Gender and Subject Choice in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

Jawaher Awwad Alwedinani

Doctor of Philosophy

University of York

Department of Education

May 2016

Abstract

This study explores women's views and attitudes towards the traditionally masculine subjects in higher education in a Saudi Arabian context. It investigates the factors that influence women's subject choices. It also addresses the implications of limited subject choices in women's experiences in higher education. The study adopted an inquiry approach to understand women's experiences in relation to their educational choices. The study was conducted at two universities located in two major cities in Saudi Arabia. The data in this study were collected through interviews with women. Snowball sampling was used to recruit 100 female students and lecturers.

The findings of this study demonstrate how the internalisation of gender norms and gender stereotypes shapes women's views and attitudes towards these subjects. It also shows how patriarchal structures influence women's subject choices and how such influences vary depending on the father. Women who come from traditional families are more likely to accommodate the patriarchal influences, whilst those who come from non-traditional families are more likely to bargain or negotiate with the patriarchal system. This study reveals how fathers' influences on women's education differ according to their attitudes towards *Ikhtilat*. The study addresses the sensitivity of the *Ikhtilat* issue in the Saudi context and how the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* has shaped women's experiences in Saudi higher education. It shows how women exercise their agency through bargaining, resisting and negotiating with the patriarchal system. Furthermore, it identifies factors that influence women's subject choices and how these factors differ amongst women.

Table of Contents

Chapter 4: *Ikhtilat* as patriarchal expression: Gender segregation and the influence of fathers

Chapter 5: The gendering of subject status

Chapter 6: The construction of femininity and masculinity amongst traditionalists and modernists

Chapter 7: Bargaining with patriarchy: Women's subject choices and patriarchal marriage norms

Chapter 8: Conclusion

List of Tables

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor **Dr. Vanita Sundaram** for her remarkable commitments to my research and her continued engagement even when she was on maternity leave. Her valuable comments, suggestions and feedback have always been of great help in developing and shaping this study. I will always be grateful for her unlimited support and encouragement throughout the four years of my study. I also thank my previous supervisor **Dr. Gillian Hampden-Thompson** for her helpful contributions and guidance during the initial phases of this research.

I am very thankful to my thesis advisor **Professor Stevi Jackson** for her criticism and advice, which were extremely valuable to me. Her tremendous experience in feminist and gender research helped me in linking gender issues to higher education even though I did not have a background in feminist and gender research. I have learnt so much from her during the last few years.

A special thanks to **Dr. Maria Tsouroufli** for her friendship and encouragement. She was the first one who taught me about feminism and gender issues through lending me her books and welcoming me to her lectures. Her kindness and support will never be forgotten. Thanks go to **Dr. Eleanor Brown** for taking the responsibility for guiding me during the maternity leave of my supervisor. I extend my thanks and appreciation to **Professor Chris Kyriacou** for his cooperation and assistance when I needed it.

My deepest gratitude go to all my family members for their endless support and love. I am sincerely grateful to my father **Awwad Alwedinani** who planted in me a desire for learning and an appreciation for knowledge. I thank him for always believing in me whatever I do, and standing by my side in every step I take concerning my professional and educational life. Without his unique support it would not have been possible for me to be where I am today. I am equally grateful to my best friend and greatest champion…. my dear mother **Aisha Al-Otaibi**. Words cannot describe how thankful I am for her being in my life.

 Whatever difficulties I have faced or I might face, I have always believed that I am protected and blessed because of her prayers. I dedicate this work to my great mother, as gratitude for her patience, sacrifices and struggle for me.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or produced by me or another party in fulfillment of any other degrees at another university or institution.

Chapter One:

Introduction

This study focuses on the influences of patriarchal structures and gender norms on women's subject choices in two Saudi women's higher education institutions. It also sheds light on the factors that shape women's experiences in higher education. In other words, it draws attention to how the patriarchal system works differently, depending on the attitudes of a woman's family in the Saudi context. Furthermore, this study emphasises Saudi women's agency and how they can make agentic choices concerning their education through negotiating or bargaining with the patriarchal system.

Developments in Saudi higher education over the last decade have allowed women to enjoy educational and occupational rights that were unavailable to previous generations. However, Saudi women still face cultural and patriarchal constraints that affect their educational choices. "The current education structure limits women's access to the labour market through restrictions on certain areas of study and access to a wider scope of jobs, such as engineering, media, and architecture" (Al-Saif, 2013, para. 23). In order to help the reader understand my motivation in conducting this study, I explore my personal biography as a researcher, including my personal beliefs, experiences and cultural background, all of which influenced my decision to choose this topic.

I am a Saudi woman who has lived most of her life within the Saudi culture. I graduated from a state high school in a major Saudi city. When I graduated, I wanted to study any subject other than teaching. Thus, I intended to study politics, but this field was not (and is still not) available to women. Clearly, this subject is not available at Saudi women's universities because it is not considered suitable for women. Subject segregation is very common in Saudi universities. However, I was not aware of concepts like patriarchy or gender norms, therefore I never saw this as a patriarchal constraint. Despite the patriarchal constraints on my education I was able to exercise my agency.

I did my own search within available subjects to find a subject that did not involve teaching. At that time, there were limited subjects available at Saudi female universities that did not involve teaching, such as medicine, nursing and business. As a result, I chose to study business. Unfortunately, this was only available at a university that was located an hour and a half away from where I live. Since I am prohibited from driving by law, I was unable to make such a decision without my father's permission (my male guardian). Male guardianship is a form of patriarchal system in the Saudi Arabian context. I was not able to study at university without a consent letter from my father or male guardian. I also would have to rely on him to either drive me to the university or provide me with a personal driver. After convincing my father, he drove me to the city where the university was located. I submitted my application but did not get accepted. I eventually decided to study sciences and education, specifically chemistry, at a women's education college.

The main aim of women's colleges in Saudi Arabia is to prepare Saudi women to be qualified teachers for teaching at female schools. Accordingly, I graduated with a degree that only qualified me for jobs in teaching. More specifically, there were limited job opportunities for Saudi women in non-teaching sectors because of subject segregation. Although there were plenty of educational job opportunities at that time, I decided not to apply because I was not passionate about teaching. At the same time, I was unable to gain access to jobs in other sectors. As a consequence, I stayed at home for a year. The year following my graduation from the women's education college was a turning point in my life. I felt restricted since I had limited educational and professional options. Even though I was not aware of what a patriarchal system is at that time, I was influenced by it and I bargained with it. I refused to give up as I tried to find a way to mitigate the influences of the patriarchal constraints.

Therefore, I decided to pursue an advanced degree in education. Consequently, when my family and I moved to another city, I applied for a master's degree course at an education school and I got accepted to study for a Master of Educational Administration and Planning. I was aware that studying at an education school did not guarantee me a non-academic job, and I was starting to lose hope.

I just wanted to postpone being a teacher for a few more years. During my master's studies at the education school, it came to my attention that King Abdullah had launched a scholarship program that enabled Saudi citizens to study abroad. The program aims to provide Saudis (males and females) with qualifications and skills to meet the needs of the Saudi labour market. I became interested in joining this program, as I saw it as an opportunity to change my career path to something I love. Therefore, after obtaining my master's degree, I submitted my scholarship application. Although the main requirement of the scholarship for a female applicant is to be accompanied by her male guardian (*Mahram*) throughout her study abroad, I did not tell my father about my decision because I was worried that he would refuse, especially because I was the first woman in my family who had decided to continue her studies abroad. My application got accepted and I was awarded a scholarship to study in the UK.

Eventually my father discovered that I had obtained the scholarship, when he read it in the newspaper. Luckily he was very supportive and proud of me. He was as excited as I, to the degree that he proudly told relatives and friends about it. He was also by my side at every step in completing the scholarship process, which took four months. I felt so blessed to have such an understanding and supportive father. I was very optimistic that this scholarship would bring a positive change to my life. Although at that time I had the opportunity to shift my career path away from teaching, which was what I had always wanted, I felt it would be very late to take that step. I also found it difficult to study a subject that was different from my previous degrees.

I knew that I was not the only one who faced such challenges, as plenty of Saudi women have been through similar experiences. The initial idea for my PhD topic was conceived during that time, as it derived from my personal experiences. I have always been interested in Saudi women's issues and I wanted to speak out about such issues. After thinking deeply about what I have been through, starting with the limited subjects available for women to study at Saudi universities, and professional segregation in the labour market, and on to the influences of the male guardianship system on women's experiences in higher education, I felt that these patriarchal constraints had negatively affected my education.

Furthermore, I found my study in the UK as an opportunity for me to freely discuss such sensitive issues that I would not be able to discuss at a Saudi university I then decided to carry on my PhD research on Saudi women in higher education. I was eager to discover Saudi women's experiences within higher education. I was particularly interested in examining their views towards certain subjects that are not available at female universities due to the patriarchal culture and gender expectations. I also wanted to know whether the participants of my study had similar experiences to mine. Did they feel obliged to conform to the cultural expectations of women's roles in Saudi society?

As a Saudi woman, I bring to this study my personal knowledge and the experiences of other women living in Saudi Arabia, who face patriarchal constraints that affect their educational opportunities. Such knowledge and experiences enabled me to be an insider as well as a researcher, and provided me with a depth of understanding of the patriarchal structure and power relations within the Saudi context. Furthermore, I approached this research from a feminist perspective, which allowed me to reflect on the experiences of my participants. The feminist perspective helped me to identify the inequality that is experienced by Saudi women within higher education. It also helped me to shed light on how women's higher education in Saudi Arabia reproduces gender norms through subject segregation.

Although I did my research for my master's thesis using quantitative methodology, I adopted qualitative methods in conducting my PhD research, not only because these are the most suitable methods to address my topic, but also because I wanted to improve my knowledge and skills in using qualitative methods. As a consequence, using qualitative methods contributed to developing my understanding of women's experiences in higher education. As previously mentioned, I conducted this study at two Saudi higher education institutions. Those two institutions are located in two different cities. During my time in both cities, I noticed the differences between people who live in Jeddah and people who live in Makkah. People living in Makkah are more conservative than people living in Jeddah.

For instance, most women in Makkah cover their faces, whilst there are increasing numbers of unveiled women in Jeddah. During my studies at both universities, I noticed that subjects such as medicine, business or computer sciences were perceived as prestigious, whereas subjects like Islamic law, Arabic, nursing or social sciences were seen as less prestigious. Although there is growing literature on gender and women's education in Saudi Arabia, little is known about how the patriarchal system works differently depending on a woman's father. Since little has been done on women's subject choices in Saudi higher education, this study fills this knowledge gap by identifying the factors that influence Saudi women's educational choices.

Additionally it is recognised in this research that women are a heterogeneous group, which helps in understanding their different experiences. Most studies of Saudi women in higher education overlook the influence of the patriarchal culture and gender norms on women's experiences as they relate to higher education. Furthermore, Islamic feminists like Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed and Riffat Hassan, "see modern liberal and egalitarian gender reformation of Islam as a requirement for the success of a broader societal and political reform" (Tohidi, 2003, p. 140). However, this approach does not take into consideration other factors that could contribute to the oppression of women.

Therefore, this study is designed not only to investigate women's experiences in higher education, but also to examine women's agency under patriarchal conditions. It also discusses how gender norms influence women's subject choices. Hence, this study answers the following questions:

1. What are the factors influencing women's subject choices?

2. How do they feel about disciplines that have been socially constructed as feminine or masculine?

3. To what extent do cultural and social norms influence subject choices at university level?

4. How do female students and lecturers perceive the implications of limited subject choice on their future careers?

Overview

This thesis has seven main chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter provides the theoretical background of the current study and is divided into four sections. The first section gives an overview of the historical background of women's education in Saudi Arabia. The second section discusses the construct of femininity within the Saudi context. It demonstrates how the patriarchal system operates in the Saudi context. The third section reports on existing research on the influence of gender stereotypes on subject choices. The third chapter discusses the philosophical and methodological positions that underpin my study. It explains why I adopted the narrative approach for this study, as well as the limitations and strengths of narrative inquiry. It describes the access process and sampling techniques that were used in this study. Furthermore, it discusses the theoretical framework that influenced the study paradigm.

The fourth chapter is based on data collected from the participants during the interviews, focusing on the influence of fathers on women's educational choices. It shows that the influence of fathers varies greatly depending on their class. It also sheds light on how the concept of *Ikhtilat* (gender segregation) impacts some fathers' attitudes and views towards certain subjects, and demonstrates how in some cases women restrict their educational choices because of *Ikhtilat*.

Chapter five addresses how my participants' educational decisions have been influenced by how their chosen subjects are perceived. This chapter suggests that some subjects such as nursing have a lower status because of gender norms, which prevents some women from studying them. Chapter six explores the effect of religion on justifying subject segregation. It shows how the attitudes of participants differ depending on their interpretations of Islam. It also discusses the differences between the views of traditionalists and modernists in terms of certain subjects. It focuses on two interpretations of Islam, which are the patriarchal interpretations of Islam, which are followed by the traditionalists, and the less patriarchal interpretations of Islam, which are followed by the modernists. This chapter reveals how the participants' essentialised views of gender roles affected their subject choices.

Chapter seven discusses the way in which my participants can be seen as active agents who make agentic choices. It explores the influence of patriarchal constraints, such as marriage, on their education. It discusses how women resist or bargain with patriarchal marriage values in order to avoid them negatively affecting their education. It also explains why some women do not exercise their agency, and instead make accommodations for patriarchal constraints.

The final chapter draws on summaries of the preceding chapters in order to present the conclusion of study. This chapter reflects on my experiences whilst conducting my research. It also discusses the contributions of this study to enriching the field of Saudi higher education, and suggests some areas that need further investigation. Finally, it highlights the implications of the findings of this study for understanding Saudi women's experiences in higher education.

Chapter Two:
Literature review chapter

2.1 Introduction

This review draws on literature from educational, sociological and women's studies resources to contextualise the research presented in the current study within the educational and feminist perspectives available in the literature. This chapter comprises four main sections. The first section provides an overview of women's higher education in Saudi Arabia. The second section gives an overview of how gender roles and power relations are constructed in Saudi Arabia. The third section includes the effects of gender stereotypes on university subject choices.

The literature search is based on a systematic review using social, educational, and women's studies databases. During the search for literature, key terms were used such as "gender roles," "higher education," "subject choices," "Muslim women," "gender and Islam," "Saudi Arabia," "women in Islam," "education in Saudi Arabia," "Saudi women," "women in higher education," "students' subject choices," "intersectionality," and "intersectionality of gender and class." The search process was conducted in two stages. Firstly, I searched manually through the University of York and University of Leeds catalogues for journals, books and theses. Secondly, I searched for journals, articles and theses through electronic databases such as, Science Direct, Ethos, EBSCO, ASSIA, ERIC, JSTOR including Google scholar.

2. Saudi women and higher education
2.2.1 Context

In the sixties, higher education institutions for Saudi women did not exist. Therefore, some girls who wanted to pursue their higher studies went to universities in Arab countries. However, others who could not afford to study abroad went to local universities such as King Saud University in Riyadh or King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah. Nevertheless, female students found it difficult to travel to Riyadh and stay in relatives' houses and relied on male students to obtain lecture notes or books (Al-Bassam, 1984).

Some girls after graduating from high school wanted to obtain a higher education degree. However, conservative scholars were against building a university for women because they thought that would lead to mixing between men and women in the workplace. Some families who could not afford to send their daughters to study abroad demanded that the Saudi government build universities and colleges for women. Universities in Saudi Arabia were built for men who wanted to pursue their higher education. The absence of female universities at that time made some upper class families send their daughters to study abroad (Hamdan, 2005). However, the growing number of women who graduated from high schools and who wanted to continue their higher education made women's higher education a necessity, especially for those who could not afford the expense of studying abroad. Due to this demand for women's higher education, universities established separate campuses for girls. For example, in 1976 King Saud University established a Centre for Women to give girls the opportunity to study particular subjects such as languages, geography and history.

Subsequently most King Saud colleges opened centres for women providing the opportunity to study business, economics, law, computer sciences, pharmacy, medicine, and nursing, but not architecture and engineering. In 1967, King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah allowed women to study subjects like education, art, home economics and medicine. At the beginning of the seventies, Um Al-Qura University in Makkah allowed women to study most subjects except law and Islamic studies. The late seventies saw the University of King Faisal in Damamm admit women to some departments such as home economics, medicine, education and nursing (Almohsen, 2000). By 1998, there were eight universities and 61 colleges for girls. In the last few decades, the number of girls who graduated from Saudi universities has exceeded the number of boys (Baki, 2004). The University of Imam Mohamed bin Saud in Riyadh, which is a religious university, has started to accept female students. Lately, King Khalid University in the south of Saudi Arabia has opened its doors to female students in different disciplines, for instance, "computer sciences, biology and English" (Hamdan, 2005, p. 52). On the other hand, the only Saudi university that has not opened a centre for girls is the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals.

This could be due to the nature of its activities, which mainly focuses on oil extraction and refining that are traditionally performed by men. Despite the advances made in women's higher education, there are still significant restrictions on what Saudi women can study. For example, Saudi women cannot study subjects like chemical engineering, politics, petroleum or aviation (Hamdan, 2005). As a result, many families still send their daughters to the United States or Europe to study subjects not available to women at Saudi universities (Hamdan, 2005). The oil boom in the early seventies had a huge impact on women's education. An enormous number of schools and colleges were built for women and many teachers from Arab countries were recruited. Education helped Saudi women to gain skills and broaden their knowledge and to know about their rights (Al-rawaf & Simmons, 1991). Despite the growing number of Saudi working-women, there is a common belief amongst Saudis that home is the natural place for women. That is, the primary role of women is nurturing and raising their children. Thus, Saudi women are still facing challenges and obstacles in obtaining education or a job (Hamdan, 2005).

Unlike male education, female education in Saudi Arabia was overseen by the general presidency for girls' education, which was under the control of the extreme clerics. The reason behind this decision was to make sure that women's education serves the purpose for which it was founded, namely for preparing girls to become good housewives and mothers. However, Alsweel (n.d.) revealed that the Saudi state put the conservative clerics in charge of women's education for two reasons. Firstly, this was out of fear of criticism from other conservative clerics, who have influence on public opinion. Secondly, it was due to the fear that the traditional roles of women, mothering and reproduction, might vanish. The massive expansion in the number of girls' schools led to the emergence of the need for qualified female teachers to teach the girls. Hence, Riyadh College of Education was built at the beginning of the seventies (Al-Bassam, 1984). It was the first higher education institution dedicated to women in Saudi Arabia. This was followed by the opening of many education colleges all over the kingdom. There were over a hundred education colleges before they recently merged with universities. The main purpose of education colleges, "was to train Saudi teachers for intermediate and secondary schools" (Al-Bassam, 1984, p. 256).

Regarding private higher education in Saudi Arabia, King Abdul-Aziz University was the first private Saudi university established in 1967 in Jeddah. The establishment of King Abdul-Aziz University was due to the lack of universities at that time in the western part of Saudi Arabia. It was founded by a Saudi businessman, who wanted higher education to be accessible to local people. It was a non-profit university and it depended financially on donations and real-estate trust. However, a few years later this university became public because of financial difficulties (Batarfy, 2005). The failure of King Abdul-Aziz University negatively influenced the development of the private higher education sector in Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, the establishment of private universities in Saudi Arabia ceased for decades.

Nevertheless, due to the significant increase in demand on public universities, the Saudi government authorised the re-establishment of private universities in its Sixth Development Plan of 1995-2000 (Jamjoom, 2012). The number of high school graduates grew over time, with an annual growth rate of 2% between 2004 and 2008 (Ministry of Planning, 2009). The gap between supply and demand in higher education has revealed the need for private higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, there are 41 private colleges and 10 universities in Saudi Arabia. Two of these colleges are only for females and the rest are for both males and females. Some of these private colleges and universities offer subjects, which are not available at female public universities such as architecture and electrical engineering (www.mohe.gov.sa).

Conversely, gaining access to a private university could be a challenge for some women, particularly those who come from lower-class backgrounds. The relatively high tuition fees make private colleges accessible for higher-class female students: "The tuition fee level of the institution reflects the social class of its students" (Jamjoom, 2012, p. 115). For instance, Dar Al-Hekma College in Jeddah typically admits elite female students because of its high level of tuition fees. Although the Saudi government gives women from lower class groups an opportunity to study at private higher institutions through scholarships, it is only the high achievers who can obtain such scholarships. Furthermore, the environment and the admission requirements of private institutions appear to be another obstacle (Jamjoom, 2012).

One of the entry requirements of private universities or colleges is fluency in English (Jamjoom, 2012). Taking into consideration that the lower class women very often graduate from public secondary schools, which use Arabic as the medium instruction, unlike private secondary schools, private colleges can be seen as excluding those working class women.

The main goal of the education system in Saudi Arabia is to preserve Islamic culture and identity, and to embed Saudi customs and traditions. Education in Saudi Arabia follows the policy of gender segregation. In female universities, all the staff is women except where blind male professors teach modules like Islamic studies at a women's university (Al-Bassam, 1984). Furthermore, each university is surrounded by high walls and a guard at every gate to protect female students, until their fathers, brothers or drivers pick them up (Hamdan, 2005).

Female students face difficulties in terms of transportation, as Saudi women are not allowed to drive. Accordingly, most female students rely on their fathers or brothers to drive them to and from university, although some universities such as King Saud University in Riyadh (the capital) and King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah (western Saudi Arabia) have their own accommodation for female students who live in nearby areas. Nevertheless, some families prohibit their daughters from living outside the home and away from their supervision, because they worry that their daughters could commit adultery. Sexual relationships between men and women outside of marriage are religiously and socially forbidden in Saudi Arabia. Involvement in such relationships might lead to the family's reputation being tarnished (Alrawaf & Simmons, 1991).

These social pressures and barriers make schools and universities the favourite places for Saudi women to socialise and meet people. This also might lead Saudi females to stay in college/university and carry on their higher education more than males. There are separate campuses for men and women. Sometimes, in the case of a shortage of female professors, male professors can teach female students through videoconferencing. It allows male professors to give a lecture to female students without needing to be in the same classroom, as mixing between the sexes is forbidden both from religious and social perspectives (*Ikhtilat*).

Nonetheless, for some colleges like those offering medicine and business, it is necessary for male professors to teach female students in the same classroom without needing videoconferencing (Baki, 2004). This could be because women who study in medical or business colleges are open to *Ikhtilat,* since hospitals and companies are gender-mixed places. Therefore, it is considered that there is no need for videoconferencing in medical colleges, since female students will eventually work side by side with men in hospitals.

2.2.2. Women's subject choices in Higher Education: Comparison among countries

The participation of women in higher education has grown in recent decades, which has helped to decrease gender inequality in higher education. Before the 1990s, males in higher education outnumbered females in OECD countries. However, since the mid-1990s the gender gap has diminished (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). The social and political rights that were obtained by women during the second half of the 20th century played a part in the advancement of the position of women position (Bradley, 2008). The number of female students at university is double the number of male students in countries such as the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada and Australia. In contrast, countries like Korea, Turkey, Japan and Switzerland lag behind in terms of achieving gender parity between men and women in higher education, since few women go to university compared to their male counterparts (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008).

The number of women who participate in higher education in Sweden is almost equal to those of their male counterparts, although women in Sweden used to be treated as inferior in diverse ways. For example, they were disadvantaged in terms of the financial benefits of higher education. Nonetheless their status has dramatically improved due to the needs of the labour market for female workers (Jonsson, 1999). In the same way, in Saudi Arabia the number of women who graduated from Saudi universities has exceeded the number of men during the last few decades (Baki, 2004; Pharaon, 2004). However, the opposite is seen in Germany, where for several reasons women's participation at university is relatively low compared to men.

Firstly, German women are more likely to choose vocational education rather than university education since many job opportunities can be obtained through vocational training. Secondly, vocational training offers jobs that allow them to balance their private and public duties. Finally, gender stereotypes discourage women from studying technical subjects (Loz & et. al, 2011). Nevertheless, gender segregation in higher education exists in most countries, however the degree differs from country to country (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). Gender segregation in higher education is a global phenomenon (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008): "Although women's overall representation in higher education increased dramatically during these decades, approaching gender parity, gender differentiation by field of study remained high" (Bradley, 2000, p. 6).

Women are traditionally associated with subjects like education, health and humanities, whilst men are traditionally associated with engineering, mathematics and sciences (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). Gender segregation in Swedish higher education is persistently high because women choose subjects that are not in conflict with their domestic work (Jonsson, 1999). As a consequence, in most OECD countries, women are overrepresented in education, health, and humanities, and underrepresented in engineering and sciences, whilst men are overrepresented in engineering, mathematics and sciences and underrepresented in education and humanities (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). This can also be observed in Saudi Arabia, where women very often tend to select traditional female fields such as teaching and medicine due to the gender stereotyping of technical fields. Most Saudi female students (nearly 93%) graduate with a degree in education and humanities (AL-Munajjed, 2010).

According to the latest statistics the majority of female university students graduated in education (around 11851 students) followed by humanities (13030 students) and social sciences (5949 students), whilst a small number of female students graduated in architecture (50 students) and law (169 students) (www.mohe.gov.sa). Nevertheless, Saudi women do not have more educational choices, since engineering and other subjects are not available to them. Since the gender essentialist culture is very widespread in Saudi Arabia, engineering, politics and aviation are seen as not suitable for women.

As a result, Saudi women are directed to study in certain fields like humanities, religious sciences and medical sciences (Berrais, 2010). Consequently, the number of working-women in Saudi Arabia is equivalent to 30% and almost 85% are employed in the education sector (AL-Munajjed, 2010). This is in contrast to Turkey and the United States. In Turkey, subject segregation is very low since females and males are almost equally distributed across subjects. Conversely, in the USA the number of women who are studying male-dominated majors has increased over the last 10 year (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008).

Additionally, the type of higher education contributes to gender segregation in higher education in the USA, Japan, Germany, Australia, the UK, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. Women tend to choose other types of higher institution than university. In the USA, women are overrepresented in community colleges rather than at universities, whilst in Japan women prefer to choose Junior College over university as this type of college prepares them to obtain female-labeled professions. In Israel the number of women in colleges is higher than in universities because colleges mainly focus on preparing students for a teaching career, which is traditionally viewed as a feminine profession. Furthermore, women are more likely to engage in vocational education rather than to attend university in Germany, Australia, the UK, and the Czech Republic. Men and women tend to study gender-oriented subjects (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). This can be observed in Saudi Arabia where women are more likely to choose Education Colleges over universities because of their low admission requirements compared those of universities.

3. **Women's subject choosing and aspirations**

It has been observed that gender atypical choices could interact with class and ethnicity (David et al., 2003). Muslim women's aspirations in higher education are often centred around improving their families' social class. Therefore, they choose a field that provides them with professional jobs. Evans (2010) shows that working-class women have high aspirations, as they believe that higher education will allow them to access the middle-class professions. The aspirations of British Muslim women after graduation include going back to their local communities in order to find a job and get married.

They want to raise their children within their communities and obtain their families support with childcare. The social class of British Muslim women in their home countries appears to influence their choice of subjects. The subject choice of British Muslim women is guided by Islamic teachings. The Majority of British Muslim women choose fields like the sciences, law and business in order to obtain vocational jobs after graduation (Mellor, 2007). Bagguley & Hussain (2016) indicate that the participation of south Asian women in UK higher education increased between 1979 and 2000. Most of those women came from working class families. Their study also revealed that religion does not affect south Asian women's educational choices; however their parents, do especially their fathers. They identified that south Asian women always have negotiations with their parents regarding their subject choices: "Quite often these interactions and negotiations involved parents highlighting the future career consequences of degree subjects" (Bagguley & Hussain, 2016, p17).

Regardless of the consequences of their subject choice on their career opportunities, south Asian women resist the influence of their parents on their educational choices. As result, south Asian women study diverse subjects at the higher education level. South Asian women, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, see higher education as a form of social mobility (Bagguley & Hussain, 2016). Additionally, many studies have shown that social class has a significant impact on students' decisions in terms of their choice of higher educational institution. Tsagala and Kordaki (2006) found a mix of traditional and modernist practices amongst Cypriot families towards education. Traditional attitudes/practices are associated with working-class families, whilst modernist attitudes/practices are associated with upper-class families.

Some working class high school students are reluctant to choose to study at prestigious universities like Oxford or Cambridge, as reported by Evans (2009), who found that the reason for this attitude is that students consider it is not the right place for them, even if they have obtained the grades that qualify them to study at these universities. Instead, they prefer to study at less prestigious universities as this makes them feel happy and comfortable.

Equally, a study by Reay et al. (2001) not only examined the effect of social class on working class students' university choices, but also the effect of race. They demonstrated that working class students from minority ethnic groups tend to study at less prestigious universities. Furthermore, social class appears to influence opportunities for access to higher education. Many global studies have discussed this issue in various contexts. In order to fight the inequality in access to higher education, the study of Osorio (2008) recommended the adoption of social and racial quota policies. The inequality in access to universities could be a result of the inequality in pre-university education, as is the case in Russia. Konstantinovsky (2012) highlighted the fact that working-class students who study in poor quality schools mostly located in rural areas of Russia are unlikely to obtain high scores in the Unified State Exam; therefore they are unlikely to enter universities. The previous studies discussed focused on the influence of race, class and inequality in schools, in promoting unequal participation in higher education.

4.   Women, gender and subject choices

The influence of gender stereotypes on subject choices has been investigated by many researchers. The findings of recent research reveal that women are overrepresented in the humanities and underrepresented in the scientific fields (Ayalon, 2003; Barone, 2011; Lorz et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2012; Trusty et al., 2000). Gender differences in subject choice exist globally. However, it is the structure of the learning environment in the Saudi Arabian context, which is different. The reasons why both male and female students choose to study specific subjects may relate to gender expectations.

Lorz et. al (2011) found gender-difference effects on the university subject choices of boys and girls. Both were inclined to choose their university field based on the social expectations of males and females. Furthermore, girls preferred jobs with fewer working hours to fit in with their expected roles as wives and mothers. On the other hand, getting a job is an important factor for boys when it comes to their decision to choose university specialisations, since they are expected to be the breadwinner of the household (Tsagala & Kordaki, 2006). Gender norms in Saudi Arabia appear to manifest in women's education through educational policies; as Doumato (2010) highlights, "the purpose of educating a girl is to bring her up in a proper Islamic way so as to perform her duty in life to be an ideal and successful housewife and good

mother" (p. 35). Baki (2004) argues that the educational system in Saudi Arabia serves to maintain the social order and patterns, since women and men are directed through education to learn certain subjects and perform certain activities compatible with the social expectations of the characteristics of men and women. Adely (2004) reported that:

> "Social reproduction theorists argue that power relations and domination underlie formal education systems. In this theoretical framework, schools serve to support existing power relations and to socialize young people to play their class and gender roles in these relations … feminist social reproduction theorists in turn argue that schools serve to preserve patriarchy and dominant gender relations that relegate women to subordinate roles in society" (p. 354).

