet challenges, her perseverance, and her motivation to make a difference helped her with her deanship. She started her college with one faculty member and nine administrators because the nature of the dentist college makes it hard to find a faculty with Ph.D. Then, she ended up with 44 faculty members who were assistant professors and professors, 250 staff, and about 350 students. Also, she had clinics and administrators. Seven years later of being in administration positions, Dean 7 returned back to University 1 as a faculty member.

What was unique about this dean was her belief that the administration position was not her biggest interest. Instead, she was passionate about conducting more academic research in the field. She missed being a researcher!

Dean 8

Dean 8 works as an assistant of the vice-president for development and quality at University 2. I met with her because of her former dean position for four years at the same university.

The highest degree that she has is a Ph.D. from a university in the United Kingdom. Also, she got her bachelor's degree from the university where she works.

Dean 8 has 28 years of overall experience in the educational field, making her the longest working participant of all the study participants. She has continued to work in the institution since her appointment in 1994 as a faculty member before the university's establishment in 2008. She was appointed a dean at University 2 for two years, then renewed for two more years at University 2. Dean 8 oversaw 300 faculty members when she was a dean.

Interestingly, she mentioned the history of the university that she has worked for and how the university was comprised of many colleges before it became a university, and the colleges

included various subject areas. At the level of City 1, the colleges were included together in a new university (University 2) in 2008.

Also, she believes her success would have been nothing without accumulated experiences, time and experiencing different situations to reach the deanship position.

Dean 9

Dean 9 was appointed as a dean on June 16th, 2018 at University 2. She has held the position for a year and almost three months at University 2. She oversees 16 Saudi faculty members and 28 international faculty members. Also, she is accountable for the administrative staff and responsible for the health staff. The college and the clinics she discusses are all under the Ministry of Education.

Her highest degree was master. She believes that attending several workshops and communicating with many senior leaders both enhanced her experience at an administrative level.

What was unique about this dean was that she thinks that a big part of her gaining knowledge as a dean was through her experience of progression in various positions. In the past, she was an advisor at University 1. Also, the health colleges at University 2 were emerging colleges that are only seven years old. The members were still junior members, and they needed a senior from outside the university. Therefore, they transferred her as a dean to University 2.

Interestingly, her background and training provided the tools needed for the dean position. However, she strongly suggested a "smooth transition" by connecting the previous dean with the potential dean to avoid the struggles that the new dean could face when getting familiar with new responsibilities.

Dean 10

Dean 10 was a dean for five years and is still currently employed at University 5. She oversees almost 300 faculty members and around 200 female employees.

Her highest degree is a Ph.D. She was a teaching assistant at University 4. She married and moved from University 4 to University 5 where she earned a master's degree.

She has held many leadership positions in her 20 years of work at University 5. She was an assistant professor, and she applied for a position as an associate professor.

What was unique about Dean 10 was that she had an excellent work team. She had indirect mentoring from her experience with her previous dean. She was pleased about what she learned from her; "I learned everything from her."

Responsibilities of the Academic Deans

Through my analysis, I found the deans' responsibilities can be different or similar according to their leadership skills, academic discipline, the kind of institution, and whether the institution includes both male and female students or just females and an organizational chart.

Similarities

There were some responsibilities that all ten participating deans had in their institutions. All the deans served both educational and administrative purposes in their colleges, including having responsibilities for both hiring and managing faculty members. All of the deans indicated that the essential responsibility of the dean is to be able to communicate with faculty, department chairs, students, and leaders at the university.

Additionally, all ten deans indicated that they had some assistant vice-deans to whom they would delegate responsibilities. Also, they all shared similar administrative functions

related to student affairs, facilities, employees, and management of academic programs. For instance, Dean 4 indicated:

> I can tell you that each of these four vice deans takes a quarter of the dean's duties. This one, for example, is responsible for graduate studies in the college, this one is only responsible for educational affairs, this one is only responsible for the quality, and this one is only responsible for student affairs. The dean is ultimately responsible for all four matters.

All ten deans indicated that they had an organizational chart that presents the different jobs with descriptions of roles in their institutions. For instance, Dean 2 suggested that "the vice deanship of administrative development was in charge of the organizational chart, processes, procedures, and initiatives." Also, some deans mentioned that their colleges got approved by the ISO, which is an International Standards Organization, due to following specific standards of administrative responsibilities and procedures that include a clear organizational chart. For example, Dean 2 stated:

> I was the first female dean whose office gets the ISO, which is one of the independent companies that check your administrative procedures. Whether you have an organizational chart, whether the description is clear, whether the description of the lower departments is clear, whether everyone understands his work, authorities, and responsibilities, whether the qualifications required for each job are clear.

Dean 7 also mentioned that "We were very careful to make sure of the organizational structure of the university and its integrity, so we review all the job descriptions, the hierarchy of the colleges, and the hierarchy of the university as a whole."

Differences

Apart from these similar responsibilities across all the institutions, some of the deans had more specific and different obligations in their work. Seven of the deans indicated their contact with a broad range of institutional constituents – the president or vice presidents, academic affairs officer, the faculty, students, and external stakeholders.

Four of the deans explained that responsibilities of academic deans typically included the educational program and curriculum, faculty selection and development, student affairs, facilities development, and public and alumni connections.

Some deans indicated that they have many new and more uncommon responsibilities because they have new colleges or their colleges have suddenly changed from a College of Education to a College of Science. For example, Dean 10 had the experience of dealing with many atypical responsibilities of programs creation and starting everything from the beginning. She noted, "Also, we run workshops. However, this particular year, it was a challenging year, and until now, we didn't finish all the programs." She was focused on the development of unique programs and attracting new faculty members:

But I'll tell you about my tasks before this stage because I was a dean of the College of Education, and then I became dean of the College of Science. My jobs before were mostly planning. I was focusing more on my role in putting up plans, strategy, and operational plans. Operational plans and performance indicated to work with people and distribute tasks to them. I get in touch with the community by marketing for people. I was doing communication when I was with public education. We're open to new ideas from the community and give feedback; I communicate a lot with the students. (Dean 10).

Four deans shared their responsibility to identify new sources of revenue – a demand that has increased considerably. The work of garnering such financial support has become a primary function of the academic dean. These responsibilities include fundraising, and the increasingly complex financial environment has made the role of the academic dean far more complicated than it has been in the past. Dean 3 shared her experience with raising funds and her role in saving resources for the college, defending its interests, and searching for establishing partnerships and strategic issues with external bodies:

> I also should be aware of the stakeholders and establishing strong relations with them. They may be the sectors that will employ our female graduates or companies that may support us, etc. Furthermore, I should develop the resources of the college. I'm responsible for the college in terms of recruitment and development.

Skills needed

Eight of the deans said that communication skills are essential for deans to communicate with faculty, students, and the top authorities in the institution such as president and vice presidents. Also, some deans asserted strategic planning skills as a necessary role in deans' responsibilities.

For example, Dean 2 reported the skills she believes that the dean should have include negotiation skills, critical thinking, listening, speaking, and communication skills. In addition, deans should be able to set priorities, have experience in the organizational chart, strategize, plan, and know how to manage others well. Also, all deans should have smart objectives and not take things for granted.

Furthermore, some of the deans indicated that time management is one of the most important skills along with having strategies for short and long term goals, solving problems, and overcoming difficulties.

Five of the deans also shared the importance of negotiation skills in their work. For example, Dean 8 clarified that "There were not a lot of negotiations. I was giving my advice to the department because I'm an expert in the place." However, she was aware of the importance of negotiation skills.

> But, as a dean, I do need negotiation skills as I make changes in the whole university and people [employees] need to be convinced in some things. I think that anyone who holds a leadership position has to have these skills. It's not easy to have this skill.

Moreover, some deans indicated that they need resilience and readiness for urgent things that could happen during their work as deans. For example, Dean 3 stated that: "Why do I need agility? I need to do so because many things come at the last moment. The ministry may send me an urgent letter to do something. But it's not my problem. And today is Friday."

Presentation of Themes

The results in this qualitative study are related to the research questions. The themes explored are from the Nvivo codes, which are taken directly from participant responses across all of the research questions. As table 4 shows, I found nine major themes:

1. Path to the Deanship

2. Structural Supports

3. Structural Challenges

4. Cultural Supports

5. Cultural Challenges

6. Family Supports

7. Family Challenges

8. Other Challenges

9. Other Supports.

Table 4

Summary of Results

Research Questions	Themes	Sub-Themes	Emergent Ideas	Frequents
Question 1. What role did the organizational structure play in your path to the Deanship?	1 Path to the Deanship	1 Career sequence of deans	1 Academic and administration roles	10
			2 Various positions	6
			3 Committees' services	5
			4 Quality and accreditation work	6
		2 Nomination and recommendation		10
		3 Vision and values		3
		4 Experiences, skills and qualifications		10
	2 Structural Supports	1 Leadership development programs		10
		2 Mentoring and networking relationship		10
		3 Empowerment	1 Providing them with knowledge and opportunities	10
			2 Participating in decision making	5

Table 4 - Continued

		4 The benefits of the structural segregation by gender	6
	3 Structural challenges	1 The difficulties in the selection criteria for deans	10
		2 Centralization of authority of the organizational structure	10
		3 The occupational gender segregation difficulties	3
Question 2. What role did Saudi culture play in your path to the Deanship?	1 Cultural supports	1 Support by the culture of organization	5
		2 Support by culture of family and friends	5
		3 The absence of a gender wage gap	2
	2 Cultural challenges	1 The impacts of the stereotypes	7
		2 Gender bias in the workplace	4
Question 3. What role did family play in your path to the Deanship?	1 Family supports		10
	2 Family challenges	1 Family obligations and work-Life balance	10

Table 4 - continued

		2 Feeling guilty being away from family	4
Question 4. What other challenges did the women experience?	1 Other challenges	1 Academic major	5
		2 Glass ceiling effects	2
Question 5. What other supports did the women experience?	1 Other supports	1 The Saudi new vision plan for women's empowerment	4
		2 Personal characteristics	10

Theme 1: Path to Deanship

The first interview question asked was, "How did you became a Dean?" to illuminate the participants' career experiences in their path to the deanship. Specifically, this question involved examining themes about the organizational structure of the path to a deanship. Generally, this structure is subcategorized into: (a) career sequence of deans, (b) nomination and recommendation, (c) vision and values, and (d) experiences and skills (see Figure 3).The participants provided insight into the career path of women from their experiences and perspectives related to these ideas. Also, they offered details and examples related to their personal journey in reaching their senior-level positions. These are discussed under the four sub-themes in the following section:

Sub-theme 1: Career sequence of deans. The first sub-theme included the basic career positions and types of work that potential deans complete on their path to becoming a dean. The results from the analysis include the career sequences within four different professional opportunities and experiences, including (a) academic and administration roles, (b) quality work,

(c) committees' services, and (d) various positions. Each of the women deans believed that the career sequence and their experience in these different positions prepared them to be deans.

 Emergent idea 1: Academic and administration positions. All ten participants noted that the professional sequences in academic and administrative roles are an essential part of the path to the deanship in colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia. Academic and administration positions include teaching, research, administrative work, committee service, quality and accreditation work, community engagement, and external and internal campus service.

 Seven of the ten participating deans indicated that they held the position of department chair for several years before they took the role of dean. Eight of the ten deans (80%) believed holding an academic position was a significant phase in their path because academic affairs taught them other aspects of university life, including how to handle unique cases, obstacles, a deprivation, etc. For example, Dean 10 indicated that she was the head of her department for two years. She considered that two years was not enough, and if she stayed longer in the chairmanship of the department, it would be better for her work readiness. She stated:

 I consider it [department chair] the most important position in all positions, which I
  learned many things from it. I learned the academic aspect, the development of programs,
  to solve problems, deal with students, management, and to understand the rules and
  regulations. All systems are headed by the chairman of the department. I mean it is a very
  important stage. I even considered two years was too little. I consider it as the most
  important school [step] in any job sequence for any person who wants to reach this [the
  position of the dean].

In agreeance with Dean 10's ideas, Dean 5 indicated that "The most important position, in these universities, was the department chair." She argues, "It is an academic and an administrative position" at the same time.

On the other hand, Dean 7 indicated that she did not get the opportunity to experience a department chair, or even a vice-dean position, before she became a dean. Because of the system in her previous job at University 1, she was restricted from becoming either a department chairman, vice-dean, or dean. However, within University 2, she was appointed immediately as a dean for the new college since it was a female university. She had the opportunity to play all the roles as a Dean, a Chairman, and a Vice Dean at the same time "because there is only me," she said. However, she still believes that moving through the positions and phases is essential for a more manageable and supportive sequence in the path to a deanship. She indicated that being a dean is "not easy," and she thinks to gain the experiences of lower positions is helpful. Dean 7 indicated that she was a lecturer when she was given the position of chairperson for the first time. However, she thought that it was not essential to be a chairman, "but it is better." She felt that there were "small details" that people were not aware of. Also, "They will convert into defects in terms of getting administrative posts later if you don't realize the rules and regulations. But, one may skip some positions."

Eight of the deans (80%) indicated that they worked as a vice-dean through their mission of leadership. Dean 1 discussed her progression in different administrative positions in a university in Saudi Arabia to be necessary in her path to deanship. She stated that:

> I passed through multiple positions…I was nominated to be the Vice Dean of the Science College. I was working in two positions; the second position was in the Quality Unit. I was responsible for the female and male sections. My service as a vice-dean of the

Science College ended because I reached the maximum years of service allowed, which

is six years, just as any administrative positions in the university.

Another participating dean stated, "I progressed through administrative positions. I was a

representative of the deputy vice dean, then the vice dean of the college, then a consultant in the

university president office, then a director of International Communication in Educational

Affairs (ICEA)" (Dean 4). Dean 6 stated that "After two years of being the vice-dean at the

College of AMS, I was nominated to be the first female dean of the College of Nursing. Thus, I

was leading both males and females." Also, Dean 10 indicated the importance of progression in

the vice-dean position and how this progression in these different stages impacted her life. She

stated that:

I have been the vice-dean of administrative affairs at the same time I was holding the

quality affairs position, too. It has opened all the doors for me. The aspects of rules and

regulations are important for you as a vice-dean of academic affairs; it will enrich you. I

consider the quality affairs, academic affairs, and chairmanship of the department [most

important]. In their own words, these were useful for me to reach the Deanship.

Also, Dean 2 indicated that "the candidate should hold such positions before. I think I did such a

good job because I was the department chair, then the vice-dean, and finally the dean of the

college."

Dean 5 indicated that she worked in developing the study plan in her field for three

universities in Saudi Arabia. Also, she had experience as a vice president at University 3 before

she became a dean at University 2.

However, Dean 7 indicated that she was appointed as a dean for six years. She became a

vice president after her deanship position. Then, she decided to return to her previous university

as a faculty member to work on her research. That was her progression at the academic and administrative experience.

> I was the first female dean and the founding dean at University 2 for around six years. I worked the position of vice president for quality and development in the university, and then I returned to my faculty position at University 1. So, altogether in the leadership position maybe seven years, um, six years as a dean, and one and a half years almost as a vice president.

Emergent idea 2: Various positions. The second emergent idea includes holding various positions. Six of the participating deans indicated they worked various positions through their progression to the deanship. Two of the ten participating deans indicated that they had experience in various positions as a consultor in many different fields. "I was there for consultations for almost a year developing the curriculum, recruiting the faculty, and then once established, they appointed me as the first dean at College 4" (Dean 7). Dean 1 indicated that she advanced out of the college a little bit in her journey to deanship; "...after I finished my maximum six years, I was nominated to run the Entrepreneurship position at the University... Then, I nominated myself to be the Dean. The Entrepreneurship and then to the higher level, the Deanship." Dean 3 stated that:

> I was proving my worth in terms of being the head of the organizing committee of a conference. For example, the routine was that the dean organizes this issue, but I did so. The university has given me an important file for two years in a row, which is the exhibition and the international conference of higher education for two years. Generally, I was responsible for the participation of the university. I was the project manager of the university website.

The routine is that the dean organizes this issue; even though she didn't hold the dean position, she played the dean roles to practice for the position.

Emergent idea 3: Committee' service. The third emergent idea includes service on committees. Five of the participating deans discussed their experiences working in committees and how it was necessary in their progression to the deanship. For example, Dean 10 stated that:

After I finished studying for my degree, I was appointed to lead small committees. I started to do these things, then my skills develop, and things started to be organized step by step. We acquire new skills every day and they build over each other.

Dean 6 indicated that she had worked in all nonprofit committee' services before she joined the leadership works. Also, she noted that committee' service was one of the most important things to reach the leadership position. For example, she explained the benefits of participating in these committees:

It is an accumulation process that ends up with having enough information about the institute in which you work. You should have full information about the rules and regulations when you work in small work teams such as the committee of academic guidance, the committee of exams, and all the committee.

Dean 5 also provided an example of external committee' services. She stated, "As I said, my work is always supporting or volunteering either in the Saudi Commission of Engineers or in the Engineers Committee."

Emergent idea 4: Quality work. The fourth emergent idea includes quality work. Six of the ten participating deans shared their reflection on the value of working with quality accreditation affairs and described it as one of the most beneficial opportunities in their progression to the deanship. Also, quality and accreditation work enhanced their knowledge

about administrative tasks. For example, Dean 10 stated, "I consider that [quality affairs] a great change that has become part of my life, and it makes me able to be a leader and to be a dean of the college."

Dean 7 stated, "I worked a lot on quality and accreditation, so I was the chair of the quality department in my college. Then, I think I was asked to become the vice dean at University 1." Another participant indicated, "I achieved success so other institutions contacted me, especially as I worked for the Academic Accreditation and Evaluation Commission" (Dean 5).

Sub-theme 2: Nomination and recommendation. The data collected from the participants included the deans' considerations about the institutional procedures of nominations and recommendations for selecting potential deans. Participants agreed that the job postings would be mailed to all those in the university. "For example, the position of the dean will soon be vacant. Four-months before the current dean ends her two-years term, the declaration will be published and placed for two weeks" (Dean 1). Apart from simply posting the job to all those in the university, nominations would occur through recommendations from former deans, recommendations from other colleagues, and votes from a selection committee.

Six of the ten deans indicated that the previous dean could nominate a potential dean. For example, Dean 3 stated:

the previous dean communicated with me and told me that I was recommended to hold the post of the dean… When my period of deanship finished, the president of the university asked me to recommend a person for this position as I recognized it.

Related to this idea, four of the deans indicated that colleagues can be recommended by one another. Dean 2 stated that "…through asking their colleagues about them to know about their

reputation" she could acquire the deanship. Similarly, Dean 1 reported that the university sends emails to faculty members to evaluate the performance of their dean in the last two years. These colleague emails could be instrumental in the nomination process. Additionally, three of the deans were nominated by the vice president of the deanship position. Dean 7 stated that "the vice president of University 2 requested to meet with me and asked me if I would be able to supervise the initiation of a new College 1 at University 2."

Four of the deans indicated that the selection committee members would review the nomination materials. Afterward, they identified who received the most votes and would arrange interviews for the candidates. The selection committee would then submit its recommendations to the president. The Ministry of Education appoints the dean by the recommendations of the president at the university. The appointment is for two years and is renewable, and the dean must submit a report of her achievements in the college at the end of each academic year. Dean 1 stated that "the minister's decision provides for two years, which is subject to extension of course, because of the selection of male or female deans. The same procedures will be on both of them."

Sub-theme 3: Experiences, skills and qualifications. All ten deans believed that certain experiences, qualifications, skills, and abilities were necessary to attain the dean position. Also, all the deans indicated that the female dean needed to acquire a variety of skills, practices, and professional backgrounds to be qualified. The participants discussed having obtained personal skills and experiences through their progressions which qualified them to achieve the position of deanship. For instance, Dean 1 indicated how "experiences accumulate, with time and experiencing different situations, experiences accumulate. Nobody is perfect as they say, we all make mistakes and learn from our mistakes."