In the light of social reproduction theory, it could be argued that higher education like other institutions in Saudi Arabia is influenced by the patriarchal system. Under the patriarchal system, males and females are assigned to different roles, for example females are expected to be mothers and wives, whilst males are expected to be the breadwinners. Therefore, higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia could be seen as agents that reproduce gender norms through subject segregation. For example, subjects that are available to females are different from the subjects available to males. Subjects such as aviation and chemical engineering are limited to men because men traditionally performed these activities. In the Saudi Arabian context, men are perceived as tough and physically strong, therefore tough subjects suit them more. In this sense, Saudi higher education serves the patriarchal structure.

The Saudi government implements gender specific aims in its institutions, including education. For example, the aims of women's education in Saudi Arabia emphasise through the curriculum the nurturing and reproductive roles of women. Curriculum differentiation in the Saudi educational system appears to reproduce gender division; for example, gender stereotypes in textbooks as well as unequal access of men and women to certain university subjects. Men and women in Saudi society are seen as complementing each other but not equal. Gender segregation in Saudi Arabia is based on religious grounds and maintained by education. Thus, education is a means of preserving the traditional gender roles and power relations (El-Sanabary, 1994).

However, subjects like industrial and electrical engineering have recently become available to women at King Abdul-Aziz University, and architecture is available now at private universities. That said, the majority of Saudi women have limited access to subjects like engineering and architecture, as these subjects are dominated by men (Red & Hamdan, 2015). Al-Munjied (2009) highlights that most Saudi female university graduates hold degrees in fields such as education, Islamic studies, humanities, art, mathematics, chemistry, physics and biology. Subject segregation in Saudi higher education could be attributed to gender segregation in the Saudi educational system. Separate male and female universities makes it easy for the Saudi government to provide what it thinks is suitable for male and female students, whether in terms of equipment, facilities or subjects.

Al-Rawaf & Simmons (1991) attributed the subject segregation in Saudi universities to economic and occupational factors. The occupational factors include the lack of female job opportunities in the Saudi labour market. The economic factors include spending exorbitant amounts of money on equipping and preparing women's universities. However, education could pave the way for women to challenge the gender norms; as identified by Fargues (2003), "girls have not only been educated longer than their mothers but, also their fathers. And since education is an element of authority, girls' over-achievement compared to their fathers could well challenge the patriarchal system" (p. 46). Although almost half of the participants in the present study have a higher level of educational attainment than their fathers, their educational and professional choices are subject to their father's approval.

As is clear from the literature, there is a link between gender stereotypes and university subject choices. However, the present study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, whilst the previous studies were conducted in various cultural contexts. The current study explores how gender norms and patterns specifically affect Saudi women in terms of their university subject choices, by exploring their perceptions of gender as well as of certain subjects that are not available to them. This study focuses on the influences of gender expectations on women's subject choices. Gender roles and relations are constructed through the patriarchal system. Men and women are ascribed certain roles according to the social expectations of each sex.

Women in this study are stereotyped by the participants as emotional, weak, and soft, whilst men are stereotyped as rational, strong and controlling. Accordingly, the roles of women are childbearing, childrearing and homemaking, whereas the roles of men are to be the breadwinner and protector of the family. Such gender stereotypes influence how those women perceive themselves and consequently influence their educational experiences and choices. Nevertheless, not only do gender stereotypes determine women's educational experiences because the influences of the patriarchal system vary amongst women depending on their family, but the chances of resisting the patriarchal constraints are also different depending on a woman's family. In other words, women from traditional families have limited access to education and thus, they have fewer options. This study sheds light on how the patriarchal system works differently depending on a woman's family, as well as identifying the effects of gender on Saudi women's experiences regarding their educational choices.

2.3 Religion and Saudi women's education

When King Faisal Al Saud came to power in 1964 (Al-Shubaili, 2011), the Saudi state became economically and politically more open to the international world. Therefore, King Faisal wanted to reform the Islamic thought that was prevalent at the time to keep up with modern life and to protect young Saudis from Western intellectual invasion. In the Muslim Brotherhood ideology, he found what he was looking for, particularly after the failure of local Saudi clerics to propose a contemporary Islamic thought. The Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamic movement founded by the Egyptian scholar Hassan Al-Bana in 1928; it is now widespread amongst the Arab and Islamic worlds. The movement aims for social, political and economic reform from an Islamic perspective (Al-Saif, 2014; Al-Otaibi, 2014).

Although the Muslim Brotherhood was banned in Egypt, King Faisal welcomed members of the Muslim Brotherhood and appointed them to leadership positions, especially after the tense diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, during the era of the Egyptian President Jamal Abdul-Nasir. During that period, King Faisal included a number of Muslim Brotherhood members in the process for reforming the Saudi curriculum; he also recruited Muslim Brotherhood members as teachers and professors to Saudi schools and universities (Al-Saif, 2014).

This decision contributed to making the Saudi education system under the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology (Moghadam, 2014). To understand the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, it is helpful to discuss the position of women in the literature of Muslim Brotherhood thought. Qutb was one of the key theorists of the Muslim Brotherhood. He viewed the Muslim family as the nursery of future generations. He perceived the role of women in the Muslim family as mothers and wives, whilst the role of men was as breadwinners (Moghadam, 2014). The thoughts of the Muslim Brotherhood movement are a reflection of the thoughts of Qutb, and the Saudi curriculum has been influenced by these thoughts.

Therefore, patriarchal views towards women's roles have shaped Saudi female education, which has manifested in segregated education, subjects and professions. The patriarchal interpretations of the *Quran* (the Islamic holy book), has made Saudi society more conservative, particularly regarding women's issues. This in turn has had a huge impact on women's education in Saudi Arabia. Since segregation is embodied in Saudi cultural and social norms, the education system in Saudi Arabia is "gender-segregated." Accordingly, women and men learn activities that suit their expected roles. For instance, at the university level women are directed to study "soft" courses such as the social sciences, education, languages, nursing, art and humanities, which are perceived to lead to jobs that do not require physical strength. This undermines women's opportunities in the job market, as women are encouraged to work in education or healthcare.

Thousands of female university graduates find it difficult to gain a job, as their qualifications do not match the requirements of the job market (Baki, 2004). The majority of Saudi women work in the government sector (about 95%) for job security reasons. The number of working-women in Saudi Arabia is equivalent to 30% and almost 85% are employed in the education sector (Al-Munajjed, 2010). The only sectors that allow women to work alongside men are health and the media. The majority of Saudi women work in the public sector and almost 7% of women participate in the workforce (Al-Khateeb, 2007). Despite of Saudi government's efforts in generating more jobs for women, the majority of Saudi women's qualifications do not match the requirements of such jobs.

Such efforts have not succeeded in overcoming the high rates of women's unemployment in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the growing unemployment amongst Saudi females has pushed the Saudi government to open new fields, which were traditionally preserved for males, such as media courses at King Faisal University, Umm Al-Qura University, King Saud University, King Abdul-Aziz University and King Imam Mohammed Bin Saud University, engineering at King Abdul-Aziz University, as well as politics at King Saud University. Currently, there are almost 462 engineering programs offered by Saudi universities for male students compared to 18 engineering programs for female students (Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, 2014).

Although there are a number of engineering programs at the female Saudi universities, most of those programs offer engineering courses in computer sciences or interior decoration. Fields such as architecture, petroleum and electrical engineering, are dominated by men. However, in 2012, King Abdul-Aziz University opened up industrial and electrical engineering courses for female students (El-Sherbeeny, 2014). King Abdul-Aziz University is the first Saudi public university to have an engineering department for female students.

2.4 The femininities in Saudi Arabia

When it comes to the construction of gender expectations in Saudi Arabia it is advisable to take into consideration three different factors, which are religion, traditions and patriarchy. The construction of gender in Saudi Arabia is a result of the interplay of social norms, the patriarchal system and Islam. The patriarchal system in Saudi Arabia is rooted in the social, economic and educational institutions (Doumato, 2010). The word patriarchy is a Greek word (William, 1994) and it means the rule of the father (Bhasin, 1993).

Fathers or men generally in patriarchal societies have power over women in both public and private spheres. There are many researchers who define patriarchy in different ways but with the same content; for example, Bhasin (1993) states that patriarchy is related to, "male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate

in a number of ways" (p. 3). Walby defines patriarchy, "as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p. 20). According to Lerner (1986) men in a patriarchal society are seen as strong, wise, and superior, whilst women are seen as powerless and immature mentally and emotionally. Patriarchy manifests itself differently from one society to another and from one culture to another. In Arab societies as Joseph (2010) proclaims, there is a hierarchy where the men have power over women and elderly men and women have power over young men and women. Saudi Arabia, like other Arab countries, has its culturally specific gender ideology, which shapes power relations and the roles of men and women. Accordingly, Saudi men and women are socially and culturally expected to act and behave in certain ways that fit the Saudi social and cultural norms.

Typically women who live in a patriarchal society are powerless, especially in the public sphere, whilst men hold power in both spheres (Moghdam, 1992). In a patriarchal society, the duties of women are mainly centred on women as mothers and wives who bring up children in accordance with the social expectations and norms, as well as providing emotional support to their husbands (Joseph, 2010). In terms of Saudi society, the main role of women is homemaking and childrearing (Sabbagh, 1996). This could explain why Saudi women are underrepresented in social, economic and political spheres.

Nonetheless, women under the conditions of a patriarchal system such as in Saudi Arabia can adopt two actions. Kandiyoti (1988) argues that women can either challenge the patriarchal constraints or find alternatives in order to exercise their power. Furthermore, a Saudi woman can gain power when she gets married. Al-Torki (1986) stated that older women in Jeddah (a city located in the western region of Saudi Arabia) hold power over their children and grandchildren in terms of their marriage decisions. As reported by Al-Torki (1986) older married women can be mediators between the young household members and the head of the household, in order to obtain the head of the family's (the father's) approval. This form of female adjustment to the patriarchal system turns them into active agents even within the system that has suppressed them. Despite the constraints faced by Saudi women, they can still make agentic choices.

Therefore, the predominant image of Saudi women in the West as powerless and voiceless, as portrayed by some of the Western media, is far from the reality. It can be said that under the conditions of a patriarchal system Saudi women may be marginalised in some areas, but they also can gain power in others. The social changes that have been experienced by Arab societies because of modernisation and globalisation have contributed to the improvement of women's conditions through the weakening of the patriarchal system. The changes in women's social positions have come about through a combination of long-term macro-level processes, notably industrialisation, urbanisation, proletarianisation, demographic transition, globalisation and forms of collective actions that include national liberation movements, revolutions and social movements (Moghadam, 2014).

As Joseph (2010) mentions, patriarchy in Arab countries like anywhere else takes various forms. In Saudi Arabia, a male guardian or *mahram* is a manifestation of the patriarchal system. Saudi women are not able to travel, work or study without their male guardian's permission (Al-Fayez, 1978; Keene, 2003). The male guardian could be a father or brother. In the case of a married woman her husband is her male guardian. Women in Saudi Arabia cannot access the courts without a male guardian to identify her. Since by law, a Saudi woman should wear a veil in public areas, she should bring her male guardian to verify her identity to the judge (Doumato, 2010).

In general, family is the essence of the patriarchal system, therefore Muslim family laws are entrenched with the traditional gender roles and undermine women's agency. Family laws in the modern Arab world are a mixture of laws derived from the schools of Islamic jurisprudence, Western laws and tribal traditions (Moghadam, 2014). The conservative forces as represented by clerics (who support patriarchal gender roles) play a major role in the enactment of such family laws. In Saudi society tribal affiliation is another patriarchal unit. As a result, Saudi women should behave according to their tribal norms, either in terms of their educational or occupational choices. Moghadam (2014) reported that tribal identity "is based on blood ties which is patriarchal in the classic sense" (p. 118).

2.4.1 Interpretations of Islam

The other aspect that plays a critical role in the construction of gender roles in Saudi society is the conservative interpretations of Islam. According to Islamic laws, women are allowed to work as long as their domestic work is not being negatively affected (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). The conservative interpretations of Islam highly praise the nurturing roles of women. As reported by Charrad (2011), Islam shows equality between men and women, but the conservative interpretations of Islam have given men power over women, as these interpretations have been made by men. He refers to the multi-interpretations of Islam as, "multiple legal systems on the one hand and a history of active legal interpretation on the other" (p. 421). The roles of women according to conservative Islamic interpretations are childrearer and homemaker. For example, traditionalists believe that it is preferable for Muslim women to stay at home so they do not tempt men.

In order to support their claims they cite the prophet *Hadith:* "A woman's prayer in her room is better than her prayer in a courtyard, and her prayer in her cabinet is better than her prayer in her room" (Abu Dawood, 570; Al-Tirmidhi, 1173). Traditionalists believe that God created men and women differently in terms of mental and physical qualities. Hence, they assert that tasks such as child rearing are performed by women, because they view women as compassionate. Obedience is another role that should be performed by women. In order to support their statements traditionalists cite the prophet Mohammed saying, "if a woman dies and her husband was pleased with her, she will enter heaven" (Al-Tirmidhi & Ibn Majah).

Unlike traditional Muslim clerics, modern Muslim clerics like Rashid Al-Ghanushi have a liberal view regarding the roles of Muslim women. He criticised the traditional roles of women, confirming that domestic work such as child rearing and homemaking are shared tasks performed by both men and women (Yazbeck Haddad, 1998). Traditional and progressive Muslims interpret the *Quran* verses differently in order to support their views. For instance, the concept of *Qiwamah* (which means guardian) is a debated issue. There is dissent between the traditionalists and modernists regarding the interpretation of the concept *Qiwamah*. Muslim traditionalists such as Yusuf Ali define *Qiwamah* as, "men are the protectors and maintainers of women" (Roded, 2008, p. 28).

On the other hand, Islamic feminists such as Azizah Al-Hibri understand the concept of *Qiwamah* as, "the concept of moral guidance and caring" (Roded, 2008, p. 28). Consequently women, according to the conservative interpretations of Islam, are assigned to traditional gender roles. Alternatively, women have egalitarian gender roles under the modern interpretations of Islam. Although there are egalitarian interpretations of the *Quran* by Islamic reformers such as Mohammad Abdu and Qasim Amin, as well as by Islamic feminists such as Amina Wadud and Fatima Mernisi, the conservative interpretations of the *Quran* are very common in Saudi Arabia. As a result, Islamic teachings in Saudi Arabia appear to promote gender stereotypes. Saudi Arabia follows the conservative interpretations of the *Quran* due to the influence of state-employed clerics. By following the traditional interpretations, Saudi Arabia entrenched its religious identity in the eyes of traditional Saudi clerics, as well as the Islamic world. Clerics in Saudi Arabia have authority in social and religious issues, particularly those concerning women (Doumato, 1992).

2.4.2 *Ikhtilat*

What makes Saudi Arabia unique from other Muslim countries is the fact that Saudi Arabia is the only Islamic country that completely segregates both sexes in all walks of life. Alsweel (n.d.) attributes the reason for this to the fact that Saudi Arabia was historically not colonised by Western colonisers; "gender segregation in schools, universities charitable organizations, restaurants, government offices and other public spaces is one of the defining features of Saudi Arabia" (Merijer, 2010, p. 81). There is a common belief amongst the conservative clerics in Saudi Arabia that *Ikhtilat* (mixing between women and unrelated men in public places) could lead to decay and debauchery in society. They view women as temptation (*Fitna*) that incites men's lust, which eventually leads to adultery (*Zina*). Thus, they believe that gender segregation could protect society from moral decay (Doumato, 1992).

Yet, in reality sex segregation does not protect Saudi society from depravity, since Saudi society suffers from numerous social problems and corruption such as sexual harassment, rape, incest and adultery. The prohibition of *Ikhtilat* did not exist in Saudi Arabia until the Islamic awakening movement (the Sahwa Movement), which took place during the eighties (Merijer, 2010).

When I was a child during the late 1980s, the males and females in my family gathered in the same room over tea or coffee at an aunt's or uncle's house. I noticed that they later socialised in different rooms. At that young age, I did not understand why one of my aunts refused to shake hands with my father when she used to do it every time they met. I remembered her telling my mother that shaking hands with unrelated men is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. She learned this from her brother who had recently returned with extremist attitudes from the Soviet-Afghan War.

The Awakening Movement began in 1987. It was based on a belief that society was taking a long nap, which had led to the Westernisation of society. *Sahwa* (awakening) thought stated that the ignorance of religion had contributed to the deviation of society from Islam. Therefore, the purpose of the *Sahwa* Movement was to wake up society and bring it back to true Islam. The Awakening Movement is grounded in the idea of *Ihtisab,* which is the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice. As a result, people who believe in *Sahwa* should take the task of *Ihtisab* on themselves (Al-Ghathami, 2015; Hegghammer & Lacroix, 2007). This movement was accepted by the majority of Saudi society and was seen as a positive social change. During the Awakening Movement, society's thoughts were transformed into the extremist Islamic perspective. Women's issues were at the centre of *Sahwa's* jurisprudence. *Sahwa* movement members adopted the most radical doctrinal views of women's issues because they argued that the Westernisation of society began with women. They linked unveiling to the Westernisation of women. Therefore, they issued *fatwas* (rulings) on veiling and on the prohibition of women driving cars (Al-Ghathami, 2015).

 Accordingly, the majority of Saudi clerics believe that *Ikhtilat* is prohibited in Islam. One of these clerics is the prominent Saudi Islamic scholar Abdul-Aziz Bin Baz (the former grand mufti of Saudi Arabia), who issued a *fatwa* on the prohibition of coeducation in Islam. He said that segregated educational institutions make women comfortable to be able to receive education without the need to wear a *hijab* or veil, as well as helping men focus on their studies without being distracted by exchanging glances or flirtation with female students (Al-Misnad, 1995). On the other hand, a moderate Saudi cleric Sheik Ahmed Al-Ghamdi (who was head of the Committee for Commanding Right and Forbidding wrong in Makkah) declared in

the media in 2009 that *Ikhtilat* is not prohibited in Islam. His statement has made him the focus of criticism and censure by large segments of Saudi society including conservative clerics (Alriyadh Newspaper, 2010).

As a result of gender segregation, the basic dichotomy of public / private spheres are used quite differently in the Saudi context. As stated by Le Renard (2008) there are two public spheres, which are the male public sphere and the female public sphere, as well as a private sphere. He suggests that segregated institutions help in creating a public sphere for Saudi women; instead of staying at home they are able to engage in different activities, meet other women from a different class, background, sect and ethnicity. Nonetheless, there are some exceptions with respect to gender segregation. Saudi women can mingle with men in some workplaces such as hospitals and some private organisations. For instance, in the kingdom holding company owned by prince Alwaleed bin Talal, women can work alongside men even without wearing a veil or *abaya* (long black overcoat).

2.5 Conclusion

The literature on Saudi women has been steadily growing in the last decade. Even though there is relevant literature on Saudi women and gender or patriarchy, most of this literature is from non-Saudis, either because of the lack of awareness amongst Saudi women about women's studies (since gender or women's studies courses are not available at Saudi universities) or because of the fear of the consequences they could face by studying such a sensitive issue. On the other hand, Western literature on Saudi women and patriarchy does not recognise women's agency since it considers Saudi women as a homogeneous group. Such literature portrays Saudi women as powerless and voiceless.

In reality, women can resist the patriarchal system depending on their family's attitudes, class and ethnicity. Saudi women have different experiences under the same patriarchal system. The inquiry approach that was adopted by the present study helps to understand how the experiences of Saudi women have been differently shaped in higher education. In this chapter, I examined the development of women's higher education in Saudi Arabia in terms of universities and fields of study.

The establishment of higher education for women in Saudi Arabia began with two universities, namely King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah and King Saud University in Riyadh. The establishment of universities has been constantly increasing during the last five decades. The policy for girls' education in Saudi Arabia determines the types of fields that are available to Saudi women at university. Women's education follows gender specific policies. Thus, women's courses are centred on teaching and health. However, a number of courses that were dominated by male students have recently become available to female students such as engineering, media studies and law. Furthermore, I analysed how gender roles and relations are constructed within the Saudi context. There are three aspects to gender construction in Saudi Arabia. These aspects overlap and intersect with each other. Firstly, the patriarchal system, which takes different forms in shaping and reproducing gender roles and relations. Under the conditions of a patriarchal system men and women are ascribed to certain roles.

Saudi women are socially expected to be mothers and housewives, whilst Saudi men are expected to be breadwinners. Guardianship is one aspect of the patriarchal system that undermines Saudi women's mobility, study and work. Saudi women are not able to study, travel or work without the permission of their fathers, brothers or husbands. The second aspect of gender construction in Saudi Arabia is the conservative interpretations of Islam. Traditional interpretations of the *Quran* value traditional gender roles, since traditional Muslims believe that God created men and women with different qualities. The third aspect of gender construction is the social traditions and customs. Some tribal traditions such as the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* limit women's access to certain fields or professions. Gender segregation contributes to directing men and women towards certain subjects or professions.

Chapter Three:
Theoretical framework and methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the literature on women, gender relations and higher education in Saudi Arabia in order to develop a theoretical framework for the present study. In what follows, I investigate how gender norms intersect with class in shaping Saudi women's experiences and their choices in higher education. The reason behind my choice to study the influences of gender and class on Saudi women's experiences is because Saudi women in many studies have been portrayed as a homogenous group. Studies on women in Saudi Arabia have overlooked the influence of class. A feminist approach was taken in this study in order to explore women's views on the factors that influence their subject choices. In this chapter, I demonstrate my position in the field as an insider-researcher and how this affected the research process. I also clarify the challenges and ethical issues, which I faced in the field. This chapter discusses why a certain methodology was used and how the method was designed in order to answer the research questions. It also shows the epistemological approach to give a clear idea of the types of knowledge and beliefs that support this research, as well as of the use of a narrative approach for data collection and analysis. Furthermore, an explanation of the pilot study including participants and sampling procedures is also provided in this section.

2.   Epistemological position

Educational researchers require a clear epistemological position before they start the methodological design of their studies. Generally speaking, ambiguous ontological and epistemological positions could lead to inconsistency between the methodological design and the research questions. Consequently, researchers could be confounded when it comes to data analysis (Nicol, 2003). Epistemology provides researchers with a road map in research design. It helps to identify the nature of knowledge and where it is to be obtained. It also shapes the type of methodology and techniques that the researcher chooses.

It guides researchers on which methods should be adopted and which instruments should be employed. Accordingly, the selection of research methods and instruments is based on epistemological paradigms: "Epistemology, one of the core branches of philosophy, is concerned with the theory of knowledge, especially in regard to its methods, validation and the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be" (Grix, 2002, p. 177). Broadly speaking, there are a number of research paradigms, such as positivism and constructivism. For the purpose of this study I adopted a constructive perspective.

The constructive or interpretive paradigm deems that people have their own knowledge and beliefs about social reality. Skeggs (1997) claims that women's experiences contribute to understanding women's status within any given society; however, such experiences are not the "foundation for knowledge," since it is a subjective construction of knowledge (Skeggs, 1997, p. 28). Thus, the interpretive approach focuses on participants' experiences in order to obtain knowledge about social reality. Unlike within a positive paradigm, the participants are treated as contributors to the research, not as objects. Accordingly, women in this study are the producers of knowledge. By listening to my participants' experiences I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions, views and beliefs about gender and power relations.

I also found out that my participants do not share the same views regarding gender norms. The research paradigm determines the researcher's views of the topic under study and the researcher's selection of research methodology. Thus, the research paradigm comprises three aspects, which are epistemology, method and methodology (Harding, 1987). Interpretive research focuses on participants' attitudes, beliefs and culture in order to get a deep insight into social phenomena. Brooks & Brooks (1993) state that, "[c]onstructivism is not a theory about teaching…it is a theory about knowledge and learning… the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective." In constructivist epistemology, researchers are not restricted to do their studies in a certain order; instead, they have more freedom to move from one step to another.

Golafhani (2003) highlights that observations and interviews are prevalent methodological instruments in the interpretive paradigm. An apparent epistemological position helped me to focus on the areas of my study and to select an appropriate methodological design. This philosophical position by which I have constructed my questions and chosen my method will help the reader judge the quality of this research. The starting point of my study was that I wanted to know the views of female students at Saudi universities towards the subjects currently available to them. I also wanted to know their feelings about the subjects that are only available to male students, and how they interpret their feelings and views in the context of Saudi culture.

By finding out the female students' feelings and views towards these subjects during the interviews, I aimed to understand the meanings through the narratives of female students and lecturers, and the way in which these young women express their perceptions of gender roles. Mead (1934) argued in his theory of symbolic interaction that understanding people's beliefs and views occurs through the meaning, language and thoughts they share during social interaction (as cited in Aksan et al., 2009; Denzin, 1983; Gillespie, 2004). I took into consideration the influences of cultural or societal contexts on the women's perceptions or views, as argued by Dewey (1968), who suggested that an understanding of people's meanings and actions comes through exploring the conditions or contexts in which they occurred (as cited in Crotty, 1998).

Consequently, Mead's symbolic interaction theory was adapted in the current study. Initially, I formed hypotheses about the university female students and lecturers' views and perceptions. Then, I assessed my hypotheses and modified some of them after I came to shared meanings with the participants during the interviews. This process was emphasised by Herbert Blumer, one of Mead's students, who stated that people's perceptions about things derive from their own meanings and these meanings are apparently modified in the course of interpretation (Maines & Morrione, 1990).

It is generally accepted in the research literature that qualitative research investigators need to be reflexive (Finlay, 2002). Berger (2015) defined reflexivity in qualitative research as the:

> "turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation" (p. 220).

Therefore, the researcher should take a reflexive approach in the interpretation and analysis of the data collected from the participants during the interviews. Accordingly, the data that have been analysed in this study include the reflexive interpretations of the researcher of the phenomenon under study. The positions of the researcher such as beliefs, experiences, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, political views and affiliations (Finlay, 2000; Hamzeh & Oliver, 2010; Kosygina, 2005; Padgett, 2008) could influence the study in three ways. Firstly, they might impact the opportunity to gain access to participants, where the respondents may be motivated to participate in the study when they feel that the researcher is sympathetic towards them (De Tona, 2006).

Secondly, they might influence the relationship between the researcher and the respondents to an extent that could affect the data provided by the respondents. Finally, the personal beliefs and experiences of the researcher might affect his or her way of asking questions and gathering information from the participants and thus, may affect the findings of the study (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006). Hence, I adopted the reflexive approach in my qualitative research in order to increase the study's credibility through my consciousness of the effects of my values, beliefs and experiences on the study (Cutcliffe, 2003). That is, I was aware of being a part of the research, recognising my inevitable potential impact on the collection and analysis of the data (Mason, 1996). People in the west of Saudi Arabia speak two different dialects based on their origins. The original Saudis who descended from the Bedouin tribes living in the Arabian Peninsula speak nomadic or the "*Badawi*" dialect; non-original Saudis who descended from Arab or non-Arab origins, those who immigrated to the Arabian Peninsula, speak urban or the "*Hadhari*" dialect. I speak both dialects fluently.

This helped me to easily find participants and gain the trust of people of both origins. I could recognise a participant's origins from appearance, dialect and surname. For example, most of the original Saudi surnames (including mine) begin with "Al". Thus, I immediately adjusted my dialect to either "*Badawi*" or "*Hadhari*" when I heard a participant speak or when I knew the participant's last name. The identification of an epistemological perspective of the study as discussed above, assisted me in designing the appropriate methods. The next section provides details of how I chose the methodology for this study.

3.   Review of research aim and questions

The aim of the research was to explore the perceptions of female students and lecturers of gender and limited subject choices in Saudi higher education. Consequently, the objectives of the research were to explore the following main research question:

1) What are the views/attitudes of female students and lecturers towards patriarchal gender norms and the influences on their educational choices and future career opportunities?

In order to find an answer to this question, the following subsidiary questions were asked:

- What are the factors influencing Saudi women's subject choices?
- How do they feel about disciplines that have been socially constructed as feminine or masculine?
- To what extent do cultural and social norms influence subject choices at university level?
- How do female students and lecturers perceive the implications of limited subject choice on their future careers?

4.   Methodology

This study was exploratory as it investigated the perceptions of Saudi female students and lecturers of gender norms and the influences on their educational choices, which is a topic that has not been investigated in-depth before. Exploratory research methods are often used when the researcher knows a little about the

phenomenon being studied. It is also used when the issue under study is new and has not been discussed before (Gratton & Jones, 2010). As far as I know, the influence of gender norms on women's subject choices has not been studied within a Saudi Arabian context. Therefore, I needed to do an initial investigation to get an insight into the phenomenon before an in-depth investigation could be carried out (Marlow, 2010; Rubin & Babbie, 2010). It is very common that the knowledge generated by exploratory research is tested by further studies. It gives a reasonable explanation of the causes of the research problem and examines the links between the variables (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

Exploratory research is the best approach when the topic under study has not yet been researched. Thus, it helped me to acquire an understanding of and a familiarity with, the issue being discussed (Malow, 2010). However, the main weakness of exploratory research that it provides indefinite results. That is, it gives a clue about the research problem but cannot give the final answer (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). It takes different forms such as case studies, interviews, analysis of secondary data and observational methods (Parasuraman, Grewal & Krishnan, 2006). Collis & Hussey (2009) define exploratory research as that which is, "conducted into a research problem or issue when there are very few or no earlier studies to which we can refer for information about the issue or problem" (p. 5).

There is a debate about whether qualitative methods are more relevant to feminist research than quantitative ones. Feminist researchers have argued against quantitative methods: "The relationship between feminist theory and quantitative social science research remains uneasy. Among feminist scholars, quantitative research is often seen as suspect for its association with positivism and its pretense of objectivity" (Harnois, 2012, p. 2). In this regard, Joey Sprague (2005) clarified:

> "Because feminists and other critical researchers have tended to assume that quantitative methodology cannot respond to their concerns, there are relatively few analyses of specific procedures that are problematic in mainstream quantitative methodology and there is even less written on feminist ways of implementing experiments or surveys" (pp. 81–82).

Feminist critiques of quantitative methods attribute this to three main reasons. Firstly, quantitative research is seen as being against the principles of feminism due to the, "unequal power" between the researcher and participant. Secondly, the positivistic approach of quantitative methods excludes women. Finally, statistical techniques that are used in quantitative methods are not able to reflect women's realities and their complexity (Oakley, 1998). The criticism of quantitative methods by feminists does not mean that all feminist researchers are in opposition to such methods. Indeed, there are number of feminists who have used quantitative method in their works such as Friedan (1963); Reinharz (1992); Anderson, Brown and Campbell (1993). Harnois (2012) states that quantitative research helps feminists to understand how the gender gap statically changes over time. It also helps to address the social inequality in private and public spheres.

Nonetheless, I believed that using qualitative methods in exploratory research would allow participants to express their views in their own words, as qualitative methods are most often associated with using open-ended questions rather than using closed questions, which are common in quantitative methods. Additionally, qualitative methods give a researcher the opportunity to probe and ask the participants to elaborate. Qualitative research is considered a form of scientific research. Thus, qualitative research has the same characteristics as scientific research. Furthermore, it examines the subject from the perceptions of the participants. It is an effective method to collect data about the beliefs, views, behaviours, culture and social context of the participants. Qualitative research is capable of giving a clear explanation of the issue being studied. It can also shed light on impalpable factors that affect the research problem, but are not easily noticeable.

5.   Critical feminist perspectives

In every historical era, feminist movements appear to mirror the political, social, and economic concepts prevailing in that era (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). In a period of political liberalism, for example, there was liberal feminism, whilst Marxist feminism emerged with the escalation of the Marxist communist movement against capitalist imperialism (Freeman, 2011).

The demands of feminism movement in its infancy, or the so-called first wave, were the equality between men and women with regards to legal rights. It derived its principles at that time from the liberal political philosophy that appeared in France (Butler, 2008). In the late sixties and seventies, the second wave of feminism occurred, when women demanded in that period more rights for women and to enter areas that were limited to men. What distinguished the second wave of feminism was the crystallisation of feminist theory to the extent of the emergence of several kinds of feminism, as being either liberal, Marxist or radical (Freeman, 2011). Marxist feminists stresses that all women are oppressed by capitalism, but that the degree of oppression varies depending on class, as working-class women are oppressed more than women from the upper class. Therefore, Marxist feminist theory focuses on the role of women in the economy and the labour market (Hart, 2006).

On the other hand, liberal feminists believe that gender differences originate from socialisation and not biological differences (Kensinger, 1997). They state that women and men may be different but equal. The liberal feminist theory calls for equality between males and females in rights, especially educational and employment rights. A liberal feminist fights gender discrimination by demanding the appointment of women to high positions, as well as encouraging women to work in professions monopolised by men, and vice versa (Lorber, 2010). It should be noted here that patriarchy is mainly associated with radical feminism. Therefore, radical feminists theorists devote their efforts to fighting against patriarchy in both private and public spheres.

They strongly attack the patriarchal culture that values the roughness, hardness and dominance believed to cause the spread of violence, poverty, wars, rape and the torture of children. Radical feminists believe that patriarchy is deeply rooted in society, thus it is difficult to eliminate. However, they suggest allocation of special places for women only where there is no hierarchy, as well as allowing women to act and think freely away from violence, rape and sexual harassment. Their radicalism has gone so far to the extent of demanding the formation of a special culture and religion for women (Omar, 2011).

Conversely, postcolonial feminism emerged as response to the misrepresentation of women in developing countries by western feminists: "Postcolonial, as a term, suggests resistance to 'colonial' power and its discourses that continue to shape various cultures, including those whose revolutions have overthrown formal ties to their colonial rulers" (Tyagi, 2014, p. 45). One of the main postcolonial feminist theorists is Chandra Mohanty. In her article, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", she criticised western feminists; "this mode of feminist analysis, by homogenizing and systematizing the experiences of different groups of women in these countries, erases all marginal and resistant modes of experiences" (Mohanty, 2003, pp. 40-41). Black feminist theorists argue that the intersection of class, gender and race contribute to women's oppression.

Accordingly, "intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made thus far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). The work of Crenshaw has contributed to a large extent in, "developing the field of intersectionality" (Walby et al., 2012, p. 226). Crenshaw (1989) uses intersectionality to understand how race intersects with gender in influencing the participation of black women in the US labour market (cited in Walby et al., 2012).

The emergence of the so-called Islamic feminism came as a response to imperialism or scepticism and the suspicious 'vision of the feminist' as a Western concept. The severe attacks received by the feminist movement in the Islamic world, especially from conservatives, have led Muslim women to adopt Islamic feminism in order to be accepted in their own societies. For example, in the Arab world, Islamic feminism emerged with the increasing growth of the Islamic streams, which led to access to power, as happened recently in Egypt. The term Islamic feminism has been the subject of debate since its appearance in the nineties. Most of the work of Islamic feminists as mentioned by Kynsilehto (2008) has focused on re-reading religious heritage. Feminist researchers have explained that Islamic feminists have critiqued the patriarchal interpretations of religious texts that have contributed to the continuation of the patriarchal system, by re-reading the Qur'anic text and the hadith.

In this regard, Moghadam (2004) said that the interpretations of the Qur'an were in favour of men, because it is interpreted according to their desires. With respect to the Islamic feminist perspective Omar (2001) highlighted that, "women suffer from a worsening situation in all Arab and Islamic countries, and there is a need for a greater appreciation of women in Islam, and this means re-reading the texts and the renewal of previous explanations" (p. 153). Islamic feminism aims to address patriarchal ideas and eliminate them. It also aims to revive the true meaning of gender equality in Islam (Badran, 2006).

The current study is discussed in light of critical feminist perspectives. The adoption of critical feminist perspectives serves as an appropriate framework for understanding the findings and interpreting the young women's responses. Feminist theory suggests two methods for analysing the status of women socially, either by gender analysis or an intersectional analysis of persecution (Fiorenza, 2013). It is worth mentioning here that critical thinking theory did not appear with the feminist movement but is an independent school that first appeared in what is known as the Frankfurt School for critical thinking. Theorists of that school have contributed to developing, "Marx's concepts of exploitation and the alienation of labour into the category of domination, hence explaining aspects of structured social inhumanity" (Agger, 1993, p. 15).

 According to the Frankfurt School, critical theory is based on three criteria, which are normative, explanatory and practical (Bohman, 2005). Critical thinking has been used in feminist studies to challenge male domination in patriarchal societies. Accordingly, I found that a critical feminist perspective was appropriate for my research topic. The critical thinker is a person who exploits her or his research by criticising social and cultural postulates (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). It should be made clear here that the current study intended to critique the social customs and traditions that hold back the emancipation of women, without compromising religious constants. In addition to the above, there are several reasons for choosing a critical feminist perspective. One is that a critical feminist perspective is associated with education and developed what is known as critical feminist pedagogy, a reaction to the technocratic view (Apple, 1990; Adler & Goodman, 1986; Goodman,

1992). Accordingly, critical feminist pedagogy aims to challenge patriarchal practices and power relations that oppress women.

There are numerous feminist perspectives and methodologies (Harding, 1986; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992), however feminist methodologies determine that the role of the researcher is not isolated or objective or invisible (Stanley & Wise, 1993). Although critical theorists see that the researcher needs to be objective and neutral, at the same time they stress that the impact of a researcher's personal beliefs and experiences on the phenomenon to be studied is unavoidable (Young, 1990). The purpose of feminist methods in social research is to criticise the practices and discourse that would not only persecute women, but whoever is exposed to them in a society that values wealth, or any kind of authority (Allen, 2000).

This study adopts a feminist standpoint because it is concerned with women's experiences in higher education. This study was based on the assumption that women experience social inequality. The patriarchal system influences women differently depending on their father's attitudes towards *Ikhtilat*. As a result, this study focuses on how gender norms shape women's experiences in higher education. Furthermore, women in the current study are not passive agents but rather, they are acknowledged as active agents who can make choices through bargaining with the patriarchal system.

6.   Narrative approach

A qualitative method using a narrative approach was used to obtain and analyse the stories of Saudi women in higher education. The narrative method has become popular in educational research, as well as in the other social sciences research. It aims to explore human experiences and views of the world through storytelling. In narrative studies, the researcher listens to the participants' experiences and gives them the time to tell their stories. Data collection can take different forms in narrative methods; for example, it could be in the form of interviews, observations, field notes, pictures, journal records and storytelling. I used a narrative approach, as I believed that it would assist me in understanding how gender expectations influence Saudi women's experiences in higher education.

It focuses on women's interpretations of gender inequality in higher education (Elliot, 2005; Hurwizt et al., 2004, as cited in Zeilani & Seymour, 2010). By using narrative inquiry I found that female students and lecturers were able to construct their experiences by telling their stories and making sense of their reality (Reid et al., 2005). The narrative approach was initially used in research concerning health or criminology (Elliot, 2005). Later the narrative approach became popular in educational research as well as in the other social sciences (Hurwizt et al., 2004 as cited in Zeilani & Seymour, 2010). It has been used in educational research and Smith (1996) was one of the leading researchers who adopted the narrative approach in her study, in order to understand women's experiences of returning to education after a long break and to study the attitudes to this of their husbands or partners. The narrative approach has been associated with education since ancient times, where it was used by different cultures as a means of teaching people. As Hardy (2007) points out:

> "Stories are one of the most ancient of teaching – and learning – techniques, and are effective within and across cultures. The use of stories as an educational resource acknowledges that behavioural and systemic change often stems from a felt understanding of the implications of decisions rather than from a purely abstract or theoretical one. Stories can be used to communicate visions and needs in a powerful way; they offer a compelling and practical means of exploring issues and experiences from different perspectives, while promoting reflection and stimulating dialogue and debate" (Hardy, 2007, para. 1).

According to Witherall and Noddings (1991) stories are, not only a means of abreaction and liberalisation, but also an efficient research tool as well as an educational tool for exploring people's lives. They give us the true picture of an individual's circumstances and the actual challenges that the person faces. The origin of the word "narrative" goes back to the Greek word "narrow," which means, "to know" (Emihovich, 1995). Narrative inquiry in the social sciences according to the perspective of Chase (1995) is:

> "Life stories themselves embody what we need to study: the relationship between this interaction and the social world the narrator shares with others; the way in which culture marks shapes and/or constrains this narrative, and the way in which this narrator makes use of cultural resources and struggles with cultural constraints"(Chase,1995, p.20).

Time is the centre of the stories or narratives, hence they take several forms depending on the chronology. A narrative could be in the form of "life history books," where it begins with events occurring at the present time and then ends with events that took place in the past. Alternatively, it might be in the form of a "life story," where stories begin with events that happened in the past and end with events that will occur in the future. It also may be about the events and experiences that have happened in a given period of time (Greenhalgh & Calman, 2006). In this study, the narrative approach gave female university students and lecturers a chance to express their perceptions and views on the subject under study by using their own words.

Narrative inquiry has become the focus of attention of several authors such as Connelly and Clandinin, (1991), Elbaz-Luwisch, (2002), and Moen et al., (2003), who use the word "voices" rather than "voice" when it comes to narrative research, since they believe that narratives are affected by the values and experiences of the narrators. Stories to a large extent are linked to the cultural and social contexts of the storytellers, as pointed out by Wertsch (1991). He highlighted that stories that are narrated by individuals are not isolated from the society and culture that they live in. In other words, they cannot be detached from their cultural context, since they are seen as experiences that were lived by the individuals, as well as their values deriving from that particular society (Bruner, 1984). Although there are advantages to the narrative approach that does not mean its shortcomings can be ignored.

An enduring critique of narratives is that stories are subjective as they reflect the personal beliefs and experiences of the storytellers (Ricoeur, 1981): "What one believes to be true depends on who you believe yourself to be" (Korg, 1999, p.149). Additionally, when stories are transferred into written text they are separated from the temporal and spatial contexts in which they occur, and therefore they might deviate from their original meanings (Ricoeur, 1981). The narrative approach helped me to listen and understand women's experiences in higher education. It also gave my participants a voice to be able to express their views and feelings with regard to women's education in Saudi Arabia.

Narrative inquiry in education requires small samples due to the long interviews that are used in data collection. In turn, these samples are not representative of an entire population, however the data collected through narratives are very often deep and rich compared to large samples (Dhunpath, 2000). In order to avoid the limitations of the narrative approach, I took into account the, "thick descriptions" technique described by Denzin (1989), who suggested that the researcher in narrative inquiry is supposed to give a precise description of the respondents and the context of the study. In terms of overcoming the misunderstandings that could occur during the process of transcription, I sent copies of the transcriptions to the participants so that they could check the accuracy of information provided by them.

In summary, the narrative approach aims to explore human experiences and people's views of the world through storytelling. In narrative studies, the researcher listens to the participants' experiences and gives them the time to tell their stories. Data collection can take different forms in the narrative approach; for example, it could be in the form of interviews, observations, field notes, pictures, journal records and storytelling. I used a narrative approach, as I believed that it would assist me in understanding the culture and social norms that affect Saudi women's experiences in higher education. Although this approach does not represent all female students and lecturers' lives, it focuses on women's interpretations of gender in higher education (Elliot, 2005; Hurwizt et al., 2004, as cited in Zeilani & Seymour, 2010).

7.   Data collection

As I previously mentioned, this study is qualitative, thus participants were provided with the opportunity through interviews to talk and offer their views on the effect of gender on subject choice. Although there is no exclusive method used in feminist studies, some feminists have claimed that the qualitative approach is feminine, whilst the quantitative approach is masculine (Stanley & Wise, 1993). Others have argued that quantitative methods could contribute to, "silencing women's own voices" (Maynard, 1998, p. 18). Accordingly, I believe that participants can express themselves clearly through words. Therefore, I think that the best way to collect participants' views and opinions is by using interviews.

Since I am interested in exploring the challenges that Saudi women face with respect to their educational choices, interviews helped me to gain in-depth data about women's attitudes and experiences. They also offered space to explore how gender norms shape women's experiences in higher education. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews are widely used in narrative inquiry for data collection (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Hence, semi-structured interviews were used in this study to gain insight into the effects of gender stereotypes on the participants' choices in Saudi higher education by listening to the stories of female students and lecturers. Such data would help me to know what other types of gender discrimination females might face at university.

My sample consisted of female students and lecturers. This is because in Saudi Arabia the educational system is gender-segregated. Thus, it is difficult as a female to access a male campus rather than a female campus. The interviews were in Arabic to make it convenient for participants to express their views clearly in their own language. I then translated them into English. Interviewing is the most common method for gathering qualitative data. It aims to develop a new knowledge that comes from interviewees' experiences. Social research can attain an enormous amount of information through interviews. When a researcher asks participants about their experiences, opinions and views, he or she obtains detailed data. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured.

Semi-structured interviews are usually used as the main method in qualitative research. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer plans for the interview in advance. Accordingly, I prepared open-ended questions and identified the interview time and place. I also asked follow-up questions, depending on the interviewees' responses (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The semi-structured interview is the most familiar method in qualitative research. It can be conducted with individuals in groups and it can last several hours. In feminist research, unstructured and semi-structured interviews are regarded as the most-used methods for data collection. This is because these types of interview assist in achieving the goals of feminist research. The interviews consist of talking and listening processes between the interviewee and the interviewer.

The interviewer's opinions are not important, as the interviewee is the key source of information (Kajornboon, 2005). Kvale (1996) defined interviews as, "an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data" (p. 14).

The semi-structured interview is a flexible research method that helps the researcher to ask questions in a different order and add new questions depending on the nature of the interview. In this type of interview, I was able to ask detailed questions. If the participant could not understand a question, I asked the questions again or rephrased it. I employed interviews because they helped me to obtain very personal information from my participants. However, I found that there are some limitations in using interviews as a research method, since they are time-consuming and require experience at interviewing (Kajornboon, 2005). In order to understand the factors that influence the Saudi female students' choice of university specialisation,

I gave the participants an opportunity to express their feelings and experiences. Therefore, I used open-ended questions in the interviews with the participants, since these helped them to recall events that happened to them in the past (Oliffe & Mroz, 2005), as well as to talk about those events in their own way and their own words (Chase, 1995; Holloway & Jefferson, 2000; Overcash, 2004). I believe that the use of this type of question made my participants able to freely share their experiences and emotions. The flexibility of open questions positively affected the interviewees and made them more involved in the study, to the extent that they revealed unexpected data (Kvale, 1996). In contrast, posing yes or no questions or questions requiring short answers restrains narrative interviews (Elliott, 2005; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1990).

Authors are spilt in terms of the role of the researcher in interviews: some such as Wenrich & Curties (2006) believe that the researcher has to elicit data from participants; others such as Mishler (1986) think that the role of the researcher is to listen to participants, since they tend to be keen to share their stories with others.

However, I believe that the researcher could adopt both roles, since it depends on the personality and psychology of the interviewees. I interviewed women who were very talkative and ceaselessly spoke. On the other hand, I also interviewed reserved and quiet women who responded to my questions with succinct answers, and I found it challenging to interview them. In the case of shy women who were experiencing being interviewed for the first time, I elicited their answers by asking the questions one after the other. However, when women were keen to talk about their experiences and share their views, I posed the question then waited for the participants to answer it in detail.

8.   Sampling and gaining access

The data were collected at two universities in Saudi Arabia. Both universities are located in the western province of Saudi Arabia. The first one is Red Sea University, which is located in Jeddah, and the second is Holy University located in Makkah. The reason for choosing these two universities is their geographical locations. One university is in a city characterised by conservatism, hence the rules and regulations of the university in that city are conservative. The other university is located in a city that is characterised by economic and cultural openness where there is a seaport and airport. Thus, the rules and regulations of its universities are more open compared to other Saudi universities.

I also chose to interview only women for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to give a voice to both female students and lecturers to share their experiences. Secondly, because of the cultural and legal constraints of Saudi Arabia, which is a gender-segregated society it would have been difficult to interview male students. In the process of getting ethical approval, I went through two stages. Firstly, I obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of York, which took a few weeks. Secondly, I obtained the approval of the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (now Ministry of Education) in order to conduct the fieldwork. I recruited 100 female students and lecturers from both universities. First of all I recruited a sample of 50 participants (40 female students and 10 female lecturers) from Holy University (see Table 1). Then, another 40 female students and 10 female lecturers were recruited from different departments at Red Sea University (see Table

2). The recruitment process took several stages. Initially, I sent a formal letter in Arabic with a research proposal attached, to two Saudi universities where I wished to conduct my study. I then gained the approval of both universities within weeks.

After that, I sent documents, including the approval of the universities and the research proposal, to the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London, which in turn sent the documents to the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia. After a month, the Committee at the Ministry of Higher Education granted me approval to conduct my study at both universities. Access to research participants was facilitated through a gatekeeper in the Computer Science Department. Invitations to take part in this study were advertised online to potential informants through the University website. The advertisement explained the purpose of the study, the way data would be collected and the extent to which confidentiality would be guaranteed.

The invitation also highlighted that individuals were not obliged to contribute but that their cooperation would be much appreciated. After the advertisement, only 13 female students and six female lecturers at Holy University, and nine female students and four lecturers at Red Sea University voluntarily accepted to take part in the interviews. Of the students that declined to take part, most cited time as the deciding factor, as I was conducting the fieldwork in an exam period. I then used a snowballing technique to recruit my participants, by asking the participants who voluntarily participated (including the participants who declined) to invite their friends' sisters or relatives who were currently studying at this university. One of them invited her sister and others invited their friends. Snowball sampling was undertaken with first and fourth year female undergraduates at both Universities, because I wanted to compare their experiences and views of their fields of study.
In this kind of sampling strategy, "the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contact with others" (Bryman, 2004, p. 100).

Table 1: The number of participants from Red Sea University

Subject	Female Students	Female Lecturers
Computer Sciences	2	
Biology	2	
Chemistry	2	1
Early Education	1	1
Physics	2	1
Engineering	2	
Law	6	
Media Studies	2	
Human Resources	1	
Nursing	2	1
Medicine	2	1
Art	2	
Medical Physics	2	
Information Systems		2
Marketing	1	
Pharmacology	2	
Business Administration	4	
Mathematics		1

Bio-chemistry	4	
Psychology	1	
Economics and Administration		1
Operations Management		1
Total	**40**	**10**

Table 2: The number of participants from Holy University

Subject	Female Students	Female Lecturers
Computer Sciences	2	1
Biology	2	
Chemistry	1	
Early Education	2	1
Sharia Law	2	
Physics	1	
Law	2	
Media	3	1
Family Education	2	
Nursing	4	2
Medicine	3	1
Information Science	3	
Islamic Studies	2	1
Special Needs Education	2	
Art	1	1
Medical Physics	3	1
Pharmacology	3	1
Clinical Nutrition	1	
History	1	
TOTAL	**40**	**10**

I recruited 40 female students and 10 female lecturers from each University. The female students were from different disciplines including old subjects like maths, medicine, education, religious studies, as well as newly available subjects, for instance law, media studies, special education and engineering. In turn, most of the female lecturers who were interviewed held masters and doctoral degrees, and a few held a bachelor degree. In qualitative studies, the size of the sample is often small. There are many reasons for this. In a random sample, the characteristics of the participants should be known. However, this is not possible in qualitative research. Furthermore, a random sample can help to select a representative sample. However, in obtaining a representative sample, the population should have the same characteristics. Yet, values and beliefs are not evenly distributed within a population.

Therefore, taking a random sample is not an appropriate strategy in qualitative research. In some cases, some informants are an infinite source of information as they are very knowledgeable in some areas. Hence, researchers in qualitative studies tend to select certain participants. This makes random sampling a waste of time, effort and money. It is also a simple way of selecting participants as it saves the researcher time, effort and money. However, it could lead to poor quality information (Marshall, 1996). In turn, I have greatly benefited from being an insider, which made it easy for me to gain access to both Universities. Mohanty (2003) criticised Western feminists for not paying attention to the fact that women's experiences in postcolonial countries vary widely depending on class, race and culture.

According to her, Western feminists, as outsiders, viewed women in developing nations as a homogenous group. Therefore, my position, as insider researcher, helped me to understand that Saudi women are not a homogenous group. Instead, each woman has her own unique experiences based on her class, race and Islamic sect. Insider refers to a researcher who is a part of the population under study (Kanuha, 2000); in other words, a researcher who shares some characteristics with the participants such as language, race or culture. These characteristics make the researcher closer to the participants which also makes them more open, and which could help in collecting detailed data (Asselin, 2003).

The similarity of myself to my participants in many aspects like gender, language, surname, culture and religious affiliation greatly helped me to gain their trust. Consequently, the participants felt at ease in answering the interview questions. For example, one female student at the end of the interview revealed, "*we have just met but I feel like I have known you for a long time.*"

I obtained my undergraduate degree from Red Sea University, whilst my master's degree was obtained from Holy University. I have friends and colleagues at both universities and I am familiar with the rules of both Universities, especially with regards to dress codes. Despite the high temperatures in Saudi Arabia, I was compelled to wear a long skirt and a long-sleeved top when I went to Holy University, since wearing jeans violates the University's rules. On the other hand, I wore jeans and a sleeveless top when I went to Red Sea University. I also made great use of my surname as I come from a huge and inveterate tribe, which has a great history and a good reputation in the Arabian Peninsula. My last name or tribe helped me access the participants; for example, when one of the female students knew that I am from the Otaibi tribe she said:

"*I am proud that you are from the Otaibi tribe as my mother is from the same tribe… I am more than happy to help you find participants for your study*" (Samar, a Computer Sciences female student, Holy University).

Another female student who has the same last name as me expressed her feelings when she found out that I am from the Otaibi tribe:

"*I am glad and proud at the same time because I have met an Otaibi girl who studies abroad and is highly educated…. You raise our heads up high*" (Fatima, a Clinical Nutrition female student at Holy University).

Such encouragement and compliments from the participants gave me a greater sense of responsibility, as well as making me feel more enthusiastic about my study. I was planning to collect my data within two months; however, critical circumstances and challenges that I faced during my fieldwork led to the extension of the data collection period. The challenges encountered included the exam period, the lack of cooperation and commitment to dates from some female students and lecturers. Further, the lack of transportation was the greatest challenge that led to delaying the data collection.

Since women cannot drive in Saudi Arabia I was totally dependent on my father and brother to drive me daily to the University. There was no problem during my fieldwork at Holy University where we live. However, the problem worsened when I started my fieldwork at Red Sea University, which is located in another city and 65 miles away from where I live. My father and brother were not able to drive me an hour and a half every day due to their job commitments. Therefore, I was obliged to tailor my fieldwork schedule around theirs. Prior to my fieldwork I did a pilot study to test my interview questions.

Although, the main purpose of the pilot study was to test my interview questions, I also wanted to practise my interview skills, since it was my first experience in conducting qualitative research. I piloted the interview questions with six female participants to see if the questions were clear and understandable, as well as to receive feedback and suggestions on those questions. The pilot study was conducted at the University of York in two stages. First of all, I sent invitation emails to all of the Saudi female students who were studying in the Department of Education at the University of York, asking them kindly to participate in my pilot study. However, I received no response from them. Therefore, I decided to do a group interview with five friends from Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries who were undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of York and York St John University. The focus group discussion took between one hour and two hours. The group interview was held in one of the study rooms in the library at the University of York.

Finally, I did an individual interview with a colleague who has been working as a lecturer at a women's centre in Jordan and who is currently studying at the Women's Studies Centre at the University of York. The individual interview lasted for an hour and took place in the common room at the Women's Studies Centre at the University of York. This helped me to improve the interview schedule, based on the participants' feedback. Furthermore, the pilot study was undertaken to generate data from female students and lecturers about gender issues in Saudi higher education, to test out the interview questions, methodology and procedures in gathering information. Based on the feedback from the participants of the pilot study, I found out that some questions were not related to the topic of the study and some of them

were not clear. Accordingly, I removed and paraphrased some questions that were misleading or out of context.

9. Addressing ethical issues

Discussing the influence of patriarchy and gender norms on women's education in a context characterised by gender inequality made me anticipate difficulties during the fieldwork. Before conducting my fieldwork, I expected that women might show reluctance in participating in this study due to the sensitivity of the topic within the Saudi context. Luckily, I did not experience reluctance from the women; instead they were interested in contributing to my study. A few of the women were reluctant to participate in this study. However, their reluctance was not due to the sensitivity of the topic, but rather due to other reasons such as it clashed with their timetable or exam period. I thought discussing such issues could make them distressed, however they were open in sharing their views and experiences. I noticed during the fieldwork that discussing gender norms and the patriarchal system were normalised for them, since their knowledge about feminism, patriarchy and gender stereotypes was very poor. This could be the reason for not facing difficulties during my data collection.

3.9.1 Confidentiality

In order to protect the privacy of the participants, I made sure I held the interviews with the female students in the University halls. Very often I found a number of female students in the hall that had been booked in advance for the interviews, or some of them suddenly entered the hall during an interview. I kindly asked them to leave the hall, since I noticed that some participants became shy or confused with other female students around them. Conversely, there were other female students who had no objections to answering the interview questions in the presence of their friends or other female students. As a result, I interviewed the female students in various places on campus that were convenient to them, such as in the library, in prayer rooms and in the cafeteria. The choice of the place of interview was upon the request of the female student herself, as I gave the participants the freedom to choose the place they wanted in order not to negatively impact the course of the interviews. For instance, some female students preferred certain buildings that were close to their lectures.

As for the female lecturers, I never had a problem in the choice of the place of interview since most of the interviews were conducted in their offices during break time. Some female lecturers had their own office, whereas others shared an office with their colleagues. One of the disadvantages of conducting interviews in shared offices is the interruption from other female lecturers, which led to some interviews coming to an end.

2.   Gaining informed consent

According to the research ethics, participation in this study was based on informed consent of the participants. Through informed consent, I gave participants the freedom of self-determination to take part in this study. Before conducting the interviews, I clarified with each participant the purpose of the study, the means by which the interviews would be recorded, and the fact that these interviews would be transcribed and translated into English, including reminding them that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. My role as a researcher required me to do no harm, hence all the data was treated confidentially. It is worth mentioning here that most of the participants signed the informed consent form, except one female student who was reluctant, as she thought it could be used against her. However, she signed it after I explained that it would only be used for academic purposes. Gender, feminism and women's rights are considered sensitive topics in Saudi society. Therefore, I have hidden the names and identity of the participants by giving them pseudonyms in order to protect them. In addition, I have not disclosed the real names of the universities or their locations, and they have also been given pseudonyms. I have kept the interview records and the transcribed data in my personal computer. I intend to keep them for 5 years and after that they will be destroyed.

3.   Using a tape-recorder in the interviews

Before conducting the interviews, I was keen to obtain the permission of the participants to record their accounts, so I would be able to take field notes as well as focus on what the participant was saying, in order to ask follow-up questions if needed (Clarke, 2001; Elliott, 2005). My effective listening during the interviews, particularly the semi-structured and unstructured interviews, helped me to probe and investigate in-depth the interesting topics mentioned during the interviews (Ritchie

& Lewis, 2003). Furthermore, I regularly checked the tape-recorder before and during the interviews to make sure it was working. I also made sure to bring extra batteries in case the tape-recorder stopped in the middle of the interview. Most of the participants expressed a desire to record their voices, except two participants, who believed that the voice of women is rougher or "*Awrah*". One of them was a female student and the other was a female lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies Although I reassured them that I would be the only person who was going to listen, they were afraid that unrelated men could listen to these recordings. I respected and understood the participants' requests, so recorded these two interviews manually.

These were the longest two interviews conducted, as one of them took two hours, and it was not possible to ask all the questions. Thus, the female lecturer asked me to set another date in order to complete the rest of the interview questions. Since during these two interviews I was actively engaged in writing the participant's answers, I was not able to watch the participant's body language or make eye contact with them. I also experienced difficulty in transcribing these interviews, as my handwriting was not clear. This is similar to what happened with Halabi (2005) when she faced opposition from the Palestinian women refugees to record the interviews using a tape-recorder. She attributed this to the anxiety of the participants since they were not familiar with recording their voices.

4.   Building rapport with the participants

Before interviewing, I initially met with the participants in order to schedule the interview dates and places. The first meeting with the participants was an opportunity to introduce myself and my study as well as answer their questions. I was available to answer all their questions, even personal ones such as regarding at which British university I was studying, which year I was in, when I would finish my studies, and which family I come from. Some participants wanted to study abroad, thus they asked me about my experiences studying in the UK. By responding to these questions I built rapport with the women, which helped me in creating a comfortable environment and gaining the participants' trust (Booth & Booth, 1996; Overcash, 2003). When I interviewed some women during their lunch-time break they invited me to share their lunch with them.

I accepted their invitations to show respect to them. When I met the participants I shook their hands and said "*Salam alaikoum,*" which means peace be upon you. I established good relationships with the participants, to the extent that a number of them shared very personal experiences with me. For example, Eman told me the story of being sexually harassed by her driver. Additionally, Sawsan narrated her suffering with her father after his divorce from her mother. I have not included these stories in my study since they are unrelated and may harm the participants. I ensured that I did not make women feel that I am superior to them or and did not use non-understandable terms with them, but rather I made them feel that we are equal (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Grbich, 1999).