All ten participants also provided insight into the importance of having different crucial skills to be able to accomplish the functions of a female dean effectively. Dean 3 explained:

> I could read, write, and speak in three languages fluently. I'm outgoing. I have individual initiative. Generally, my relationship with people is good. I think that the nature of my personality and previous merit recommended me for this position. Furthermore, I accepted any tasks given to me. Instead, I belong to those who say ok. I don't ask for support except for exceptional cases. I think that these aspects made me the best candidate for this position.

Dean 8 appreciated her unique experiences in studying abroad and considered how it has affected her positively:

> The experience of studying abroad improved and polished my personality. But, I practiced English abroad, and I came here to teach in English. Without studying abroad, I would not nominate myself. You speak English as a second language, but you are going to teach it as a first language for the female students as you want to teach them a scientific material in the right English. The experience of studying abroad was a turning point for me.

Along with gaining confidence in her second language, Dean 8 developed communications skills and management skills, which promoted her for the deanship position.

Notably, the results of the data advised that personality, communication skills, and an ability to work with others are crucial to obtain the deanship. Dean 6 stated that "what makes you reach a position is to be committed, patient, flexible and diplomatic with people."

Nine of deans were holding Ph.D. degrees before working as a dean. Four of the participants indicated that personal qualifications and getting their Ph.D. supported their

advancement to the position of deanship. Dean 1 stated that "the process of selection is limited as the Saudi women who have their Ph.D. are few. Indeed, this aspect increased my opportunity to be recommended for this position." Dean 10 stated, "I held the head of the department when I was a lecturer, I did not even take a doctorate. They assigned me the head of the department because there were no Saudis (with higher degrees)." The limited number of those qualified and holding a Ph.D. increased their opportunity to get leadership positions.

Sub-theme 4: Vision and values. Three participants indicated that a person's vision and values have to be consistent with the organization's vision and goals to obtain the dean position. Also, through their experiences in the institution, they should be aware of the institution's vision and interested in improving the institution to obtain the deanship. Dean 5 stated:

Sometimes, you may say that this person is the best for this position, but his vision and attitude does not align with the university direction at this period. Thus, many reasons lead the president of the university to make a different decision. You may be surprised at the appointment of this person as a dean rather than that one.

Dean 6 states, "if you want to succeed in the leadership positions, your aim should be the institution's interest… Our purpose is to achieve the vision and goals of our institution."
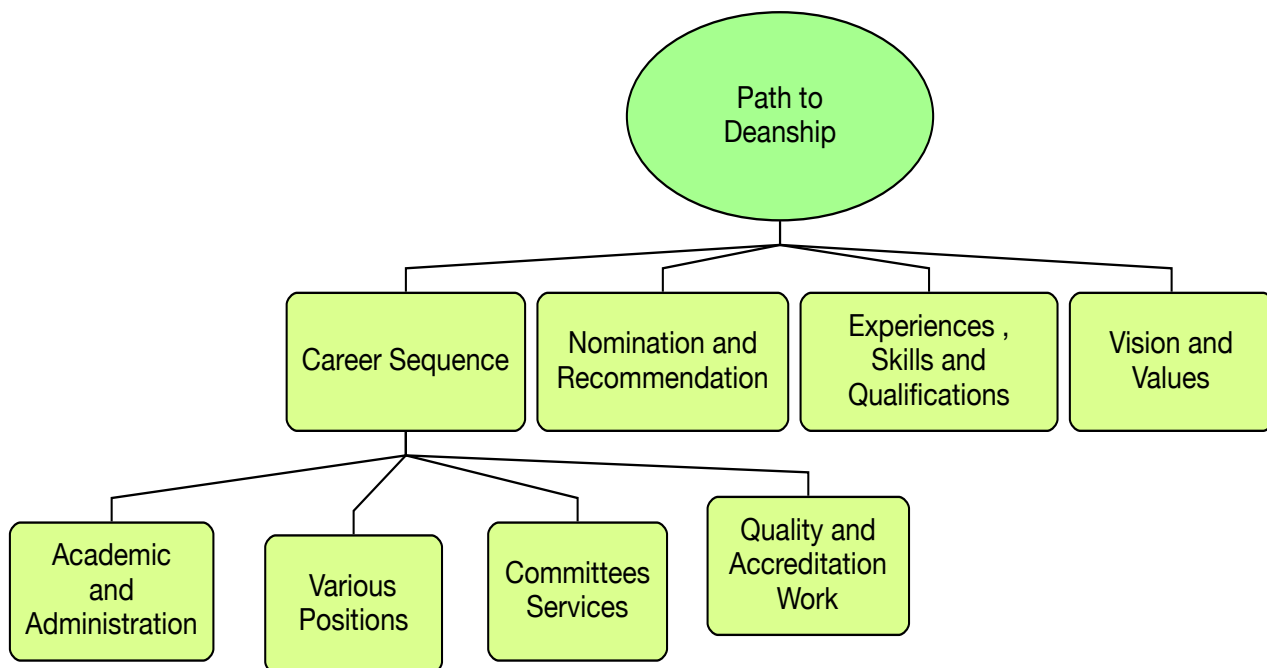
Figure 3. The Path to Deanship.

Theme 2: Structural Supports

The interview question that focused on the organizational structural supports and challenges that affect women's positions was, "What role did the organizational structure play in your Path to the Deanship?" This question focused more specifically on aspects such as the selection process of the leadership programs or the hierarchical structure in their nomination. Questions for the participants regarding this included "How did the structure help you? For example, were there any leadership programs or mentoring programs that helped you? Did the structure present any challenges? For example, did you have difficulty with the bureaucratic aspects?"

The theme produced significant data that suggested structural supports are critical players in the career advancement of a female deanship position. All ten participants shared their

experience at their institutions related to how the organizational structure supported their path to the deanship position. Four sub-themes emerged from this theme: (a) leadership development programs, (b) mentoring and networking relationships, (c) empowerment at the workplace, and (d) benefits of the structural segregation by gender.

Sub-theme 1: Leadership development programs. The deans provided information on programs of leadership in their institutions which enhanced their paths to the deanship. All the deans indicated that their universities were very supportive of them and provided many different types of external and internal leadership training.

Dean 10 indicated that her institution had a "Development Center for Training" for the leadership programs with cooperation from the institutions of administration. "Every week there is a course. It depends on the person that he has to register in the course and if he wants to develop himself. For all the courses offered, if you applied for it and you were accepted, you will go." Dean 2 described the programs that she received to advance in her path to the deanship; "University 3 had an administrative development, and there were programs of excellence from the Ministry…many entities that helped to develop me as a leader."

Dean 3 indicated the advantages of these programs allowed her to be involved with high caliber people such as experienced deans and those who work on faculty development. "There was a program and it's still there in ILC-academic leadership center under the supervision of the ministry." She explained:

> The leadership center that was organized at the ministry level was the most successful
> one from my point of view. These workshops opened new areas for me. Those who
> attended came from the US, UK, and the British Council. They talk about the experience
> of establishments that date back to hundreds of years. The position is easy for them as

everything is like a train that has a specific track. They have their own policies and procedures.

All ten deans explained that they attended several internal programs that were prepared by their university or by the Ministry of Education. Also, five of the deans discussed the KAUST program, which is provided at King Abdullah University to prepare Saudi women leaders for their institutions in Saudi Arabia. They appreciated efforts to offer these programs to them, which affected their future leadership positively by providing knowledge and skills to advance them in their path to the deanship.

Dean 4 indicated that the university president was interested in producing leadership and ran programs that were paid for by the university. She was nominated by the university to attend a heavy educational program called "INSEAD" for a full year. Also, she attended programs from the Ministry of Higher Education "to prepare leaders which we were nominated to get in." Also, KAUST holds an annual training program for leaders and academics at Saudi universities called (KSLP) which is a KAUST Saudi Leadership Program. She explained her experience with KAUST programs:

> There were international instructors from the University of Berkeley. It was rich with information. KAUST asked the university to nominate trainees. The university nominated us for King Abdullah University, who paid for the training. It was very wonderful and one of the best courses sponsored by KAUST that I attended (Dean 4).

Dean 10 "enrolled in several seminars in [her] university or, for example, the Ministry of Education conducted workshops and [she] attended. Some of them were in Riyadh while others were in various cities in Saudi Arabia." The programs offered by the university were great support for her as a new leader in the administrative position to create the best institution. This

program, called Commission for Evaluation and Academic Accreditation, appeared in 2007 or

2008. She provided an example:

> There is a thing that is called the evaluation so the dean said to me, go see what they
>
> have. They spoke about standards and accreditation. With these standards, you have the
>
> best practice. They suggest if you do this, you will become better and walk in the best
>
> universities (Dean 10).

She indicated how these programs played a significant role in changing her status. "There is a

great benefit from some courses, which have affected my life a lot. Courses that I consider

changed my life."

Nine of the participants asserted they were attending external leadership programs out of

the country for any country in the world they chose. It is offered by their university once a year.

Dean 2 stated:

> They give you the authority to attend two or three courses per year. The university
>
> supported me a lot in terms of attending courses but I should search for them. These
>
> courses may be internal or external. I attend courses in England, UAE, and Egypt. The
>
> period of these courses differ. Some courses may be short, while others are long.

The deans believe these preparation programs increase the experience and ability to lead in

higher education and have a significant impact on attaining deanship and other leadership

positions. Dean 8 offered a piece of useful information about how the university creates leaders

through affording them different programs:

> There was the program of ENSEAD with a French university. It aimed to put the leaders
>
> in the atmosphere in which they imitate the tasks of the various leadership positions in
>
> the university. They produced many projects. So, those who joined this program held

leadership positions. Yes, the university believes that there are specific persons for programs. Specific persons who have personal traits and credentials are selected. So, I put those who have these personal traits in the experiences and give them the necessary certificates in order to be qualified for holding these positions.

She appreciated her experiences at these programs:

ENSEAD was one of the most successful experiences in the university. About more than twenty members were taking part in this program, and most of them are holding leadership positions now. It is not limited to the position of the dean. We have chairs of the departments, deans, assistants, and vice deans. We benefited from the leadership programs of the university.

Three of the deans mentioned the other significance for these programs is meeting and learning from the other leaders' experiences at their different universities in Saudi Arabia. "There are people where it is clear that they are leaders and experts. It was interesting to see programs and see how people, I mean in higher levels, how they work in very different styles."

Sub-theme 2: Mentoring and networking relationships. The data suggested that mentoring and support networks are critical players in the career advancement of female deans. The participants provided detailed accounts of how mentoring and networking relationships have influenced their career advancement.

Most of the deans discussed the need of a "specific program for those who would hold deanship positions," with assistance from mentoring. Three of the deans indicated that internal mentoring like "practice and working with the previous dean" facilitated their advancement to the deanship (Dean 8). Likewise, Dean 10 discussed that she had a powerful role model in her

former dean. The support and mentoring helped her in transition and advancement to the deanship.

> She [the dean] was a source of strength, understanding, cooperation, and worked hand in hand with her team. She was acceptable; people loved her; her personality is beloved. Nothing will be without her support. She gave me the opportunity, she gave me the powers and let me go ahead. I would not be able to do this work of development, plans, and implementation without her mentoring.

Additionally, Dean 10 appreciated what she learned from the previous dean. She considered her as a role model:

> No one supported me except my dean, Dr. LB. I learned everything from her. I learned from her administration, writing the letters, writing reports, and her calm. I learned from her how to deal with others, be patient, earn people and not lose them in hardship. I learned everything from her, as my companions, now many people praise my way. I was not so (laughs). I learned this from her. Because she had a strong personality, matronly, and had excellent emotional intelligence.

> However, three deans associated the lack of a direct mentor or a previous dean at their institutions to their lack of managerial experience in higher education. They discussed how they dealt with their lack of experience in administration by connecting with the external mentors. For example, Dean 3 stated:

> How can I develop the resources? Can anyone explain this to me? I went to meet the dean of the college of science at that time. I told him that I need a mentor to guide me. I want a person who is worthy of trust, and I can communicate with him occasionally and tell him

that this problem is a source of nuisance for me, and I don't know how to solve it and deal

with this issue.

She also indicated that she did not see a dean perform the tasks of the dean, but she received

mentoring from her external networking; "I had not a reference point. But I learned from some

persons, and this is so fantastic. If there is a guide, it should be used as a resource" (Dean 3).

Dean 4 also received external mentoring from colleagues and networking. "I was

communicating with the colleagues to consult those who belong to different universities, and

they were cooperating with me well." Dean 1 stated: "also learning from the colleagues attending

these seminars…learning from people surrounding us" was necessary.

Two of the participating deans elaborated on the process by the mentoring of previous

deans for the potential dean through training and practices. Dean 3 considers "a large portion of

the succession plan is to identify the high potential of persons like their personalities and

communication skills." Dean 8 stated, "the succession management is very important in the

establishment. The dean is supposed to select the vice deans. The vice-dean performs the tasks,

and the dean plays a role in nominating him."

Five of the participating deans indicated that workplace relationships provide

organizational support with their female co-workers, bosses, and students, and how these

networking relationships were key contributors that promoted their progress. Dean 10 discussed

how her relationships with her coworkers and working together with them supported her success;

"The dean needs not only skills but must know how to choose the people who work under them.

You must have excellent vice deans and department heads. Without them, you cannot succeed or

do anything." Also, Dean 4 indicated her excellent relationship with the president of University

1, who encouraged her holding the deanship. Her lovely relationship with her students also

facilitated her path the deanship. Dean 3 showed how she built strong relationships with co-workers:

> I sometimes identify a leader and tell her that this is a project for her and her team. It is better to manage peer to peer rather than from top to down. I'm an expert with delegating tasks. Team dynamics are so significant.

Dean 9 stated, "so one needs to have the ability to manage flexibly, understand, and communicate with everybody and build teamwork, as I cannot do the work alone. The cooperation and willingness of the persons around me push the college to make progress."

Sub-theme 3: Empowerment at workplace. The findings identify the importance of empowerment of the deans in structural aspects to facilitate the advance toward the positions. Two emergent ideas are related to empowerment of the deans: (a) providing them with knowledge and opportunities, and (b) participating in decision making in the institution.

Emergent idea 1: providing them with knowledge and opportunities. All the participating deans reported that knowledge of the different roles, rules, and regulations at their institutions contributed toward their rise to the deanship position. All of the deans asserted "the aspects of rules and regulations are important for you; it will enrich you." Acquiring knowledge is necessary "because you as a dean, you cannot say 'I don't know' to people when they ask you. It doesn't work. You can't lead if you don't know" (Dean 10). Dean 9 stated that "being aware of the regulations and rules of the higher education is of great importance."

Dean 4 indicated that the benefit of providing the opportunity to practice different roles and experiences made her better able to read and understand the rules by connecting "the theoretical and practical part of this list of rules… Deanship grants you some positives."

Six of the deans indicated that the Saudi Department of Higher Education issued the main book of regulations and tasks for the universities in Saudi Arabia.

Our main reference is the book or system of higher education that is present in all offices of the officials. There is a difference between the system and the regulations. After getting the institutional accreditation, university employees have guidelines that have spread at the level of our university. They determine the organizational chart of all positions in a way that enables all employees to understand their roles. (Dean 5).

Dean 4 stated:

It [book of regulations] controls all universities. Each university is covered by these regulations, but each university president applies them differently. And so that explains the material, for example, admission and registration, they have their executive rules. Post Graduate Affairs have their executive rules.

Six of the deans explained how having different jobs and taking opportunities to learn about different areas in institutions facilitated their path to the deanship. Deans 6 stated:

It is an accumulation process that ends up with having enough information about the institution in which you work. You should have full information about the rules and regulations when you work in small work teams such as the committee of academic guidance, the committee of exams, and all the committees…before joining in leadership work. Five of the deans indicated that their institutions empowered them by providing them with information on free training programs and scholarships, and then prepared them for the opportunity to become leaders. Dean 6 stated:

I joined University 5 in London to get my Ph.D. program that was funded by University 1 as a scholarship. The empowerment of women may not be clear. But, sponsoring all

these females to get their degrees is a big step towards giving the women their rights. The

first thing is to teach them, then, give them the chance to be leaders.

Three of the deans showed how providing them with clear information about the roles

facilitated their path to the deanship. Dean 6 stated: "before the quality affairs entered the

university in 2007, the job description of the responsibilities and duties at the departments was

not clear."

Emergent idea 2: Participating in decision-making. Five of the participants indicated

that they were empowered to participate in decision making at their institution which facilitated

their advancement. They have the full authority in their colleges to make decisions about their

role as deans and department chairs. Also, they have the right to participate in decision making at

the university council, including the decisions made by voting. Dean 9 stated:

> The decisions that concern the college are often made by the council of the college that
>
> includes the dean, department chairs, and vice deans. It's a collective decision that's made
>
> after a long discussion. They are easy decisions made by the council of the college as it is
>
> the highest point in the structure of the college. We have no relation to the decisions that
>
> are outside the college, such as recruitment and promotion decisions that are made by the
>
> vice president.

Even though the dean has full authority, "some matters need decisions by high bodies such as the

vice president for health affairs and the president of the university to get approval" (Dean 9). But

the matters that a dean has full authority are within their college. Dean 2 stated:

> Honestly, I was practicing as if I am the president of the university in the female student
>
> section. For example, all the matters of the student's affairs, activities, the courses, as well

as programs that affect successive administrative personnel, the members of the faculty, I

had authority of.

She "managed to bring extra authorities for the female students' department as [she] has the skills

of strategic planning." Dean 4 stated:

We meet at the university council, issues are proposed, and we have a discussion, then

we vote. The majority vote is the base for accepting or refusing the decision. Otherwise,

the decision will be withdrawn. Some decisions are under the authority of the president of

the university. For example, one of the powers of the president is to propose what he sees

at the university council.

Sub-theme 4: The benefits of the structural segregation by gender. When discussing

the structural supports, six of the participating deans indicated how the gender-segregation (two

separate campuses for women and men) in the higher education system enhanced their path to

attaining their deanship positions.

Dean 10 described the advantage of being at a women's college in stating that the

institution does not have the ability to choose a man for a position. She explained:

If we [the college] were males and females, I would never reach the Deanship, honestly.

If the colleges are of males, they won't select women. This situation is in all the Saudi

universities. Unfortunately, if the college is male and female, they make a woman the

vice-dean and a man the dean, even if the woman is stronger and better at the position.

Dean 1 indicated:

If we lived in a country other than the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we would not reach this

position due to the absence of a system of gender segregation in the universities of other

countries. Female students have their buildings that are a ten-minute drive away from those of male students.

She described the segregation by gender in Saudi Arabia and the need for it as a part of the essence of Saudi Arabia. "Many things began to change in the last three years. But I think that we will not reach the stage of gender-desegregation in our universities. We still need two different campuses: one for male students and the other for female ones." Also, she described the different ways of meeting with the board of council, which included males and females.

There are particular rooms for men's meetings; Video conferencing is a method for communication between males and females. Male students study in a particular place, whereas female students study in a different place. We do not have mixed lectures, and this does not mean the presence of bureaucracy at work, but it is some challenge that stems from the nature of our country that is changing gradually.

Dean 8 indicated the privilege of being at an all-female university; "We have no men. The whole university has female deans. So, I think that we are distinguished at the level of Saudi, as all deans are women. Still, University 2 has a woman dean who has all rights and authorities of male deans in different universities." Also, she indicated the empowerment of women is clear in the university. "Women have the central council, and men attend via the net. It's another way. On the contrary, I think that our university supports women's empowerment as it is the only female university…"

However, Dean 7 indicated that gender-segregation impacts their roles negatively, due to the women's exclusion from decision making.

I remembered at that time, they offered that I hold the female students' affairs (at University 1). But, when I asked them about the duties and the authorities, they gave me

a role description that wasn't clear, which was to stay in the female students' section and

take care of them, and so. I asked about the decisions, and they told me they have people

for this. So I refused.

Therefore, she thinks the structure of University 2, being a women's university advanced her

path to the deanship. "University 2 is a place for the birth of leaders, but they still need time."

Theme 3: Structural Challenges

In addition to structural supports such as leadership programs and mentors, the

participants discussed structural challenges in their path to the deanship. Questions they

responded to included: "Did the structure present any challenges? For example, did you have

difficulty with the bureaucratic aspects?" These questions produced significant data that

suggested structural challenges can hinder the advancement of a female to a deanship position.

This theme focus area included three sub-themes: (a) the difficulties in the selection

criteria for deans, (b) centralization of the authority of the organizational structure, and (c) the

impacts of occupational gender segregation.

Sub-theme 1: The difficulties in the selection criteria for deans. Eight of the

participating deans (80%) indicated that the selection process used by many universities limited

women from advancing to the top positions. Most of the deans noted "the committee usually has

specific criteria and details" for hiring deans but the information is not given (Dean 1). Another

dean stated:

There was a need for a department chair of department 1 and a department chair of

department 2. There was also a need for a vice-dean for academic affairs and a vice-dean

for quality and accreditation affairs. My colleague and I agreed that I would hold the

positions to gain knowledge. Thus, I selected the position of vice-dean for quality and

accreditation affairs, as I had no background in it. I also have chosen the position of the

head of Department 2 because it was a new department (Dean 3).

On the other hand, one of the participating deans mentioned differences in private and

public universities that could cause challenges in the path to the deanship. Dean 6 indicated:

The evaluation system of the government sector may be poor, and people sometimes get

depressed. The domination [in the public sector] is completely different than the private

sector in which you get a bonus if you work hard. Here, [at the public universities], your

academic field is completely different in regards to the workload and weak evaluation

system.

Six of the deans were frustrated that the universities tend to promote men as deans and

women as vice-deans, even if the women were more qualified for the position. Dean 10 stated:

[Upper-level administrators] appoint a woman into the position of vice-dean, and they

pick a man as their dean, even if she has a powerful leadership presence. She is best

suited for the job at the university. They appoint women as vice deans, even if there are

some colleges where female students represent 70% or 80% of the student body, and

male students represent 20%. As well as female staff represents 70% of employees, male

staff represents 20%, and women can be highly effective at leading those colleges. As

long as you have males and females, they will pick the male as a dean.

Dean 7 asserted:

I think my advantage was I wasn't a department chairman because, in Saudi Arabia, the

distribution of authority in different universities prevents a lot of women from becoming

a department chairman or a vice-dean or a dean. Because of the unique opportunity at the

all-female University 2, when I went there, I was appointed immediately as a dean.

Three of the deans indicated that some Saudi higher education institutions are looking for women who execute the orders instead of being leaders. Dean 3 mentioned:

I think that the female deans' position is different. Many of them are just performers who are away from being decision makers . In the hiring process, [upper-level administrators] choose candidates who have weak characters to be able to control them in the workplace and to ensure that these candidates do not cause them any troubles.

Dean 3 discusses another criteria of selection:

How men work is entirely different, as I noted. [Men prefer to hire submissive employees], so they search for candidates who meet their needs and instructions and those who do not get them into trouble.

Dean 4 also confirmed that she felt that deanship was performing orders that come from the higher administration more than being an independent leader:

I see it sometimes as an execution work. People said the administrative work is leadership, supervision, and implementation, but I don't see that honestly. I see it as carrying out orders; the dean didn't reach the leadership job. Deanship needs time to be leader.

Sub-theme 2: Centralization of the authority of the organizational structure. All ten of the participating deans described how their higher education institutions' centralization affected their authority. They explained how they must receive permission from upper-level administration before making any critical decisions, which, in turn, delays their work.

Some of the deans were upset about the enormous responsibilities they have compared to the limited authority they have. Dean 4 stated:

I have great responsibilities but, I have limited authority to handle these responsibilities. For example, if we are going to host someone we cannot do that independently, we need to contact the university's administration to have formal correspondence and approvals from the university's administration. These procedures delay the work.

Deans 2 shared how the responsibilities and authorities should be equal. She stated:

They[upper-level administrators] give you some power, such as hiring and [signing] contracts and finishing everything. But, I find that the faculty members are not under my authority.(be upset).You give me the authority to renew the contracts; it is the responsibility of the dean. Thus, this is inconsistent. So, the responsibilities and authorities should be equal. You should not give me more authority than responsibilities. That means you may tell me that I'm responsible for the security and protection of the department of the female students, but you do not give me the authority to close the door, appoint, expel and do something. If you do not give me authority, what shall I do with my responsibility? Is it logical to have responsibility without authority? (be angry).

The results of the data analysis indicated that women's campuses were under the supervision, organization, and authority of the men's campuses. Dean 1 showed that her authority depends on her dean male counterpart if he gives her the power to manage the women's campuses.

Our authorities may change in case of appointing a new dean. A male dean may limit the scope of our authorities and control the study plan, the appointment of committees, and exam questions. Another male dean may give us full freedom. He may argue that we have our campus and that we are allowed to do what we want without extremism while still related to [each other] at the same time.

Four of the deans indicated that they do not have direct authority over resources for their work, and they must first ask male superintendents for access. Dean 2 noted that "there was no difference [in having power] except [in managing] for the financial affairs, and men in their campus supervised them. But our requirements were met." Another dean indicated that she does have authority and thinks that the deanship is a strong position, but she believes that the deans should have the authority to meet their colleges' needs. Dean 2 stated an example:

> If I want a [new] building for the women's campus, [the male administrator] asks me why do you want this building for the female students. He adds that we already have such buildings. My response needs to be ready. I have all the required numbers and statistics of the female students. So, I will explode (be upset) if they don't meet my requirements within two or three years.

Dean 3 started:

> When I ask the vice president about my budget, he told me that I should ask [them my needs, and they will provide me needs]. Frankly, I don't like working in this way. You should tell me the exact amount of money that is available for me to work according to this budget. I realized that authorities differ entirely from the decisions or even from any job description in terms of financial affairs. The issue is that you go to the vice president as if he was your father who would be satisfied with you, and in this case, he gives you what you need someday, or he would be dissatisfied with you, and in this case, he promises that he will support you but he does not to keep his promise. Later, you would find out that the same demand that he refused to provide you with, he has already given to another dean.

She explained the challenges of access to resources within the university:

The process of recruitment is so complicated, especially when it comes to employing Saudi individuals. For example, we stayed for about four years without hiring any female instructors. Because someone was purposefully misleading the employees' statistics. This individual modified the employees' statistics to indicate that there was a sufficient number of women administrators. So, how can I inform and convince the university president [of what had happened]? [particularly the fact that] these statistics are false even if they're brought from the vice president.

Some deans asserted that financial management is linked to the Ministry of High Education. The issue of changing policies has to do with the Ministry of Higher Education. Many universities in Saudi Arabia have not been given the authority to manage their finances, but they are about to become privatized and have an independent budget. Dean 8 thinks it is time to give this authority to deans because "they have to experience, training, and to get involved in it." As she stated:

Financially, we don't have much authority. I have the power to manage this workplace. But, I developed a new project and submitted it to the upper level administration to gain approval and funding. I'm not responsible for the budget, and we lack this authority. I don't think this is gender bias, as all members of the university are women. They [upper level administrators in the Ministry of Higher Education] are not sure that we can manage a budget that includes millions of dollars. I requested for some projects, and they're achieved by the body concerned. But it is different from being responsible for a specific budget and submitting reports about it, as well as managing it. So, it doesn't act in the interests of the deanship. It's not there yet.

Five of the total number of participants reported that the organizational structure of governmental universities has rules and regulations imposed by the Ministry of Higher Education. Even the president, vice president, dean, or vice-dean must commit to these commands. Two of the deans think that there are problems raised from the way individuals see and interpret rules, which needs a lot of practice and experience in addition to supervision and evaluation from the university. Dean 5 thinks "most Saudi universities need this." As she stated that:

> If you want to develop a position or something, you can't; there are restrictions. Universities have lists of rules imposed by the authorities of upper-level administration. The Higher Education Ministry enacts rules and regulations regarding how the university operates and organizes its workflow. The implementation and application of rules and the system in the university are what causes problems. Administrators need to continually monitor the implementation of these rules within their workplace, see how they work, effectively evaluate their application, and eventually work to develop them.

Dean 4 noted the bureaucracy that influences the work environment negatively. "Sometimes you have many obstacles such as bureaucracy. The list of rules itself is inflexible, or you meet inflexible people who apply these regulations inside the university."

The results of the data showed the different structural aspects of these institutions that make it more difficult for the path to a deanship. Five deans discussed the centralization, which forced them to do some practices that affected their performances. Dean 3 stated:

> … centralization may take some authorities from you in some cases without any reference to this. For example, there is a part of the academic accreditation affairs that has to do with the financial aspects. The dean should have financial authorities. For

example, the dean should draw the draft budget of the college. The proposal is in line

with the needs and requirements of the departments and faculties, such as maintenance,

projects, facilities, etc. I told them in one of the stages that this is what I want.

The bureaucracy in the work environment that they [deans] faced was due to lack of confidence

in their abilities to give them powers to make their decisions. Two of the deans provided an

example of decisions regarding determining student numbers of each department in the colleges.

Dean 5 stated:

My authorities were restricted. Maybe, this back to the nature of the emergent university

that tends to be central. Thus, some colleges became executive colleges rather than (She

laughs) being independent colleges. For example, who is responsible for determining

student to faculty ratios in classrooms. For instance, College 3 assigns each faculty

member a number that ranges from one to 15 students maximally. But they ask us to

increase this number to 20. Our college is not theoretical. I cannot put 50 students in one

class. I cannot ask students to come and join the 50 students at a design studio. The

nature of college is different. They do not understand, but they think that they can enforce

the faculty.

Dean 5 also discussed how the deans' authorities are different depending on their workplace, and

the challenges they face in that situation.

The environment was not suitable for me. I came from an environment in which no one

[the upper level administrators] can enforce the college to do something. The college has

to determine [the student to faculty ratios in the classroom]. Here, they do not want the

issue of quality. The goal of the president of the university and the vice presidents is

good. They want to achieve quality. Let's say when they force colleges to stick to the

system without distinguishing between the identities of the colleges as differentiating

between the college of science and practical college, this is not right — one law imposed

on all colleges.

Two of the participating deans mentioned that the deans have authority in their colleges, but they do not have confidence in themselves to practice their powers without asking males. However, three of the deans indicated that the higher management do not trust the women deans and do not give them authority to make any critical decisions.

I don't think they have full confidence. I mean that it's a women university, that you have all these powers. But for male deans here (at university 1 of men and women), has everything, has powers, because the university president gives them authorities there. So, I give you authority, don't give you powers? Do you deserve these powers? Or do not deserve it? Then note that I am a dean among 15 deans, different colleges, and there is a difference in thought and disparity in the tasks and variation in the quality. So, the literary colleges are different than scientific colleges, different than health colleges. It was a little bit difficult for the president.

However, Dean 3 indicated that they trust women in giving them work to get the perfect work, but this depends on the supervisor's ethics and if he acknowledges their work or not. Dean 3 suggests that:

They prefer assigning prestigious tasks to women to get wonderful results. But, it is up to the morals of the person who assigned women these tasks. This person may attribute this success to his management of the faculty without mentioning their names at all.

Dean 7 addressed work stress and how the dean receives an unfair pay that does not match his effort. As she indicated, there is much bureaucracy that prevents the dean from

handling their work tasks, so a lot of male or female individuals, especially women, left the deanship early. She stated:

I mean maybe the period of me being in my deanship for six years outlasted many of the deans in the other colleges. At University 2, they remain for two years then they stop. A lot of deanships ended due to the extreme pressure within their roles. It doesn't deserve all of these sacrifices. I think bureaucracy, is one of the problems because our education system does not reward the deanship. Abroad let us say the simplest is the money rewards. Here, the payment does not match the dean's effort that the dean abroad feels that this is his kingdom which he is calling the shots for. After two years, they say "why I did agree to do that heavy work". Maybe what made me persevere is that it was an emerging college, and I wanted to make sure that the first batch is graduating.

All ten participating deans explained the stress inherent in their work as one of the challenges that female deans experience, which may affect their productivity. Four of the deans mentioned that the negative feelings are due to the heavy workload, and how various responsibilities and tasks made them feel unsatisfied about their performance. The lack of qualified female administrators that they have in their colleges increases the workload on them. These pressures potentially affected their continuity in the deanship position. Dean 4 stated:

The work is very demanding and exhausting, and you cannot see results quickly; this also causes you a kind of frustration. I knew I did so, and so, I do not deserve all this. Other people who you are working with do not value this work, do not recognize the importance of this work. Let us say they possibly lack seriousness, or they are somewhat selfish. The person did not do his duty so that is [what is] causing the delay[work]. Things like this make you a little frustrated. For example, the horse is running in a race at

maximum speed, but, still, it has a long way in a race. I mean, if you don't have support

from the college, you keep giving the best of what you can but, for how long you keep

giving?

Also, Dean 3 stated:

I reached the stage of burning out [which is extreme exhaustion that occurs as a result of

constant stress due to holding multiple positions and meeting their excessive demands].

Due to being a vice-dean, department chair, website project manager, responsible for the

exhibition and high education conference and member of the faculty at the same time, I

was required to teach and do research. Moreover, I became the manager of T. without

being consulted. I had to perform this task, and this is the merit of the things that I was

given.

Four of the deans mentioned that they felt pressured due to working on building the

foundations of a new college, which required them to establish new programs, develop new

curriculums, and recruit new staff from the beginning with the other responsibilities of the dean.

Dean 10 stated:

The college just emerged and there are a lot of stumbles, and we were not happy with the

performance of the College. I have a lot of responsibilities (laughing). But this current

stage is, of course, a critical stage because we were a college of education and suddenly,

they changed it to a college of science.

Two of the participating deans shared different experiences with the pressure of conflict

in the work environment. Dean 3 stated:

We have a culture of fear additional to the compliment. Let's assume that I had a

problem with one of the vice presidents in the university and quarreled with him strongly.

Our quarrel was not limited to simple things or having different opinions. Instead, it was a big quarrel. Then, I talked with one of the female deans and expressed my opinion. I said that no one would be able to work with this man for so and so. This female dean looked at me without providing any comments on what I said as she was afraid that I might tell other people about what she said, even though she is not involved in the problem [or] she was afraid that other people would assume that she agreed with me. Frankly, these situations are annoying. One expects that persons who have higher scientific qualifications and certificates are supposed to deserve such posts. But what I noticed was that a lot of them were afraid of making any decisions. Their integrity, credibility no longer exists. Many people may criticize me for many things, but I think that the real warrior is the one who doesn't feel afraid of telling the truth. I always tell them that what makes me distinctive is that I'm not looking forward to being a dean as I realize that it would be just a short period, and it does not necessarily yield something for a university.

Sub-theme 3: The impact of the occupational gender segregation. Interestingly, a few deans (30%) discussed the negative side of gender segregation as opposed to the positive side discussed by several deans previously. Three of the participating deans indicated that the structure of higher education in Saudi Arabia directly affected their roles or challenged their advancement. For example, It took the women away from decision making. Dean 2 stated:

[The upper-level administration segregated the higher education institutions by gender in Saudi Arabia, is located in men's campuses, and they oversee the women's campuses]. The difficulties were related to [the physical separation in location, which makes communication between these campuses complicated]. For example, the female students'

campus is not presented at some committees and councils [in men's campus]. But when

female administrators knew that we had the right to be presented, we overcame this

situation and got presented. I think that the system of gender segregation may lead to

misunderstanding with [male administrators] in the men's campus, without face-to-face

interaction.

Dean 9 described how her experience at University 2 is different than the previous work at

University 1, which she had direct contact with male faculty members at University 1, and she

added that other women were attending meetings via the internet at Saudi universities.

When I became responsible for the postgraduate studies, almost 90 % of my team were

males. There are male patients, colleagues, and administrators at the college. So we don't

have all these things. The process was very easy at the College of DD. Now, I suffer from

the presence of only women employees at University 2. I believe that balance is of great

significance. I think that the presence of male and female employees in the same location

is healthy.

Dean 7 stated:

McKenzie company for planning. It's Internationally famous. He (the president of

University 1) brings McKenzie's company that made a strategic plan for University 2.

Before our vision, (the new vision of the country, the "Saudi Arabia's Vision for 2030), it

was one of the things that they had when they saw the strategic plan; I remember a page

of pages that was very clear that your hierarchy needs to fixed. Because you have

women's campus living in a second world [very separated from] men's campus who are

making decisions, and these (women campus) are executives. They want her to listen to

them and do the work (be upset). Even the selection in the past was the selection of

women who listen more; she isn't a leader; she is excellent. Why? Because that's what's

needed. What are her powers? So, they were proposing three proposals that you

combined to the university. This talk was nine years ago, you integrate the university, and

you choose the best person, either a man or woman, to hold the leadership of the

institution. I do not mean that to combine the male and female students in the same

buildings, ... But I mean that the organizational structure to be one.

Theme 4: Cultural Supports

The deans were asked about how their culture supports them and the cultural challenges

via the questions: "What role did Saudi culture play in your path to the Deanship? How did your

culture help you? For example, did you feel support from those who feel women should have

more access to jobs, such as the Deanship? How did your culture present any challenges? For

example, did you have difficulty with stereotypes or bias?" Three sub-themes emerged from this

theme focus: (a) support by the culture of organization, (b) support by the culture of family and

friends, and (c) the absence of a gender wage gap.

All ten participating deans described how their experiences with culture supported their

advancement in their careers at leadership roles in higher education.

Sub-theme 1: Support by the culture of organization. Five of the participating deans

indicated that they were supported by the culture of their organization toward the position of the

deanship. Dean 2 believes that a woman is respected when she gets a higher position. She

indicated that she received all the necessary support from male colleagues at work. They

attempted to help her overcome all difficulties and weaknesses that confronted her. She noted

that higher education qualifications, which were only held by a few women at the time, advanced

her to the position of dean. She stated, "Yes, as a dean, I'm responsible only for the department

of the female students. So, my presence is welcomed due to my great role in taking care of the girls."

Also, some deans believed that the environment was very supportive, and there was high confidence in their ability to manage. For example, Dean 10 indicated that she had never seen any problem with the culture at her institution. She indicated:

> There was no cultural conflict – the environment was very supportive, and I didn't have any problem as a dean. Even when I am a dean, on the contrary, I find all the respect. The president of the university very much believed in us, and he always tells me that there is nothing like a woman's work, and our work is always the best work.

However, when Dean 3 was asked about how culture supported her path to the deanship, she stated:

> I think that it [culture] affected me to some extent. One of my merits is that I'm not a stickler for details. I ignore all things that I do not like as if they did not occur at all. I joined the municipal council with my colleague. We were the only women included in thirty persons, which gave me power. I had to be cruel to some extent in order not to allow anyone to take away my rights.

Additionally, Dean 3 believes that she did not face any obstacles with the Saudi culture, and she was too far ahead of her time throughout her whole career. She indicated that she had already made significant advancements before talking about the issue of women's empowerment. Dean 1 indicated that the culture of structural segregation supported her advancement to the deanship. Also, she noted how the culture developed from restricting women's advancement to promoting women holding higher positions such as deputy ministers. She stated:

What helped me is that we study in separate places. If we had only one university for male and female students and the positions were open for men and women, all the higher positions of the university would be held only by men. As you may note, all ministers were men in the past. Now, there are some female vice and assistant ministers. There are also a lot of women in Shura Council (which is a legislative body that advises the King on matters that are significant to Saudi Arabia). These women are holding such positions that were never found in the past.