2.   Data analysis

I conducted the interviews in Arabic because it was easier for my participants to express themselves in their own languages, as most of them did not speak English. The analysis process began with transcribing the interviews. I transcribed and analysed the interviews in Arabic because I found that translating the interview transcripts into English to be a laborious and a time consuming process, as well as being concerned that I could lose the meaning of the sentences. As a consequence, I could not use Nvivo (a qualitative data analysis software package) as it does not work with Arabic transcripts. Alternatively, I entered the transcript of interviews into ATLAS (another qualitative data analysis software package which works effectively with Arabic transcripts). Afterwards, I started grouping under one code the accounts that shared the same opinions. Next, I grouped these codes into four themes. I used thematic analysis, which helped me to identify the themes that related to my research questions.

3.11 Conclusion

This is a feminist study concerning women's experiences in higher education. It focuses on the intersectionality of gender and class and its influence on women's subject choices. This study also recognises women as active agents that resist patriarchal constraints. Women's agency varies depending on her class. Accordingly, women's agency in this study is the producer of knowledge.

The research methods and methodology were designed to explore how gender norms influence women's educational choices in order to answer the research questions. Using semi-structured interviews assisted me in answering the questions of my study. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a hundred female students and lecturers to hear women's accounts regarding their subject choices. My position in the field influenced the research design and process. In addition, reflexivity was a key part of the research process, thus I gave my own input into this study. Being an insider researcher was empowering for me. It was easy to communicate with my participants since I am a woman and speak Arabic. During the interviews, my participants felt relaxed in expressing their views. The following chapters focus on how I analysed and interpreted the findings of my study.

Chapter Four:

Ikhtilat as patriarchal expression: Gender segregation and the influence of fathers

4.1 Introduction

It is clear from the interviews that I conducted with a number of women in Saudi Arabia that *Ikhtilat,* which means mixing or mingling between men and women, plays a large role in influencing the decision of Saudi fathers in allowing their daughters to choose their fields of study. Regardless of whether the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* stems from Islamic religion or Arab tribal customs and traditions, Saudi female students have different views on the authenticity of *Ikhtilat*, as will be seen later. Furthermore, this chapter shows that my participants exercise their agency through accommodating their father's influence. They see a father's interventions as necessary for their education. Therefore, they accept the father's influence on their subject choices without resisting or bargaining.

2. Concerns around *Ikhtilat*

Ikhtilat, or mingling between women and unrelated men, is prohibited in Islam based on the jurisprudences of, "the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatwa*" in Saudi Arabia. "The Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatwa*" is a Saudi religious organisation, which "offers state-sanctioned *fatwa* (religious decrees) on major social and political issues in the kingdom, and offer[s] advice directly to the Saudi king" (Schanzer & Miller, 2012, p. 1). This committee built on its justifications for the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* from its understanding of the *Quran* and *Hadith*. The Prophet Mohammed said, "I have not left a *fitnah* (trial, calamity, or cause for calamity) after me more than (the *fitnah*) with women for men" (Sahih Muslim). According to the interpretations of Saudi senior *ulema* of this *Hadith*, women are seen as a temptation for men that could lead them to commit sins. Thus, males and females should be segregated (Khoja, 2012).

"Men and women are supposedly commanded by God not to interact or socialize with one another, except for their spouse and respective mahram" (Buisson, 2013, p. 100). The Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatwa* believes that *Ikhtilat* is a tool for the demolition of morality of society. It argues that *Ikhtilat* promotes relationships between men and women that eventually lead to adultery. Furthermore, it expresses concern that *Ikhtilat* could lead women to give up their traditional expected roles as mothers and wives (Khoja, 2012). As a result, *Ikhtilat* is forbidden in Saudi Arabia to protect the chastity of men and women, as well as to protect society from corruption and moral decay (Buisson, 2013).

The Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatwa* has credibility and moral legitimacy amongst Saudis, who trust and respect such an organisation. Thus, *fatwas* issued by the Committee have great influence on Saudis (Al-Ghathami, 2015). The questioning of the prohibition *of Ikhtilat* is a sensitive issue in Saudi Arabia as the prohibition has been ruled upon by the Committee. However, *Ikhtilat* has been the centre of debates in Saudi Arabia between the Islamic trend on the one hand and the liberal trend on the other hand. This was seen particularly after the establishment in 2009 of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, which is the first co-educational university in Saudi Arabia. The Islamic trend believes that *Ikhtilat* is forbidden, whilst liberals argue that *Ikhtilat* is permissible in Islam. As a consequence, one prominent cleric - Sheikh Abdullah Al-Barrak - called those who believe in the permissibility of *Ikhtilat* to be called infidels, because he considered them as apostates from Islam.

Debates about *Ikhtilat* are not limited to disagreements between liberals and Islamists, but are also seen in dissension within the Islamic trend itself. For example, consider Abdul Latif Al-Sheikh, who is descended from a prestigious religious family. (He is a grandson of the Muslim revivalist and reformer Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab, who contributed to the establishment of the Saudi state.) Sheikh Abdul Latif Al-Sheikh claims that *Ikhtilat* existed in the era of the prophet; therefore, it is not prohibited in Islam (Al-Sheikh, 2010). Nonetheless, the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatwa* is the only official religious organisation that can issue *fatwas*.

Hence, any jurisprudential opinions that are contrary to the state Committee's fatwas should be ignored. According to this Committee, *Ikhtilat* is forbidden in Saudi society. Most of the participants revealed that their fathers influenced their decision in their choice of specialisation. Some fathers prevented their daughters from choosing certain disciplines or studying in certain colleges due to social customs and traditions, and cultural and religious heritage. Saudi fathers may prevent their daughters from studying a certain subject because of *Ikhtilat*, as can be seen from the interview with Muna, a student in her final year studying chemistry:

"My father only has one dream in which I become a teacher. He maybe believes that teaching is the best for me, because he has experience in life and I am young and I know nothing. He wants me to be a teacher, not in a company or medicine and nursing, because he is concerned about Ikhtilat. I told him that after I finish studying chemistry I want to work in hospital laboratories or a company, then he said to me, 'it is either teaching or nothing.'"

In the same context Fatima, who is an outstanding Computer Science student who has obtained a patent, narrated how her father made her give up her dream of studying medicine so as not to mix with men, either at college or in a hospital:

"I love dentistry and I had a desire to study it since I was in middle school. I felt that it would be something fun. But my father refused, so I had to choose Computer Science. He is now happy… The most important thing from his point of view is that there is no Ikhtilat."

It can be said that whether the subject requires *Ikhtilat* or not influences Saudi women's educational decisions. It is likely that a female student will not choose a particular specialty if it conflicts with her religious and cultural beliefs, as a number of female students explained how their fathers made them choose other specialties rather than medicine because of the possibility of mixing with men. Norris (2009) points out in his study that religious culture plays an influential role in women's access to leadership positions. In non-Muslim societies, women are more successful in obtaining full ministerial and legislative rights compared with those in the non-Muslim communities. Fatima was not the only women whose father prevented her from studying medicine.

In my sample there were quite a number of Saudi women whose fathers prevented them from achieving their dreams of studying medicine or media studies, because of *Ikhtilat*. Some fathers refused to enrol their daughters in Medical School, because of the possibility of mixing with men, as they believed it would be a way for their daughters to become involved in relationships with unrelated men, which could lead to adultery. Adultery by women in Saudi Arabia is not only a crime punishable by Sharia Law, but rather it brings shame to their families or tribes.

Furthermore, a woman who is involved in sexual relationships is seen by Saudi society as impure, which affects her worthiness for marriage. A woman's chastity in Saudi Arabia is linked to family honour. Therefore, male members in the family should protect the family honour by protecting the chastity and purity of the female members (Kulczycki & Windle, 2011). Accordingly, the reason behind some Saudi fathers preventing their daughters from studying medicine or media studies is to protect the family honour. Other fathers also prevent their daughters from taking media studies due to social barriers, such as the appearance of the girl's name on television or in newspapers. One of these girls Samar, is a lecturer in the Department of Physics in the female section at Holy University:

"*I wanted to study medicine, but my father was initially opposed because of customs and traditions. He is very conservative and deeply religious. I tried to change his mind and then he was convinced, but unfortunately I did not get accepted by the College of Medicine. Also my sister wanted to take media studies but my father again refused because it is shameful that women appear on TV. He did not want me to study at the Department of Medical Physics, because he did not want me to work in a hospital for fear of Ikhtilat, and he prevented my sister from working in a hospital after she graduated from university.*"

Mixing with men is considered one of the main impediments that prevent female students from studying certain disciplines such as medicine or media studies. The prohibition often comes from fathers since they do not wish their daughters to study these disciplines for religious and social reasons, due to fear of people talking about the reputation and honour of their daughters, where the consequence is rejection from their community.

To understand why mixing between men and women is forbidden in Islam and why I came to this finding, the concept of sexuality in Islam needs to be addressed. As mentioned by Baden (1992), sex according to *Sharia* laws is one of the necessities in the life of a Muslim; however, at the same time it could lead to a morally corrupt society if it is not controlled. Indeed, the Qur'anic orders urge marriage to prevent the occurrence of adultery; they also stress the observance of modesty and restraint in any place where there is mixing between men and women. Joumanah works as a lecturer in the Faculty of Sharia (religion) in the female section at Holy University. She recalled the days of her youth when she was at high school saying:

"I wanted to study medicine, but my father was not in favour of this idea. He was dismissive of this idea due to Ikhtilat. It was also at a time when a lot of male relatives were studying at Medical College. I remembered that my father asked them about the type of study at Medical College and they told him it was a mixed college. I spoke to my father regarding my decision to study at the College of Medicine and he told me that the College was mixed male and female and female students did not wear the hijab. He said that it would be hard for me to study there as I am religiously committed to some extent, let alone studying at a mixed university whose female students did not wear their headscarves. This was thirty years ago, the situation has changed now."

Jude, a lecturer in the Art department at Holy University revealed:

"My father was supporting my participation in art exhibitions as long as there was no Ikhtilat in the galleries, but if it was mixed he asked me to take one of my brothers with me as a male guardian. I suffered for about a year; he thought that the acquisition of painting and sculpture tools was only a waste of money. But, after he began to see my work and hear about my success in Saudi society he changed his mind and encouraged me."

As can be seen from the interviews with the women, the reasons behind fathers preventing their daughters from studying certain disciplines seems to also be due to social impediments. The main reason behind the intervention of fathers in the educational decisions of their daughters is to protect the honour of their families, people talking and its negative impact on discrediting their daughters.

Samiha, a student studying Human Resources at Red Sea University told me about the contradictions experienced by a Saudi father because of society, customs and traditions:

"*I wanted to study nursing but my father said no since it is shameful for a woman to study nursing because of Ikhtilat. He used to say our women are not allowed to study nursing. He does not care whether Ikhtilat is Halal or Haram (forbidden) religiously. He cares about people and their words. For that reason I studied HR; I could do nothing. He asked me to work in women-only banks and I agreed with him; I want to work in a respectable place where there is no mixing with men. My brother works in a mixed company and he said that he feels harassed by girls working there in terms of their voices, in the way they talk, their clothes. A woman's voice is awrah (nakedness), especially if she speaks in an alluring and soft voice. Women should speak in a serious voice. My brother owns a company and he wanted my sister to work with him but my father refused.* "

Abeer, a Saudi girl studying marketing whose parents are separated, is a divorced mother of two children and lives with her father and her stepmother. She told me about her story with her father:

"*My father did not oppose my choice to study marketing, as long as it was not medicine, since our customs and traditions discourage restrain girls from studying medicine. My father sees it is as hard to let me study or work in mixed places because of the talk of people and his belief that his daughter lives her life freely without censorship, or that his daughter works until late at night. Even if I worked as a receptionist at a clinic it would be impossible for him to accept that. But after my divorce the restrictions became more to the extent that my father prevented my younger sister from going to university because of me believing that university education is the reason behind my divorce. All my female cousins are educated and one of them works outside the city where she lives in her own flat. Her parents support her therefore she is successful. The father and mother's role cannot be ignored. My father and my mother are against me. Their thinking is confined to the marital home being the only Kingdom for a girl, even if it is a failed marriage.*"

It may be that the father has a particular viewpoint on the rejection of his daughter studying medicine; this view appears to be influenced by the social roles played by both men and women in Saudi society. As Abeer continues:

"*My younger sister is very talented as she got high grades in high school. She wanted to study medicine but my father disapproved. He believes that if a woman obtained a degree or a job then she could make a living and she would dominate a man… He wanted us to be dependent on a man since he thought that a man is the strongest and the protector of women… I believe that his thoughts are absolutely wrong.*"

Conversely, Hana a lecturer in the Department of Physics reported on the role of the local community in influencing some fathers in terms of the issue of *Ikhtilat*; she said:

"*Ikhtilat was not the reason behind my father's rejection of my studying medicine. You know here in the society of Makkah or in general Hijaz society [including Makkah, Jeddah and Madinah] there is a permissiveness with regard to the issue of Ikhtilat. For example, Hijazi girls grow up with their male cousins and neighbours until they turn twenty, then they start to wear headscarves or veils...men and women in ancient Makkah or the Hejaz region (Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah) mingled in all areas.*"

There was no separation between the sexes as it currently happens. The prohibition of the mixing of men and women is an alien custom to *Hijazi* society, as reported by Radwa a lecturer in the Faculty of Sharia:

"*When I was very young I never wore headscarves. We were living with my male cousins in the same house. I consider them as brothers. However, when I was in middle school I knew from my religious teacher that when a girl reaches puberty it is not permissible for her to mingle with men. She explained to us who Mahrams (male kin) are and whom I can show myself to without a veil. Then, I found out that what I learned in school is totally different from the reality in which I live. Hence, my life began to take a different path and since that I began to wear the hijab. During prayers the woman covers her body except her face and hands. This applies when she meets her male relatives.*

Therefore, I started wearing a headscarf in middle school then girls in our family started to wear it one after the other."

Through the interviews with female students in the present study, it is possible to identify the main factors that drive fathers to forbid their daughters to study a particular specialty; they are social and cultural factors. In conclusion, religion and social customs have a huge impact on a father's decision regarding a girl's' subject choice. This finding is in agreement with those of King (2003), who explored the effect of religion on fathers' involvement with their children. He conducted his study with 810 fathers in the United States. He found that religious fathers have great involvement with their children. Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the study of Igbinedion (2011), which aimed to investigate the perception of factors that influence students' vocational choice of secretarial studies in tertiary institutions in Neheria. It found that parents are considered one of the factors that influence students' selection of secretarial studies.

Furthermore, this finding to some extent is similar to the findings of Meyer et al.'s study (1998), which was about Islam and the extension of citizenship rights to women in Kuwait. The results of their study showed that moderate Islam supports giving more citizenship rights to women, whilst those who follow the radical Islamist approach do not encourage it. When comparing the two studies, I find that the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatwa* adopts very conservative interpretations of Islam especially those concerning women's issues, which somewhat limit the role of women and prevents them from obtaining their full rights. This explains the numerous religious barriers that may be faced by Saudi women at various stages of their lives.

Again, a study carried out by Norton & Tomal (2009) found that there is a relationship between religion and women's educational attainment. Religion could affect women's education, whether it is primary, secondary or higher education. Interestingly, Islam has a significant effect on the education of women compared to other religions, which increases the number of illiterate women and reduces the number of women at the various educational stages.

In addition, a study conducted by Lerner (1989) revealed the role of religious affiliation in women's educational attainment. That is to say, the religious affiliation of females has a great effect on the number of educational levels completed by them. However, the results of the current study are contrary to the results of Naugah's study (2011), which explored factors affecting the choice of science subjects amongst girls at secondary school level in Mauritius. The study shows that parents do not influence the decision of their daughters in the selection of scientific disciplines — in this study parents said that they leave this matter to their daughters. Differences in the results between the two studies may be due to the multiple interpretations of Islam. There is no one comprehensive understanding of Islam; rather there are many interpretations of Islam.

For example, Saudi Arabia follows the *Hanbli* School of Islamic Law, which is different from the *Hanafi* School of Islamic Law that is predominant in Mauritius. A religious motive appears to be the reason behind the refusal of Saudi fathers of *Ikhtilat*. As a result, they prevent their daughters from studying certain disciplines that require mixing with men such as medicine, nursing and media studies. In Islam, there are interpretations of the *Quran* and the *Sunnah* that forbid mixing between the sexes. God said:

> "O wives of the Prophet, you are not like anyone among women. If you fear *Allah*, then do not be soft in speech [to men], lest he in whose heart is disease should covet, but speak with appropriate speech (33). And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance. And establish prayer and give *zakah* and obey *Allah* and His Messenger. *Allah* intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification" (Al-Ahzab, verses 32 & 33, n. d.).

Although the above verse was addressing the wives of the prophet, it includes all Muslim women, according to the interpretation of Ibn Cordoba. He stated that God ordered Muslim women to sit in their homes and not to leave them unless absolutely necessary. He explained this divine order as honouring Muslim women, since women in the pre-Islamic era mixed with men and did not wear the hijab. In another verse God ordered Muslim men not to look at women or mingle with or talk to them, unless from behind a partition; God said, "[a]nd when you ask [his wives] for

something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts" (Al-Ahzab, verse 53, n. d.). In addition, there are many *Hadith* from the prophet Mohammed emphasising gender segregation, such as addressing his companions saying, "do not enter the mosque using the females' door." In another *Hadith* the prophet urged the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* in mosques and during prayer.

It was narrated by Abu Huraira (one of the prophets' companions) that the prophet Mohammed said, "[t]he best rows for men are the first rows, and the worst ones the last ones, and the best rows for women are the last ones and the worst ones for them are the first ones." (Sahih Muslim, Book 4, *Hadith* 147, n. d.). The role of fathers in the lives of Saudi women is pivotal, since they live in a masculine and patriarchal society. Hence, fathers can impose their opinions on the choice of academic specialisation for their daughters. They may also prevent their daughters from studying certain subjects due to religious or social reasons such as *Ikhtilat*. The father may see that most of the religious evidence (whether based on the *Quran* or the prophet *Hadith*) forbids women mixing with men. Therefore, he might prohibit his daughter from going to mixed schools such as medical and nursing schools. For certain reasons, most of female students comply with the authority of their father. Firstly, this is because he is her male guardian and financially responsible for her. Secondly, she bears his name, so if she behaves in a way that violates social customs it could tarnish her father's reputation.

4.3 Women whose fathers impose restrictions with which they disagree or are critical

Most of the female students did not agree with their fathers on issue of *Ikhtilat,* as they believed that there is a misconception amongst people in Saudi society, who do not understand the true meaning of the concept of *Ikhtilat*. Rabab, a final year student at nursing college, does not mind studying or working in mixed places. She says:

"*I was not scared of training in a hospital, I was excited. Some of my friends were scared of training in a hospital because of Ikhtilat. There are some girls who used to live in a women-only society. As for me, because I often travel with my family outside Saudi Arabia I am used to dealing with men. So, the situation was very easy for me compared with my female friends.*"

However, some female students also stated that their fathers did not object to their decision to study a certain subject, perhaps due to the compatibility of the subject with religion or customs and traditions. According to Samirah, a students in the Department of Early Education:

"*My father is not that kind of father who forces their daughter to do certain things. He encouraged me to choose the field of study that I find myself in. The most important thing is I learn and be creative in my chosen specialisation. I think it's because my subject is not inconsistent with the customs and traditions in terms of Ikhtilat. For example, if I chose medicine then yes… I think my father would have refused because of Ikhtilat.*"

Latifa, who works as a lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, pointed out that her father did not oppose her when she decided to choose computer science, as long as it was consistent with her future role as a mother and wife:

"*My father did not bother too much; as with most fathers he believes that the ultimate role of a woman is to be a wife and raise children. So, he asked me to study an easy subject.*"

Others support the choice of their daughters particularly when the subject equips her to be a good mother and wife, as illustrated by what Haneen said:

"*My father encouraged me to pursue my higher studies. He was happy when he knew that I chose family education. It might be because it will qualify me for marriage.*"

It can be said that there is a link between gender segregation and gender inequality, as gender segregation could lead to gender inequality. For example, the segregated educational system in Saudi Arabia appears to be the reason for the inequality between men and women in terms of access to certain subjects or professions. As shown by the present study, there are disciplines that are not available in female universities but available in male universities. If Saudi male and female students study at the same university, disciplines become equally available to both. The phenomenon of gender segregation is not limited to Saudi society, and also exists in the European labour market.

There are many studies that have discussed this. According to Jarman (2005), in the countries where the degree of gender segregation is high, the degree of women's disadvantage is high as well.

4.4 Fathers open to *Ikhtilat*

On the other hand, there are fathers where the issue of *Ikhtilat* causes no problems for them; rather, they encourage their daughters to study any discipline, regardless of whether it leads to mixing with men or not. As we can see from the interview with Amina, a computer science student, her father wanted her to study medicine but she chose to study computer sciences since she did not like medicine:

"*My father encouraged me to study medicine; he did not pay any attention to the issue of Ikhtilat. I do not think that there are parents who still think like this old thinking.*"

What attracted my attention during the interview with Dina, a student at the College of Media, was that although her father and her brother did not want her to study media studies, they did not force her to choose another discipline, but gave her freedom of choice:

"*My father and brother opposed my studying at Media College. They have been trying to convince me to terminate my studies. Despite that, they never force me to study a certain subject. I tried to change their mind but I could not. They thought that I will become a TV host after my graduation.*"

The case of Dina shows us a different father's attitude towards media studies. Dina's father is highly educated as he holds a higher education degree. This could influence his attitude towards his daughter's education. Although he has some reservations about media studies, he did not exercise his authority over her to prevent her from studying what she likes. Instead, he left it up to her whether she chose media studies or another subject. This indicates that not all Saudi fathers interfere in the education of their daughters.

There are some open-minded fathers who respect the choices of their daughters, even if such choices are against their will. Those fathers seem to hold a belief in egalitarian gender roles. Furthermore Nouf, a student in the Department of Biology addressed the unlimited support that she received from her father in terms of her choice to study medicine:

"No, the situation was unacceptable. My father very often encouraged me to achieve my dream even after he knew that I was not accepted to the College of Medicine. Then he suggested that I move to another university in another city so I could join the College of Medicine. It depends on the father; if he is conservative it will negatively affect the girl. But if he is open-minded within the boundaries of the societal customs and traditions, he will support his daughter. The role of a father is great in terms of a girl's choice of subject, since he is the backbone of life and in charge of the girl. If he approves her subject choice she will achieve her goals. However, if he says no she will have to find other alternatives."

Laila, a media student who proudly spoke about her father, said:

"My father was the only one who encouraged me to do media studies regardless of my mother's opposition; she thinks it does not have promising job opportunities. He is the only open-minded one in my family and he supports me whatever."

As mentioned previously, some fathers forbid their daughters from joining the College of Medicine because of *Ikhtilat*. However, there are some Saudi fathers who encourage their daughters to study medicine, such as Amina's who mentioned:

"I initially studied dentistry for a year, and then I converted to computer sciences. I had chosen dentistry because I was thinking of the job and the future. My father influenced and supported me in studying dentistry. Then I decided to study it for my father and the job. He cried when he knew that I got accepted into Medical College. I did not want to disappoint him. I studied dentistry in spite of my knowledge of my abilities, as I do not have any experience. Although I am fully convinced that there is no difference between boys and girls in terms of capacity, the study of medicine was not my thing. I did not feel comfortable internally and there were anatomy modules that I did not like.

I wanted to study computer sciences from the very beginning, but my father made me change my mind especially after he knew that I was supposed to be the first graduate from the dentistry department."

Additionally, Amani a student at the College of Pharmacology talked about her father's dream of her becoming a doctor:

"My father has been encouraging me since I was a child. He used to say to me, I want you to become a doctor when you get older. This motivated me so much. It is true in the beginning I wanted to study medicine, but I found that anatomy is very intimidating .... corpses.... I felt it was difficult ....I could not handle it hence, I chose pharmacy and thank god I am relieved."

Fatima, a student who studied biochemistry, highlighted how her father wanted her to study medicine but she chose biology. She said:

"My father wanted me to study medicine because the specialties of all my sisters are non-scientific and I am the only one who studied a scientific specialisation at high school. But Allah did not make that happen, as I obtained low grades at high school. I also thought deeply about medicine and I found that the years of study are so long and I will spend most of my life studying, so I did not choose it."

In return, Shrooq boasted that her father is open-minded as he studied in the United States. He is the one who encouraged her to do media studies:

"My father is a columnist. He encouraged me to take media studies. My father is an open-minded person since he travelled and studied abroad. He does not like extremism. We are different from our relatives who criticise our liberal way of life."

This result is consistent to some extent with Murenga et al. (2014) who found that the parents of Muslim girls in the Mumias district in Kenya positively affect their educational attainment. They revealed that although the majority of parents are illiterate, they encourage their daughters to continue their education by paying tuition fees in order to make up for what they have missed. According to the data from the questionnaire collected from the participants at each interview, the majority of fathers who encourage their daughters to study non-traditional subjects hold high academic degrees. Furthermore, some of them are open-minded in terms of women's education, since they studied abroad and experienced different cultures. Additionally, these fathers may want their daughters to be outstanding women from the rest of society, as well as to obtain degrees better than what they already hold.

4.5 Women self-imposing restrictions on their study due to concerns about *Ikhtilat*

There is a group of female students who refuse to choose particular specialties, not because of their father's refusal, but because they themselves do not want to mix with men, whether during the university years or after graduation and when joining the labour market. Elham, a first year physics student described how her fear and shyness of men hampered her from studying medicine:

"*Since my childhood when I was at primary school I was hoping to go to medical school, but when I grew up I knew myself that I cannot deal with men. Yes, I am scared of talking to men. In our society I am not used to dealing with men as most of my dealings are done through women. My father is the only man I know. For example, if a male lecturer treated me unfairly I could not defend myself unlike a female lecturer.*"

In this context Asma, a student studying medical physics, shed light on the psychological aspect in terms of the fear of a Saudi girl mixing with men:

"*I think that mingling with men whether in college or in the workplace is difficult, especially when the society around you is only women. I think it is a new and strange situation I have never tested before. Hence, any new experience will be accompanied by fear. When someone travels for the first time he or she will feel fear and alienation and psychological fatigue. The same with Ikhtilat; it is tiring at first but then we gradually will get used to it. I personally feel the change in society and its development, and I also feel that the new generation is more positive and interactive with the community compared to previous generations.*"

There are female students who came from traditional families and believe that *Ikhtilat* is religiously forbidden; according to Sarah, a final year history student:

"*I know one of my friends is very conservative. Her grades at high school allow her to study at medical school, but she chose to study one of the religious subjects since she does not like Ikhtilat.*"

When I asked Najwa, a family education student, about *Ikhtilat* she replied with confidence:

"I am against Ikhtilat as it is forbidden in our religion. I agree there is Ikhtilat in the holy mosques, but still they are places for worship and there is no time to do haram things, but other mixed places are forbidden. There is no difference between Ikhtilat and Khulwa (a man and woman meeting in a secluded place). I think that Ikhtilat could lead to Khulwa (seclusion). Thus, Ikhtilat is not permissible."

Reem, a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Management, spoke about her father saying:

"My father (may God have mercy on him) was one of the people who encouraged the education of girls. He was not in favour of the idea of a girl staying in the house. He always told me: you need to learn and to continue your education even if you are married. He pushed us to continue education, my sister and I. She is now a professor at a university. We are a family that value education. He, may God have mercy on him, wanted me to study medicine but I refused because hospitals are mixed places and I do not like Ikhtilat."

The attitudes of some of the female students towards medicine and their unwillingness to study it because of *Ikhtilat,* indicates a high degree of internalisation of gender stereotypes. It appears from their responses, these female students believe that because they are women, studying medicine does not fit them. It is socially expected for Saudi women to not work two shifts in order not to conflict with their main role of taking care of their husbands, children and houses. Moreover, it is socially unacceptable for Saudi women to work late at night, as they might be subject to sexual harassment or have their reputation questioned. In the Saudi cultural context, men are the financial providers for the family, therefore there is no need for women to work and it is better for them to stay at home. Nevertheless, this view has recently changed due to tough economic conditions.

Internalised gender stereotypes appearing to influence the female students in choosing their academic subjects is strongly supported by Correll's (2001) study. He found that the decisions of female and male students in choosing their jobs are influenced by gender expectations, which derive from cultural beliefs. He determined that male students tend to overestimate their abilities in sciences compared to female students.

Hence, male students often choose to study subjects like engineering, maths and sciences, due to the social expectations that males perform better than females in these subjects. Furthermore, the results of Seymour and Hewitt's (1997) study show that women find it difficult to allow themselves to study scientific disciplines, because of gender stereotypes.

Similarly, Spencer (1999) revealed the impact of the threat of gender stereotypes on the performance of females in maths tests. He highlighted that the performance of females is low in the tests that are described as hard; however, they perform well in easy tests. There are social gender expectations of Saudi women concerning culture and traditions that could limit them in studying certain subjects. Interestingly, the internalisation of gender stereotypes is not limited to female students who study feminine subjects, but could also include those who study masculine subjects. The findings of Bonnot and Croizet (2007) reveal that the performance of female students who study male-dominated subjects like maths are affected by the endorsement of stereotypes. They also show that female students do not want to work in traditionally masculine professions.

Despite the fact that these female students are studying what are known as masculine subjects, their maths abilities are influenced by the internalisation of gender. It could be drawn from above that the internalisation of gender stereotypes may make women feel threatened, thus it prevents them from choosing stereotypically masculine subjects or jobs. This result supports the results of the present study, where some women who are studying engineering expressed the view that they would prefer to teach at a university since it is a stereotypically masculine profession. This finding could indicate that a number of Saudi women from the current generation still hold traditional gender roles. This result is contrary to Gainsky et al. (2008), who found that the views of participants have changed over three decades from believing in the traditional gender roles to believing in modern gender roles. It should be taken into account here that Gainsky et al.'s study was conducted in the United States between 1977 and 2007. Therefore, this change in gender roles could be due to the progress and development of women's rights and the equality of the sexes in the United States, where women have, to some extent, become equal to men in terms of rights.

Conversely, women in Saudi Arabia are still trying hard to obtain their basic rights such as the right to freedom of movement and to drive a car. It is difficult to know if there is movement towards a change in gender stereotypes in Saudi Arabia, since there are no studies measuring the perceptions of gender roles.

On the other hand, men in South Africa are still holding on to the traditional gender stereotypes, as Kruger's (2000) study has shown. He conducted an evaluation study to examine the effectiveness of the "men as partners" program. He revealed that only 25% of the group who were not exposed to the program believe in equality between men and women, whilst around 30% see domestic violence as normal. Nevertheless, the results of the Sonke Gender Justice Survey uncovered attitudes, which are less severe towards women and their rights compared to Kruger's study. It shows that almost 50% of males are against violence towards women, and 38% of them see that the government does not use everything in its power to prevent the violence against women (United Nations report, 2009). Although the present study analyses the participants' perceptions and concludes that many of them hold internalised gender expectations, there are studies refuting the influence of the internalisation of gender stereotypes. Ziknali and Maphosa (2012) suggest that internalized gender stereotypes have not influenced the perceptions of the students at education colleges in Zimbabwe towards their female lecturers.

 They found that the perceptions of the students towards their female lecturers are positive. In the same context, the results of Young's (2011) study suggest that there is no link between the level of internalisation of gender stereotypes and the leadership style of American female managers. The findings also agree with Sultana's (2010) study, which aimed to identify the gender ideology of Pakistani females towards the education of their children, as well as to identify the impact of patriarchal ideology on the gender ideology of Pakistani females. The study found that most of the participants follow the traditional ideology in terms of the role and status of women, as they believe that the primary role of women is to sustain the home and take care of the children. Although some of my participants refused to study medicine or media studies due to *Ikhtilat,* there are other participants who have challenged their fathers' refusal to allow them to study certain subjects because of *Ikhtilat*.

The divergent views of female students on the issue of *Ikhtilat* in this study may reflect the split amongst Saudis themselves about this issue. There is a conservative party in opposition to *Ikhtilat* and a liberal party who are the proponents of *Ikhtilat*. According to Meijer (2010) the issue of *Ikhtilat* has been the scene of controversy between liberal and conservative parties in Saudi Arabia for a long time. The establishment of King Abdulla University of Science and Technology lit the fuse of the crisis again between both parties. Some clerics criticise the establishment of this university and feel it is a step towards the corruption of Saudi society. On the other hand, liberal columnists consider it a liberal symbol and attack its detractors.

4.6 Differing views according to whether *Ikhtilat* is related to religion or customs

Regarding whether the prohibition of the mingling between men and women in Saudi society stems from Islam or from tribal customs and traditions, the female students' responses are varied. Some female students believe that *Ikhtilat* comes from customs and traditions, as Yasmina a lecturer in the media department reported:

"*In one of my lectures I mentioned that most job opportunities in the media field require Ikhtilat. After that a student told me that her father is very conservative and against Ikhtilat. Then she asked if there were women-only jobs in the media sector. From my point of view, Ikhtilat is not forbidden. It is not against religion, because the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, mingled with the female prophet's companions and talked about religious matters. There is ample evidence in this regard. For me I have no problem with Ikhtilat, provided that I cover my body except for my face and hands. However, there are some girls who refuse to stay with men in the same place. There was a media forum which took place in one of the hotels, but some female students were unable to attend because their fathers refused, as it was a mixed forum."*

On the other hand Fitna, a first year psychology student, believes that *Ikhtilat* is prohibited in Saudi Arabia because of social traditions, not Islam. As she described*:*

 "*Surely it is unpleasant for women to work or study in mixed places. My father does not allow me to work either in a hospital or private companies. But, if I work in a school he will support me since he thinks that mixing with men is shameful.*"

Based on participants' views, gender segregation could be a social custom, since it has nothing to do with religion. Therefore, fathers encourage their daughters to work in schools, as they are gender segregated. In contrast, they deter their daughters from studying or working with men. The reason for the fathers' decisions is to ensure that their daughters work in safe places, away from the eyes of men. Saudi fathers may worry that their daughters may be exposed to sexual harassment, since there are no laws protecting women from harassment in Saudi Arabia. They also worry that their daughters might get involved in romantic relationships with men, which is socially unacceptable. Most marriages in Saudi Arabia happen through family as arranged marriages. Further, there should be no romantic relationship or even friendship between men and women before marriage. Nevertheless, Marwa an art student, clarified the role of customs and traditions, compared to the role of religion:

"Some parents do not allow their daughters to work or study in mixed places due to the fear of people talking. It is shameful for women to work with men. It is true that Ikhtilat is religiously forbidden, but honestly we care a lot more about customs and traditions than religion."

Additionally, amongst the social reasons that make Saudi fathers against *Ikhtilat,* is social reputation. Since Saudi society is a patriarchal society, a father's reputation is related to the reputation of his daughter, wife, sister or even his mother. Accordingly, if a woman commits an act that is socially unacceptable or contravenes Saudi customs and traditions, such as talking with unrelated men, it could tarnish the reputation of the woman, thus tarnishing the reputation of her father, brothers, uncles and tribe.

Thus, women's behaviour must be compatible with customs and traditions. Speaking of *Ikhtilat*, Samia a first year Human Resources student explained her point of view regarding Ikhtilat, saying:

"Look, I'm not with it that Ikhtilat is religiously forbidden; on the contrary, women in the time of the Prophet were working in trades and mingling with men. If a woman is respectful and committed to the Islamic teachings and the man as well, then there is no objection to Ikhtilat."

Although Eman, a biochemistry student, does not see herself qualified to delve into religious matters (since in Saudi society clerics are the ones who are authorised to

interpret religion and issue *fatwas*), she believes that *Ikhtilat* is not religiously forbidden. She replied hesitantly, saying:

"The forbidden nature of Ikhtilat is one of the traditions and customs …hmmmm… I do not know; I do not like talking about religion, but I do not believe that it is religiously forbidden."

Ashwaq, a lecturer in the physics department, believes that *Ikhtilat* is not forbidden in the Islamic religion if a woman keeps her modesty:

"Look, I feel that the issue of Ikhtilat is not prohibited nor against religion. It depends on the morality of the woman and her fear of God. Women who work in mixed places should not wear make-up or accessories to avoid drawing male attention to them."

Although many *Hadith* suggest that women in the era of the Prophet mixed with men, some Saudi clerics follow radical interpretations of the religion or use religion in order to impose tribal customs. On the other hand, some female students believe that there is a difference between *Khulwa,* which is forbidden religiously, and *Ikhtilat,* which is permissible according to Islam. Fadyah, a medical physics student, explained in-depth the issue of *Ikhtilat* and touched on the difference between *Khulwa* and *Ikhtilat* saying:

"Religion does not forbid Ikhtilat as long as it is necessary. However, religion forbids Khulwa. Working-women in any area of society are committed to the Islamic uniform and headscarves. Thus, Ikhtilat is not prohibited as long as it is within limits. Many Saudi women are shy, so female doctors examine them; therefore hospitals need female employees. I think in the coming years there will be women's hospitals."

Moreover Haya, a medical physics student, discussed the subject of *Ikhtilat* and *Khulwa* saying:

"Ikhtilat is not prohibited but Khulwa is prohibited. For example, women eating in a restaurant, is not Ikhtilat because there are many men and women in a restaurant. This is not what Islam prohibits; Islam prohibits Khulwa where a man and woman meet in a secluded place."

Conversely, Tahani believes that the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* is not related to customs and traditions, but is religiously forbidden:

"*The reason behind the rejection of my father of my taking media studies is Ikhtilat. The prohibition of Ikhtilat stems from Islam, not from customs and traditions.*"

Maha, a computer science student, shared the same view as Tahani, as she said: "*There are religious factors that may affect the education of girls, such as Ikhtilat, whether in a school or a workplace.*"

The divergent views of the participants on whether gender segregation comes from the Islamic religion or social customs could be due to Saudi clerics' disagreement over the prohibition of *Ikhtilat*. There is a debate amongst clerics in Saudi Arabia in terms of whether *Ikhtilat* is forbidden or permissible in Islam. There is a group of clerics represented by the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia sheikh bin Baz, who believes that *Ikhtilat* is prohibited in Islam, citing verses from the *Quran* and *Hadeeth* the Prophet Mohammed (see Al-Missned, 1995).

By contrast, there are clerics of the most famous such as Dr. Ahmed bin Qasim Al-Ghamdi, who announced in 2010 during a television interview the permissibility of *Ikhtilat* in Islam. His *fatwa* has received widespread controversy amongst Saudi society, since no cleric except him had dared to oppose the *fatwa* of the Grand Mufti. He refuted all the *Quranic* and prophetic evidence used to prohibit *Ikhtilat* (see Alriyadh newspaper, May 2010, Issue 15286).

4.7 Other factors influencing fathers' views/ decisions

There are factors other than *Ikhtilat* that may influence a father's decision; amongst these factors are long distances and the lack of specialisation at the local university, which forces female students to study in far-away cities or sometimes travel abroad. In this case the father may refuse to allow his daughter to move to another city and live on her own, whether at university or in private accommodation, because of the shame and of people talking. According to Salma, a lecturer in the computer sciences department:

"*My father objected to the idea of my living on my own in Jeddah, because I am a girl. Then I began looking within available disciplines at Holy University.*"

Safa, a lecturer working in the Faculty of Social Sciences, spoke about her willingness to study computer sciences at Red Sea University, since this subject is unavailable at Holy University. However, her father refused to allow her for several reasons. She told me:

"I got accepted by King Abdul-Aziz University, but my father rejected the idea because of transportation and accommodation. Then I had to choose Islamic studies."

Lama, a lecturer in the Faculty of Science, told me about the cause of her father's rejection of her studying medicine, when she said:

"My father's rejection was based on the long distances, as medicine was not available at Holy University. As I do not live in Jeddah, I travel to Jeddah every day and it is very tiring."

Some female students wanted to travel abroad to study subjects, which are not available at Saudi universities. Eman, a lecturer in a nursing school, explained her passion for aviation. She wanted to travel to Jordan to study this, however her father refused:

"Initially I was hoping to study aviation and because of the lack of an aviation college for girls here in Saudi Arabia, I wanted to study it in Jordan, but my father rejected this idea. Then he asked me to study medicine here in Saudi Arabia."

4.8 The role of mothers in subject choice (when fathers are absent)

In spite of the clear dominance of fathers in the subject choice of female students, a mother may play a role in the selection of her daughter's university specialisations and serve as a 'father' in certain cases, such as when a father is absent due to death or divorce. An example is shown through my interview with Dalal, a family education student whose father had passed away:

"The opposition of my mother to taking media studies was the main obstacle. As long as my mother said do not do it, that meant I could not do it. She also rejected my dream to be a businesswoman. She said that my father did not allow my sister to work in business because he thought that she will fail."

Similarly, Sahar proclaimed that her mother's rejection of her studying medicine was because of societal customs and traditions:

"*I wanted to study medicine, but my mother was very reluctant as she feared people would talk. Consequently, I would become a spinster and I would not find someone to marry me because of Ikhtilat and long working hours or the night shift, that would make me stay most of the time outside the home until late at night. Thus, I choose biochemistry since it is close to medicine. Honestly, I'm not excited about my specialty and I do not like it, but in the end I want a university degree.*"

Hiba, an early education student whose father passed away, pointed out that her mother's refusal to let her study medicine in another city was because of the long distance:

"*I was accepted at a university in the south of Saudi Arabia but my mother refused to allow me, since the university was far away from where we live. She asked me how I could live there on my own. For that reason I left medicine.*"

This finding differs from the study of Chunghee (1993), which found that the absence of a father frees girls from social restrictions and stereotypes and makes them engage in fields reserved for men. Her data revealed that the absence of the father from the family had helped to liberate Korean women from the prevailing patterns of gender, and had made them engage in areas dominated by men, such as politics. The current study found that in the absence of a father, the mother takes over his role and becomes the father and mother at the same time.

4.9 Conclusion

Ikhtilat is prohibited in Saudi Arabia according to the state religious institutions. Therefore, most of the institutions in Saudi Arabia are gender segregated. However, there are places where Saudi males and females can mingle, such as hospitals, some private companies and King Abdullah University. Saudi schools and universities are gender segregated, but medical schools are co-educational. This chapter shows how *Ikhtilat* plays a critical role in influencing both women's and fathers' attitudes towards certain subjects.

There are few subjects available to Saudi women that require *Ikhtilat,* such as medicine, nursing and media studies. Some women wanted to study subjects like medicine or media studies but their fathers prevented them because of *Ikhtilat.* Other women are studying these subjects since their fathers are open to *Ikhtilat.* However, there are women who impose restrictions on their studies by limiting their subject choices because of *Ikhtilat.* However, there is a disagreement amongst the participants whether the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* is rooted in Islam or social traditions. Participants from traditional families believe that *Ikhtilat* is forbidden in Islam, whilst other participants see the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* as part of social traditions.

Chapter Five:
The gendering of subject status

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the status of subjects in the Saudi context and its influence of women's subject choices. It shows two categories of subjects, namely those that are prestigious and those that are less prestigious subjects. The status of subjects is determined by, "work-related factors such as the mixing of men and women, long working hours and rotating shifts which render nursing a socially unacceptable occupational choice" (Lamadah & Syed, 2014, p. 21). Even though medicine has work conditions similar to nursing, it is seen as prestigious profession in Saudi Arabia. This is because it is a highly paid profession, as well as due to the nature of tasks performed by doctors. For example, medicine is about diagnosis of diseases and treating them, whilst nursing is about taking care of the patient according to the doctors' orders. Therefore, a subject such as medicine is prestigious, whilst nursing is less prestigious. Another reason for the low status of nursing in Saudi Arabia is because it is associated with non-Saudis or foreigners. This chapter is divided into two main themes. The first theme discusses how the status of a subject in the Saudi context shapes women's experiences in higher education. The second theme addresses the negative image of the nursing profession within the Saudi context.

2. The role of subject status in influencing Saudi women's educational choices

As illustrated by the answers of the participants, there are two types of disciplines, those that are prestigious, and those that are less prestigious disciplines or colleges. These divisions are based on society's perception of these disciplines. Further, it became a criterion adopted by the Saudi women in the selection of their specialisation; participants are afraid of society's perception of them. They care deeply about their reputation in society, which must be in accordance with customs. Therefore, they tended to study prestigious subjects (in order to be accepted by society) and avoided the less prestigious ones (in order to not be seen as inferior by society).

Specialisations in Saudi society are classified based on their turnovers. For example, prestigious subjects are those that guarantee prestigious jobs with high salaries. In contrast, non-prestigious specialties are those that lead to low-paid jobs such as nursing. The nature of nursing work, for instance cleaning patients, making beds and changing bed linen contributes to the low status of nursing. From the perspectives of members of Saudi society, the duties of a nurse are related to the work of domestic servants who are mainly non-Saudis. Since Saudis are reluctant to work as nurses, the nursing profession is associated with expatriates. At the beginning of the oil boom in Saudi Arabia in the seventies and eighties of the last century, the professions that had a good reputation in Saudi society were occupied by Saudis, such as teaching, jobs in governmental departments, the military and the Ministry of Defence, whilst professions such as nursing, plumbing and sanitation were always occupied by non-Saudis. However, with increasing rates of unemployment and the lack of job opportunities, some female students have been forced to study nursing, especially those who did not get accepted into subjects like medicine, pharmacology and computer sciences. Disciplines that have a prestigious social status in Saudi society are medicine and computer science, as listed by Nouf, a biology student:

"*From my point of view, the best departments at Holy University are medicine and computer science. They are called the top colleges, as they are in demand by the job market. They also guarantee the female students a prominent social status in society. Although this view exists in our society, I do not agree with it.*"

Honaiyda, an art lecturer, agrees with Nouf in terms of the influence of society in the glorification of some disciplines and the dismissal of others. She said:
"*Society plays a role in that. There are disciplines seen by society as inferior and others that are of great importance in society, such as medicine, computer science and media studies. There are some conservative families who do not want their daughters to study in the fields of media studies or medicine. However, many of them encourage their daughters to study these disciplines for the sake of gaining prestigious social status.*"

This finding is consistent with Gazzaz (2009) who reported that social acceptance is a critical factor in choosing a job in Saudi Arabia. She found that some professions are more prestigious than others, for example medicine, engineering and teaching, as they give individuals in those professions a high social status and power in society. On the other hand, she stated that nurses are seen as doctors' assistants who receive orders from the doctors; as a result, there is no desire to work as a nurse. The present study shows that female students tend to choose prestigious subjects like medicine, computer sciences and law, since these subjects qualify them to have prestigious positions. However, even working class female students prefer studying these subjects in order to increase their social status.

 Despite the fact that the Saudi higher education system is free and open to all students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, and that there are universities in certain regions that have many and varied subjects, compared to universities in other regions, some students are still not able to access certain subjects. For instance, I found some subjects are available at Red Sea University but they are not available at Holy University, such as engineering, business, accounting, marketing and economics. Social inequality in access to higher education is a global phenomenon. Many global studies have discussed this issue in various contexts. In terms of accessibility and participation in UK higher education, Archer (2000) focused on how low-income students are disadvantaged in accessing universities in the UK. She found that the majority of students who come from working class families often decide to engage in the labour market instead of going to university, due to poor economic conditions.

She also pointed out that low-income students who decide to pursue their university education prefer to study at local and less prestigious universities. She indicated that working class students feel that university is, "above their station" and that it is the place of middle class white students; hence, they do not feel they belong at university. On the other hand, female participants expressed their willingness to participate in higher education, as long as it was at a local university and was part-time study. Despite the efforts of the US government to make higher education a means of social mobility, a study conducted by Haveman & Smeeding (2006) showed that these efforts have failed to make universities accessible to all students

from low-income families. They mentioned that the majority of low-income or poor students in the US are often unprepared for university education, thus they choose to study at community colleges, which prepare them to obtain low-income jobs.

In Brazil, many factors such as class and race overlap in the promotion of inequality in access to higher education. The previous studies focused on the influences of race, class and the inequality of schools in perpetuating inequality in participation in higher education. In contrast, the present study focuses on the influences of gender and class on Saudi female university students' decisions in choosing their university subjects. It is worth mentioning here that most middle class female students who were interviewed in the current study are studying in prestigious departments. This indicates that the social status of fathers affects the subject choices of Saudi female students. Unlike working class fathers, most middle class fathers encourage their daughters to choose prestigious subjects, even if these subjects are against social customs and traditions.

The causes of the differences in the social status of subjects may be due to the nature of the profession. Medicine is considered a prestigious subject since doctors are the ones who diagnose and treat the patient, as well as giving their orders to the nurses. Conversely, nursing is viewed as less prestigious because of the tasks of nurses, including taking orders from doctors, bed-making, caring for and helping patients. Ranyia, a biology student, touched on this point through comparing nursing and medicine:

"*After 7 years of study at nursing school you will be in the end a doctor's assistant. This underestimates nurses. Certainly, there is a big difference between a doctor and a nurse in terms of knowledge. A female doctor can be a doctor in several disciplines such as ear, nose, eyes, dentistry or surgery. However, female nurses help the female doctor. She is merely an assistant. Her job is limited to taking the patient's temperature or blood pressure, but the diagnosis and treatment are within the jurisdiction of the female doctor.*"

Economic prosperity and the wealth experienced by Saudi Arabia has led Saudis to become heavily reliant on foreign labour for doing menial jobs, for instance nursing. Moreover, most Saudi families brought maids from foreign countries to help them

in domestic work. Most of the Saudi generations that came after the oil boom have become accustomed to relying on maids for household chores, cooking their food, doing laundry and ironing their clothes (Gazzaz, 2005). For this reason, female students are reluctant to study socially unacceptable subjects, namely nursing. Despite the increasing number of Saudi females who want to pursue their university education, the subjects available in the Saudi female universities are limited to teaching, medicine and nursing, because these subjects are viewed by the society as suitable for women. This could force female students to choose subjects like nursing in order to get a place at university or to guarantee a job in the labour market.

It also cannot be overlooked that a small number of working class or lower middle class female students study or want to study medicine or any other prestigious subject, for the sake of social mobility. This result is consistent with the findings of Sianou-Kyrgiou and Tsiplakides (2010). Their study was about determining the effect of socio-economic background on students' subject choices at the University of Ioannina in Greece. They found that students from the lower middle and working classes tend to choose subjects that secure them a permanent job in the public sector; conversely, middle class students choose subjects that secure them prestigious jobs and power in society. Therefore, they have a predisposition to choose medicine. Furthermore, Connor et al. (2001) carried out a study of the factors that influence lower class students to pursue their higher studies. They noticed that there are many factors that make lower class students feel belittled in higher education.

They pointed out that financial factors such as tuition fees and their opportunity to obtain jobs (with high salaries) are the main reasons that make them reluctant to participate in higher education. Conversely, higher education in Saudi Arabia is free of charge; accordingly, students from all social groups have an equal opportunity in terms of access to higher education. Nevertheless, some specialties like economics and management are available in few female universities, which makes it difficult for some participants to study those subjects. Nevertheless, this current study differs from the study of Bratti (2006), which was about social class and undergraduate degree subject in the UK. The difference between the two studies is that Bratti's study found that there was no relationship between the social class of the students and their subject choices.

They made their decisions to study certain subjects based on characteristics other than their social class. These differences in the findings of both studies might be due to temporal and spatial differences between the two studies. The study of Bratti was conducted in the period between 1981 and 1991 at UK universities, whereas this study was recently conducted with female students and lecturers at two Saudi universities. Ironically, some of the disciplines such as medicine, now considered amongst the reputable specialties, were inferior subjects a few years ago. Due to *Ikhtilat*, Girls Medical College was subjected to the wrath of society for a long time before it became accepted by society, and one of the top colleges and subjects. Loujain is a lecturer in a physics department who wanted to study medicine, but studied physics due to the absence of a medical school in her city at that time. She touched on this paradox through her comparison between the pioneer female medical students and female medical students at the present time:

"In the past, it was a challenge for a girl to study medicine. It was a challenge for society as a whole and a challenge for customs and traditions as well. Society was seeing female doctors as notorious girls. It was a challenge for most of the female doctors at that time who were bound with me in close friendship. They are a generation of girls who fought against society's perception, to prove themselves. This is very different from the female medical students these days. I believe that most female students who are studying this field these days seek social prestige. Our society has come to see the female medical college as a prestigious college, and joining medical school for both males and females is a way to ensure social prestige. This is also a factor that affects students when choosing a field of specialisation, whether the subject ensures them social prestige. I also know students who wanted to obtain the title of doctor and then get married and dedicate themselves to married life and childrearing. They never thought to open a clinic or practise medicine, and many of them regretted studying this subject. It also gives girls an opportunity to mix with guys since they are influenced by some Western soap operas that they watch on TV, such as Grey's Anatomy; they dream of living such stories."

In the same context Tahani, a lecturer at the School of Economics and Management (which is one of the most prestigious schools in Saudi Arabia nowadays), indicated that the Management School in her time was a less prestigious school:

"The prevailing perception in society at the time was that the graduates of the School of Economics and Management would never get a job or that they would become cashiers. The situation has now significantly changed. In our times, the educational level of our parents was low. Their way of thinking was like their parents and grandparents."

It is worth mentioning here, not all Saudi universities offer the subjects economics and management. For example, at Red Sea University there is a School of Economics and Management for girls. On the other hand, there is no such school at Holy University. Female students who live in Holy City are forced to travel daily in order to study at the School of Economics and Management at Red Sea University. Taking into consideration that it is not allowed for Saudi women to drive and there is no public transportation, some girls from upper and middle class families have their own drivers, thus they are able to study at this school if they want to. However, girls from working class families cannot afford the expense of a driver. Hence, they are not able to study at the School of Economics and Management even if they want to. Consequently, there is an inequality in terms of access to some subjects such as management and economics.

This is consistent with the findings of the Johnston et al. (2014) study entitled, "Has economics become an elite subject for elite UK universities?" Their study focused on the implications of the availability of economic programs at the old universities and its absence at the new universities. Their study found that this gap between old and new universities in terms of the availability of economics programs has created an inequality of access to economics degrees. Applicants who do not get a place in a top university are more likely to be excluded from studying economics. The current study and the study of Johnston et al. are similar in identifying an inequality in access to economics and management subjects. Yet, this study is concerned with female university students in Saudi Arabia, whilst Johnston et al. involved both male and female students at UK universities. Having mentioned previously about the prestigious disciplines, I will now address the less prestigious disciplines. There are specialties seen by Saudi society as inferior; amongst these are nursing, kindergarten teacher, family education, flight attendant and pharmacology due to misconceptions or the negative image of people who work in these professions.

Nurses in Saudi society are perceived as maids, since they serve patients in terms of feeding them and changing their gowns. With regard to kindergarten and family education, these are perceived as professions based on domestic work and thus, related to maids or housewives.

5.3 The image of the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia

This discussion will be more focused on nursing, since it was mentioned in most of the interviews that I conducted with the female students. Most of the views of the students were focused on nursing and the attitude of the society towards this profession. Nursing is one of the controversial subjects available to Saudi women due to the nature of the profession itself. In addition, the *Ikhtilat* factor plays an additional role in promoting the perception that nurses are inferior. Since most Saudi hospitals are mixed places, female nurses might be subject to sexual blackmail or harassment.

Male doctors are in higher positions than them. In a patriarchal and masculine society like Saudi Arabia, people think that women who work as nurses implicitly accept any type of harassment by the hospital staff and patients. Many of the female students who both study nursing or another discipline reported in detail about this unjustified societal hostility towards nursing and nurses. It should be noted here there is no male nursing college at either university where the study took place. Nina, a lecturer in the Department of Kindergarten Education, in answer to my question as to whether she faced challenges when she decided to study kindergarten education replied:

"*I have not encountered challenges to the study of kindergarten education, but it is seen by society as an inferior subject. The prevailing thought is that the graduates of this subject are working as nannies. There are certain jobs despised by society. From the perspective of society, the scientific specialties have a great value and science students are more intelligent, whilst non-scientific specialties have less standing than scientific ones, and students who study non-scientific subjects are less intelligent.*"

Al-Anoud spoke about how her father did not prevent her from studying medicine, but he did not support her when she wanted to study nursing because of society. She compared the two subjects in terms of their importance in society:

"*My father never opposed my desire to study medicine, but he opposed the idea of my studying nursing. Society perceives nursing as inferior to medicine. The female graduate of medicine will become a doctor who has an effective role in society. Female nurses are inferior to female doctors in terms of their degree and their job. Although both female nurses and doctors work in a hospital, which is a mixed place, the pride in the title of 'Dr' is enough and people turn a blind eye to the subject of mixing. The position of a doctor in society is superior to a nurse. Indeed, it is true that the top subjects in society are medicine and engineering, and obtaining a doctorate in any field dignifies a person in society*".

Another misconception in society about nursing described by Abeer, a biochemistry student was:

"*There is a misunderstanding of some of the disciplines in our society such as nursing. Nursing is considered an unwanted subject because nurses are seen as cleaners by society.*"

There was a contradiction in the answers of some students such as Lubna:

"*A nurse provides humanitarian service but it is impossible for me to study nursing or to allow my daughter in the future to become a nurse, since a nurse is like a maid who receives orders from a doctor.*" Then she added laughing, "*I feel like I am a complicated person. Even if I allowed my daughter to study nursing my husband would refuse. Look, a Saudi man however developed or however well-travelled, he never changes.*"

Despite her recognition of the value of nursing, she refused to study nursing. This finding agrees with those of Gazzaz (2009) who noticed that although Saudi males and females appreciate the importance of nursing as a profession, they believe it is a job that can be done by foreigners.

The previous sections explored the views of nursing of students and lecturers from different disciplines. The following presents the views of nursing students and lecturers about their field of study, and how they feel about themselves as nurses in a society that is in contempt of this profession. Their answers ranged between optimism and despair. Eman, a lecturer at a nursing college, expressed views on how Saudi society influences girls in choosing their field of study:

"The negative attitude of society towards nursing may prevent female students from choosing it. Our society places so many restrictions and red lines that must not be exceeded by a girl due to shame and Ikhtilat, whilst guys can study any discipline that they want to."

This matched with Meleis (1980) who highlighted that few want to study nursing, as parents restrain their girls from studying it due to society's lack of respect for nurses and the nursing profession. Samiha, a lecturer at a nursing college, expressed her despair and her surrender to the status quo by saying, "*we are not convinced studying nursing, how to convince society*". I believe that Samiha represents a segment of the nurses forced by circumstances to work in this field. Surely, Samiha is not the only one that had to study this specialisation. Sawsan is another nursing lecturer who is ashamed of her subject to the extent that she lies about it:

"*Some people believe that nurses are maids. When people ask me about my specialty I tell them medical sciences. I cannot say nursing.*"

This finding is in agreement with Emeghebo (2011) who demonstrates that despite the awareness campaigns on TV that value nursing, nursing students at the beginning of their education are still misinformed about nursing. They decide to study nursing either because of their failure in another discipline at college or think nursing is estimable, but not a highly educated job. In spite of the differences in the cultural and social contexts between both studies, arguably the misconception of nursing is a prevalent phenomenon. This result is dissimilar to the results of Al-Jarrah, (2013) in Jordan, who revealed that nursing students have positive attitudes towards the nursing profession.

Furthermore, findings indicated that the reason for their choice to study nursing goes back to the numerous employment opportunities, high wages and job security. Unlike Saudi males, Jordanian males are more receptive to the study of nursing. This could be a result of the downturn of the Jordanian economy. Jordanian males choose to study nursing since it guarantees them overseas job opportunities either in the Arab or Western world. This positive perception of Jordanian nurses may be the result of the constant efforts of the Jordanian government, which has managed to develop the field of nursing. For this reason, it has become one of the most advanced Arab countries in this area (Shukri, 2005). Possibly, the negative image of nursing in Saudi society is the result of a lack of awareness. If the Saudi government followed what has been adopted by the Jordanian government, the image of the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia would be better than it is today. Another negative perception of nurses was described by Maymouna, a nursing student:

"People think that a nurse is just a doctor's assistant, but that a doctor is something respectable. He is responsible for the patient. I do not know…. I feel that this is their perception of nurses."

This perception of the inferiority of nursing may be caused by the nature of the nursing work itself, as mentioned by Badryiah a nursing student:
"Work time extends into late hours in the night and this will affect a married nurse, since it is difficult for her to find a balance between her job and her role as a mother and wife."

What was said about nursing by the interviewees is consistent to a large extent with the study of Al-Omar (2003), which investigated the perceptions of nursing of female and male high school students in the capital of Saudi Arabia (Riyadh). Al-Omar (2003) found several reasons to explain the reluctance of Saudi students to study nursing. Some of these reasons related to the nature of the nursing work, such as night shifts and long working hours. Other reasons were related to social customs and cultural traditions, namely *Ikhtilat*. Again, it turns out that this degrading view of nursing in Saudi Arabia may be related to Arab customs and traditions, but not the Islamic religion.