Sub-theme 2: Support by culture of family and friends. The participating deans mentioned that they had cultural support from family, and friends were useful in their path to the deanship. Some deans, when asked about how culture supported them, indicated that they did not have any problem with the culture in their life, considering their family culture. For example, Dean 1 shared that she was from an educated family. Her father, husband, and brothers were very supportive in her advancement toward the dean position.

I have never met anyone who underestimates women or reduces their value. On the contrary, they were supportive and supportive of my higher education. Even when I got married, the first condition for my husband was that I complete my higher education, and my work is something essential. He has to agree with my work and study as a condition of marriage, so it is supportive. My father noticed that my studies, completion of my higher studies, my research and my work is one of the most important things. Something important. You should never give it up. So, we didn't have that culture in the family (Dean 10)

Dean 4 also mentioned that her parents and husband were enthusiastic and encouraged her to take the deanship. They were the reason for the acceptance of the deanship position. She stated:

I was working on my scientific research, and I did not want something to interrupt me. They asked me to try it, I mean, [her parents said to her] you know, why do you say no? You should serve the country and the university. My husband says the same thing. He says, do not be afraid, we are with you, and we will support you. I see neither society nor culture itself stood in my way. The culture of my family and my husband, too, was very supportive.

Dean 8 indicated that she had never felt that women do not have the same opportunities as men in Saudi Arabia. She shared her experience in a big family with a unique culture. She stated:

I have never felt that my brother is better than me (the tone of her voice was sharp). So, my upbringing made no difference. Instead, we were enjoying things that my brother was lacking. So, I was raised (the tone of her voice was sharp) without feeling that we have to be better than men. You collaborate with men at your work in the establishment, your personal life, and your relationships. We are not against each other. I had never felt this when I worked in a female-dominated environment. I don't need to compete with a man concerning the position since I was working at a female college of education. I didn't have to prove myself in a position before a man, although this existed in some places. If I had grown up in a different family, the situation might have been different as we have a lot of families that prefer men to women and think that men have more benefits and authority than women. But these have not existed at the level of my family or work.

Dean 7 noted how her family culture supported her. She stated:

If I were following the culture, I would not take the leadership role. I think my family culture affected me. I am the daughter of a military man, and my father is stubborn. It

seems that I take after him. I think the challenges that I faced because of the Saudi culture were a lot, but I overcame them because I was a bit stubborn.

Also, some deans believed that different groups in Saudi society were supportive and not against women's advancements, such as friends and society as a whole. For example, Dean 9 thinks that she is lucky as she had a small group of friends who fight for their rights as women. "Saudi society includes those who are with you and those who are against you. So, it depends." As she mentioned, her environment of the place that she grew up in it in the western regain of Saudi was very supportive.

This may stem from my environment. The regions, such as the middle and the eastern ones, play a role in this connection. The western province may be liberal to some extent. It may be natural in our environment that females act like males as long they are respectful of the rules. So, they can hold leadership positions.

Dean 6 indicated that the culture of society was supportive. She stated:

If the society had not accepted this, females would not have nominated themselves. Even the higher authority or the government has already allowed for this. On the other hand, the male-dominated committee would not have accepted the females. Culture is not against having females in leadership. It is just the stereotype adopted and the method of marketing.

Sub-theme 3: The absence of a gender wage gap. Two of the deans indicated that there was no discrimination in the salary of males and females. All received the same wages, and they never faced a problem with a gender-based wage gap. For example, Dean 1 stated that:

In spite of holding the same posts, men's salaries are higher than women's in some countries, such as America and England. Such a difference is not found in Saudi. The

assistant professor's salary is 16,000 in Saudi universities regardless of gender. The deputy minister's salary is 20,000, regardless of gender. I don't know their salaries exactly, but there is no gender gap concerning salaries in Saudi.

Theme 5: Cultural Challenges

The resulting data finds that cultural difficulties in regard to beliefs and customs are significant in women's lack of success in becoming deans. All ten participating deans reported that they have experienced cultural bias or stereotypes. They addressed different cultural perspectives about women, which affected their path to leadership positions. Also, the culture of women in Saudi Arabia is continuing to change with each year. This theme focus area included two sub-themes: (a) the impacts of the stereotypes and (b) gender bias in the workplace.

Sub-theme 1: The impacts of the stereotypes. Deans indicated that they had experienced many different kinds of stereotypes, which hindered their advancement into a deanship. Dean 7 described the most common stereotype in Saudi Arabia as the belief that females are supposed to be in separate places from men, or "isolated spaces," and that this prevents them from sharing in critical decisions. She acknowledged that this is common and a clear tradition in Saudi society. She mentioned an example of private places for women and for men in Saudi Arabia:

> …like isolated clinics for women and isolated clinics for men while you are supposed to be in mixed universities. So, you're the vice dean of the female student's affairs, and you don't have to be in the big decisions. [they say] The big decisions, leave it to us[men]. You are only doing the graduation ceremony for girls, and if there is a girl who is crying, take care of her. Make sure everything's all right. And the things that are related to

affairs, as a big decision, leave it to us the males. But there still some steps that we didn't

finish yet.

She addressed the kind of cultural beliefs that were not acceptable, like for women to be at the same meeting place with men. "So when the foreign advisor came, I went with them [other colleagues, man, and woman] to attend with them (the meeting), and he said, Doctors [meaning her and another woman's colleague], I will attend and tell you. So also this is one of their cultures."

> Two of the deans indicated that there is a great deal of cultural bias about women being in leadership positions and feeling that they are unable to lead in a higher position. This is because they are used to dealing with women who are only secretaries just because they are women. Dean 3 described her experience with this stereotype:

> They (the men) will deal with you as a secretary, whatever your administrative post. One of the stereotypes is that they argue that women should be at home; I did not feel this. I felt that they deal with a woman as a secretary.

However, Dean 5 shared a different idea about how in Saudi Arabia's culture, women are viewed as teachers, not as leaders. It did not accept women declaring majors in subjects other than education. She mentioned that society supports women in teaching but not in other jobs.

> Because we are deans at universities, and you know the community considers us as a teacher, the community accepts you to be at the university. So the community encourages you to go to either a university or a school, but not to other jobs. I mean, it does not support you to go to some jobs as it supported you in teaching.

The participating deans indicated that there are negative beliefs about women's ability to be a leader in Saudi Arabia that affect their advancement to the deanship positions. For instance,

Dean 6 also stated the expectations and stereotypes about women as present in the culture. She mentioned how the men still often expect that most women are the same at their incapability to hold a leadership position:

> In Saudi Arabia, specifically because of the role that we went through, it is not very clear to men what women are capable of. What are their abilities? I mean, as I tell you, he wants to encourage the woman just because she is a woman, not because she's capable. I mean you are like women x and x like women y, all of you are women, although he did not say this to his colleagues of men, x not like y, y not like x of males. Someone is perfect, and this one knows that, and this one does that. But, you're all women (she means that he thinks all the women are the same). So far, they've not reached the stage that they recognize if I am capable or not. However, it is a little bit easier for me because I'm in the medical field. But still, the Saudi man is a Saudi man (laughing).

Also, Dean 6 mentioned the other kind of negative stereotype that made them lose confidence in themselves and their abilities. They think they are not supposed to have any authority as a woman. She mentioned the challenges that she faced at the women's university. The women there believed they are not capable of having power because they are women. So, the effect of the culture is that women possibly perform their work according to that stereotype.

> Powers were not clear, but I believed that the authorities have taken, not given. For me, it's clear, for them, it's not clear. But for me, I was comparing myself there [University 1] as a dean like any dean in the college at University 1 or others. While those who are there in University 2 were a little bit like NO, stop. How do you take these powers? This authority is supposed to be a little bit limited. So, one of the things is that when you are in a women's-only society, they believe that they are a little less than men.

Sub-theme 2: Gender bias in the workplace. Four of the deans indicated that gender bias is one of the elements that affects women's advancement in the path to leadership — the culture's gender bias against women is likely to affect women's psyches. For example, Dean 2 stated that:

> I wish that the leader would be able to lead either as a male or a female dean. I hope that we would not say that this is a male leader, and that is a female leader. I wish that who leads, whether vice or president, who leads an establishment, a factory, or a university would be the one who deserves and has the ability, potential, and competence, regardless of being a male or female. I wish we would reach that day on which there is no difference between a male or female in this connection. I wish we would get rid of this view and anyone, whether a male or female, who is efficient, should hold this post as long as he or she has the required skills.

Some deans note how the change did not allow women to appear in leadership positions due to being a woman as a part of the culture. However, now it is allowed. Dean 3 indicated how this transition could affect women's psyches, too, because Saudi society informed women that their leadership is unsuitable, but now women's leadership is considered perfect and required. She stated:

> People clap at the end of the event. I think that women should view themselves as independent persons who have the right to participate in the process of community-building. This is stronger than the voice of society from my point of view. This society did not allow women to appear properly. I think that our generation has a good excuse in case they have schizophrenia [she means unable to think effects] when the person who tells you that it is forbidden is the same one who tells you that it is excellent now! (she

means when they warned her of doing something, then, they came back and encouraged

her to do that thing again, which makes one disturbed)! This [culture] is funny, and we

have already noted this for a long time. So, I think that this aspect [culture] did not play

any role.

As she stated, the effect of culture changed as qualified women were allowed to present their

leadership skills:

I note that there are efficient women in terms of culture, knowledge, presence.

Nowadays, they have already begun to give them the opportunity. What is this

opportunity? It is an opportunity to present, rather than that of empowering them. As

soon as they had presented, we began to say "yes." They are present. They have

developed their skills for a long time, but they haven't been allowed to appear.

Another dean mentioned the example of her experience with gender bias and discrimination:

You as a company, when you want to hire a doctor, you will have a doctor, a man or a

woman, or you say I want to see who's the most competent, often. Except if you have

separated clinics, whether it was a man or woman, you are often looking for the ones who

are qualified. Qualified, that means that he or she learned especially. That means the

things provided for him are similar to the ones provided for the girls. It means that the

college that produced him must be the same. I mean, now we are in a time that a

company [she means any human resources supposed to look for the qualified person

either he/she was a woman or man] want to hire a human resources man-manager or

woman manager! I want to see who's qualified! (Dean 7).

Three of the deans mentioned their experiences with gender biases and the effect of the gender

bias on their advancement in the leadership position. Specifically, they said there are

discriminatory practices against women who wear a full hijab (covering their face), and that there are stereotypes about these women being unable to lead. Dean 7 stated:

The committees of deans are all of these typically male. All of them were males. I remember the first time that I attended the meeting, sometimes they put me in a separate room and connect with them through the video conference. Sometimes they let me in to sit with them together, and sometimes they put her chair be in the same room but at the end of the room (she's upset). They're not mean, bad things. But they don't know how to act with me.

Then she explained how she dealt with this situation:

So, after the second meeting, I asked University 2 to invite them [the dean men] to a meeting at our university. So, I can tell them how to behave. When they come, I use one conference room. I put the chairs at reasonable distances from each other. Also, the dining hall has Sections for females if you want and a section for males … I remember that when I was going to go, they were on the bus and I was in a car behind them. But when we invited them to our university, I got with them on the same bus, and I got out with them, but I'm in the section on the same bus, and I showed them how the world isn't hard.

Theme 6: Family Supports

The interview questions that led to the next focus area, family support and family challenges to advancement to dean position, were "What role did your family play in your path to the Deanship? How did your family help you? For example, did you have relatives support your time away from home or help with your children? How did your family present any

challenges? For example, was it difficult to balance your time and resources, or did any of your family members object to your work?"

All ten deans indicated that they have received full support from their families. Without their family supporting them, they would not be able to hold the deanship position, and they would not have been able to advance in their leadership roles.

All the deans shared their various experiences about their families assisting in facilitating their path to the deanship. Eight of the deans indicated that they received support from their husbands. Dean 10 shared how her family helped her to reach the deanship. She indicated that her husband was a strong supporter of her. She believes that she can deal with balance between work and home. She noted that she had an advantage; she had an understanding husband and when she got to the deanship, her daughters were in high school. She thinks the most important thing is that you should balance your time. She indicated that her daughters replaced her in the house when she was working or traveling. When she reached the stage of deanship, her daughters and sons were old enough to take responsibility for themselves. She also mentioned her dad's support. When she went to America on a long trip, her father stayed with her children. Dean 2 also indicated that her mother and husband played a significant role in her path to leadership roles:

> My family took into consideration that I was busy for a long time. My relatives did not get upset with me in case of not attending their events. My mother replaced me in case of absence. All my relatives supported me.

Four of the deans indicated that the family supported them by believing in their abilities to make a difference and being proud of them.

When I talk about my husband, I say he is so supportive, and he believes in me. He is such a patriot. When a university needs me, he says, go and do your social duty. My father is supportive and proud. Thank Goodness, the whole family is so supportive. My siblings and my father are supportive, but I am independent. I do not need support. I rarely need it (Dean 5).

Another dean indicated she had excellent assistance from her uncle, and he was the closest person to her in terms of support. He was always encouraging since she was a student, as his major was the same as hers. He always motivated her and believed in her potential to get any new chance that was offered for her. Also, her relatives were a great source of encouragement for her. They were proud of her.

My family brought me a tree that I named "the tree of deanship" to celebrate my deanship at home. I planted the Youssef Effendi tree in the garden. When the leaves of this tree begin to fade, I say that the period of my deanship may end soon. So, I should search for another thing. My relatives are enthusiastic and support this matter. (Dean 3).

Dean 7 mentioned the critical role that her family played in her advancement to the deanship:

We are in a society that helps in everything. I mean, my mother, it's helped a lot, of course. My daughter has helped a lot, also. If I have to travel, they would stay with the kids if I need to travel, so that helped a lot.

Dean 6 also believes that if you don't have assistance from your family, you will not be capable of attaining the deanship; "They believe in what you are doing. If there is no support from family, friends, and community, no one can continue."

Theme 7: Family Challenges

All ten deans indicated their experiences with the family challenges that they faced in their path to the deanship. This theme's focus includes two sub-themes: (a) family obligations and work-life balance and (b) feeling guilty being away from family.

Sub-theme 1: Family obligations and work-life balance. All ten deans indicated that they have struggled to balance obligations to their families and their work responsibilities and how this struggle could have made it impossible to be promoted. Dean 6 stated that "the big challenge for females who have leadership positions was the family duties. You have to work at home besides your job. Mother is still responsible for her family no matter how helpful the family is." Dean 1 believes that balancing with family commitments was a significant challenge. Also, Dean 3 indicated that she wishes that she reached a state of balance between work and life. Dean 7 stated:

> The college took a lot of my time. The University took a lot of my time. I think without the support of family, it would be challenging to play this role. So, your kids have to be patient, and your husband has to be very patient.

Dean 8 indicated the importance of balance between work and house responsibilities, which could affect the house duties negatively. "You have a lot of pillars. If you work, you want to destroy neither your home nor your potential to be a leader. I try to be neutral. There is no bias for any side." She mentioned that she was offered many leadership positions, which required a lot of traveling. But she refused because the family means a lot to her.

> Because some positions require continuous travel, yes, I would not go. I would not take it. I received many offers to take up leadership positions that require continuous travel to attend conferences and meetings. Firstly, I don't like continuous travel. Secondly, I don't

like being away from my family many times. But if it were reasonable, there would not

be a problem.

Three of the deans described how they sometimes spent all day out of the house until night and were exhausted upon returning home. Dean 4 stated, "Sometimes, if we have an opening ceremony in the college," her work would last from the morning until ten o'clock at night.

Sub-theme 2: Feeling guilty being away from family. Four of the deans indicated the responsibilities and time pressure made them feel frustrated, and they blamed themselves for being away from the family. This made them think about not staying in their leadership positions. Dean 4 stated:

I just felt guilty as I felt sorry for my family, so I said two years are enough. Some deans

extend the deanship time to four years. The deanship is only two years, but some deans

extend it to four, and there are cases in which deans extend them to six.

Dean 7 described her kids' feelings and her feeling, which caused her to be unwilling to work for an extended period as a result of her family responsibilities and her substantial work responsibilities.

The most important thing is that it is their [her kids] feel that I'm shared with so many

different people...I think that's the important thing. I think the major obstacle that I had

was my own guilts that I'm delaying in meeting their needs. And I think that's the primary

issue that females have. Although I have to compare myself to somebody with the one

who's a housewife and she's out of the house all day long at invitations, maybe she is

farther away from her children than me. (She was frustrated about her family and leaving

her kids, so she decided to return back to faculty work). It takes a lot, and I think when I

decided to go back to faculty… So I felt that I give a lot to the institution, and now I think it's time that I give some to myself.

Dean 3 felt that she was short of her family's needs for a long time due to her hard work outside the house. She hopes to be able to spend more time with them.

I was a workaholic at specific stages. I'm a survivor who recovered from burning out. I worked so hard that I reached the stage of complete burning…So, my family realizes that it is a vital thing for me. I know that I fell short of my family's needs concerning time. I wish I would have spent much time with them. But, they have never put pressure on me.

However, a dean indicated that her family circumstances were a big challenge, which compelled her to choose between family and work. After giving it a great deal of thought, she decided to pick her family.

I can say that my mother and my sister passed away from cancer. God honors them. No one can object his will. When my sister got sick and then died, followed by the death of my mother, I passed through hard times. I had to choose, and my mind was upset. I was not rejecting work, but my social condition obliged me. I had to settle everything; then, I felt it was like suicide. I could not take care of my mother during her sickness, and I can't do my work, so I have to choose. I chose to give her my time. So, I was teaching and going to the hospital with my mom. It was the hardest situation. My family did not stand in my face, but my family's conditions did (Dean 5).

Theme 8: Other Challenges

The fourth research question was, "What other challenges did the women experience?" The data analysis I found was that there are other significant factors that would affect Saudi women in attaining their leadership roles in higher education.

The sub-themes that emerged under this theme include two sub-themes: (a) academic major and (b) glass ceiling effects.

Sub-theme 1: Academic major. Five of the participating deans indicated that the major field of their study was not in the lead roles which would improve their leadership abilities. They indicated the lack of general management skills and experience made it more difficult for them when they first became deans. That was due to different reasons, such as their majors and lack of experience with administrative issues. Dean 4 indicated: "We lack a lot in strategic planning and teamwork. Our work is still an individual one. What can I do? You know the feeling of responsibility as a part of a team."

Four of the participants reported that their science majors had nothing to do with management experience. Dean 1 stated: "I studied Mathematics. In Mathematics, I did not study management, and I did not know how things work in the working environment, how to control your employees, and the flow of the work but learned through experience." Another participant stated:

> The university president asked me to be the dean of BB College, even though BB is not my study field. My study field in education. Firstly, I told her that business is not my field of study; she told me that leadership does not need specialization (Dean 4).

Dean 3 indicated:

> One of the most serious aspects is that no one tells you what exactly required from you. One may ask you to develop the resources. I'm sorry. I specialized in the field of architecture, and now, I work in an administrative post that I did not seek to. It is not my ambition.

Sub-theme 2: Glass ceiling effects. Through my analysis, I found examples of two deans discussing the different experiences about the concept of the glass ceiling which impacted women's advancement in deanship position. The glass ceiling is a metaphor for an invisible challenge or wall that prevents Saudi women deans from reaching the top levels of the leadership hierarchy. For example, Dean 5 stated:

> After two years, I felt that this was my roof. I was giving everything, but not gaining anything. I used all of my expertise. Let us say that deanship consumed all my energy. I achieved many positive things, but they were not like my previous experiences.

Also, Dean 4 said, "If you don't have support from the college, you keep giving the best of what you can, but for how long you keep giving?"