These findings also correspond to what Mansour (1994) reported, that although nursing was a reputable profession in the time of the prophet Mohammed, it is not suitable for a woman in Saudi Arabia to be a nurse, as it is not an honourable job. Similarly, this finding is in agreement with Gazzaz (2009) who demonstrated that the nature of tasks performed by the nurse inhibit Saudi males and females from choosing it as a career. These tasks are closer to domestic work, since they are perceived to require little training and knowledge. In addition, the relationship between the doctor and the nurse resembles the relationship between the master and the servant (Gazzaz, 2009). In the same way, the findings of the current study are in harmony with Jackson and Gray (1991) who confirmed that nursing was considered an inappropriate profession for women. They also stated that Saudi mothers prefer their sons not to marry a nurse, and almost 64% of high school and university male students showed their unwillingness to marry a nurse on social grounds. This similarity in the results between previous studies and the current study could be attributed to the similarity in the social and cultural contexts, as all these studies were conducted in Saudi Arabia.

However, the similarity in cultural and social contexts between the studies does not necessarily mean the same results will be obtained. Studies could be carried out in different cultural and social contexts and reach the same results. It appears that the poor image of the nurse is not limited to a particular culture or society. There is a study by Foong et al. (1999) in Hong Kong whose findings are similar to a large extent with the results of the current study. They pointed out the negative aspects of nursing, which are that it is a hard and tiring job that requires long working hours with repetitive tasks which makes it boring. Also, nurses are more exposed to the risk of infectious diseases. From the above, it is clear that negative perceptions of nursing are a global phenomenon and are not just restricted to a specific country or a specific culture. These negative perceptions might vary from country to country. It might be more noticeable in Arab countries compared to Western countries, since most Arab countries are patriarchal. For example, in Saudi Arabia, university disciplines are divided based on gender stereotypes into masculine and feminine subjects. Female subjects are related to the social expectations of women such as being caring, and being sensitive and soft, whilst masculine subjects are those that require toughness, physical strength and rationality.

Hence, there are no mechanical engineering or aviation programs available in Saudi female universities. On the other hand, there are no family education or kindergarten subjects available to Saudi male students. Conversely, Price (2011) who explored the experiences of Millennial nursing students in Canada of nursing as a profession, found that the students' responses were positive towards nursing. They chose to become nurses since nursing is a, "virtuous, honourable and noble" (p85) profession. The nursing profession in Canada is characterised by its distinctive social status and high salaries. This contrasts with the situation of nursing in Saudi Arabia. The incompatibility between the current study and Price's study in terms of findings could be due to the difference in the cultural and social contexts. The negative image of nurses in Saudi society appears to hinder female students from choosing nursing as a career.

On the other hand, the relatively positive perception of nursing in Canadian society might encourage both male and female students to consider it as a reputable profession. The Angel of Mercy title is given to the nurse for her humanitarian feelings and caring for those who are in need. However, all these noble sentiments do not protect her from the injustices of society. Recently, there has been noticeable progress in the field of nursing in Saudi Arabia, where the number of Saudi nurses working in hospitals in 2011 was around 47.4%, which exceeded the number of Saudi doctors by 23% (www.moh.gov.sa). The proportion of Saudi female nurses working in private and public hospitals has reached 30.4% (Omair, 2010). From the previous statistics, it is clear that the majority of nurses in the field of nursing in Saudi Arabia are female. This may be due to the fact that most nursing colleges in the public Saudi universities are dedicated to female students. In the masculine society of Saudi Arabia gender roles and stereotypes are apparently affecting almost all aspects of Saudis' lives.

Thus, there is a social stereotype that a nurse should be an affectionate and caring person, as these specifications are more available in women than men. Despite these fairly positive realities about the nursing sector in Saudi Arabia, there are negative social perceptions of nursing and nurses. Most Saudi families prohibit their sons from marrying female nurses, since their job violates Saudi customs and traditions, such as working with men who are not relatives.

The negative image of the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia could make female nurses subject to sexual and emotional blackmail from men, whether doctors, nurses or even patients, as there are no laws in Saudi Arabia to protect women from harassment. What makes matters worse is that there is a misconception that the women who work as nurses, implicitly accept that men can harass them. Therefore, in most cases of sexual harassment, women may fall silent for fear of their behaviour being seen as scandalous. Since Saudi women who work with men who are not relatives, are very often subject to questions about their behaviour and ethics, Saudi men are reluctant to marry female nurses. Evidently, a girl's decision to study nursing in Saudi Arabia is a difficult and fateful decision. As a result, Saudi female nurses' dropout rate has reached 25% in spite of the financial incentives offered by the Saudi government for nurses. Saudi society for many years has been accustomed to seeing non-Saudi nurses washing patients, helping them to move, cleaning their beds. Saudi people believe that all these tasks are unskilled and need no education or degree. They feel that these tasks fall within the scope of domestic work. Since domestic work is traditionally the responsibility of a woman, then nursing is a more appropriate job for women.

It has stuck in the Saudis' minds for a long time that menial jobs are always left to non-Saudis. In other words, Saudis see female nurses as maids; therefore, it is an unbecoming job for Saudi women. Perhaps all of these social barriers hinder the Saudi female students from choosing nursing (Gazzaz, 2009; Omair, 2010; Al-Omar, 2004). However, this does not mean that there is no improvement in attitudes (even if it is small) in Saudi society towards nursing and nurses. I felt some optimism when Noran, another lecturer at a nursing college, mentioned the positive change in society's attitude towards nursing. Apparently, there are some positive responses that give me hope that all these negative attitudes towards nursing in our society will change. Lina, a nursing lecturer highlighted:

"*Not all of Saudi society looks down on nurses. When I was working in the hospital, I felt people's attitudes change. For example, I remember one patient said I want a person who understands me. Bring me the Saudi nurse. I feel that the perception of nurses has slightly changed.*"

I believe that she means change for the better. Another positive point of view of nurses and nursing, was expressed by Samah, a clinical nutrition student. She criticised society's attitudes towards nursing:

"*I do not know why people in our society see nursing as a bad subject. On the contrary, I think that nursing is a very important subject. It is a humanitarian action. Nurses are the angels of mercy on the earth.*"

There are positive experiences that were experienced by some nursing students, as explained to me by Huda, a nursing student:

"*When I was a student intern at the King Abdullah Hospital Care Unit, Cardiac Department, there was a patient (an old man) who had open heart surgery and I was the only Saudi nurse amongst a group of foreign nurses. When the patient woke up I asked him about his condition. I asked him, how are you, my uncle? Are you ok? He replied: Are you a Saudi? I said yes. Then he shed a tear and whispered: Stay with me, do not leave me alone where no one understands me.*"

This is in line with what was mentioned by Hassan et al. (2012) about their experiences as Qatari nurses. They felt the love and respect not only from the patients but also their families. They found that patients and their families were grateful because of the presence of nurses who were Qatari speaking and taking care of their health. There are nursing students and lecturers who have not given up and have tried to change the misconceptions about nursing in society. Ashwaq is one of those nurses. She reported:

"*There are challenges from society but we challenged society back and we proved to them our existence. When I was a student at the College of Nursing, I volunteered to educate people about the importance of nursing through leaflets or making presentations at malls.*"

Another defender of the nursing profession is Aya, a nursing student who firmly replied:

"*We should change the perception of inferiority of the nursing profession in our society. Nurses are seen as maids. Therefore, when I was in my first year I wrote my dairies and published them on my own blog. I received so many emails from girls thanking me, since I gave them a good impression of nursing and this made them enthusiastic to study it.*"

Likewise, social media especially Twitter (which is very popular in Saudi Arabia) has been improving the image of nurses in society, as pointed out by Jana, a nursing student:

"*I see that Twitter helped me in deciding to study nursing. Most of the sons and daughters of my generation are open about the idea of studying nursing .... The problem is the old generation who do not accept it.*"

This finding is contradicted by Emeghebo (2012), who noticed that the disappointment experienced by nurses as a result of a lack of appreciation could lead them to discourage others from choosing nursing as a profession. The positive attitude towards nursing and the efforts to improve the image of the nurse have been revealed by the study of Miligi and Selim (2014). They state that a large number of Saudi students choose nursing because they like this field. Family, friends and the media were the factors that positively influenced them to study nursing. They also compared Saudi students' attitudes to nursing. They found that students who live in central, south and the east of Saudi Arabia (which are the majority) showed positive attitudes towards nursing.

Conversely, northern students (which are the minority) expressed negative attitudes towards nursing as a career. They attributed this result to the fact that northern regions of Saudi Arabia are "conservative" and "restrictive". They believe that the lack of the presence of nursing colleges in northern regions (there is only one nursing college) has led to a lack of awareness of nursing in those areas. These perceptions of inferiority of nursing in Saudi society may be attributed to nurses themselves, as explained by Jana, a nursing student:

"*The main reason for this negative perception of nursing in our society is because some nurses do not deserve to work in hospitals and do not deserve their parents' trust. Girls in mixed places do not cling to the Islamic ethics, instead they sweep into romantic relationships with men in the workplace.*"

Ranyia, a biology student who wanted to study nursing, agrees with Jana that nurses themselves are responsible for the bad reputation of nursing. This reputation made her father prevent her from studying nursing; she said:

"*The perception of inferiority of the nurse and the nursing profession in society may have had an impact on my father, preventing me from studying nursing. But, indeed I see that there are nurses who abused the nursing profession.*"

This finding is largely in line with Emeghebo (2012), who asserted that nurses attribute the cause of the deterioration of the image of nursing to other nurses who misrepresent nursing values. Although Hanaa's (a medical physics student) answer was harsh, she was fairly honest. She described how society looks at nurses:

"*Society sees nurses as morally dirty women because they talk with men.*"

In order to improve the image of nurses in society, some female students and lecturers have made suggestions. Basma, a nursing student, suggested using media to change the negative thoughts about nursing:

"*I believe that the media has a role in changing this perception. The media has to help us to change society's perception of nursing. I see that the media falls short in this aspect.*"

There is almost a consensus amongst the previous studies that the main source of the image of the nursing profession is the media, including TV programs and newspapers. In this regard, Gazzaz (2009) revealed that Saudi female and male nurses believe that the media is responsible for the menial image of nursing. They think that Egyptian movies abused nurses and the nursing profession through portraying nurses as prostitutes who want to make a fresh start and live in dignity.

They identified that the media plays a critical role in constructing the image of nursing as a profession suitable for low class people. Furthermore, Foong et al. (1999) asserted that most knowledge about the image of nursing comes from media, which provides a negative impression of nurses and nursing. According to the above, it can be said that Saudi society is divided in its attitudes towards nursing. Some people believe that nursing is a respectable profession. Others think it is a menial profession. The results of this study confirm the interpretation of the negative attitudes towards nursing reported by Miligi and Selim (2014). What makes me more inclined to adopt this interpretation is the findings of Al Thagafi (2006). He conducted an experimental study on Saudi students through a counselling program. He found that, students' attitudes after the counselling program changed to be positive. Along with the shortage of nurses being a global phenomenon, it is a serious dilemma in Saudi Arabia (Shukri, 2005). However, this does not preclude the possibility that the nursing profession is regarded as a noble profession in some Arab countries like Jordan, Palestine and Egypt. Although there are about 36200 nurses working in Saudi Arabia, the number of educational institutions offering a nursing baccalaureate program is very few (Shukri, 2005).

Clearly, there is a need for nurses in Saudi hospitals and dispensaries, however the number of nursing programs currently available at Saudi universities does not meet this need. The reason for the small number of nursing colleges in Saudi Arabia seems to be because of the lack of demand for such colleges. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia ranked penultimate in terms of providing a nursing baccalaureate program compared to Egypt, which took first place. Ironically, Saudi Arabia came in second place after Egypt in terms of the number of staff nurses. This discrepancy between the number of nursing colleges and the number of nurses working in the Saudi health sector explains why most nurses who are working in Saudi Arabia are foreigners. This phenomenon, 'the employment of foreign nurses' is not only common in Saudi Arabia, but also in all the Gulf countries. In contrast, this phenomenon is almost non-existent in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. This misconception about the nursing profession is not limited to the Arab world, but extends to Western countries like Britain. The nursing profession in Britain is publicly stereotyped as having low salaries, under recognised, unskilled and requiring no education or training (Morris-Thompson et al., 2011).

Generally, most of the nursing students and lecturers who I interviewed did not want to study nursing in the first place. In fact they initially submitted their applications to medical school, but they were transferred to nursing because of the lack of vacancies at medical college and their low grades in the preparatory year. In the beginning, they opposed it, however they later changed their minds about nursing. This reflects what was identified by Boyle (1989) and Lovering (1996), and mentioned in Lovering (2008) about the tendency of many students who could not enter medical school because of their low grades and who take up a place in nursing as a second choice. This contradicts my expectation that Pharmacology would be seen as one of the prestigious disciplines in Saudi society, and it was surprising when Essra (an ambitious village girl who moved to live in Holy city to study pharmacology) said:

"*Society looks down on pharmacology compared to medicine. It also looks to pharmacists as sellers of drugs.*"

In addition, Samirah indicated that some subjects are despised by society:

"*We do have here in our society that nursing and being a flight attendant are decadent professions for a woman.*"

5.4 Conclusion

This study identifies how the status of the subject influences women's educational choices. The status of subjects in the Saudi context has been shaped by social norms and religious beliefs. Subjects like nursing have a low status in Saudi society, as they do not require in-depth knowledge and skills. Subjects like medicine have a high status in Saudi society, as they require in-depth knowledge and skills. Nursing was the subject mentioned most often by the participants as an example of a low status subject. It is the most controversial subject available to women because of its nature. There has been a lack of respect for nurses and the nursing profession amongst Saudis, as it is associated with non-Saudis, and despite the growing number of Saudi nurses the status of nursing has not changed.

The tasks performed by nurses require little training and knowledge, and may be seen as being closer to domestic work. Such tasks are seen as menial by most Saudis, and there is a misperception of nurses in Saudi society, who are seen as maids. *Ikhtilat* is seen as one of the main factors that negatively affect the image of nursing in Saudi society. Working in mixed places such as hospitals makes female nurses subject to sexual blackmail and harassment. Another factor that contributes to the low status of nursing is the long working hours, which are in conflict with women's roles as mothers and wives. As a result, men are reluctant to marry female nurses. A further factor is the inferiority of the nurse compared to the doctor in terms of the job and degree needed. Accordingly, the relationship between doctors and nurses resembles the relationship between the master and the servant.

Chapter Six:

The construction of femininity and masculinity amongst traditionalists and modernists

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections or sub-themes. The first section or theme presents the role religion plays in influencing the views of Saudi female university students in justifying subject segregation. In other words, it is about how Saudi female students see themselves as women in Saudi society and how this influences their internalised sense of possibilities in terms of academic study. The second section or theme is about the essentialised views of male and female characteristics held by the participants and how these views affect women's subject choices. Three categories of participants emerged during the data analysis: participants who are in favour of full-subject segregation, participants who are in favour of part-segregation and participants who believe that women should be able to study the same subjects as men. Thus, these categories are discussed in the light of both themes.

6.2 Religion or Islam as a framework for justifying subject segregation

Under this theme, the views of the female students and lecturers were split into two categories. Firstly, are those participants who support full subject segregation since they believe that Allah created men and women differently and accordingly they have different roles. Secondly, are those participants who support the availability of all subjects for women, since they believe that men and women are equal. The participants' views vary depending on their interpretations of Islam. The participants against women studying all subjects are mainly conservative or traditionalists and against any change in the status quo of women, since they adopt traditionalist interpretations of Islam. On the other hand, participants who think that traditions and customs are the reason for the monopoly of these disciplines by men are more likely to follow modern interpretations of Islam than the ones calling for change. The traditionalist participants feel that the judiciary is not suitable for women because they think that the employment of women in the judiciary is against Islam. They believe that masculinity should be present in Muslim judges.

They also think that the judiciary is not appropriate for Muslim women, as the testimony of two women is equal to the testimony of one man in the courts. Thus, they use this as proof of the inadequacy of women to be in the judiciary. In this regard, Ola a lecturer at the School of Economics and Management clarified:

"*In Islamic law, one woman is not enough as a witness in the court. There must be two women, whilst the testimony of one man is enough, because if one of them forgot the other would remind her. This does not imply women's' lack of intellectual ability but it is for caution's sake.*"

Ghada a religious law student agrees with the view of Ola in terms of the inadequacy of Muslim women for the judiciary, saying:

"*There are subjects such as the judiciary that are hard for women to study. I have never heard of female judges in Islamic history. It is no problem if women only study the judiciary without practicing.*"

Siham, an Islamic lecturer has the same opinion as Ghada, as she articulated:

"I *have not read in Islamic history that there was a female judge since judges are often males. After the death of the Prophet Mohammad, his companions were always asking Ms. Aisha about Islamic matters, as she was close to the Prophet. She issued advisory opinions but she never made herself a judge.*"

It became clear from the interviews that there are patriarchal views that affect women studying the judiciary. It seems that Ola, Ghada and Siham accommodated to the patriarchy. In patriarchal culture, men are traditionally associated with the judiciary; hence these participants find it difficult to accept women working in the judiciary. Bushra, a lecturer at the School of Economics and Management, believes that the judiciary is inappropriate for Saudi women based on her experience in Saudi courts, as she explained:

"*How can a woman be a lawyer?! She cannot stand in front of the Sheikh who is a conservative and defend a man or a woman since she is unable to do anything without a male identifier. I am a university professor; when I go to court I need to bring a male identifier with me as, the Sheikh does not accept my ID card. My country has identified me by providing me with an ID card. I do not know the*

usefulness of the ID card if it cannot identify me. I urge the Ministry of Justice to open a female section employing women to check my ID because it is not reasonable that every time I want to go to court I have to bring my brother, and he is unable to go to work because he has to identify me in court. Honestly, allowing girls to study law is a very big step given the strict Sheikh in the Ministry of Justice."

It appears that traditionalist participants follow the *Hanbali* School of Islamic jurisprudence, since the judicial system in Saudi Arabia follows the *Hanbali* School, which is described as the most radical school of Islamic jurisprudence. All schools of Islamic jurisprudence, except the *Hanafi* School, make maleness in the biological sense one of the requirements of being a judge. Consequently, they believe that being male is one of the conditions that must be met by a Muslim judge. In Islamic circles, the *Hanbali* School adopts the literal interpretations of the *Quranic* verses and the prophet Mohammad *Hadith*. According to the *Hanbali* School men should be the protectors and maintainers of women, as literally mentioned in the Qur'an (Surah Al-nisa, 34).

Hence, followers of the *Hanbali* School believe that if a woman was appointed as judge and ruled between male adversaries, she would have power over a man and this would violate the words of Allah in "the Qur'an"(Saleh, 2012). The traditionalist participants think that traditionally male subjects like politics, media studies and aviation may lead women to commit sins. They suppose that female pilots would give up their *hijab* and modesty, as their headscarves may hinder them from controlling the plane and mobility. Furthermore, they believe that it is forbidden for Muslim women to travel without a male guardian or "*mahram,*" because the Prophet said, "a *woman must not travel alone without a mahram. No man may enter the house of a woman unless there is a mahram with her.*" Thus, they consider that it is prohibited for Muslim women to study these subjects. According to Ibtisam, a computer sciences student:

"A *girl who wants to become a pilot must give up many things, beginning with her hijab. Religion is the biggest reason for the lack of these disciplines for female students. I do not mean that religion rejects these ideas, but as long as women commit to their religion they should avoid these things. Women in Islam are spoiled*

*and we are not deprived; for example, we do not drive cars for the sake of our safety
but we have our private drivers.*"

Ibtisam's case shows us how the perception of the field influences women's subject
choices. Ibtisam believes that aviation conflicts with Islam since it requires woman
to give up her modesty. Therefore, she argues that aviation is inappropriate for
women. Even though there is no verse or *Hadith* explicitly stating this, Ibtisam view
is derived from her understanding of the patriarchal interpretations of Islam. These
interpretations give men privileges and powers over women. According to the
traditional interpretations of Islam, Muslim women should cover all their body,
except their eyes, so they do not tempt men. Conversely, Muslim men should cover
the part of their bodies, which is between the navel and the knees. As a result, this
kind of modesty could restrict women and prevent them from performing such
activities. In the same context Muna, a law student reported:
"*Women cannot be pilots because they cannot travel without a male guardian
"mahram" and it is difficult for a woman to become a pilot because it requires her
to travel every day. In our Muslim country all our laws are derived from our
religion...before pleasing people we must please our God.*"

Apparently, Ibtisam and Muna have internalised the traditional gender norms that
are derived from patriarchal interpretations of Islam. Women in patriarchal cultures
internalise the patriarchal norms, since the patriarchal system undermines women's
agency. The traditionalist participants do not challenge the patriarchal system;
instead they comply with it. Although media colleges were recently opened in some
female universities in Saudi Arabia, traditionalist participants see that media studies
is not appropriate for Saudi women, as it conflicts with Islamic teachings. They think
that women will be required to appear on television in front of people without the
veil. Hence, they think that when a girl works as a broadcaster on TV she needs to
look pretty and eventually she will give up her modesty. Additionally, they see that
the voice of women in Islam is an *awrah*. Therefore, it is prohibited for a woman to
work as a broadcaster on the radio. Amal, a Home Economics student highlighted:
"*When a girl studies or works in the media she will be forced to give up her modesty.
She will put on make-up and possibly in the end give up her hijab.*"

Noura, a Biochemistry student, believes that women taking media studies is a sin, as she expressed:

"*These subjects could make women commit sins. The media is not appropriate for women because it is against Islam. Women could appear on TV without the hijab, as well women's voices are awrah. So, it is prohibited for women to work in radio.*"

The traditionalist participants think that women studying/working in politics conflicts with Islam. They support their views by referring to the *Hadith* of the Prophet Mohammad that states, "*No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of them.*" As a result, they consider the employment of women in politics as a breach of the Islamic religion. As Fitna a computer sciences student said:

"*It is possible for women to work in politics as long as it is not in a leading position. There is a saying of the Prophet Mohammad that no people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of them.*"

Nadeen, a human resources student, thought that the absence of female politicians in the era of the Prophet of Islam was an indication of the inappropriateness of politics for Muslim women, as she stated:

"*Frankly I think that women are not suited to work in politics. If politics were actually suitable for women we would have found in the era of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) women ministers or envoys. But all these tasks were preserved for men. These are things felt since ancient times, since the days of the Prophet, dedicated to men. I am strongly opposed to the appointment of women in the Shura Council. The Shura Council is not the proper place for women….. But the problem is that we make our customs and traditions first and then comes religion. It is an intruder on our society that women study disciplines such as politics and engineering, and it is not from our religion. In the era of the Prophet, we have not heard that there was a woman ruler, except Aisha who they approached for religious matters. She was not a messenger.*"

The traditionalist participants felt that it is impossible for Saudi women to become ambassadors, as they cannot travel outside Saudi Arabia without their male guardian. Siham, an Islamic lecturer on legislation, elucidated on the position of

women in Islam in terms of politics, and whether it is permissible in the Islamic religion for women to be engaged in this profession:

"I *never noticed in the previous Islamic eras a female ruler. In Islam, I find that a man is more capable than a woman in politics…. there is a Hadith that says (no woman travels a distance of three days, unless she is accompanied by a male guardian). If she travels without a mahram she would have committed a sin. So, this specialisation is not suitable for women. Anything that is incompatible with Islam we should move away from.*"

According to the traditional interpretations of Islam, women should not travel without male guardianship. As previously discussed, the male guardianship system is a form of patriarchal system in Saudi Arabia. Since Saudi women's movements are restricted by their male guardian, they are not able to study certain fields such as aviation or politics. Traditional participants do not challenge these patriarchal constraints, instead they accommodated them. As a consequence, Siham does not see the male guardianship system as oppressive; she believes that by gaining the permission of her male guardian, she is obeying God. Her case indicates how she is submitting to patriarchal values. On the other hand, modernist participants believe that women and men are equal in Islam. They demonstrated the validity of their point of view using the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad such as, "*women are the twin halves of men.*" As a consequence, they feel that women should be able to study the same disciplines as men.

Modernist participants see that aviation, politics and the judiciary are not in conflict with Islam. Instead, they believe that Islam dramatically urges women to seek knowledge and education. In their view, Islam does not forbid women to be a pilot, judge or engineer. They believe that women can be pilots, since they interpreted that the reason behind the prohibition of woman traveling without a *mahram*, as in ancient times, was that it was difficult to travel because of the bandits and burglars, as well as the lack of aircraft and transportation available. Consequently, it is convenient and safe for women these days to travel anywhere in the world without the need of an accompanying male guardian or *mahram*. In this respect, Essra said:
"*We are almost the only country in the world where everything is forbidden for women, because we are the only country whose constitution is based on the Quran*

and Sunna. We follow an Islamic constitution, but it has been distorted. If clerics say to a woman this thing is not permissible for her to do, she should ask for evidence from the Quran or Sunna. If she looked at the Quran she will not find what he said is true. Clerics here interpreted the Quran according to their whim. They consider Jeddah a place for prostitution because women here do not cover their faces; there is no religious evidence to prove that Muslim women should cover their faces. But, the Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence differ on this matter and this in the interest of women. Here if a woman was to uncover her face they would consider her an infidel. Although I wear niqab I am strongly against it. Uncovering the face is not haram. According to the Hanbali doctrine, which we follow here in Saudi Arabia, women are required to cover their faces. I wear a veil for my family, as I do not want to embarrass them in front of people. I do not want to break my father's word because I respect him. We know that there are a lot of women's rights that are not against Islam, but clerics made them against the religion."

Essra pointed out that the *Hanbali* interpretation of the *Quran* is dominant in Saudi Arabia. She criticised the patriarchal interpretations of Islam. Her example shows us that not all the participants accept patriarchy; she resists the patriarchal structures. She is exercising her agency by following pro-women interpretations of Islam.   In order to understand the true Islam, she encourages other women to follow other schools of Islamic jurisprudence that are fairer for women. Furthermore, modernist participants believe that politics is suitable for women since they think that the Prophet *Hadith* is weak, as Samar an Early Education lecturer clarified:

"The *Prophet saying, 'No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of them' is weak. In the days of the Prophet, women were involved in wars, as well as being ministers of trade in the days of Omar bin al-Khattab (a companion of Prophet Mohammad)."*

Although traditional participants refer to the same *Hadith* to justify the inappropriateness of politics for women, the modernists consider this *Hadith* as weak and that it should not be taken into account. The modernists resist the patriarchal system by not following the patriarchal interpretations of Islam. The modernist participants believe that even if these subjects are available to Saudi women, the social customs and traditions could inhibit them being productive.

In referring to traditions and customs, the participants mean the social expectations and gender relations. They think that Saudi society is unaccustomed to seeing Saudi women as engineers or pilots, as it is unfamiliar psychologically. For example, in their view, it is difficult for a Saudi woman to be a judge because it is not part of her expected roles. In addition, they assume that Saudi men are not accustomed to taking orders from women since men traditionally have power over women. Rania, a radiation physics student, who explained how customs and traditions affect Saudi women and their education, said:

"Customs *and traditions restrict women and make them insecure. We have customs and traditions imposed on women. For example, people keep asking me why I chose to study radiation physics. How will you manage? These traditions are based on nonsense and stupid things. But, there are Saudi girls who are self-confident and do not allow customs and traditions to stop them from achieving their goals. For example, Dr. Maha Khayat got a patent from the United States. She is a role model for the majority of female students in the Department of Medical Physics. I feel that Hijazi girls are educated and rebels but, in a positive way mashallah.*"

Furthermore, the modernist participants see that the patriarchal culture of Saudi society does not accept that these disciplines are available for women, since everything is preserved for men. From their perspective, Saudi society has not reached the stage that allows women to study these disciplines. In this context Ghada, a lecturer in the Department of Physics said:

"These disciplines do not exist for the simple reason that our society is unaccustomed to accepting women in these areas. Women in Western societies are equal to men, and they even have more rights than men. Saudi society regrettably is not ready psychologically and intellectually. It is underdeveloped in terms of giving women their rights and dignity. Saudi women are self-confident but society does not trust them; therefore, some women regrettably lose confidence in themselves and they are not able to work in these areas. Our problem is that our society does not allow women to grow. We cannot be ministers. We cannot be managers. We do not have a female minister. We only have one female vice-minister. Have you heard the voices of the female members of the Shura Council? ... Women in Islam are equal to men in terms of rights and duties, even in the way of punishment and reward in

the afterlife. Allah saw women and men as equal, so why does society not have equality between us? We have gender discrimination. You cannot go out without the permission of your male guardian. You cannot have surgery without the consent of your male guardian. You cannot drive a car. Laws here in the Saudi kingdom are for men and against women… Our society does not accept sudden change due to the customs, but it does accept gradual change. I nicknamed King Abdullah pro-woman. Since he came to power, he has given women more space and tries to create equality between women and men. I imagine after twenty years a Saudi woman will be completely equal to a man."

It can be concluded from Ghadas' view that if these subjects were suddenly opened in female universities, society's perception could be an obstacle for women in choosing them. If politics, aviation and engineering were opened to female students, the beginning could be difficult for them as they would be under the pressure of a patriarchal system to make sure they do not challenge the system, as happened when the medical school opened for girls. In addition, the modernist participants set Western women as an example of women who can study these subjects. A Western woman can do everything she wants. She can be an engineer, lawyer or even a plumber, according to her capabilities and tendencies. In this regard Munirah, an engineering student, stated:

"*Women can be anything. Women can be pilots, why not? Why can Western women be anything they want and we cannot? I guess it is because of our thoughts about ourselves that we cannot do anything."*

The modernist participants attribute the lack of certain disciplines in the female universities to the Saudi nomadic customs and traditions. They think that customs and traditions, not religion, is the reason behind the delay in Saudi female universities opening up these disciplines. The views of this second category of participants could link to the explanation of Braunstein (2014), who stated that patriarchy and not religion promotes gender inequality. He claims that Islam supports equality between men and women and that the reason for the inferior position of Muslim women is because of patriarchal interpretations of Islam. He states that Islam is used as a "proxy" in order to uphold patriarchal values, as these values enshrine these inferior views of women.

Based on the interviews, the traditionalist participants are greater in number than the modernist participants. Almost three quarters of the female students and lecturers are traditionalists. There is no difference between female students and lecturers in this regard. This is an expected result for a country like Saudi Arabia, which follows the traditional interpretations of Islam.

Traditionalist participants are satisfied with their assigned roles, thus they accommodate the patriarchal system. Conversely, modernist participants do not accept their assigned roles; therefore, they resist and negotiate with the patriarchal system. The split between the views of the female students and lecturers in terms of the availability of non-traditional subjects to women is similar to some extent to the spilt in Iranian women's views towards women's rights, after the Iranian revolution. They are split into three types according to their closeness or aversion to Islam. There are "traditionalist-Islamists" who believe that Islam is the only source of legislation, especially with regards to women's rights and the private sphere as the appropriate place for women.

 The second type, are those who could be described as "modernist–Islamists," who follow a modern interpretation of the *Quran*; they call for the elimination of gender inequality by opening the public sphere to women. The last type is "modernist-seculars" who adopt secular values and share the modernist-Islamist view regarding overcoming gender inequality. What is happening in Saudi Arabia is largely similar to what happened in Iran after the Iranian revolution. Although Iran and Saudi Arabia follow two different sects, both countries follow the conservative approach of Islam. Iranian women were equal to men in the era of the Shah.

 However, it is noted that Iranian women's activities in the public sphere have decreased since the Islamist rebels came to power. Although Iranian women participated in the Islamic revolution, it did not help them make political and economic gains. Iranian revolutionaries took advantage of Islam in order to obtain power and isolated Iranian women from the public sphere (Kian, 1995). The refusal of some female students and lecturers to the idea of opening up these disciplines may be due to the lack of women's awareness of their religious and social rights. This result resembles the findings of Al-Sayegh (2013).

She found the obstacles that prevent the participation of Saudi women in decision-making positions, are self-constraints represented by the lack of awareness of Saudi women and their religious and social rights: social obstacles as a result of the dominance of customs and traditions, and political obstacles caused by the dominance of power in the hands of men without women. She considered the prevention of Saudi women from studying some disciplines in education as discrimination against her. She also attributed the discrimination suffered by Saudi women to the regulations set by the state that have been developed in accordance with generally accepted customs and traditions.

Modernists see that the reason for the unavailability of these subjects at the female universities could be because of social customs and traditions. This is supported by Haleem (2004), who stated that in most Middle Eastern countries the legislation relating to the labour market is very often based on societal norms, which include the protection of women and the safeguarding of their sexuality. What makes the modernists claim close to the reality is the fact that disciplines such as law and media studies were previously dominated by men; these subjects were recently opened up to female students as parents began to accept the idea, and to allow their daughters to study these disciplines. Law and media studies were normally associated with men, hence both of them were perceived as masculine professions. Despite the fact that the perceptions of these subjects have recently changed since they were made available for women, these subjects were still seen as inappropriate for women by the traditionalists.

6.3 The influence of the essentialised views of male and female characteristics on justifying subject segregation

In this theme the participants are divided into three groups or categories. Firstly, there are the female students and lecturers who hold strong essentialised views of gender roles. Secondly, there are the female students and lecturers who hold less essentialised views of male and female characteristics. Thirdly, there are the female students and lecturers who hold a socially constructed view of gender roles. The participants' views are discussed in-depth through three sub-themes, which are emotionality/rationality, strength/weakness and breadwinners/ homemakers.

6.3.1 The physically strong males/ physically weak females model

In this section, participants who hold essentialised views of gender roles argue that certain disciplines such as engineering and aviation are not suitable for Saudi women at all, to the point that when I asked Eman, a human resource student, why specialties like aviation, politics and engineering are not available in Saudi universities for female students, she laughed loudly as she thought I was making a joke. She replied:

"*Are you kidding? It is hard for a woman to be a pilot. I feel this is a joke. This is unbelievable. I cannot imagine a female pilot. Of course it is something unusual. It is impossible for a woman to be a pilot since it requires someone who has a heart of stone.*"

Sometimes, I felt that merely asking that question made me prone to criticism in the sense of not respecting Islam or Saudi customs. I also found out that this type of question raises surprise and puzzlement, particularly amongst the traditionalist participants. Participants who hold essentialised views of gender believe that these subjects suit males only. In their minds these subjects require physical strength, thus they are beyond the physical capabilities of a woman since they view women as physically weak. As a result, such participants believe that it is difficult for a woman to perform these tasks. However, they hold the belief that men have the qualities that make them able to study these subjects; as Samar a student in the Department of Media justified:

"*Because I feel that these fields are only suitable for men, such as aviation. I feel they do not fit girls in terms of capacity, physical strength and endurance. Moreover, these tough disciplines need a man and not a woman. I do not support that a woman drives a plane, for one reason which is that women do not have the physical capacity to do so.*"

Samar and Eman felt that men have consistency in studying these disciplines since they suit their physiques. In their view, aviation and engineering require physical strength and this is not available in women. They think that women go through periods of fatigue and exhaustion especially during menstruation. Therefore, they see that these subjects could expose women to dangerous situations.

This does not apply to men since they are physically strong. In this regard Munirah, a lecturer in the Department of Maths explained:

"*I feel that the engineering and aviation disciplines do not fit a woman because of her physique. Women cannot bear these arduous and difficult kinds of work. I feel that these disciplines are somewhat manly.*"

The patriarchal social constructs widespread in Saudi society such as physically strong men versus physically weak women, made Eman, Samar and Munirah suggest men are more able at studying engineering and aviation because women are not expected to perform such activities. The gender roles assigned by the patriarchal culture are the reasons that made some participants associate men with certain subjects. As a result, some participants (mainly those who hold essentialised views of gender roles) are reluctant to study engineering or aviation because they do not perceive them as part of their roles. The softness and tenderness which is associated with women (by women participants as well as within patriarchal ideology) may make it difficult for them to work as engineers, as in Hind, a family education student, who praised the unavailability of these disciplines in Saudi female universities and justified this by saying:

"*It is a good thing that engineering is not available to women. Firstly, a woman's physical structure is weak. There are some women who would say our physical structure is strong but in the end the physical structure of a woman varies from the physical structure of man. Menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth weaken the body of a woman. As for mechanical engineering, a woman cannot drive a car. So, how does she fix it?!*"

This shows us how gender structures influence the participants' perceptions of subjects and vice versa. Hind's attitude towards engineering is based on essentialised structures of gender, which give men legitimacy in studying such a subject. There is a phrase that I kept hearing from the female students who were against women studying aviation, which is if a woman cannot drive a car on the earth how can she fly a plane in the air? Unlike women, men are tough and their physical structures are strong. A woman would be affected if she were a pilot and there was problem in the plane; she would be quickly affected and she could have to leave her job. Conversely Hanan, a computer science student, sees that whilst

aviation is difficult for women because of their physical abilities, it is possible for her to study it if she has certain specifications. She identified the specifications that must be met in a female pilot:

"*Whoever wants to study aviation must be an iron woman. She must have the ability. There are capable women. Aviation requires that women have physical abilities and the abilities to control and focus. I mean someone like me is not useful to be a pilot. I see that aviation needs a woman with male specifications.*"

What Hanan means by male specification is having physical strength. According to Hanan, women might be able to study these disciplines in certain situations, for example if they are tough and their body structures are strong. They should be women with male specifications. Participants who hold strong essentialised views of gender roles indicated that these subjects could be inconsistent with women's femininity. Femininity was perceived to be one of the distinctive qualities of women. Participants see femininity as certain qualities that every women should have such as being soft, thin-skinned, physically weak and emotional. So, if a woman flew planes what would men think of her? Afnan, a family education student, attributed the unavailability of these disciplines to women, to their inappropriateness women. She stated:

"*This goes back to three reasons. Firstly, these subjects do not fit the physical structure of women. Secondly, I do not think that a woman has a desire to study these subjects because a woman tends to study feminine subjects; even if she has desires to study these disciplines I feel she will change and become a guy. I feel these disciplines would take away her femininity. I believe it is unnecessary for women to study these disciplines as long as there are men who are able to do these things.*"

Afnan did not mean that females who study tough subjects would actually become males; rather she meant that such females would be adopting the activities that are traditionally performed by males. She argues that a woman who performs such activities could lose her feminine attributes. Afnan defines the word femininity as having softness, weakness and being nurturing. Accordingly, women who do not fulfil their expected roles are looked upon as men.

There is dissension amongst the first category of participants in terms of the appropriateness of studying architecture for Saudi women. This could relate to the nature of engineering, which includes fieldwork and office work. In their opinions, architecture is appropriate for women as long as it is limited to mapping and designing buildings. However, there are those who believe that other engineering fields are inappropriate for women, since they require women to go to work locations where there is heat, dust and sun.

This is inconsistent with the expectations of a Saudi woman where a woman has to be modest in the public sphere by wearing a black cloak and veil. Although Gulf countries have the same religion, customs, traditions and cultural heritage, women in other Gulf countries are able to study and work in areas such as aviation engineering and politics. However, a study by Aswad, Vidican, and Samulewicz, (2011) reported that some Emirati female students cannot study science, technology and engineering due to the lack of such programs in some Emirate countries and they find it difficult to move to another Emirate country to study these subjects.

Additionally, their study revealed a stereotype about engineering, in that it is seen as a masculine subject that requires working in the desert, dust, sun and heat. On the other hand, participants who hold less essentialised views of gender roles thought that some of these disciplines suit women and must be available to them; however, they had reservations about other subjects because they are incompatible with the nature of a woman. They claimed that women cannot study tough subjects which in their view require physical exertion like aviation and petroleum engineering; however, they can study soft subjects which do not require physical exertion such as politics and the judiciary. One of those is Amal, a lecturer in the Department of Management and Economics who rejects the idea of women studying aviation or engineering but encourages women to be politicians or judges. She enthusiastically said:

"*Because they do not fit with the nature of women. A man has the consistency in studying these disciplines. I see they fit males and I am still insisting they do not fit females whether aviation or architecture in particular. If I have a daughter I will not allow her to study architecture. But I expect in the coming years, women will be able to study all these disciplines. I do not support opening the disciplines of*

engineering and aviation to the female students but it is possible that girls study politics, why not? On the contrary, I want women to work in politics. We are also very in need of female judges."

The patriarchal culture associates men with tough activities and women with soft activities based on their biological differences. It appears that some participants, particularly those who hold essenialised views of gender roles, accommodate such patriarchal roles. This has lead to the societal deprioritisation of women's involvement in tough activities. Suha, a Biochemistry student, agrees with Amal in terms of the suitability of politics for women. She views women as more diplomatic than men, and they both think that men do not have feelings. She also believes that women look for perfection because she sees women as attention and perfection-seekers, unlike men who are viewed by her as careless. She expressed her views as: "*Basically, these disciplines such as engineering do not fit women at all. Secondly, there would be mixing between men and women in the workplace, as well as no fixed working hours. Frankly, politics is a beautiful specialisation. I feel that women are more diplomatic than men. Women can feel for others, but men do not have feelings. Unlike men, women are always looking for perfection; when a woman takes over a position she likes to stand out, and she also tries to avoid mistakes, whilst a man does not care.*"

It can be concluded from the above that the perception of a subject determines whether it is appropriate or inappropriate for females. Subjects such as aviation and engineering are seen as tough subjects that require physical strength. The patriarchal cultural expectations are that women are expected to be soft and physically weak, whilst men are expected to be tough and physically strong. Accordingly, tough subjects are not suitable for women due to their weak physical structures. It could be said that some interviewees accommodated patriarchal expectations through living up to gender roles and social expectations.

6.3.2 The emotional females / rational males model
There is almost a consensus amongst the first and some of the second categories of female students and lecturers that a woman is emotional and man is rational. They think that women are not able to control their emotions, whilst men can put their

emotions aside and think with their minds. They suggested that women are not fit to be politicians because they are emotional; whatever they try, they are controlled by their emotions. However, they see that men are rational. In this regard Munirah, a lecturer in the Department of Maths explained:

"It *is hard for a woman to be a judge. Men have no such agitated emotions as do women. I feel that the judiciary needs a rigidity and firmness, and these qualities are not available in women. It is known that women are emotional rather than rational. Forget about the Western women; they grew up on independence and self-reliance, whilst here we rely on our father, brother or husband or even the driver in every aspect of our lives.*"

Another reason that makes the first category of participants think that the judiciary does not suit women, is that they believe that since women are emotional creatures, they could give biased adjudications as Mirna, a chemistry student, confirmed:

"*I think that politics does not suit women. I do not know, maybe because I do not like it. It is hard for a woman to be a judge since she is emotional, so she possibly feels pity for the defendant then releases him or her.*"

Fatima, a lecturer in the Department of Physics shares Munirah's view, as she reported:

"*Even if a girl studied engineering she would not work as an engineer, since it is not suitable for the nature of a woman. Honestly, I do not accept this for myself. I will not accept being a plumber for example, or fixing cars. I feel that this work fits men. My sister likes politics, but I feel it is not suitable for her. It is lovely for a woman to be familiar with and follow up on politics. Nevertheless, I feel that there are things that fit a woman and things that fit a man.*"

In the same context Afnan, a family education student, attributed the unavailability of these disciplines to their inappropriateness to the femininity of women. She stated:

"*I feel that the judiciary like the Imamate must be entrusted to men. I feel that the person who rules between people must be a man. A woman cannot be a judge because she is too weak to think with her mind.*"

Suha, a public administration student, justified the unavailability of these subjects to girls as being due to the inequality between males and females, as she confirmed:

"*We have a lack of awareness in our society: any idea that comes from the West we immediately believe in. If the West says that women should be driving, we say yes, a woman should drive. There is not supposed to be equality between men and women in everything. It is difficult. Mainly women and men are different, so how do we equate them? This is not fair. Justice is to see what things suit women and what things fit men.*"

Women in their view are more emotional than men and cannot control their minds. Amani, a nursing student who thinks that politics is not appropriate for a woman, explained:

"*In terms of politics I do not think a woman should work in politics. I feel that leadership is suitable more for men. However, there are many things that affect a woman's decisions. I mean it is possible that her emotions play a role... the emotional side sometimes must dominate. I myself see particularly politics and other sensitive things suitable for a man.*"

Zina, a computer science student, sees that politics is not fit for a woman as she stated:

"In *terms of politics, it does not fit a woman because she is illogical in her thinking and emotions. I feel that politics is suitable for a strong and strict person. I think that engineering and politics are masculine disciplines. It is possible for a woman to be a judge because there are written laws and she can follow them.*"

On the other hand, the second category of participants believes that all these subjects are suitable for women except the judiciary, since they view women as irrational. Eman, a medical physics student, believes that except for the judiciary it is possible for a woman to study aviation, engineering or even politics. She sees the law as suiting women more than the judiciary because women are emotional and unreasonable. She enthusiastically said:

"Sure. *Sure ...sure. It is possible for a woman to be an engineer and a politician. Saudi women are smart though. If they were given a chance they would be something great, God willing. Women are more diligent than men. In general women have showmanship and love to be famous. It is possible for a Saudi woman to become a pilot if she is provided with training. There is a girl from Makkah. I do not remember her name. She is a private pilot for Prince Alwaleed bin Talal. This is evidence that*

Saudi women have the capability. A woman can be a lawyer but not a judge, because she is emotional, not rational. This is life or death and it is possible that a woman might exonerate the killer because she sympathises with the defendant. Women are emotional and men are rational; this is a foregone conclusion. Men think of the future, but women think of the present. But this is not a flaw; there are many rational women. But, I am against women working in the judiciary."

In the same vein, the second category of participants feels that women are physically strong but as the same time they see women as emotional as Manal, a media studies student revealed:

"A *woman can be a mechanical engineer. There are women who have physical strength that allows them to carry out such tasks. It is possible that a woman works in politics, but she should not be a queen or a president. It is also possible for women to vote or express their views or be politicians, or members of the Shura Council. But, I feel that men in the leading positions are better than women… women are emotional. Allah created us like that because in the end we all will be mothers. But, it is not difficult for a woman to be a judge. Female judges are often educated and enlightened human beings and not naive to the point that makes their emotions control them. I do not think that there is a judge who would allow themselves to go too far with their emotions.*"

Additionally, participants from the second category see that women can be pilots and judges but not politicians as Samirah, a chemistry student claims:

"*If women study these disciplines they could benefit themselves and society. For example, God forbid, if a woman does not have brothers and her father's car broke down, in this case she could help her father in fixing the car. Conversely, this is not inconsistent with the nature of women. We see women in developed countries manufacturing cars and this has not negatively affected them. It is possible for women to be pilots. In our society, there are women better than men almost in everything… There is no difference between men and women at the present time. Women need what men need. It is possible for a woman to be a judge, why not? They opened law departments for female students. However, a female judge must be educated and wise. A female judge should be an elderly woman in order to judge the cases justly. I feel that politics is difficult for women since men are more rational*

than women… Men are inherently political and wise. They can deal with topics politically and soundly."

There is a fear amongst all the first category and some of the second category participants that women may not be up to the same level of thought in politics as men, since the mentality of men is always stronger than the mentality of women. They believe that there is no woman wanting to give up her femininity in exchange for working in the field of politics; they think that women may not be strong enough to solve the political problems that they would face. The absence of a female role model working in politics could be the reason for this as Zina, a public administration student, said:

"*Subjects like petroleum engineering or aircraft engineering are hard for women to study. But, women can study cute things like architecture or interior design. Saudi women cannot be suddenly American women and wear jeans and work with men. If a woman were in a position superior to her she would persecute people. We have Saudi women who talk about politics and call for women's rights. Saud al-Shammari is a Saudi. She talks on our behalf but we are happy we do not need anything. It is true that we have problems but not to the degree that she depicts; that Saudi woman are oppressed, and have no rights and no equality. For this reason I expect that politics are not suitable for women. We need time. It is very early that Saudi women are studying politics at this time. I want to ask you about the women recently appointed as members to the Shura Council; what have they done? I think they are just an image; they have no roles.*"

This finding matches those of Al-Hurani and Adhaylah's (2012) study, which sought to highlight the most important gender challenges faced by female traffic sergeants in Jordanian society. They found that most female traffic sergeants are young, their education is below university level, they live in urban areas and are from working class families. He pointed out that although female traffic sergeants describe their jobs as stressful, they do not believe that their emotions negatively affect their work. The study revealed that female sergeants face gender challenges in terms of their interaction with their male counterparts. Female traffic sergeants feel that their male colleagues look down on them and make them feel insecure.

According to Al-Hourani and Adhaylah female traffic sergeants say that their male counterparts think men are the most suitable for this job, based on their perceptions of gender. Additionally, female traffic sergeants in Al-Hourani and Adhayla's study indicate that they receive negative reactions from society. They feel a lack of respect from people in society and they do not comply with their guidance since they do not accept their presence in the street. In addition, female traffic sergeants feel that people in the street exploit their emotions as well as making annoying comments. Equally, this finding is almost in line with a study conducted by Abu-Bakar (2005) who found that social values affect the psychology of gender within Arab couples.

On the other hand, participants who hold socially constructed views of gender roles and who have not internalised gender stereotypes, are still affected by the social expectations of males and females, which limit their choices and opportunities. This group of participants sees that women could suit the judiciary, since they believe that there are rational females. According to them, there are emotional men and there are women who are more rational than men. Amina has a point of view regarding the unavailability of politics in Saudi female universities:

 "*Society believes that women are not fit to be politicians because they say that a woman is emotional, but this is not true; there are rational women. Female law graduates do not find jobs in the courts, because they say that women are emotional. I have heard that most of the female law graduates become teachers of religion.*"

This group of participants appears not to have internalised gender roles, as they do not view themselves as emotional or illogical. These positive views about themselves might be reflected in their responses. These participants are aware of the injustice suffered by women in the Saudi courts due to some of their female friends or relatives experiencing injustice from a *Shaikh* (a male judge). Therefore, they depict males as oppressive and females as oppressed. Khadijah, a lecturer in the School of Economics and Management showed that a woman can only judge on women's issues (and not men issues):

"*A woman can be a judge on women's issues such as khul, divorce, custody, because women in divorce cases are often the oppressed. Female judges understand women more than male judges who are often biased towards men, because they believe that the man is always right.*"

6.3.3 The breadwinner males/ momemaker females model

The attitudes of all the participants who hold strong essentialised views of gender roles and some of the participants, who hold less essentialised views of gender roles, conform to the patriarchal household structures in which women and men are assigned to certain gender roles. Under such structures, women are expected to be the homemakers, whilst men are expected to be the breadwinners. These two categories of participants believe that such disciplines could be in conflict with their roles as mothers and wives. Thus, they think that if women study these subjects they will be reluctant to marry as Suha, a medical physics student, explained

"Females cannot be as creative in engineering as males. Even in the West a very few number of females excel in this specialty. Mainly, this specialty is unwanted by the girls here because they will be a mother in the future and responsible for a husband and children, therefore it will be difficult for them to be outside their homes for a long time."

Rana, a housing management student, pointed out:

"It is nice that a woman can work. But, she should make time for raising her children. To be a mother is the best thing in the world. For me the most important thing is my husband and my children, then comes my career."

They see that aviation requires travelling anywhere and anytime. Therefore, they feel that it is difficult for a woman, balancing her family and her job. As a result, participants believe that aviation conflicts with their roles as the homemaker of the household. On the other hand, they think that a male pilot can take his wife with him on all his travels, unlike a female pilot who cannot take her husband with her, since a woman is the one who is expected to make the sacrifice in Saudi society. They argue that aviation fits men because it does not conflict with their role, which is as head of the household. Instead, men have priority in studying or working in such professions, since they are the financial providers for the household, as well as not having domestic responsibilities The participants who hold strong essentialised views of gender roles and some of the participants, who hold less essentialised views of gender roles, expected to fulfil their gender roles, which are assigned to them by society. Therefore, they did not resist the gender norms, but rather they complied with them.

According to the participants who hold essentialised views of gender roles, Saudi women are expected to choose their families over their careers, as they are primarily raised to be good mothers and wives. This finding is similar to Metcalf's (2004) who revealed how rooted gender patterns are in society, to the extent that a woman is supposed to give up her job when she gets married, unless her husband allows her to carry on working. In addition to this, a Saudi man does not want a woman who is interested in her work more than her family. Those participants think that married women should not devote themselves to political action since they believe that being a mother and wife are the primary roles of women. In their view, it is difficult for a woman to travel abroad leaving her husband and children, as they see that she is not capable of juggling between them. Either she devotes herself to her work in politics or she devotes herself to taking care of her husband and children. They confirm that men are more capable of confronting, controlling and resolving problems whereas women lack these qualities. From their perception, a woman has a limited abilities, thus Allah made man the protectors and maintainers of women.

Such views are a reflection of the nature of Saudi society, which is patriarchal. Those participants value women's unpaid domestic work more than women's paid work. Unpaid domestic work means work done by women in the private sphere, including cooking, cleaning and taking care of family members, whilst paid work includes the professional work that is performed by women in the labour market and for which they get payment. However, the majority of Saudi women working in the teaching sector, which indicates that women's paid work is important as long as it does not conflict with their domestic work. For this reason, some subjects are seen as inappropriate for women.

This finding agrees with Sultana's (2010) study, which aimed to identify the gender ideology of Pakistani females of the education of their children, as well as to identify the impact of patriarchal ideology on the gender ideology of Pakistani females. The study found that most of the participants follow the traditional ideology in terms of the role and status of women, as they believe that the primary role of women is to sustain the home and to take care of the children. Conversely, participants who hold socially constructed views of gender roles, which is a very small number of the interviewees, believe that all subjects suit women.

In their view, there are no feminine and masculine disciplines. They wanted to study aviation since they believe that there are women who have proven themselves in this field more than men. In their opinion, there are women able to be creative and productive and they can do tasks that men might not be able to do. In their view, the reason behind the unavailability of these subjects for Saudi women is because Saudi men are paranoid that these subjects could widen women's horizons and make them demand their rights and rebel. Yasmina, an administrative sciences student stated:
"*It is possible for a woman to study aviation. If this specialisation were available to female students I would be the first one studying it. I would prove to my father that aviation is a good subject. A woman can be anything she wants, but here they tighten the noose around us. There are disciplines that are not permitted for us to study, whilst they are available to males. But, if these disciplines become open to women there will be a huge demand for these subjects. If you ask other female students you will find many female students who want these specialties to be available to girls. There are no male and female disciplines or specialties. There are no differences between men and women. If a girl wants something, she can do it.*"

Yasmina's attitude is an example, which shows us that not all Saudi women comply with patriarchal norms. The patriarchal system in Saudi Arabia undermines women's mobility through the guardianship system. By law, Saudi women should not travel without a male guardian. Yasmina's attitude challenges the guardianship system. This system gives men authority to control women's mobility. It is part of the patriarchal structures, which explains why aviation suits men more than women. Yasmina's first choice was aviation, however she chose to study administration sciences instead. The unavailability of aviation to women makes them fulfil their expected roles.

Despite the guardianship laws, which control women's movements, Yasmina expressed her willingness to study aviation if it were available at the Saudi female universities. The third category of participants use Western women as an example in order to support their views as Zeinab, an engineering student, did:
"*Women can be anything. Women can be pilots, why not? Why can Western women be anything they want and we cannot? I believe it is because of our idea of ourselves that we cannot do something.*"

Generally, participants who hold socially constructed views of gender roles see that all these specialisations should be available to female students. They use Western and international women as an example of women who are able to perform these tasks. They claim that as long as there are women in any place in the world who are able to do this work, then any woman can do it; as Joumana, an art student, said:

"*Yes, she can do it. There are many female pilots from around the world. We are not inferior to them! Also, a lot of women in other countries are successful in this area.*"

Participants from the third category hope that subjects like engineering and aviation will be provided for women because there are girls who love these disciplines and excel in them. They pointed out that some girls were forced to migrate and study abroad to achieve their dreams of studying the subject that they dreamed of. They go so far as to suggest opening a Security College for girls in order to enhance the status of women in our society. They also suggested opening a Police College for girls, so that college graduates can work at female inspection points.

They call for making sports education available in girls' schools. They feel that women are in need of new subjects, since most of them are unemployed and sit at home. They feel that they have the right to get jobs, since male students have more career opportunities than them. They think that specialties that are available for males are more than those available for females, as they are taught differently and they have more hands-on training. They complained that they have been taught theoretically within the halls of college, since they cannot go outside the university for practical training. They believe that there must be equality between females and males. Thus, they suggest that disciplines that are available to men must also be available to women, since they feel that there is no difference between them. They state that since boys can study these disciplines, it is also the right of girls to study them. They see that there must be no discrimination in education, as men and women are equal.

"*There must be equality between boys and girls because there is no difference between us. They are supposed to make all the disciplines available to both males and females. Why do you think Saudi girls hate education? I love studying, for*

example, but do not like education in Saudi Arabia because of the lack of practical training and of what we rely on - reciting and memorising. There are a number of female students who did not complete their university education because of the lack of disciplines they wanted to study. Female students cannot think of studying aviation or engineering because they know it does not exist at university, and even if they thought of studying them, they are not be able to do so. If the Ministry of Higher Education opened these disciplines up to female students I would be happy because it would be a development of our education."

There are varied views from the female students and lecturers of the impact of gender stereotypes in the absence of certain subjects at female universities, these subjects being limited to male students. Conversely, the majority of the female students hold essentialised views of gender roles; hence they support full subject segregation. This is followed by the female students who support opening these disciplines with some reservations in the case of certain disciplines, whilst a relatively small number of female students are completely in favour of opening these disciplines to female students. In contrast, female lecturers were equally divided between full subject segregation and part subject segregation. However, a small number of female lecturers were in favour of opening all these subjects up to women.

The attitudes of the participants towards the study and work of women in these subjects or professions might be due to the nature of Saudi society as a patriarchal religious one. The mating of the patriarchal with religious powers in Saudi society might help explain the prevalence of essentialised views of gender roles amongst the participants. Saudi clerics believe that certain fields are suitable for women, like teaching, medicine, nursing and social work (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). Thus, high numbers of Saudi women working in the educational sector as teachers or administrators (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). The number of working women in Saudi Arabia is equivalent to 30% and almost 85% are employed in the education sector (Al-Munajjed, 2010). The over representation of women in the health and education sectors has led to a saturation of the labour market, and thus rising unemployment amongst females.

In the Arab world as well as in Saudi Arabia, women very often tend to select the traditionally female fields such as teaching and medicine, due to the gender stereotyping of technical fields. Female students are directed to study in certain fields like humanities, religious sciences and medical sciences (Berrais, 2010). In other Arab countries, it is possible for women to study engineering, politics and aviation, whilst in Saudi Arabia women are forced to study certain subjects that are described as feminine by Saudi society. Most Saudi female students (nearly 93%) graduate with a degree in education or the humanities (Al-Munajjed, 2010). During my interviews with the female students, they often expressed their unwillingness to be teachers, thus they could feel that these new subjects would open up a variety of career opportunities. Female education in Saudi Arabia is incapable of preparing women for the labour market, as it offers limited fields that are not needed in today's competitive market (Al-Munajjed, 2010).

This finding is similar to Whiteoak et.al.'s (2006), who found that the female participants expressed more liberal attitudes towards women's participation in the labour market, compared to the male participants. However, older females held more conservative views towards women's work compared to young females. This finding is also consistent with Mostafa (2005) who revealed that female students support the work of women as managers, more than male students. Additionally, the new generation has more liberal attitudes towards women's roles in Emeriti society compared to the older generation. It is clear from the above that some participants (mainly first and part of the second category of participants) have a perception of inferiority about themselves and women in general.

This could be due to the essentialised views held by them and developed by the nature of Saudi society, which is a patriarchal society where women are totally dependent on men whether its their father, brother or husband, in carrying out most of the affairs of their daily lives. Additionally, the restrictions and red lines developed by Saudi society on women has made them doubt their capacities and believe that they are naïve and easily misled, since they do not have an opportunity to experience their abilities in real life. As a consequence, this negative view of Saudi women towards themselves and the negative views of Saudi society towards women might be the reason for the absence of these disciplines at Saudi female

universities. Consequently, this could hinder the empowerment of Saudi women in society, as identified by Al-Turaif (2014) in her study. She divided the obstacles to the empowerment of Saudi women in the labour market into personal and societal factors. The personal factors were the inability to balance work and family, the lack of training and practical experiences and women's lack of a sense of their status and the importance of their roles in the development of the society. As for societal factors, she included: some customs and traditions that limit women working in some professions, society's perception that the main role of a woman is taking care of her house and family, and society's lack of conviction in women's ability to be involved in the work practised by men.

In return, my study found that not only could societal expectations affect Saudi women's education and employability, but also the internalised gender stereotypes amongst the majority of Saudi women (particularly amongst the participants who hold essentialised views of gender roles). I discovered that some of my participants would not study engineering, politics or aviation even if available to them. According to Abu-Baker (2005) women in Arab culture are encouraged by society to show their weaknesses and helplessness, whilst men are encouraged to show vigour and strength. Some participants also find that it is not advisable for a man to be a gynecologist because he will be watching women. The majority of Saudi women were brought up to believe that a man works outside the home and women stay in the house. Thus, a man is not fit to be a housewife because he does not deserve to be so.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter was divided into two main themes. The participants under the first theme were divided into two groups, namely traditionalists and modernists. The traditionalist participants are those female students and lecturers who follow conservative interpretations of the *Quran* to justify subject segregation. On the other hand, modernists participants use modern interpretations of the *Quran* to support their views. The modernists are in favour of opening all these subjects to women. The traditionalist students and lecturers who support subject segregation are greater in number than the modernist students and lecturers.