Theme 9: Other Supports

The final research question was, "What other supports did the women experience?" which led to the final theme of Other Supports that would enhance the women's opportunity to become a dean in higher education in Saudi Arabi.

The sub-themes that emerged under this theme include two sub-themes: (a) The Saudi New Vision for Women's Empowerment and (b) Personal Characteristics.

Sub-theme 1: The Saudi new vision plan for women's empowerment. Four deans indicated that the new vision of the country was for empowerment and women's advancement in leadership roles in Saudi Arabia. They also asserted that the main problem was that the selection process was not open to females until a few years ago when the government decided that females should be treated equally for any positions, whether public or private. Recently, they opened access for males and females to apply to be deans at all colleges, while previously only males could apply. Dean 6 stated:

It is a separated committee that has no bias. It meets the candidates and determines the criteria for selecting which person to recommend. It was open only for males. Then, it opened for females only in the previous year. Why? Because the direction of the high command is that females should be treated like males of nomination for any governmental or private position. So, the door opened for women.

She indicated the political direction was to open access for males and females and is applied to all colleges, now. The position is accessible now, so anyone can nominate themselves whether male or female. She thinks that the empowerment of women needed "only one button to press" [She means to allow her to lead], as they have the hierarchical structure without specific names [of positions] for males.

They are deans, regardless of their gender. The structure is suitable for both of them. What we need is just pressing the button by the higher authority to show that they don't mind. Otherwise, everything is ready. The setting is fine.

Dean 7 also indicated that she thinks "the organization hierarchy needs to be changed with the *Vision of 2030* to allow a woman to play a more prominent role in the organization."

Another dean indicated that all ministers were men in the past. But, in the last three years, some female assistants or deputy ministers were appointed in Saudi Arabia. She noted that Saudi women are not given opportunities to be in significant positions in the past due to the high competition with men, although she was qualified and committed to work.

Now, this situation began to change a little. Saudi women began to realize that they can hold higher positions. No one knows what will happen exactly later. The Saudi woman may hold the position of a minister over time. Now, there are some female vice and

assistant ministers. These numbers of women holding such posts never found in the past. (Dean 1).

Sub-theme 2: Personal characteristics. All ten deans described different skills and abilities that helped them in reaching their career success and leadership positions.

Four of the deans focused on self-improvement through reading and said continued learning was an essential way to promoted their skills. They mentioned that reading the other leaders' experiences was a beneficial method to prepare themselves for the deanship positions and any future leadership opportunities.

Dean 2 indicated that she was always keen on continuous training, and self-study was the vital factor in facilitating her path to deanship and the other positions. She said that no one would teach you if you did not educate yourself.

You should educate yourself. You should read it yourself. You should attend the courses that may develop your primary skills in management, such as team leadership, communication, and negotiations. In case of being unable to participate in these courses, you should read about them, I did not know that I would be a leader, but I did my best. So, the individual should do his best to develop the abilities and skills to be ready for any time upon request.

Dean 1 also shared her experience with reading as a vital element to improving her knowledge and skills.

One always likes to read about experiences if they are discussing their live professional backgrounds rather than the specialization in the study. As you read a published article, you also read a recently published article for someone working in administration. You are reading these things. Thus, we attended seminars, read, and mingled with people.

Three of the deans indicated their abilities to read in different languages, which also increases their chance in holding the deanship position. Three of the deans reported that their skills in reading and writing in the English language were crucial. One of the deans described her excellent ability to read and write in a foreign language, in addition to English. Dean 10 indicated that she was reading and translating from English to Arabic.

As discussed previously, all ten participants provided insight into the importance of having different abilities to be able to accomplish the functions of a female dean effectively.

Dean 3 explained how her different skills prepared her to be a dean. She had skills in reading and writing and speaking in the three languages, personality skills, high communication skills, leadership skills, and the ability to take risks. She stated:

> I'm outgoing. I have individual initiative. Generally, my relationship with people is good. I think that the nature of my personality and previous merit recommended me for this position. Furthermore, I accepted any tasks given to me. I don't ask for support except for exceptional cases. I think that this aspect made me the best candidate for this position.

Chapter 4 Closure

This chapter described details in the interview data with all ten female deans in Saudi Arabia. Results presented themes that are emergent across all the research questions. A summary description of the findings follow (see a Summary of Result Table 4, pp. 68-70). In the first theme, the data focused on the path to the deanship. Career paths is a traditional way of growth or advancement to higher-level positions in Saudi Arabia. In the area of the path to the deanship, the deans have described their experiences with (a) career sequence of dean (b) nomination and recommendation (c) vision and values, and (d) experiences, skills and qualifications.

The second theme focused on structural supports as a critical player in the career advancement of a female deanship position. Four sub-themes emerged from this theme: (a) leadership development programs, (b) mentoring and networking relationship, (c) empowerment at the workplace, and (d) benefits of the structural segregation by gender.

The third theme was structural challenges that can hinder the advancement of a female to a deanship position. These challenges were analyzed and grouped for three sub-themes: (a) the difficulties in the criteria for selecting deans, (b) organizational structure of work, and (c) the impacts of occupational gender segregation.

The fourth theme was culture supports. Participants described a variety of supports, which were analyzed and grouped for two sub-themes that emerged from this theme focus: (a) support by the culture of organization, (b) support by the culture of family and friends, and (c) the absence of a gender wage gap.

The fifth theme was cultural challenges. The data finds that cultural difficulties in regard to beliefs and customs are significant in women's lack of success in becoming deans. All ten participating deans reported that they have experienced cultural bias or stereotypes. Also, the culture of women in Saudi Arabia is continuing to change with each year. These challenges were analyzed and grouped into two sub-themes: (a) the impacts of stereotypes, and (b) gender bias in the workplace.

Theme six was family supports, which focused on family support for advancement to a dean position. All participants described how they received full support from their families. Without their family supporting them, they would not be able to hold the deanship position, and they would not have been able to advance in their leadership roles.

The seventh theme was the family challenges that they faced in their path to the deanship. These challenges were analyzed and grouped into two sub-themes: (a) family obligations and work-life balance, and (b) feeling guilty being away from family.

The eighth theme was the other significant challenges that would affect Saudi women in attaining their leadership roles in higher education. These factors were analyzed into three sub-themes: (a) academic major, and (b) glass ceiling effects.

Theme nine was the other supports that would enhance the women's opportunity to become a dean in higher education in Saudi Arabia. These supports were then analyzed and grouped into three sub-themes: (a) the Saudi new vision for women's empowerment, and (b) personal characteristics.

Chapter 5 will provide an analysis of the major results of the study as well as relate the results to existing studies. There will also be a discussion of implications for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of female deans in Saudi Arabia to ascertain the specific challenges they faced and supports they had in attaining their leadership positions. These challenges and supports were directly embedded in the unique structural, cultural, and familial aspects of Saudi Arabia and its higher education system. This study helped highlight what types of experiences and supports may lead to more successful female deans in KSA academia. The 10 participants were female deans specifically in Saudi Arabian universities since this study is focused on the female experience of Saudi Arabian women.

This study rests on the conceptual framework that includes the challenges and supports potential female deans face to become a dean. Several challenges and supports underlie becoming a female dean in Saudi Arabia. This research focused on challenges and supports that were specific to the institutional structure, culture, and family for the participants. Examining these challenges and supports offered insight into what Saudi women must overcome and what specific supports can yield success in higher education leadership.

Chapter II reviewed the unique challenges that Saudi Arabian females who are seeking academic leadership positions may face. Interestingly, there are few studies that directly examine females working toward academic leadership in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Literature has shown that there are challenges that females around the world have had in reaching their leadership positions and completing their work in higher education. Throughout history and today, gendered stereotypes about leadership and female abilities still abound in both Saudi Arabia and the world. This chapter also explained the role of the dean, as well as the unique

cultural , familial, and structural challenges and supports women have. There is a lack of research to examine the challenges and supports of Saudi female deans, specifically. The findings of this study add to the previous literature on how to become a dean in higher education (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Bright & Richards, 2001; Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009).

Chapter III described this study's qualitative approach to analyze the lived experiences of female deans while embracing multiple realities and experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were conducted in person, via skype, or via phone calls and lasted approximately one to two hours. NVivo was used to manage and organize the data. I found nine significant themes: (a) path to the deanship; (b) structural supports; (c) structural challenges; (d) cultural supports; (e) cultural challenges; (f) family supports; (g) family challenges; (h) other challenges; (i) other supports. (See table 4)

The research question guiding this study was: "How did Saudi Arabian female deans experience attaining their leadership role?" I used the empirical data collected in interviews to answer my five research questions. In this chapter, I discuss the significant results of the research and how the data analysis responded to my research questions. Through my data analysis, I found nine themes. Then, I examine the relationship of my findings to the existing studies and address the implications for practice. This includes capitalizing on the strengths of the experienced female deans and lessons learned from the ten participating women deans regarding their experiences in higher education. I also discuss the recommendations for future studies. I close the chapter with my conclusions on the research.

Discussion and Relationship of Results to Existing Studies

The nine significant results from the in-depth interviews were examined in relation to my five research questions. By sharing their challenges and types of supports they experienced in

gaining positions as a dean, the participants highlighted trends that emphasize female leadership in academia. I have discussed the data I gathered through interviews to answer my five research questions and considered whether the unique culture of Saudi Arabia either helped or hindered women in their pursuit of a deanship. This research sheds light on the institutional structures of higher education in Saudi Arabia to note the structural effects of aspiring participants in my study. Additionally, the challenges or supports of female deans' family life will also be discussed. I found that structural supports turned out to be the most important aspect, so that is why I organized the themes the way I did. Detailed participant background data, the faculty members that deans oversee, as well as themes and subthemes were presented in Table 3 and Table 4 in Chapter IV.

Research Questions include:

1. What structural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

2. What cultural challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

3. What familial challenges and supports did the women experience in their path to becoming a dean?

4. What other challenges did the women experience?

5. What other supports did the women experience?

Discussion of theme 1: Findings regarding the path to the deanship. The first major theme, the path to the deanship, was analyzed from the responses to the interview question: "How did you become a Dean?" that corresponded with the first research question. Specifically, this question involved examining themes about the organizational structure of the path to a

deanship. With this theme, I found four subthemes: career sequence of deans, nomination and recommendation, vision and values, and experiences and skills. The deans' responses provided insight into the career path of women from their experiences and perspectives related to these ideas. Also, they offered more detail and examples related to their journey in the advancement of their current positions of a deanship at Saudi Arabia universities.

Career sequences of deans included the basic career positions and types of work that potential deans complete on their path to becoming a dean. The results that came out of the analysis are the career sequences within four different professional opportunities and experiences, including academic and administrative roles, quality work, committee' services, and various positions. The women deans believed that the career sequence and their experience in these different positions prepared them to be deans.

I found that all the participants noted that the professional sequences in academic and administrative roles are an essential part of the path to the deanship, including teaching, research, administrative work, committee' service, quality and accreditation work, community engagement, and external and internal campus service.

The participating deans believed holding an academic position taught them other aspects of university life, including how to handle unique cases, obstacles, deprivation, etc. Most of the deans worked as a faculty member through their mission of leadership, often as a vice-dean. Some deans had experience in various positions as a consultor in many different fields, quality, and accreditation work. Interestingly, deans can gain full information about the rules and regulations through working in small work teams or volunteering in internal and external committee' services.

The findings in this theme affirm that the department chair is the most immediate step to the deanship. Through the department chair position, the leaders acquired many skills. They managed responsibilities that they would need as a dean, such as working closely with faculty and administrators as well as with students (Bright & Richards, 2001). I found some of the deans specifically discussed additional paths to becoming a dean through servicing in various positions in the institution which afforded them experience with different program review, curriculum, and faculty recruitment. The finding adds to research that deans mentioned the significant influence of the committee work (Bright & Richards, 2001), and different kinds of service in the education field (Buller, 2007).

Interestingly, it is essential to note how some deans shared their reflection on the value of working in the quality and accreditation affairs in higher education, which was not covered in the Western and Saudi literature review. Still, it appears to be one of the most beneficial opportunities in their progression to the deanship, thus adding to current research.

While Alsuood and Youde (2018) have discussed that the Ministry of Education appoints deans based on the recommendations of the university's president, my findings add to the research by suggesting that the dean's nominations in the beginning would occur through recommendations from the vice president, former dean, recommendations from other colleagues, then by votes from a selection committee. I specifically found a detailed description of nomination procedures and recommendations for selecting potential deans in Saudi Arabia by the participants' experiences. In Saudi Arabia, the term of holding the dean position could be two years but no more than six years.

All of the deans felt that individual experiences, qualifications, skills, and abilities were necessary to attain the dean position. In this study, participants indicated that the female dean

needs to acquire a variety of skills, practices, and professional backgrounds to be qualified. Within the data, there are explanations of how the experiences and personal skills were built over time in many different ways through practices and career progression, communication with people, and learning from mistakes.

Researcher Hamdan (2005) discusses the attributes of many Saudi women who had a scholarship to study abroad in universities after returning to KSA with a unique, broader vision for women and their future as leaders. Some of them also gained broad language skills, personality skills, high communication skills, leadership skills, and the ability to take risks. This also affirms and adds to the research regarding the critical leadership skills that are required to become leaders in higher education (Aldawsari, 2016; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alomair, 2015; Antonaros, 2010; Ballenger, 2010; Braun, 2014; Curry, 2000; Unin, 2014). The data could suggest these unique skills were further enhanced by serving in different positions or even in the committee' services and volunteering work. Women aspiring to senior-level academic positions need to complete their degree (Krause, 2009) as well as the person's vision and values have to be consistent with the organization's vision and goals. The participants asserted that deans need to develop their skills in order to understand and handle the huge responsibilities of dean at their higher education organizations (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Bright & Richards, 2001; Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009). One of the deans compared the different responsibilities and many of the deans to an octopus, however, Bright and Richards, (2001) compares the dean's role to a map or a puzzle.

Discussion of theme 2: Findings regarding the structural supports. Theme 2 corresponded with the research question: "What role did the organizational structure play in your path to the Deanship?" From the analysis, this question focused more specifically on aspects

such as the selection process of the leadership programs or the hierarchical structure in their

nomination. The theme produced significant data that suggested that structural supports are

critical players in the career advancement of a female deanship position. The data findings also

provided examples of how the organizational structure supported the path to the deanship

position. I found four subthemes that emerged from this theme: leadership development

programs, mentoring and networking relationships, empowerment at the workplace, and the

benefits of structural segregation by gender.

Interestingly, the deans provided information about the different programs of leadership

in their institutions, which enhanced their paths to the deanship. The most significant finding was

that most of the deans' universities provided many different types of external and internal

leadership training. Regarding internal programs, all ten deans attended several programs that

were prepared by their universities or by the Ministry of Education. They appreciated these

efforts to provide these programs to them. Furthermore, deans felt that programs affected their

future leadership positively by providing knowledge and skills to advance them in their path to

the deanship. Krause (2009) found that women aspiring to senior-level positions need to take

advantage of leadership development programs. Levine et al. (2015), in their study, found that

leadership programs enhance women's leadership skills and increase overall leadership diversity.

The deans believe these preparation programs increased their experience and ability to

lead in higher education and have a significant impact on attaining a deanship and other

leadership positions. My findings affirm that leadership training programs would be helpful for

more women to become leaders in education (Hazifazlioglu, 2010). I found that in Saudi Arabia,

it also seems to be instrumental, too. These programs would help in preparing women to work in

an organization (Williams & Dempsey, 2014; St Marthe, 2012) with their colleagues and climb

the ladder of leadership in Saudi Arabian higher learning institutions (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Interestingly, my findings add to the research on other advantages in these programs that allow deans to be involved with high caliber leaders. For example, experienced deans and leaders who work on faculty development by meeting and learning from the other leaders' experiences with their different universities in Saudi Arabia and see leaders with different levels and styles.

Within the data, there are also examples of how mentoring and networking relationships are critical players in the career advancement of female deans. Some of the deans received internal mentoring from their former deans, and they considered them as role models that facilitated their promotion to the deanship. In contrast, other deans received external mentoring from their colleagues and networking from out of their institutions. My data findings affirm and add to the research that women aspiring to senior-level academic positions need to develop strong networks and work closely/engage with mentors (Krause, 2009) and role models to be successful (Madsen, 2012). Mentoring was found to facilitate career development and enable women in senior positions to develop their management styles, communication skills (Skurzewski et al., 2013), and improve levels of self-esteem. Improving self-esteem will enable women to promote themselves within their institutions (Obers, 2015). The data asserts the essentials of formal succession training and leadership development practices (McManus, 2013) for a "smooth transition" for the potential deans.

My findings also affirm and extend the research regarding workplace relationships as an organizational barrier. Because women did not have beneficial relationships with other female co-workers and bosses (Almaki et al., 2016), higher management was not healthy (Alsood & Youde, 2018). However, I found five of the participating deans had excellent relationships with their female co-workers, presidents, teamwork, students, and other key contributors that

promoted their progress. Most of the deans argue that they would not be successful without working with others. The data found that building positive relationships is significant in the workplace to collaborate with faculty and other administrators (Hendrickson et al., 2013) through "peer to peer rather than from top to down [management], delegating tasks, team dynamics."

Additionally, the findings identify the importance of empowerment of the deans in structural aspects to facilitate their advancement toward the positions. Within the data, there are two emergent ideas related to the empowerment of the deans by providing them with knowledge and opportunities, and encouraging them to participate in decision making in the institution.

All the participating deans reported that knowledge of the different roles, rules, and regulations at their institutions contributed toward their rise to the deanship position. One of the deans shared that the opportunity to practice different roles and experiences empowered her and made her better able to read and understand the theoretical and practical parts of rules. Most of the deans indicated that the Ministry of Higher Education enacted regulations and tasks for the public universities in Saudi Arabia, included all in a formal book. 1 Most of the deans also indicated that their institutions empowered them by clarifying the deans' tasks, roles, and providing them free education in training programs and scholarships, and then prepared them for the opportunity to become leaders. The findings affirm that more access to opportunities, information, and support all lead to more leadership opportunities in the workplace (Spreitzer, 2008). The data provides examples of empowerment from the Ministry of Higher Education sending many Saudi women abroad to continue their studies (Hamdan, 2005).

Most of the deans have the right to participate in decision making at their university council, including the decisions made by voting. In a system such as higher education, empowerment for employees comes from structural aspects such as participative decision-

making and open flow of information (Spreitzer, 2008). The data also affirms that women leaders at Princess Nora University in Saudi Arabia do lead independently of men, and this would be instrumental in their ability to thrive at work (Al Ghamdi, 2016). Interestingly, I found that most of the deans have full authority within their colleges to make decisions in their role as deans at different universities in Saudi Arabia.

When discussing the structural supports, I found that most of the participating deans shared how the gender-segregation of two separate campuses for women and men (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Dighrir, 2015) in the higher education system enhanced their path to attaining their deanship positions. The advantage of being at a women's college was that the institution would not choose a man for a deanship position – the option should be a woman. Some of the deans mentioned the privilege of being at an all-female university is that women at the institution have all powers and authorizations as male deans in the other universities. Also, the meeting with the board of council, which included males and females leaders, could be through video conferencing to assist communication between women and men in separate rooms (Al Ghamdi, 2016) or meeting could be via face-to-face with the president, vice presidents, and other male leaders, depending on the university. The findings also affirm the gender-segregation impact on deans' roles leading to their experiences as "isolated islands" (Al-Issa, 2010). One dean said that women's exclusion from decision making (Al Ghamdi, 2016; Almansour & Kempner, 2015) at the university council is related to workplace structures in Saudi universities. Therefore, some deans think that the structure of women's universities and colleges advanced their path to the deanship. However, the other side was that they excluded them from decision making in the council of the university.

Discussion of theme 3: Findings regarding structural challenges that women faced in their path to the deanship. For this theme, the participants discussed structural challenges in their path to the deanship. Theme 3 corresponded with the question: "Did the structure present any challenges?" This would suggest that structural challenges can hinder the advancement of a female to a deanship position. I believe that deans' responses demonstrated how they were affected by the structure in their institutions from three sub-themes: the difficulties in the selection criteria for deans, the organizational structure of work, and the impacts of occupational gender segregation.

Eight of the participating deans (80%) indicated that the selection process used by many universities limited women from advancing to the top positions and more often favors men's advancement (Acker, 2012; Almaki et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2004; Al Ghamdi, 2016). Most of the deans were frustrated that the universities tend to promote men to dean positions (Acker, 2012; Almaki et al., 2016). Al Ghamdi (2016) discusses that more often, women are promoted as vice-deans, even if they were more qualified for higher leadership position. Some of the deans noted, "the committee usually has specific criteria and details" for hiring deans, but this information usually is not accessible for them (Alsuood & Youde, 2018). This suggests that institutions have a tendency of promoting men, thus denying women the chance to become deans. One dean shared on the weak evaluation system of selection in public universities and how this is different than the one in private universities that could cause challenges in the path to the deanship, further adding to literature. Interestingly, three of the deans indicated that some Saudi higher education institutions are looking for women who execute orders instead of being leaders – submissive employees and weak characters to be able to control them within the women's campus. Hence, women cannot make progress in many cases.

All ten of the participating deans described how their higher education institutions' centralization affected their authority. They explained how they must receive permission from upper-level administration before making any critical decisions, which, in turn, delays their work. According to Spreitzer (2008), this aspect of universities results in missing essential elements for thriving at work, including decentralized organizational structure, a lack of decision making, and a lack of trust and respect.

Some of the deans were upset about the enormous responsibilities required of them, compared to the limited authority they have and think that the responsibilities and authorities should be equal, "such as hiring the faculty and [signing] contracts and finishing everything."

The results of the data analysis indicated that some of the women's campuses were under the supervision, organization, and authority of the men's campuses (Al Ghamdi, 2016 ;Alsubaihi, 2016). Dean 2 shared that the given authority of a dean depends on her dean male counterpart if he gives her the power to manage the women's campuses.

However, a few deans had the same power to handle work responsibilities as their male dean peers. But most of them were limited in managing financial matters, which is governed by men in their campus or\and linked to the Ministry of High Education. The issue of changing policies has to do with the Ministry of Higher Education. The findings confirm that many universities in Saudi Arabia have not been given the authority to manage their finances. Still, they are about to become privatized and have an independent budget. One dean thinks that deans should have financial authority because "they have to experience, training, and to get involved in it."

Some of the deans indicated that they do not have direct authority over resources for their work (Spretizer, 2008), and they must first ask male superintendents for access to resources (supplies, computers machines, rewards, new buildings for students) within the universities.

Interestingly, five of the total number of participants reported that the organizational structure of governmental universities has rules and regulations imposed by the Ministry of Higher Education. Even the president, vice president, dean, or vice-dean must commit to these commands. However, two of the deans think that problems may arise by the way that individuals see and interpret these rules. This needs a lot of practice and experience, in addition to supervision and evaluation from the university. Another dean noted the bureaucracy that influences the work environment negatively; "The list of rules itself is inflexible, or meet inflexible people who apply these regulations inside the university."

The results of the data showed the different structural aspects of these institutions that make it more difficult for the path to a deanship. Some deans discussed and gave examples of the centralization, which forced them to do some practices that affected their performances and "may take some authorities from you in some cases..." The bureaucracy in the work environment that deans faced was due to a lack of confidence in their abilities to make decisions, which prevents them from handling their work tasks (Spreitzer, 2008). The data found that deans' authorities are different, depending on their workplace and the challenges they face in that situation. The data provided examples of how authorities were restricted in some decisions, such as determining student numbers in the colleges. However, two of the participants shared that the deans have authority in their colleges, but they do not have confidence in themselves to practice their powers without asking males. Al Ghamdi's (2016) study suggested that in higher education, women do not have independence and focus as men do. However, others think that upper-level management

does not trust the women deans to give them the authority to make any critical decisions. Other deans believe that women are trusted to get perfect work in specifically management projects; the women often accept to do extra work to prove themselves, which puts them under pressure and causes them to reach the "burned out" stage in the end.

Interestingly, my findings add to current research regarding the stress inherent in the work as one of the challenges that female deans experience, which may affect their productivity. They discussed the negative feelings are due to the heavy workload, various responsibilities and tasks, receiving an unfair pay that does not match their effort, and lack of qualified female staff and administrators that they have in their colleges. These pressures potentially affected their continuity in the deanship position. Other deans felt pressured due to working on building the foundations of a new college, which required establishing new programs, developing new curriculums, and recruiting new staff from the beginning, along with the other responsibilities of the dean. Additionally, the pressure of conflict with higher-level authorities in the work environment impacts their deanship; these conflicts could affect their relationship with other colleagues who avoid getting in sensitive situations with upper-level management.

According to Spreitzer's Model of Thriving at Work, there are several missing elements for thriving at work for women in Saudi in attaining higher positions in education. For example, many female deans don't have direct control over resources – they must ask supervisors for access. Other elements include lack of trust, centralized organizational structures, lack of feeling valued, lack of decision making (Speirtzer et al., 2005; Speirtzer et al., 2008).

Within the data, there are also examples of the impacts of occupational gender segregation. A few of the deans indicated that the segregated structure by sex at higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia directly affected their roles or challenged their advancement – such

as it took the women away from decision making or may lead to misunderstanding with male administrators on their campus. There is a need for direct contact with men in the medical field for a healthy environment. The findings affirm and add to that in Saudi Arabia, the system of higher education is different and includes single-gender universities and a specific few mixed-gender universities (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Dighrir, 2015). Then, the data found that the deans addressed how gender segregation impacted their work effectively or negatively.

Discussion of theme 4: Findings regarding cultural supports that enhance women in their path to the deanship. The deans were asked about how their culture supports them and the cultural challenges via the question, "What role did Saudi culture play in your path to the Deanship? How did your culture help you? For example, did you feel support from those who feel women should have more access to jobs, such as the Deanship?" Three subthemes emerged from this theme's focus: support by the culture of the organization, support by the culture of family and friends, and the absence of a gender wage gap.

All ten participating deans described how their experiences with culture supported their advancement in their careers at leadership roles in higher education. Five of the deans were supported by the culture of their organization toward the position of the deanship. For instance, one of the deans believes that a woman is respected when she gets a higher position and in her experience, she received all the necessary support from male colleagues at work. They attempted to help her overcome all difficulties and weaknesses that confronted her. Some deans believed that the environment was supportive, and there was high confidence in their ability to manage.

Additionally, another dean believes that she did not face any obstacles within the Saudi culture, and she was too far ahead of her time throughout her whole career. She had already made significant advancements before talking about women's empowerment. Dean 1 discussed

how the culture of structural segregation supported her progress to the deanship. The culture

developed from restricting women's advancement to promoting women holding higher positions,

such as deputy ministers; "There are also a lot of women in Shura Council (which is a legislative

body that advises the King on matters that are significant to Saudi Arabia)." The findings affirm

the research regarding the unique culture for women in Saudi and how it continues to transform

with each passing year (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017), providing examples of how the culture of the

organization, their families and friends, and society as a whole in Saudi were useful and

supportive.

Some deans, when asked about how the culture supported them, did not have any

problem with the culture in their life, as they considered their family culture supportive. Due to

growing up in an educated family, some deans had experiences of supportive parents, father,

husband, and\or brothers in their advancement toward the dean position.

Some believed that different groups in Saudi society were supportive and not against

women's advancements, such as friends and society as a whole. For example, Dean 9 thinks that

she is lucky as she had a small group of friends who fight for their rights as women; "Saudi

society includes those who are with you and those who are against you." Other deans agreed that

the culture of society was supportive. One dean argues, "If the society had not accepted this,

females would not have nominated themselves. Even the higher authority or the government has

already allowed for this." Another stated, "I have never met anyone who underestimates women

or reduces their value."

Interestingly, it is essential to note that a few deans appreciate the absence of a gender

wage gap in Saudi Arabia. Two of the deans shared that there was no discrimination in the salary

of males and females. All received the same wages, and they never faced a problem with a gender-based wage gap.

Discussion of theme 5: findings regarding cultural challenges that faced women in their path to the deanship. Theme 5 corresponded with the research question, "What role did Saudi culture play in your path to the Deanship? How did your culture present any challenges? For example, did you have difficulty with stereotypes or bias?" The resulting data finds that cultural difficulties about beliefs and customs are significant in women's lack of success in becoming deans. All deans reported that they had experienced cultural bias or stereotypes. They addressed different cultural perspectives about women in Saudi Arabia, which affected their path to leadership positions. The findings align with Timmers, Willemson, & Tijdens' (2010) study that a cultural perspective of the context of the organization is significant in the discussion of women's lack of success in attaining academic leadership positions. With this theme, I found two subthemes: the impacts of the stereotypes and gender bias in the workplace.

Deans had experienced different examples of stereotypes, which may hinder their advancement into deanship. One of the deans described the most common stereotype in Saudi Arabia as the belief that females are supposed to be in separate places from men or "isolated spaces," and this affects their advancement to leadership positions. Cultural beliefs like for women to be at the same meeting place with men are not acceptable.

My findings affirm and add to the current research regarding cultural bias and stereotypes about women being in leadership positions and feeling that they are unable to lead in a higher position because they are female (Al Ghamdi, 2016; Gerdes, 2006; Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). My findings differ regarding the expectations of Saudi women as caregivers in the home (Aldawsari, 2016; Al Ghamdi, 2016), in that the deans dealt with the stereotype of women as only secretaries

just because they are women. No matter "whatever your administrative position," women are treated "as teachers, not as leaders." Society did not accept women representing in majors other than education, and the community supports women in teaching but not in other jobs.

The data affirms and adds to the negative beliefs about women's ability to be leaders in Saudi Arabia, which affects their advancement to the deanship (Nguyen, 2013; Al Gamdi, 2016; Sandberg, 2013). For instance, the expectations and stereotypes about women as present in the culture, and men often assume that most of the women are the same with their incapability to hold a leadership position; "they've not reached the stage that they recognize if I am capable or not." Then, the effect of the culture is that women possibly perform their work according to that stereotype (Sandberg, 2013), losing confidence in themselves and their abilities. Women may believe they are not supposed to have any authority and are not capable of having power as men do because they are women (Al Ghamdi, 2016). But a dean "believed that the authorities have taken, not given." She was comparing herself to other deans in the different universities. This is likely one of the silent barriers since cultural traditions and stereotypes are deeply embedded in societies.

The data affirms that the culture's gender bias against women is likely to affect women's psyches (Caton, 2007). Women were previously not allowed to appear in some leadership positions, but now it is required. This transition and difference in culture could affect women's psyches because Saudi society informed women that their leadership is unsuitable, but now women's leadership is considered perfect and required. The culture change allowed qualified women to present their leadership skills more than just be empowered.

Another dean shared her experience with gender bias and discrimination that affected her advancement in the leadership position. For example, "the human resources are supposed to look

for a qualified person whether he/she is a woman or man." One dean also was upset and wished "that the leader who would be able to lead [is chosen]. I wish we would reach that day on which there is no difference between a male or female." There are also discriminatory practices against women who wear a full hijab (covering their face), and stereotypes about these women being unable to lead persist. One dean explained how she dealt with this situation by "inviting them [the dean men] to a meeting at our university. So, I can tell them how to behave. When they come, I use one conference room, and I put the chairs at reasonable distances from each other…"

Discussion of theme 6: findings regarding family supports that promote women in their path to the deanship. Theme 6 corresponded with the questions "What role did your family play in your path to the Deanship? How did your family help you? For example, did you have relatives support your time away from home or help with your children?" that led to the next focus area: family support to advancement to dean position.

All deans had received full support from their families. Without their family supporting them, they would not be able to hold the deanship position, and they would not have been able to advance in their leadership roles. All the deans shared their various experiences about their families, assisting in facilitating their path to the deanship. Most of the deans indicated that the family supported them by believing in their abilities to make a difference and being proud of them. Most of the deans also received support from their husbands to reach the deanship. Deans also noted that their children (daughters and sons) were supportive by being patient, old enough to take responsibility for themselves, and\or replaced them in the house when they were working or traveling. My findings also differ regarding few women deans having children because of their career (Almaki et al., 2016), in that most of the participating deans mentioned that they have children, which made it more challenging for them.

Most of the deans also received support from their fathers and/or mothers. Another dean shared that she had excellent assistance from her uncle, who was the closest person to her in terms of support. He was always encouraging her as a student, as his major was the same as hers. He always motivated her and believed in her potential to get any new chance that was offered for her. Some deans mentioned that relatives were a great source of encouragement.

Discussion of theme 7: findings regarding family challenges that faced women in their path to the deanship. Theme 7 corresponded with the question, "How did your family present any challenges? For example, was it difficult to balance your time and resources, or did any of your family members object to your work?" All deans shared their experiences with family challenges that they faced in their path to the deanship. This theme's focus includes two subthemes: family obligations and work-life balance, and feeling guilty being away from family.

Most of the deans have struggled to balance obligations to their families and their work responsibilities and considered how this struggle could have made it impossible to be promoted. One dean acknowledged that "Mother is still responsible for her family no matter how helpful the family is." Most of the deans believe that family commitments were a significant challenge with their work roles (Hacifazlioglu, 2010) and motherhood responsibility is a woman's duty (Unin, 2012; Nguyen, 2012). Some deans stated the importance of balance between work and house responsibilities, which could affect the house duties or opportunity to be a leader negatively. For example, one dean was offered many leadership positions, which required a lot of traveling, but she refused because her family meant a lot to her. Three of the deans sometimes spent all day out of the house until night, making it difficult for women to fulfill all their responsibilities.

The responsibilities and time pressure made deans feel frustrated and "guilty and sorry," as they blamed themselves for being away from the family. This issue made them think about leaving their leadership positions, which caused them to be unwilling to work for an extended period as a result of their family responsibilities (Alomair, 2015; Eddy & Garza, 2008) and their substantial work responsibilities, thus requiring the mother to leave her work and her possible chance at promotion. Deans find it difficult to " balance family life and university work" and problems such as their kid's feelings (Nguyen, 2012) of being "shared with so many different people…" or their feeling about a delay to meet the family's needs due to a heavy workload outside the house.

However, one of the deans indicated that her family circumstances were a big challenge, which compelled her to choose between her family and her work (Robert, 1997; Hacifazlioglu, 2010). After giving it a great deal of thought, she decided to pick her family to "take care of my mother during her sickness." Because she can't balance her work, these issues of "working-life balance" mean that work will always lose since the choice of life seems to not be a "choice" at all (Sandberg, 2013). Therefore, all of these issues lead to male academic leaders being more valued because they can focus on their work outside of the home.

Discussion of theme 8: findings regarding the other challenges that faced women in their path to the deanship. The fourth research question was, "What other challenges did the women experience?" The data analysis I found was that other significant factors could affect Saudi women in attaining their leadership roles in higher education. This theme includes two subthemes: academic major and glass ceiling effects.

Some of the participating deans indicated that the major field of their study was not in the lead roles, which would improve their leadership abilities. They stated the lack of general

management skills and experience made it more difficult for them when they first became deans. That was due to different reasons, such as their majors and lack of experience with administrative issues. One dean admitted they "lack a lot in strategic planning and teamwork" or "developing the resources." Four of the participants reported that their science majors had nothing to do with management experience. For instance, "in Mathematics, I did not study management, and I did not know how things work in the working environment, or how to control your employees…" Another participating dean worked as a dean of the Business College while this major was not her study field. Another dean also shared that "one may ask you to develop the resources. I'm sorry. I specialized in the field of architecture, and now, I work in an administrative position…"

Interestingly, through my analysis, I found examples of two deans discussing the different experiences about the concept of the glass ceiling, which impacted women's effectiveness and advancement in the deanship position. The glass ceiling is a metaphor for an invisible challenge or wall that prevents the Saudi women deans from reaching the top levels of the leadership hierarchy. For example, a few deans shared their experience that after an aperid of time, they became aware that they were giving everything with no gaining, or they felt consumed; "I felt that this was my roof." Without trusting and promoting the leaders, the dean will have difficulty in being effective. These findings affirm with Ballenger (2010) that due to the effect of the glass ceiling and the exclusionary practices of women, the rate of change has slowed in reaching women in senior leadership.

Discussion of theme 9: Findings regarding the other supports that faced women in their path to the deanship. The final research question was, "What other supports did the women experience?" which led to the final theme of Other Supports that would enhance

women's opportunity to become a dean in higher education in Saudi Arabia. I found two subthemes under this theme: the Saudi new vision for women's empowerment, and personal characteristics.

Four deans indicated that the new Saudi Arabia's *Vision 2030* was for empowerment and women's advancement in leadership roles in Saudi Arabia. The main problem was that the selection was not available to females until a few years ago when the political direction of the country decided that females should be treated equally for any positions, whether public or private. Recently, they opened access for males and females to apply to be deans at all colleges, while previously only males could apply.

The Saudi government took several actions to promote women in leadership. The position is accessible now so anyone can nominate themselves, whether male or female. A dean thinks that the empowerment of women was needed and "only one button to press" [She means to allow her to lead]. Another dean also believes, "the organization hierarchy needs to be changed with the vision of 2030 to allow a woman to play a more prominent role in the organization." They mentioned that all ministers were men in the past as an argument. Saudi women were not given opportunities to be in significant positions in the past due to the high competition with men, although they were qualified and committed to work. But, in recent years, some women assistants or deputy ministers were appointed in Saudi Arabia (Almansour & Kempner, 2015), and many women participate in the Shura Council, which is the Islamic parliament that proposes and interprets laws (Estimo, 2017). While the government of Saudi Arabia has been making changes to promote more women with opportunities, the country's people fear these changes due to their culture.

In personal characteristics, all ten deans described different skills and abilities that were vital factors in facilitating their career success and leadership positions. While my findings affirm the importance of leadership skills (Aldawsari, 2016; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alomair, 2015; Antonaros, 2010; Ballenger, 2010; Braun, 2014; Curry, 2000; Unin, 2014), my findings also add by providing examples of the other skills from the deans' experiences that were required to become leaders in higher education. In personal characteristics, all ten deans described different skills and abilities that were vital factors in facilitating their career success and leadership positions hey mentioned that reading the other leaders' experiences in the administration was a beneficial method to prepare themselves for the deanship positions and any future leadership opportunities. For example, a dean said that no one would teach you if you did not educate yourself. There is an importance of courses that developing primary skills such as management skills, negotiations, and the ability to be ready for any opportunity. Their experiences, including the reading, attending seminars, workshops, and different programs, role models, mentoring and mingling with people, were vital elements to improving their knowledge and skills. Even more, three of the deans have abilities to read and write in different languages, which also increases their chance to hold the deanship position. Specifically, English and the German language were crucial. As discussed previously, all ten participants provided insight into the importance of having different abilities to be able to accomplish the functions of a female dean effectively. Examples of these skills included personality skills, high communication skills, leadership skills, time management, perseverance, and the ability to take risks. The findings describe how deans need to develop their skills (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Bright & Richards, 2001; Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009) by the participants offering details and examples of how to become leaders in higher education.

Regarding my findings, the data suggests several areas to examine specific challenges and supports that females around the world face in becoming deans within Chapter II and examining particularly the structure, unique culture, and family relationships that support, add to, or differ from the research. Structural supports turned out to be the most important, so that is why I organized the table the way I did. Table 5 offers a picture of my significant findings of each theme and their alignment with previous research and will be outlined in the pages that follow.

Table 5

Major Findings as Linked to Previous Research

Comparison Summary between Sarah (2020) and Previous Research	Previous research
The path to the deanship • Offered examples related to their journey in the advancement • Professional sequences in academic and administrative roles are an essential part of the path • Gain information about the rules and skills through experience, committee work, and quality and accreditation affairs • Details about the process of the dean selection • Nomination recommendations from the vice president, former deans, colleagues, then by votes from committee • Need to acquire a variety of skills, practices, and professional backgrounds • Scholarship gained broad language skills, personality skills, high communication skills, leadership skills, and the ability to take risks • Compared the different responsibilities of the deans to octopus • Person's vision and values be consistent with the organization's vision and goals.	**Affirms:** • Developing skills (Hendrickson, et al., 2013; Bright & Richards, 2001; Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009). • Chair is the most immediate step (Bright & Richards, 2001) • Analogies for dean's roles, i.e. map, puzzle (Bright & Richards, 2001). **Adds to:** • Committee work (Bright & Richards, 2001) • different kinds of service (Buller, 2007). • Ministry of Education appoints deans by recommendation of president (Alsuood & Youde, 2018) • Attributes of women with scholarships (Hamdan, 2005) • Critical leadership skills are required (Aldawsari, 2016; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alomair, 2015; Antonaros, 2010; Ballenger, 2010; Braun, 2014; Curry, 2000; Unin, 2014) • Need to complete their degree (Krause, 2009)

Table 5 - continued

Comparison Summary between Sarah (2020) and Previous Research	Previous research
Structural supports • Provided examples of how the organizational structure supported the path. Four subthemes: leadership development programs, mentoring and networking relationships, empowerment at the workplace, and the benefits of structural segregation by gender. • Universities provided many different types of external and internal leadership training • Preparation programs increased their experience and ability to lead in higher education, significantly impacting attaining a deanship • Meeting and learning from the other leaders' experiences with universities in Saudi and leaders with different levels and styles. • internal mentoring from former deans and/or external mentoring from colleagues and networking from out of their institutions • "Smooth transition" for the potential deans by formal succession training and leadership • Relationships through "peer to peer rather than from top to down [management], delegating tasks, team dynamics" • Empowerment of the deans by providing them with knowledge and opportunities and participating in decisions to understand the theoretical and practical parts of rules • Ministry of Higher Education enacted regulations and tasks for the public universities in Saudi included in a book • Full authority within their colleges to make decisions • How the gender-segregation of two separate campuses in the higher education system enhanced their path to deanship • The privilege of all-female university that women have all powers and authorizations as male deans in the other universities	**Affirms:** • Leadership programs, skills, and diversity (Krause, 2009; Levine et al., 2015) • Leadership training programs for women (Hazifazlioglu, 2010). • Mentoring benefits for women in senior positions (Skurzewski et al., 2013; Obers, 2015). • Formal succession training and leadership development practices (McManus, 2013). • Scholarship empowerment by the Ministry of Higher Education (Hamdan, 2005). • Empowerment from structural aspects (Spreitzer, 2008). **Adds to:** • Leadership programs for working with colleagues (Williams & Dempsey, 2014; St Marthe, 2012; Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). • Networking and engagement with mentors and role models (Krause, 2009; Madsen, 2012). • Formal succession training and leadership practices (McManus, 2013) • Workplace relationships (Almaki et al., 2016; Alsood & Youde, 2018; Hendrickson et al., 2013). • The gender-segregation of two separate campuses for women and men (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Dighrir, 2015; Al-Issa, 2010; Al Ghamdi, 2016; Almansour & Kempner, 2015). • Meeting with the board of council (Al Ghamdi, 2016).

Table 5 - continued

Comparison Summary between Sarah (2020) and Previous Research	Previous research
Structural challenges • Three emergent ideas: the difficulties in the selection criteria for deans, the organizational structure of work, and the impacts of occupational gender segregation. • Weak evaluation system of selection in public universities and how this is different than the one in private universities • Saudi higher education institutions are looking for women who execute orders instead of being leaders – submissive employees and weak characters to be able to control them within the women's campus • How their higher education institutions' centralization affected their authority. • Enormous responsibilities required of them compared to the limited authority • Few deans had the same power as their male dean peers • Universities in Saudi have not been given the authority to manage their finances and are asking for privatized, independent budget • Rules imposed by the Ministry of Education may limit president, vice president, dean authority • Need for practice, supervision and evaluation for potential issues with interpretation of rules • Gave examples of the centralization, forced them to do some practices • Bureaucracy that deans faced was due to a lack of confidence in their abilities to make decisions • Deans' authorities are different/limited, depending on workplace • Upper-level management does not trust the women deans to give them the authority to make any critical decisions, but others think they are trusted to get perfect work • Stress inherent in the work • Negative feelings are due to the heavy workload, various tasks, unfair pay that does not match their effort, and lack of qualified female staff • Pressured due to working on building the foundations of a new college • Pressure of conflict with higher-level authorities • Segregated structure by sex at higher education in Saudi directly affected their roles	**Affirms:** • Selection process tends to promote men (Acker, 2012; Almaki et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2004; Al Ghamdi, 2016). • Women are promoted as vice-deans, even if they were more qualified (Al Ghamdi, 2016). • Inaccessible criteria and details for hiring deans (Alsuood & Youde, 2018). • Decentralized organizational structure, a lack of decision making, trust and respect (Speirtzer et al., 2005; Speirtzer et al., 2008). • Lack of direct authority over resources (Spretizer, 2008) • bureaucracy due to a lack of confidence (Spreitzer, 2008). **Adds to:** • Single-gender universities and mixed-gender universities (Al Alhareth, Al Alhareth, & Dighrir, 2015). • Women's campuses under the supervision of men's campuses (Al Ghamdi, 2016; Alsubaihi, 2016).

Table 5 - continued

Comparison Summary between Sarah (2020) and Previous Research	Previous research
Cultural supports • Three ideas emerged from this theme: support by the culture of the organization, support by the culture of family and friends, and no gender wage gap. • Supported by the culture of their organization toward the position • Culture of structural segregation supported • Culture developed from restricting women's advancement to promoting it • Examples of how the culture of the organization, their families and friends, and society were useful • Different groups in Saudi society were supportive • Absence of a gender wage gap in Saudi Arabia	**Adds to:** • Culture for women and how it transforms with each passing year (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017)
Cultural challenges • Different cultural perspectives about women in Saudi Arabia • Two subthemes: the impacts of the stereotypes and gender bias in the workplace. • Deans experienced different examples of stereotypes • Society did not accept women representing in majors other than education, in teaching but not in other jobs • Generalization of women with their incapability to lead • Lack of confidence in themselves and their abilities due to cultural effects • Saudi society informed women that their leadership is unsuitable, but now is considered perfect and required. The culture change allowed qualified women to present their skills more than empower them • Being unable to lead due to discriminatory practices against women who wear a full hijab (covering their face) and stereotypes	**Affirms:** • A cultural perspective of the context of the organization is in the women's lack of success (Timmers, Willemson, & Tijdens', 2010) • Effect of the culture (Sandberg, 2013; Al Ghamdi, 2016). **Adds to:** • Feeling they are unable to lead (Al Ghamdi, 2016; Gerdes, 2006; Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). • Negative beliefs about women's ability (Nguyen, 2013; Al Gamdi, 2016; Sandberg, 2013). • Likely to affect women's psyches (Caton, 2007). **Differs:** • Expectations of Saudi women as caregivers in the home (Aldawsari, 2016; Al Ghamdi, 2016).

Table 5 - continued

Comparison Summary between Sarah (2020) and Previous Research	Previous research
Family supports • All deans had received full support from their families • All the deans shared their various experiences about their families' assistance • Most of the deans indicated that the family supported them by believing in their abilities and being proud of them • Most of the deans mentioned that they have children • relatives were a great source of encouragement	**Differs:** • Few women deans have children because of their career (Almaki et al., 2016).
Family challenges • Two subthemes: family obligations and work-life balance, and feeling guilty being away from family • Most of the deans struggled to balance obligations to their families and work • "Mother is still responsible for her family." • Dealing with both responsibilities and time pressure for work and family • Feeling frustrated and "guilty and sorry," as they blamed themselves for being away from the family	**Affirm:** • Family commitments are a significant challenge (Hacifazlioglu, 2010). • Motherhood responsibility is a woman's duty (Unin, 2012; Nguyen, 2012). • Unwilling to renew term due to their family (Alomair, 2015; Eddy & Garza, 2008) • Balance family life and university work (Nguyen, 2012; Sandberg, 2013). • Choosing between family and work (Robert, 1997; Hacifazlioglu, 2010; Sandberg, 2013).
Other challenges • Includes two subthemes: academic major and glass ceiling effects. • Some of the participating's major field of study was not in the lead roles • Lack of management skills made it more difficult when they first became deans • Lack of experience with administrative issues • Different experiences about the concept of the glass ceiling	**Affirm:** • The effect of the glass ceiling and the exclusionary practices of women (Ballenger, 2010).

Table 5 - continued

Comparison Summary between Sarah (2020) and Previous Research	Previous research
Other supports • The Saudi new vision for women's empowerment, and personal characteristics. • Saudi Arabia's *Vision 2030* is for empowerment and women's advancement in leadership • Main problem was that the deanship was not available to females until a few years ago when the political direction decided that females should be treated equally • Saudi government took several actions to promote women in leadership. • Saudi women were not given opportunities to be in significant positions in the past although they were qualified • In personal characteristics, all deans described skills that were vital factors • Insight and examples of the importance of having different abilities and skills to accomplish the functions effectively that were required to become leaders • Self-improvement through reading and continued learning, training, and programs • Reading the other leaders' experiences in the administration • Three of the deans have abilities to read and write in different languages	**Affirms:** • Women holding important positions in Saudi Arabia (Almansour & Kempner, 2015; Estimo, 2017). **Adds to:** • Importance of leadership skills (Aldawsari, 2016; Alhajjuj, 2016; Alomair, 2015; Antonaros, 2010; Ballenger, 2010; Braun, 2014; Curry, 2000; Unin, 2014) • Deans need to develop their skills (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Bright & Richards, 2001; Dean, Bracken & Allen, 2009).

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study discuss and interpret nine themes used to address the underlying issues that female deans currently face, as well as supports to help the upper-level managers figure out the appropriate practices to improve and empower more women in senior positions to create an equal and healthy workplace environment. It could also help leaders who aspire to obtain academic leadership positions in higher education. This section addresses the

recommendations and suggestions to stakeholders in higher education. Although this study found many valuable insights into examples of deans' experiences in attaining their deanship positions, the study was limited to a small sample size including just female deans of colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia. Findings were meant to provide Saudi females with valuable information if they hope to become academic deans or gain other positions in higher education. Additionally, the small sample size may not be ideal for applying to all female deans in Saudi Arabia, but having a small number of participants provided richer data. Limitations of the design included using a qualitative research method, which means the qualitative data is objective and the results have less statistical power to discover trends. Moreover, there could be constraints in finding participants for the study, and participants were self-reporting. Because of the nature of this research, participants presented their own interpretation of their experiences. Of course, this may or may not agree with what others would note as essential challenges and supports in the lives of these women. Because there were so few female deans in Saudi Arabia, this could also be seen as a limitation of the study. If there were a full pool of participants to draw from, the overall findings may be even more generalizable to the Saudi female population.

Capitalizing on the strengths of the experienced female deans

Accordingly, in light of the deans' experiences and journeys in academic administration, I have considered how the senior leaders benefit from experienced deans' stories and how new deans or potential leaders learn from them.

As a result of these findings, the unique structural, familial, and cultural factors played an essential role in empowering or hindering females in gaining leadership roles. All ten participating deans had a rich background and valuable experiences that built the necessary skills and abilities that contributed to attaining the role of the dean in higher education. Effective

support that they received from a variety of sources, including bosses, family and friends, and other factors allowed them to enhance their path to leadership positions. Most of the ten participating deans had long and rich experiences with the academic administration in higher education throughout their careers. Some of these deans had been working to develop their expertise in this area between 20-28 years, and they were highly effective in handling their responsibilities as deans.

Higher education could benefit from the dean's experiences in supporting new and potential deans to "smooth their transition" by learning from them. Universities should work to support their highly effective deans to stay in academic administration instead of retiring or moving on to another profession. For example, they should hire their experienced deans to train and prepare new and potential deans for the practice of deanship through workshops and special courses. Also, the organizations should invite them to prepare and present model lessons for new deans instead of letting them learn on their own, which may take a longer time to figure out their responsibilities and how to deal with the position. In doing this, they will solve some of the challenges that new deans face and help facilitate their path. Mentoring by the experienced women deans would enable women in senior positions to develop their management styles and communication skills. There is a need for these experienced female deans to help the new and upcoming women for training and leadership development practice. For example, Dean 3 stated:

> How can I develop the resources? Can anyone explain this to me? I went to meet the dean of the college of science at that time. I told him that I need a mentor to guide me. I want a person who is worthy of trust, and I can communicate with him occasionally and tell him that this problem is a source of nuisance for me, and I don't know how to solve it and deal with this issue.

Dean 4 indicated: "We lack a lot in strategic planning and teamwork.

On the other hand, it would be valuable for presidents and upper-level administrators to discuss the academic and administrative issues, taking into account the power effective women deans' years of service can have in managing the lives of their fellow vice-deans, department chairs, and students they serve. Areas that their administrators might focus on are training new deans, effective and appropriate training, programs, strategies that work with all potential leaders, and facilitating the implementation of those strategies. Even more, address the administration staff issues and how to encourage them then create healthy and positive workplace environments at the universities.

Finally, it is vital to respect the years of academic administration of these experienced female deans. Indeed, in the education field, it is essential for the stakeholders—new deans, presidents, and community—to recognize that we are fortunate to have them as leaders, to learn from their experiences, and to pass on their wisdom and effective practices. It is essential to promote these relationships with them to have insight into their significant work.

Lessons learned from the ten participating women deans regarding their experiences in higher education

Importantly, according to the participating deans' voices in this study and other studies, the organizational structure of the universities in Saudi Arabia highly needs to be reconsidered as a fundamental issue in difficulties that directly affects the gender roles in higher education. Often, the structural segregation by gender negatively affected the excluded women from the critical decisions and minimizing the coordination and integration between male and female sections. Although, some participating found that gender segregation enhanced their chance to

the deanship position to hold a dean role for the female colleges or at a women university. Dean 7 stated:

> I remember a page of pages that was very clear that your hierarchy needs to fixed. Because you have women's campus living in a second world [very separated from] men's campus who are making decisions, and these (women campus) are executives. They want her to listen to them and do the work. Even the selection in the past was the selection of women who listen more; she isn't a leader; she is excellent. Why? Because that's what's needed.

Higher education leaders should consider providing all potential leaders with opportunities, including professional development that increases their leadership and management skills to prepare them by holding leadership roles to practice in a department, college, or university. All the deans receive training and development opportunities and various leadership programs. Formal programs are needed for deans at the academic administration roles after they are appointed to the position. Then, professional development opportunities and the funds should be available for female deans Also, they should consider providing them with flexible training programs and seminars available for them at any time convenient with their work. Attending national and international workshops or conferences that include leadership, understanding academic administration responsibilities, budgeting, dealing with difficult colleagues or bosses, can enhance their skills in communication, collaboration, teamwork, strategic plan, make distinctions, and other essential matters. The higher education should plan to promote their faculty members in becoming faculty leaders to serve as deans.

Moreover, upper-level leaders should focus their efforts on offering continuous training, support, and networking opportunities to women working in the role of deanship during their

entire tenure in the position. These programs and opportunities will empower them and sharpen their necessary skills to motivate them in their deanship.

With the value of mentorship for women in higher education at their roles, senior administrators should aid women in making a support network of professionals both inside and outside their institutions. The focus should be placed on connecting women with other professional women who are veterans, successful administrators within the academy. Many women need more encouragement and role models to be and feel successful in their careers. Furthermore, a university council of women deans could be formed to help create a network for women to share the challenges that they faced and personal experiences to handle it. There is an importance of sharing information related to the roles and responsibilities of the deans, such as management and collaboration with faculty and other administrators, evaluation, and budgets. Also, the council would provide them with opportunities to change ideas and receive advice unique to women regarding deanship roles.

Presidents and upper-level administrators must be knowledgeable about the unique challenges faced by academic women leaders' deans, such as family obligations, career requirements, and finding a healthy work-life balance. Moreover, institutional leaders should further address the powers distribution that exists between male and female academic administrators by offering them full authorities that they need to perform their tremendous responsibilities. Bureaucracy prevents deans and senior leaders from handling their work tasks, so a lot of women left the deanship early. Senior administrators in higher education and the government should build a family-friendly working environment by offering child-care facilities and services that support women with children and aged family members, which could attract them to serve for a more extended time. Then, organizations would retain more highly qualified

women to be able to work for longer and thrive at their tasks. Furthermore, women will be able to accomplish their duties effectively. Family members should provide them with as much assistance and support as possible. Thus, women serving in the dean position must find smart techniques to balance their work and family lives through establishing the priorities and delegating the tasks.

Upper-level administrators should overcome the negative stereotypes and gender biases against women who serve in leadership positions in higher education institutions, by trusting and respecting their female colleagues. Organizations should deal with stereotypes by providing educational sessions and workshops for their employees to help them increase their awareness, acceptance, and appreciation for the women's dean role. Also, encourage diversity by including more highly qualified women in senior-level positions, such as a deanship, at the workplace to help them understand that women are effective leaders – qualified and skilled enough to hold such vital positions everywhere in the country, not just in the education institutions. Higher education also should break the glass ceiling barriers for female deans' access to information and opportunities to advance in their journey, which helps women to thrive and work effectively.

Women should focus on creativity and inspiration to learn many of the skills, complete responsibilities, spend more time and effort toward developing powerful academic and professional experience to improve themselves to be considered for the position of dean. It is also vital for women to gain experience by serving on departmental and institutional committees and active engagement in the quality and accreditation affairs that would increase their chances of advancing to the position of dean. It is also essential for women who are aspiring to deanship to gain experience by serving on different institutional committees and active engagement in volunteer services and associations in their filed. Especially, by developing solid academic and

professional skills by helping in department chair, vice dean, other various positions, they would increase their chances of advancing to the position of dean role.

Saudi Arabia's *Vision of 2030* plan took several actions to promote women in leadership by opening access for males and females in leadership positions and applying this to all universities in the country. In the past, Saudi women were not given opportunities to be in significant places in the past due to the effect of the culture. The deanship position is accessible now, so anyone can nominate themselves no matter their gender. I believe there will be a lot of change and improvement with the *Vision of 2030* to allow women to play more prominent roles in higher education.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Women are still underrepresented in attaining academic leadership positions in academic institutions such as a dean. For future studies, the results of this study present the main points to address the important findings of this study. There are still many difficulties that hinder the women dean's progress that need to be address. This section includes recommendations of some ideas for future researchers to address for deep understanding of women who become or seek to be a dean in higher education. The new issue raised from this study is, "How do universities keep benefitting from their experienced deans instead of pressing them to retire or another profession?"

The research also could be conducted with a specific case, at a specific university where women in leadership positions are studied over time to include data gathered, specifically from deans as well. The research also could conducted over time to include a new group of vice-deans who have worked closely with deans. I believe it may be possible to expend the research by focusing on the gaps or specific parts or themes found in my study. As an example, more

research about mentoring and networking relationships, specifically internal and external mentoring, could be designed to narrow the focus of the research and include the future expectations.

Additionally, the study may be designed in a quantitative study, such as a survey for deans of a specific state or region to gather information about the degree of impacts from the dean's perspective. It may also use a larger and more diverse sample size to allow for a quantitative or blended analysis using the critical findings of this study. For example, future researchers may use similar data tools but with a larger sample size. They could include different participants besides the deans, such as vice-presidents or presidents. So, it is apparent that somewhat similar experiences existed for the deans who were interviewed for this study regarding their experiences in reaching leadership roles. Still, differences may be found with a different and larger sample. Future research may add more depth to what we understand regarding the effective path to the deanship from the women deans' perspectives in Saudi Arabia. A study could even be conducted on American deans or\and to compare the experiences of American and Saudi deans. A study involving both male and female deans at different institutions may be conducted. Researchers can compare the career experiences of both groups to acquire a deeper understanding of the challenges and supports they face to become a dean. Future researchers could conduct a similar qualitative study about the experiences of male deans to determine whether they experienced the same or different career experiences. A similar study also may be conducted about women presidents to explore and compare their experiences with female deans' experiences in the challenges and supports they have had in attaining their careers in higher education. Future researchers may use this research as an extra tool for observation of

effectively-experienced deans in their higher education environments, in addition to interviewing them.

This study would be available to serve policymakers in higher education and organizations, such as universities and all other stakeholders, such as president, deans, and the upper-level administrators to address the discussed issues to able women deans in academic administration.

Concluding

Overall, the results of this study suggest that a key message is that there is no best or clear way to get the dean role (Bright & Richards, 2001). It depends and is different according to the institutions and culture of the organizations. The knowledge from this study's data collection, analysis, and discussion will help me in my professional practice in the future to better understand the lived experiences of female deans in Saudi Arabia. These challenges and supports were directly embedded in the unique cultural, familial, and structural aspects of Saudi Arabia and its higher education system. This study helped highlight what types of experiences and supports may lead to more successful female deans in KSA academia.

I became interested in this study after attending graduate school with aspirations of earning my own academic leadership position. By examining the challenges and supports that could potentially assist or prevent my journey, I could greatly benefit both myself and other Saudi women striving for academic leadership positions. Additionally, there is a lack of qualitative studies that address issues of culture, family, and structure in relation to female deans in Saudi Arabia.

Finally, this study was unique in the knowledge that it qualitatively addressed women working in the position of deanship within Saudi Arabia, while other studies have examined

different facets of leadership in general. The findings complemented the current literature and also showed the similarities and differences connected with being a female dean in a male-dominated leadership environment. By being aware of the dean participants' unique experiences and challenges, the upper-level administrators can consider a crucial role in promoting more women to this first-level leadership position, find success, and consequently increase the possibility of them attaining leadership positions.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Western Michigan University

Department of Education Leadership, Research, and Technology

Date: _____
Interviewee: _____ **(will be replaced by pseudonym)**

Introductory Protocol

Please sign the release form. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to your answers which will be anonymously saved. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.
We have planned this questionnaire to take no longer than 45 minutes to one hour depending on the depth of your answers.

Introduction

Thank you very much for meeting with me today. I know your time is valuable. I've asked to talk with you because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about being a female dean in Saudi Arabia. Before we begin, I'd like to tell you a bit about my study. The research project focuses on both the challenges and supports that serve as barriers and aides to attaining your position as dean. This study does not aim to evaluate your experiences. Rather, we are trying to learn more about the female's challenges and supports in gaining educational leadership positions, and hopefully find ways to improve female chances to obtain these positions.
Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today about becoming and sustaining the role of a deputy dean in a Saudi Arabian University. There aren't many deputy deans in Saudi. So, how you became a dean and what it takes to sustain that role may be very important to others who aspire to this position.

Interviewee Background

How long have you been:

_____ in your present position?
_____ at this institution?

Interesting background information on interviewee:
What is your highest degree? _____
What is your field of study? _____

Questions:

1. Please tell me about how you became a Dean.

2. What role did the organizational structure play in your path to the Deanship?

   a. Prompt: By organizational structure, I mean aspects such as the selection processes of leadership program, or the hierarchical structure.
   b. Prompt: How did the structure help you? For example, were there any leadership programs or mentoring programs that helped you?
   c. Prompt: Did the structure present any challenges? For example, did you have difficulty with the bureaucratic aspects?

3. What role did your family play in your path to the Deanship?

   a. Prompt: How did your family help you? For example, did you have relatives support your time away from home or help with your children?
   b. Prompt: How did your family present any challenges? For example, was it difficult to balance your time and resources, or did any of your family members object to your work?

4. What role did Saudi culture play in your path to the Deanship?

   a. Prompt: How did your culture help you? For example, did you feel support from those who feel women should have more access to jobs such as the Deanship?
   b. Prompt: How did your culture present any challenges? For example, did you have difficulty with stereotypes or bias?

5. Please tell me a bit about your responsibilities now.

   a. How do you spend your time?
   b. What kind of skills do you need to have?
   c. How many faculty members do you oversee?
   d. Do you have an organizational chart?

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. They will be very useful in this research regarding challenges and support for women in educational leadership in Saudi Arabia.

Sarah Alhoian

جامعة غرب متشقن

قسم القيادة التربوية والبحث والتكنولوجيا

التاريخ: _____

المقابلة مع: _____ (سيتم استبداله باسم مستعار)

بروتوكول تمهيدي

من فضلك قم بتوقيع نموذج الموافقة علي المشاركة. لمعلوماتك سيكون الباحثون في هذا البحث هم الوحيدون المطلعين على إجاباتك التي سيتم حفظها باسم مستعار. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، عليك توقيع نموذج تم تصميمه لتلبية متطلبات موضوعنا البشري. بشكل أساسي ، تنص هذه الوثيقة على ما يلي: (1) جميع المعلومات سرية ، (2) مشاركتك تطوعية وقد تتوقف في أي وقت تشعر فيه بعدم الارتياح ، و(3) لا ننوي إلحاق أي ضرر.

شكرا لموافقتك على المشاركة.

لقد قمنا بتخطيط هذه الأسئلة بحيث لا تستغرق أكثر من 45 دقيقة إلى ساعة واحدة حسب عمق إجاباتك.

المقدمة

شكرا لك علي اجراء المقابلة. أعرف أن وقتك قيّم . و لقد طلبت التحدث معك واختيارك للرد على هذه الأسئلة لأنه تم تحديد هويتك على أنك الشخص الذي لديه الكثير للمشاركة, كونك أمراه عميدة في المملكة العربية السعودية.

قبل أن نبدأ ، أود أن أخبرك قليلاً عن موضوع دراستي . يركز موضوع البحث على كل من الصعوبات والدعم التي تعمل كاحاجز او داعم للمرآه في الوصول الى منصبها كعميدة.

لا تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم تجاربك. في الواقع ، نحاول معرفة المزيد عن تحديات ودعم النساء في تحقيق مناصب قيادية في مجال التعليم ، ونأمل أن نجد سبلاً لتحسين فرص النساء في الوصول الي هذه المناصب.

أشكركم على الوقت الذي قضيته معي اليوم للحديث حول الحصول على دورك كعميده في جامعة سعودية. وحيث انه لا يوجد الكثير من العميدات النساء في السعودية. لذلك ، كيف أصبحت عميدة وما الذي يلزم للحصول على هذا الدور قد تكون أسئلة ذات أهمية للآخرين الذين يتطلعون إلى هذا المنصب.

لمحة عامة عن الشخص الذي ستجري معه المقابلة

-منذ متى وانت .....

في منصبك الحالي؟ _____

في هذه المؤسسة؟ _____

-معلومات عامة مثيرة للاهتمام حول الشخص الذي تمت مقابلته:

ما هي أعلى مؤهل علمي حصلت عليه ؟

ما هو مجال دراستك؟

الأسئلة:

١. من فضلك أخبريني كيف أصبحت عميدة؟

٢. ما الدور الذي لعبته البنية التنظيمية في طريقك إلى العمادة؟

ا. مباشر: من خلال الهيكل التنظيمي للجامعة ، أعنيّ على سبيل المثال: عمليات اختيار برنامج القيادة ، أو البنيه الهرمية؟

ب. موجه: كيف ساعدك الهيكل؟ على سبيل المثال ، هل كانت هناك برامج للقيادة أو برامج توجيهية ساعدتك؟

ج. موجه: هل قدم الهيكل أي صعوبات؟ على سبيل المثال ، هل واجهت صعوبة في الجوانب البيروقراطية (تطبيق القوانين بالقوة)؟

٣.ما الدور الذي لعبته عائلتك في طريقك إلى العمادة؟

أ. موجه: كيف ساعدتك عائلتك؟ على سبيل المثال ، هل كان لديك أقارب يدعمونك اثناء وقت عملك بعيدًا عن المنزل أو يساعدون أطفالك؟

ب. موجه: كيف كانت عائلتك سبب أي صعوبات؟ على سبيل المثال ، هل كان من الصعب الموازنة بين وقتك وعملك ، أو هل اعترض احد من أفراد عائلتك على عملك؟

٤.ما الدور الذي لعبته الثقافة السعودية في طريقك إلى العمادة؟ .

ا. موجه: كيف ساعدتك ثقافتك؟ على سبيل المثال ، هل شعرت بدعم من أولئك الذين يشعرون أنه ينبغي أن تحصل النساء على مزيد من فرص العمل مثل العمادة؟

ب. موجه: كيف كانت ثقافتك سبب لأي صعوبات؟ على سبيل المثال ، هل واجهتي صعوبة في المعتقدات النمطية عن المرأة (المقصود هنا الاعتقاد بآن المرآه عملها في البيت ومع اطفالها)أو التحيز؟

٥.أخبريني عن مسؤوليات عملك الآن؟

ا. كيف تقضي وقتك؟

ب. ما نوع المهارات التي تحتاجيها؟

ج. كم عدد أعضاء هيئة التدريس او الموظفين الذين تشرف عليهم؟

د. هل لديك جدول(رسم البياني) تنظيمي؟

شكرا لك على وقتك للإجابة على هذه الأسئلة. ستكون مفيدة جدا في هذا البحث فيما يتعلق بالتحديات والدعم للنساء في القيادة التربوية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

سارة الحويان

Appendix B
HSIRB Approval Letters

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Date: November 29, 2018

To: Sue Poppink, Principal Investigator
Sarah Alhoian, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 18-11-13

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Saudi Arabian Women's Experiences Becoming Higher Education Deans: Obstacles and Supports in Educational Leadership" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., *you must request a post-approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study"*). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: **November 28, 2019**

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Date: January 15, 2020

To: Sue Poppink, Principal Investigator
         Sarah Alhoian, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 18-11-13

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project titled "Saudi Arabian Women's Experiences Becoming Higher Education Deans: Obstacles and Supports in Educational Leadership" requested in your memo received January 13, 2020 (to add Student Investigator's Alwiah Alsaggaf and Somaia Mustafa) has been approved by the WMU Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: **November 28, 2020**

Appendix C

Approval Letters from Saudi Universities

Ref No: KSU- HE-19-22

سعادة الباحثة/ سارة عبدالله الحويان   حفظها الله

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

إشارة إلى توصية اللجنة الفرعية للكليات الإنسانية لأخلاقيات البحوث على الكائنات الحية في جلستها الثامنة عشر بتاريخ 16 / 05 /1440هـ، الموافق 22 / 1 / 2019 م.

نفيدكم بموافقة اللجنة الدائمة لأخلاقيات البحث العلمي على إجراء البحث الموضح بالجدول الآتي:

الحالة	البحث	اسم الباحث	م
الموافقة	"تجارب المرأة السعودية لتصبح عميدة في التعليم العالي: العوائق والدعم في القيادات التربوية"	سارة عبدالله الحويان	1

وعليه نأمل من الجهات المعنية بالجامعة تسهيل مهمة الباحثة.

وتفضلوا بقبول وافر الاحترام

عميد البحث العلمي
نائب رئيس اللجنة الدائمة لأخلاقيات البحث العلمي

أ.د خالد بن إبراهيم الحميزي

صورة إلى سكرتير اللجنة الدائمة لأخلاقيات البحث العلمي

ماشر

١٥٧٦٤
١٤٤٠/٥/٢٤هـ

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AL-IMAM MUHAMMAD IBN SAUD ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
VICE-PRESIDENT FOR
GRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة الدارس: ساره عبدالله رفيد الحويان

سعادة عميدة شؤون المكتبات   حفظها الله

سعادة عميدة مركز دراسة الطالبات   حفظها الله

سعادة عميدة التقويم والجودة   حفظها الله

سلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته .. أما بعد :

فأشير إلى رغبة الدارس بكليه التربويه بجامعه وسترن متشقان : **ساره عبدالله رفيد الحويان** في إجراء دراســــة بعنوان " **تجارب النسـاء السـعوديات كعميده في التعليم العالي: العقبات والدعم في القيادة التربوية.**" استكمالاً لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الدكتوراه بقسم القياده التربويه.

ونظراً لأن موضوع البحث يتطلب إجراء دراسـة ميدانية والحصـول على بيانات علمية وإحصائية لذا آمل تسـهيل مهمة مقدم الطلب/ ســاره عبدالله رفيد الحويان لتطبيق أداة الدراســة وتزويده بالبيانات اللازمة. والله يحفظكم ويرعاكم.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

وكيل الجامعة
للدراسـات العليا والبحث العلمي

د. محمود بن سليمان آل محمود

جامعة الأميرة نورة بنت عبدالرحمن

وكالة الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي

رقم التعميم: .... ١٦١٩٢ ....

تاريخ التعميم: ٣٠ / ٤ / ١٤٤٠هـ

موضوع التعميم: بشأن تسهيل مهمة الباحثة سارة بنت عبدالله الحويان.

سعادة د/ عميدة .... **حفظها الله.**

كلية علوم الحاسب والمعلومات	☐	كلية العلوم	☐	كلية التربية	☐	جهات استلام التعميم
كلية الخدمة الاجتماعية	☐	كلية الهندسة	☐	كلية الآداب	☐	
كلية الصيدلة	☐	كلية الإدارة والأعمال	☐	كلية اللغات والترجمة	☑	
كلية الصحة وعلوم التأهيل	☐	كلية التمريض	☐	كلية التصاميم والفنون	☐	
كلية طب الأسنان	☐	كلية الطب البشري	☐	كلية المجتمع	☐	
أخرى	☐	معهد اللغة العربية للناطقات بغيرها	☐			

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته..

محتوى التعميم:

نفيد سعادتكم بأن الباحثة/ سارة بنت عبدالله الحويان، طالبة دكتوراه مبتعثه بالولايات المتحدة الامريكية تخصص القيادة التربوية، وبصدد إعداد بحث بعنوان: (تجارب النساء السعوديات كعميدة في التعليم العالي: العقبات والدعم في القيادة التربوية) ومن متطلبات إتمام هذه الدراسة، استطلاع وجهات نظر القيادات الجامعية لخدمة أهداف الدراسة.

وعليه نأمل من سعادتكم التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة أعلاه بالسماح لها بإجراء المقابلة على جميع القادة لديكم. وذلك حسب الأنظمة المتبعة.

ولسعادتكم فائق الشكر وبالغ التقدير..

عميدة البحث العلمي

د. منال بنت عبدالعزيز الشدي.

Appendix D

Letter to the Vice Presidents for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at the Saudi

Universities

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

سعادة وكيل جامعه الملك سعود للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي ....حفظه الله

السلام عليكم ورحمه الله وبركاته وبعد...

افيد سعادتكم بانني مبتعثه حاليا لدراسة الدكتوراه في جامعة غرب متشجن في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية في تخصص القيادة التربوية - التحليل التنظيمي ، وحيث انني في مرحله اخذ المرافقات لتطبيق الجزء العملي من دراستي التي بعنوان: "تجارب المرأة السعودية تحقيق الوصول الي العمادة في التعليم العالي: المسارات، العوائق والدعم في القيادة التربوية".

وتهدف الدراسة الي فهم التجارب التي عاشتها المرأة في منصب عميدة في المملكة العربية السعودية لتحديد الصعوبات التي واجهتها وكذلك الدعم الذي ساعدها في الحصول مناصبها القيادية. على آمل أن تساهم هذه الدراسة في تسليط الضوء على أنواع العوائق والدعم التي قد تؤدي إلى عميدات نساء أكثر نجاحا في الأوساط الأكاديمية السعودية .

عليه اتقدم لسعادتكم بطلب الحصول على خطاب موافقه اجراء الدراسة في جامعتكم الموقرة موجهه الي جامعه غرب متشجن Western Michigan university, حتى يتسنى لي السير في اكمال متطلبات تطبيق الدراسة.

مرفق لسعادتكم الموافقة من مجلس البحث العلمي في جامعه غرب متشجن على دراسة الموضوع ، جنبا الي جنب مع ادوات الدراسة.

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق التحية والتقدير .

مقدمه

الباحثة: ساره بنت عبدالله رفيد الحويان

جامعه وسترن متشجن - كليه التربية

قسم القيادة التربوية والبحث والتكنولوجيا

ايميل:

sarah.a.alhoian@wmich.edu

جوال:

1(269)501-7095

Appendix E
Letter to Deans Participants

Participant Recruitment Letter (English)

Dear Dean _____ of _____ University,

Currently, I am a Ph.D. student working on my dissertation entitled " Saudi Arabian Women's Lived Experiences Attaining Higher Education Deanships: Paths, Supports, and Challenges"
With this study, I will seek to understand the lived experiences of female deans in Saudi Arabia to ascertain the specific challenges they have faced and supports they have had in attaining their leadership positions. My hope is that this study will help highlight what types of experiences and supports may lead to more successful female deans in Saudi Arabian academia.

This study was approved previously by your university (attached a copy of the approval).
You are invited to participate in a research study that will consist of an interview about your experiences. The interview would take approximately one hour. All responses and answers and names will be kept confidential.

I realize that your time is very valuable, but your participation could help future females to become academic leaders, so I am hopeful that you will participate. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at sarah.a.alhoian@wmich.edu or
by telephone at +966 50 764 5334, or at
telephone +1(269)5017095
Thank you very much for your time and assistance.

Kind Regards,
Sarah Alhoian
Western Michigan University

Participant Recruitment Letter (Arabic)

خطاب للمشاركة في البحث

سعادة عميدة _____ في جامعة _____ ،

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته,   وبعد.......

حاليا ، انا مرشحة لدرجة الدكتوراه وأعمل على اطروحة الدكتوراه بعنوان "تجارب المرأة السعودية في تحقيق الوصول الي العمادة في التعليم العالي: المسارات، العوائق والدعم في القيادة التربوية".

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى فهم التجارب التي عاشتها المرأة في منصب عميدة في المملكة العربية السعودية لتحديد الصعوبات التي واجهتها وكذلك الدعم الذي ساعدها في الحصول على مناصبها القيادية. على آمل أن تساهم هذه الدراسة في تسليط الضوء على أنواع العوائق والدعم التي قد تؤدي إلى وجود عميدات أكثر نجاحا في الأوساط الأكاديمية السعودية .

وقد وافقت جامعة وسترن متشجن من قبل على هذه الدراسة (مرفق نسخة من الموافقة).

أنا أبحث عن النساء في منصب عميدة الذين هم على استعداد لأجراء المقابلة معي حول تجاربهم. سوف تستغرق المقابلة ساعة واحدة تقريبًا ، وستبقى جميع الإجابات والأسماء سرية. انا أدرك أن وقتك قيّم للغاية ، ولكن مشاركتك يمكن أن تساعد النساء في المستقبل على أن يصبحوا قادة أكاديميين ، لذلك آمل أن تشاركوا.

في حال وجود أي استفسار فلا تترددوا بالتواصل معي عبر البريد الإلكتروني sarah.a.alhoian@wmich.edu

أو على الجوال السعودي Telephone +966 503035100

او الجوال الأمريكي Telephone +1(269)5017095

مع خالص الشكر والتقدير

سارة الحويان

جامعة وسترين متشجن