In respect of the second theme, the perceptions of the female students and lecturers differ in terms of the availability of subjects like aviation, politics, the judiciary and engineering. Accordingly, the participants were grouped into three categories. The majority of female students support full subject segregation as they hold essentialised views of male and female characteristics. Then came the female students in favour of part subject segregation. On the other hand, the views of female lecturers were divided equally between supporting full and part subject segregation. Finally, the third category of participants of female students and lecturers in favour of opening all these subjects to women, were few.

Chapter Seven:

Bargaining with patriarchy:

Women's subject choices and patriarchal marriage norms

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the influence of marriage on Saudi women's education. The majority of participants agree that marriage is as important as education and careers. According to the interviews, some female students and lecturers support women's traditional roles. These participants believe that the home is the natural place for a woman and that being a housewife is a fundamental role for a woman. Thus, they see a woman who cares about her husband as helping him to excel in his work. Additionally, if she takes care of her children, she serves the community better than if she goes to work. It is clear that those participants hold internalised gender roles. Although most of the female participants agree that motherhood is significant for women, they act differently when they have to choose between their studies and marriage.

It appears from the participants' responses that being a mother and having children are very serious decisions. However, unlike in the past, they no longer look only to marry and have children, as marriage is one of their lesser concerns. The participants were divided into three categories in terms of their attitudes towards marriage. Although most of the participants have internalised traditional marriage norms, their attitudes towards marriage vary greatly. They exercise agency by resisting or bargaining with patriarchal systems. The first category of participants consists of those who resist the patriarchal system by exercising their legitimate Islamic rights. This includes women who ask for a divorce to eliminate the influence of their husband on their education. The second category comprises those who bargain with patriarchal influences by postponing marriage until after they graduate from university. Finally, there are participants who comply with patriarchal norms without negotiating or bargaining. They get married at an early age and accept the influence of their husband on their education.

They limit their choices to certain subjects in order to maximise their marriage opportunities. This group of participants mainly studies traditional subjects such as education, as these subjects do not conflict with their family responsibilities. Furthermore, they avoid professions that might require evening-shift hours, such as nursing or medicine.

7.2 Bargaining or resisting patriarchal constraints through exercising limited agency

Based on my participants' views, many Saudi girls are currently committed to the principle of completing their education; if their spouses refuse, they will ask for a divorce. According to these female participants, getting an education and a job has become the obsession of Saudi women. Basically, they do not feel that it is necessary to get married, as they view marriage as an obstacle to completing their education. Some participants suggest that university specialisations could affect women's roles as mothers and wives in terms of their presence in the house and their attention to the affairs of their children and husbands. As a consequence, the participants indicate that, in Saudi society, men prefer women who do not complete their studies because the men do not want their wives to be smarter or more educated. Some participants are reluctant to get married whilst they are studying, because they think that this would be a commitment and a great responsibility that would stand in the way of their ambitions; they do not see themselves in marriages where they are sitting at home, cooking, cleaning, and raising children.

However, a few participants reveal that their reason for delaying or avoiding marriage is to travel by studying abroad in order to explore life. It appears that the patriarchal constraints in Saudi society are an obstacle that prevents Saudi women from getting married during their education, as some participants feel that most men are opposed to the idea of their wives being successful and having jobs, because these men do not want their wives to be better than them in any area. To understand why participants have different attitudes towards marriage, it is worth discussing this observation within the agency framework. Some of the participants make agentic choices by bargaining with patriarchal systems.

The term 'patriarchal bargaining,' was developed by Kandiyoti (1988), who described the tactics adopted by women to obtain power under patriarchal conditions. Feminist movements have focused on women's agency and on making changes through collective action to fight gender power relationships (Eduards, 1994). There are four options for women to approach the patriarchal system: resistance, bargaining, instrumental agency, and compliant agency (Avishai, 2008). For the purpose of this study, I mostly focused on the bargaining and resistance approaches.

In light of the concepts of agency and patriarchal bargaining, it could be argued that Saudi female students and lecturers follow the resistance and bargaining approaches in terms of exhibiting their agency. In a conservative and religious society such as Saudi Arabia, participants very often exhibit agency within the limits of religion, customs, and traditions. The participants in this study exercise limited powers, which they gain from bargaining with the patriarchal system. This, "limited form of agency" was mentioned by Phillips (2006), who studied gay people's choices whether to reveal their sexual identities. Accordingly, women in this study are active agents who bargain with the patriarchal system to acquire power. However, their agency is limited. For example, on the issue of marriage, girls' education may be in conflict with their chances of getting married, particularly when they study a socially unacceptable specialty.

7.2.1 Exercising legitimate Islamic rights is a tactical strategy to avoid a husband's influence

 As previously mentioned, participants are divided into categories based on their attitudes towards marriage. Less than one tenth of the participants got married when they were in high school. Some married participants resisted their husband's influence on their studies by asking for a divorce. Participants in this category felt that they did not have the right to choose what they wanted to study because their husbands would not give them the freedom to do so. Their husbands forced them to study certain subjects because of *Ikhtilat* or conflicts with their family responsibilities.

As a result, some married participants asked for a divorce to exercise the right to choose their field of study. Amal, a nursing lecturer, ended her marriage so it could not influence her subject choice; she clarified:

"I was married when I was in high school, and when my ex-husband knew that I wanted to study nursing, he categorically refused and made me choose between him and studying nursing. I chose to study nursing, and, eventually, we separated. Since then, I have become labelled as a divorced woman because of my choice to study nursing. He believed that the nursing profession undermined the dignity of women. He used to say he did not want to marry a nurse, as if nurses were belly dancers, for example. He said he did not mind if I wanted to study medicine, but not nursing. After my first marriage, many men asked for my hand, but they changed their minds when they learned that I was studying nursing. Honestly, there is a view that nurses are inferior."

Amal's awareness of Islamic laws helped her to find laws that help women. She found the right of divorce to be a useful tactic in staying independent in terms of choosing her career. Although her tactics eliminated the influence of her husband, they did not challenge it. Ibtisam, a media studies student, revealed that:

"Currently, many Saudi women are committed to the principle of completing their education; even if their spouses refuse, they will ask for a divorce."

According to the Prophet, "[n]ever did God allow anything more hateful to him than divorce" (Abu Dawud, n,d, p. 3). Hence, divorce in Islam is, "the most hateful of all permitted" (Ali, 1985, p. 2). Although divorce is discouraged by Islam, it is permitted when a marriage seems impossible to continue. As a result, some participants find divorce to be a way of eliminating the influences that their husband has on their educational choices. It could be said that some participants resist patriarchal constraints by obtaining divorces.

Another form of patriarchal bargaining is an obliging husband allowing his wife to complete her education and writing this down in the marriage contract. Some Saudi men agree to allow their wives to work, but very often, they change their minds after marriage.

Accordingly, they force their wives to sit at home and look after the children. For fear of this situation, women who want to study in a discipline such as medicine, law, nursing, or engineering stipulate in their marriage contracts that their spouses must allow them to work. In this way, participants can maintain their right to work after marriage. Sawzan, a law student, expressed her fears of not being able to work after being married:

"Look, let us talk realistically, it is hard to find a Saudi man who allows his wife to work in the courts. Therefore, if I get married I will ask the Sheikh to write down in my marriage contract that my husband cannot oppose my work in the courts."

Sawsan was able to choose to study law, which is a male dominated profession, because she is unmarried; thus, in her case, there was no influence of a husband on her educational choice. However, she is worried that a future husband could prevent her from working because courts are mixed-gender places. Therefore, her tactic to avoid the influence of a husband on her work is to place conditions on any marriage contract. By doing this, she has guaranteed her right to work. Husbands can prevent their wives from continuing their education after marriage due to a fear of losing authority. This is particularly the case when a husband holds a lower degree than his wife. This incompatibility in education between spouses may make a husband feel inferior, and he may thereby prevent his wife from working. Jihan, a chemistry student, reported the following:

 "When I got married, I asked my husband to allow me to continue my higher education, and I placed this as a condition in my marriage contract. . . . I did this because my aunt stopped her studies due to her husband's refusal."

In Islamic marriage contracts, legally, a woman's husband must treat her in a certain way; for example, he must allow her to work and complete her studies. Therefore, for fear of being deprived of being able to work after marriage, some participants require it to be written in the marriage contract that their husband must allow them to work or continue their education after marriage. A breach of this condition gives a woman the right to ask for a divorce. In this way, participants protect their right to work and study to the extent permitted by Islam.

On the other hand, the decision to choose a specialisation could be a fateful one for participants, because it depends on their priorities, such as motherhood or their career. The participants' awareness of the constraints of the patriarchal system help them to gain some power. This is similar to what Gerami and Lehnerer (2001) found regarding Iranian women's bargaining with the patriarchal system, as Iranian women's knowledge of the patriarchal system contributed to undermining the system's influence on their lives. However, most female students in the current study expressed their willingness to work in any job except teaching. A job has become essential to young Saudi women, and they do not want to be financially dependent on men. They want to be independent human beings and effective members of society, as Samah, a biochemistry student, openly declared:

"I was frightened when I found that the job opportunities available to me are few. I want to get a job. I do not like sitting at home and asking my husband for money. I just do not like it. I want to feel that I am an active member of society. I want to be self-reliant, since I do not like waiting for someone to give me money.

Participants resist the patriarchal system by challenging traditional gender roles. They do not accept being subject to marriage norms because they are noncompliant with the patriarchal stereotypes that men are breadwinners and women are homemakers.

2. **Delaying Marriage as an agentic choice to avoid the family-education conflict**

More than half of the interviewees believe that marriage may conflict with their studies. They think that if they get married, their husband will negatively influence their university education. Thus, they postpone marriage until after university so as not to affect their educational choices. This finding is consistent with those of Gubernskaya (2010), who found that women in Germany, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands hold non-traditional attitudes towards marriage and childbearing. The idea of postponing marriage until after graduation from university indicates female students' desires to get advanced degrees and proper jobs.

El-Haddad (2003) suggested that the spinsterhood phenomenon has become widespread in the Gulf countries amongst both women and amongst men. He attributed the prevalence of this phenomenon to the choice of remaining single, as marriage in the Gulf societies is no longer as socially valued as it was in the past. Other social standards are no less important than marriage, including obtaining an advanced academic degree and getting a decent job. By delaying their marriages, participants break from the traditional role of Saudi women. This shows that they want to avoid the negative impact that many husbands have on women's subject choices and completing higher education. The participants may worry that they will not be able to balance their private and public responsibilities, and about their husband's potential refusal to let them complete their studies. Thus, postponing marriage could be caused by a fear of their husband's influence, as Fatima, a computer science student, revealed:

"I consider marriage to be an obstacle to completing any girl's education. I currently do not think about marriage, because it is a commitment and a great responsibility that could stand in the way of my ambition. I also do not think of myself being married, since I cannot imagine myself staying at home cooking, cleaning, and raising my children. I want to travel and study abroad. I want to explore this world. Additionally, the majority of husbands do not like their wives to be successful and independent; therefore, after marriage, they prevent their wives from continuing their education."

Another significant aspect of delaying the idea of marriage is the experiences of female relatives or friends, as Samar, a computer science student, revealed:

"If I got married during my studies, it would negatively affect my education. My sister got married during her studies at university, and she was not able to balance family and her studies. She was studying computer science, which is difficult and requires effort and time. Three quarters of the girls in my class delayed marriage until after graduation. This means that Saudi girls are thinking more about their future. Surely, she does not trust her husband."

It can be concluded from the above information that participants appear to negotiate with the patriarchal constraints without changing them. They accept gender norms and power relations, whilst at the same time bargaining with the patriarchal system to maximize their choices. For instance, the roles of mother and wife are significant for Saudi women; hence, the idea of postponing marriage until after university is a tactical step that participants use to eliminate the possible negative influence that marriage may have on their education. In other words, delaying marriage might help them avoid the conflict between studying and women's traditional roles. The role of the wife in Saudi society, similar to that of other patriarchal societies, is limited to domestic work, such as cleaning, cooking, and childbearing. These family responsibilities are expected from Saudi women after marriage, but they could be a burden on women in addition to their studies or jobs.

This finding seems to be consistent with Barber and Axinn's (1998), who found that educational levels can influence the likelihood of women getting married. Women who want to complete their higher education and have careers are more likely to delay marriage or not get married. On the other hand, women who get married early often have no intention of pursuing higher education and are more likely to stay at home. Furthermore, this result is consistent with Ikamari's (2005) study, which showed that education has a great impact on women's age of marriage in Kenya; he found that whenever the educational level of Kenyan women increased, their likelihood of early marriage decreased. Ikamari highlighted that Kenyan women delay marriage to complete their education and revealed that Kenyan women in rural areas are more prone to early marriage than are those who live in urban areas.

Furthermore, Ikamari pointed out that Muslim women are more likely to marry early in life when compared to Protestant and Catholic women. Finally, Ikamari indicated that early marriage is less common amongst young women than amongst older women. These previous findings support those of the current study in terms of women's agency. Together, they suggest that women under patriarchal constraints can be either passive or active agents. Some women are more likely to bargain with the patriarchal system through tactics such as delaying marriage to continue higher education. However, other women comply with patriarchal constraints without resistance, for example, by getting married without completing higher education.

Clearly, the findings of Ikamari (2005) and the present study show the positive effects of women's education on social norms. In the past, women in Saudi Arabia and Kenya got married at very young ages due to the dominant cultural and social traditions; however, this phenomenon of early marriage has been gradually phased out due to women's commitment to pursue education. Unlike Saudi society, Kenyan society has multiple ethnic groups. Thus, postponing marriage is much more common amongst Kenyan women from Catholic and Protestant groups than amongst those from Muslim groups. This may be due to the fact that Islam promotes early marriage, as the Prophet of Islam himself married Aisha when she was 9 years old. This trend could also be due to cultural expectations of keeping women pure and protecting them from committing adultery. The changing age of first marriage amongst Saudi women could be attributed to modernisation and social changes in Saudi society. Although the participants in my study delayed getting married until they completed their higher education, delaying marriage is not accepted in Islam (Ayotola & A.H.M., 2015). According to Islamic law, men and women should not have premarital sex. Therefore, Islam encourages early marriage to protect the chastity of both men and (especially) women and to protect them from committing adultery (Ayotola & A.H.M, 2015).

Furthermore, this corroborates the ideas of Hoffnung (2004), who suggested that American women in their 20s mainly focus on career development. He also reported that American married women tend to hold bachelor's degrees and work in less-prestigious jobs than do unmarried women, who often hold advanced degrees. Finally, Hoffnung found that American married women appear to work in traditional jobs, such as teaching, to balance both family and work. From the findings of both Hoffnung (2004) and the present study, marriage could limit women's choices and their roles in the public sphere. Women who study or work in non-traditional subjects or professions may sacrifice motherhood in exchange for their studies and careers. However, this result partly differs from that of Raymo (2003), who reported that the phenomenon of delayed marriage amongst Japanese women could be attributed to educational, social, and economic factors. Japanese women's preoccupation with completing higher education, which is shown in the high number of Japanese female students enrolled in universities, may distract them from thinking about marriage.

Joining the advanced Japanese educational system has become psychologically and financially costly, and marriage may be an added burden to the other burdens that Japanese women face, such as taking care of elderly family members.

From the findings of previous studies and the current study, women across cultures believe that marriage is an impediment to obtaining academic degrees. This can be attributed to social expectations regarding women's roles, as the institution of marriage heavily relies on women. Japanese and American societies are more advanced than Saudi society in terms of women's rights and liberation. Although women still tend to do most of the domestic work in those countries, they have relatively equal rights in terms of participation in the public sphere. However, Saudi women have limited opportunities to participate in the public sphere due to the influences of patriarchal values, which are deeply rooted in Saudi society. Despite their cultural differences, these women share the same attitude towards marriage and education.

In a patriarchal society such as that of Saudi Arabia, where girls are raised to be mothers and wives, it is difficult for young women to give up such roles to study medicine or nursing. In Saudi society, married women are respected and appreciated because they are fulfilling their expected roles. On the other hand, unmarried women are seen as useless, unwanted spinsters. Some female students take responsibility for their decision to study medicine or nursing. I interviewed female students who are choosing to achieve their dreams of being doctors rather than getting married and being mothers. They know that they may not get married if they study medicine, and in spite of this, they still study it. This type of young woman exhibits agency not by challenging cultural beliefs and traditions, but rather by reacting differently towards them. Tahani is one of those young ladies; she proudly stated:

"Indeed, no one wants to marry a female doctor because she mixes with men, but we love to study medicine. Basically, it is not necessary that we get married. I want to live with my mom and dad. I want to become something important in society and then get married. It is not a problem if I do not get married. For me, marriage is the least of my interests."

From the above information, it could be said that these participants are active agents who are not compliant with the patriarchal system and who do not bargain with it; rather, they resist it. Some participants resist the traditional gender roles, particularly those concerning marriage. They choose to complete their higher education instead of being mothers and wives. These participants exercise their agency by challenging social norms and the cultural expectations that perpetuate social inequality. Education, for them, is an empowering tool for achieving equality. Although the majority of this study's participants are not aware of gender patterns, patriarchal systems, or other Western concepts, they are able to bargain with or resist patriarchal barriers and make agentic choices. All these participants aim to eliminate the influence that husbands have on their education. However, they use different tactics because they live in different conditions. In other words, they use the tactics that are available to them.

2. Compliance with patriarchal norms regarding marriage

Another important finding was the phenomenon of early marriage affecting girls' education. As previously stated, some of the participants married at an early age. Consequently, their husbands affected their education. Early marriage makes education subject to the husband's control. Such participants are compliant with patriarchal influences regarding marriage norms because they restrict their choices to certain subjects that they think will not be in conflict with traditional roles. In this regard, Sawsan, a family education student, stated:

"*I choose to study this field because I want to learn how to raise my children properly.*"

Although Sawsan's husband has not directly affected her educational choices, she feels that since she is a married woman, she should choose a subject that does not conflict with her family duties. However, some married participants' subject choices were influenced by their husband. For example, their husband may prevent them from studying certain fields, as Nouran, a medical physics student, stated:

"*I had a friend who was studying medicine. After she got married, her husband asked her to change her major to art, and she did. I think husbands are one of the factors that influence women's field choices of field.*"

The internalisation of gender roles appears to influence the participants' views. Participants who have internalised gender norms tend to choose traditional subjects and professions that do not conflict with their socially expected roles. These participants choose to accept patriarchal influences without bargaining or resistance. Instead, they comply with the patriarchal system. They accept marriage at a young age and their husband's influence on their education, because they have internalised the traditional gender roles. Cultural expectations about gender roles influence the participants' views about their own abilities and qualities. These internalised cultural beliefs about gender direct some participants to choose certain subjects. The participants in this study appear to make gender-stereotypic decisions because they internalise the traditional gender roles. Even if subjects like engineering or aviation are available to women, these participants have difficulty allowing themselves to study such subjects. Ridgeway (2011) argued:

> "Embedded in gender stereotypes are status beliefs that associate men and their traits with higher status than women and their traits. . . . The status implications of gender stereotypes associate men with greater overall competence, understood as the ability to master events and accomplish goals, while also granting each sex some specialised skills. Thus, the content of gender stereotypes implies not only difference between the sexes but also inequality" (p. 89).

Participants internalise traditional gender roles, and this internalisation influences their behaviour. In other words, holding beliefs in essentialised gender roles with regards to certain subjects could influence participants' attitudes and perceptions. Those participants who perceive subjects such as engineering, aviation, and politics as being in the masculine domain might think that such subjects require qualities that are inconsistent with female cultural expectations. Thus, they may question their abilities and eventually become less interested in studying such fields. Furthermore, participants may avoid stereotypically male subjects because of perceptions of their own qualities. They may feel that these activities are irrelevant or that they do not have the ability to perform them. As Bandura (1990) reported, "people's beliefs about their capabilities affect what they choose to do, how much effort they mobilise and how long they will persevere in the face of difficulties" (p. 9). However, the participants may be unconsciously influenced by the prevalent gender stereotypes, as clarified by Wood and Eagly (2010):

> "Although social categories such as gender may be automatically activated outside of awareness and without conscious intent, such activation does not always occur. Even when gender stereotypes have been activated, perceivers can control their potential effects on judgments, given sufficient motivation and cognitive resources. However, in the hurly-burly of daily life, people often lack the motivation or resources to exert this control" (p. 637).

Participants who are influenced by this theme develop their identities in accordance with their expected roles, as stated by Freeman (2005), who found that Moroccan women construct independence in the context of their family's expectations of males and females. Apparently, early marriage can affect Saudi women's subject choices, as their husbands are dominant figures in the marital relationship. The present findings show that husbands influence their wife's decision about which subjects to study. This fits with the findings of Alexander and Reilly (1981), who suggested that early marriage affects women more than men in terms of educational attainment. This is because women have more family commitments than men.

Early marriage does also affect men, however. A detailed examination of the effect of early marriage in a study by Kerckhoff and Parrow (1979) showed that early marriage affects the educational attainment of male high school students. Although my participants believe that this phenomenon is more prevalent in villages and remote areas, they think that some families in cities and urban regions prefer to marry off their daughters at a young age. They confirm that young women who get married at an early age may not be able to pursue a university education or may drop out of university because of the opposition of their husband. They clarify that some husbands may believe that women should be familiar with reading and writing only, and that a high school education is enough. They also indicate that some husbands think women should stay at home to take care of their family. In contrast, according to my participants, some young women who get married when they are in high school choose not to pursue a university education, particularly if they are pregnant or have children. Ameerah, a physics lecturer, clearly stated that early marriage is a pervasive phenomenon:

"King Faisal was a brave man when he faced society as a whole and made education compulsory for women. We now need a brave decision to stop underage

marriage. This phenomenon is abnormally widespread in Saudi Arabia. The argument is that the Prophet married Aisha when she was a child, but the Prophet married her to fulfil a divine order. There are also Hadiths that deny that the Prophet married Aisha when she was 10 years old, saying that she was 17 years old. Even if this is true, they are not prophets, and not all women are like Aisha."

The practice of early marriage in Saudi Arabia is justified by using the Prophet Mohammed as a role model, as the Prophet married Aisha when she was 9 years old and he was in his 50s. Although some people believe that the Prophet Mohammed married Aisha because of a divine order, there is no religious purpose for an elderly man to marry a child. Based on the participants' views, this phenomenon is very common in rural areas and less common in urban areas. Some fathers who live in villages marry off their young daughters for either social or economic reasons.

It is socially preferable for women in Saudi Arabia to marry as early as possible. Furthermore, the social expectation is for women in Saudi Arabia to be mothers, raise children, and take care of domestic work, which could cause not only parents, but also the girls themselves to accept marrying at a young age. Some fathers think that an early marriage can protect their daughters from committing sins or ending up in poverty. Interestingly, this finding goes hand in hand with that of Maertens (2013), who found that, in Indian villages, parents' educational aspirations for their daughters are lower than their educational aspirations for their sons. Maertens referred to these gender differences as social traditions, for the socially acceptable age of marriage in Indian villages is 18 for girls and 22 for boys. These data must be interpreted with caution because early marriage exists in Saudi society; however it is not very prevalent, as it has not become a phenomenon as it has in other countries.

According to Singh and Samara (1996), the phenomenon of early marriage is most widespread in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; it is less prevalent in the Middle East and North Africa. Early marriage rates are lower in countries where most people hold high school certificates. In the same way, Raj et al. (2014) noted the impact of education on reducing early marriage rates in South Asia; they found that primary education is inadequate in minimising child marriage in countries such as

Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and India. Conversely, Raj et al. identified secondary education as helping to limit child marriage in those countries. Similarly, Smith and Celikaksoy (2007) found that school dropout rates amongst immigrants in Denmark are high because of early marriage, which is common in that group. Additionally, these findings mirror those obtained by Kaptanoğlu and Ergöçmen (2014), who showed that the incidence of early marriage in Turkey has been declining since the late 1970s. However, Kaptanoğlu and Ergöçmen revealed that early marriage is still prevalent amongst less-educated girls in some regions of Turkey, notably underdeveloped or rural areas. Although in Turkey the law prohibits child marriage, some customs and traditions are more powerful than laws. Kaptanoğlu and Ergöçmen indicated that some parents circumvent the law by marrying off their daughters through what is known as religious marriage. Overall, previous studies have demonstrated the link between education and early marriage. It is less common in urban areas and amongst educated families. Furthermore, a family's social and economic situation appears to play a role in the prevalence of early marriage.

The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is that customs, traditions, and religion shape marriage in Saudi society. Most of the thoughts and practices related to marital life in other patriarchal societies are similar. Another result of compliance with the patriarchal system is the fear of spinsterhood. A common perception amongst the participants is that Saudi men prefer to marry women who work in segregated workplaces and are reluctant to marry those who work in mixed workplaces. Some disciplines reduce the chances of a woman getting married, including medicine and nursing, which are amongst the specialties currently available at Saudi universities which some female students are reluctant to study. Female graduates and students in these disciplines are facing pressure from parents and society as a whole.

A woman who decides to study medicine or nursing sacrifices her future as a mother. The participants also emphasise that university laws do not support female students marrying whilst studying at medical colleges, because the period of maternity leave is only 1 week, compared to up to 3 months for married female students at other colleges.

This is because of a difference in the study systems of the medical colleges and other colleges. In this context, Munira described the suffering of a female doctor who could not find someone to marry:

"The girl studied at the College of Medicine; no one would marry her, and she will become a spinster. She is one of the girls from our village, and she is older than me. She was the first girl from my village who studied medicine. One day, a guy from our village asked for her hand, and he made her choose between marrying him and leaving medical school, or not marrying him and staying in the school. She chose to carry on with her studies at medical college."

The fear of spinsterhood that causes this reluctance amongst Saudi female students to study disciplines such as medicine or nursing reveals the importance of marriage in the lives of these young women. As a result, some participants prefer to study traditional subjects such as education. This could be because such choices fit with traditions and customs related to not mixing with men, and choosing a career that is suitable for a married woman who has family commitments.

As reported by Klasen and Lamanna (2009), the majority of women in Saudi Arabia work in the educational sector. Since the majority of this study's participants have internalised the traditional gender roles, they believe that their main purpose in life is to be a mother and a wife; any matter that interferes with these roles should be disregarded. On the phenomenon of the reluctance of Saudi men to marry female doctors, Nadeen, a chemistry lecturer, spoke at length about the current situation Saudi female doctors face as compared to their situation in the 1980s. She stated that the status of Saudi female doctors in the current period has significantly improved relative to their status in the past:

"The girl who studies medicine will not marry unless she is lucky enough to marry a male doctor, but our society is selfish and masculine. You will find that even the male doctor refuses to marry a female doctor; for example, male doctors always think that they are busy most of the time. Thus, they want to marry a woman who sits in the house, which is what we encounter in our society. Thus, girls are afraid to study medicine. However, I think that this view has recently changed. In my life

twenty years ago, it was not recommended for a girl to study medicine. My twin sister studied medicine for two years, but she could not complete her studies because of disappointments, such as that she would never get married and would become a spinster. Consequently, she changed her subject to chemistry like I did. Currently, the situation is different; for example, I encourage my daughters to study medicine or engineering because they are new and available specialties. There is also a great demand for these disciplines. For example, my niece is studying law, and the other one is studying computer engineering."

This finding is inconsistent with those of Paker-William (2009), who found that educated African American women value marriage more than their mothers, who have negative perceptions of males and marriage; they do not want to be single female workers, but they prefer to have both a husband and a job. These young African American women have traditional attitudes towards female roles. They have learned from their mothers' contradictory perceptions of women's roles. They believe that women are equal to men, but at the same time, they see the husband as the mainstay of the house. Nourhan, a student, refuted the reasons that Saudi men say prevent them from marrying female doctors:

"For me, I do not want my brother to marry a female doctor—not because of Ikhtilat but because she will be busy. Whoever marries a female doctor has to get used to her sometimes neglecting her home and her husband, as this is beyond her capacity. The role of women in the house is great. There is no difference if a man is a doctor or a teacher. Men can spend long hours working outside the home, but a mother's presence in the home is necessary."

Some female students have decided not to study medicine or nursing from the beginning for fear of spinsterhood or not getting married. Some female students also have challenged society and joined medical or nursing schools. These two subjects are socially unacceptable because of *Ikhtilat*, as men work in hospitals and dispensaries. However, a husband's family can also have a negative attitude towards women who study or work in nursing; Neermin, another lecturer at a nursing school, addressed the attitude of her mother-in-law:

"When my husband proposed to me, he did not tell his family that I was studying nursing; instead, he told them that I was studying medicine. Even when his mother came to our house, she said to my mother, 'We want your daughter for my son because she is a doctor.' However, when she knew that I was studying nursing, she flooded me with hurtful questions such as whether I would inject a needle into a patient's body. However, praise be to Allah, I proved myself and became a lecturer in our department."

As a consequence, there is a common belief in Saudi society that most female nurses or doctors are unmarried spinsters. Even I believed this until I interviewed a number of Saudi female nurses and surprisingly found that most of them are either married or engaged. This may indicate that Saudi society's view of female nurses and doctors has positively changed and that some Saudi men accept that their daughters, sisters, or wives work as nurses or doctors in hospitals. This may be due to the saturation of the women's educational sector and the high rates of unemployment amongst female graduates in the educational disciplines.

7.4 Conclusion

All in all, the participants' attitudes towards marriage are different. The patriarchal system has assigned men and women to certain roles, and the participants appear to some extent, to have internalised the traditional gender roles. Therefore, some of them accept the traditional norms regarding marriage and compliance with the patriarchal system. However, others bargain with or resist the patriarchal system. As a result, all my participants are active agents, and have deployed their agency differently. Active agents exercise their agency by either asking for a divorce or by postponing marriage. Some Islamic family laws can allow wives to minimise their husband's influence. Some of the participants in this study exercised the rights that are guaranteed by Islam to avoid the effect of their husband.

On the other hand, the education of some participants was affected by their husbands, as they got married at a young age. These women do not resist or bargain with patriarchal constraints, but rather are compliant with them. The participants were able to exercise their limited agency by negotiating with the patriarchal system. Their tactics were different depending on their situation.

For example, unmarried participants were not affected by a husband's influence when they chose their subjects, because they postponed marriage. Conversely, some of the married participants asked for a divorce to avoid their husband's influence, and others accepted the influence of their husband on their subject choice.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This study explored women's educational choices in Saudi higher education. It focused on the different views of women in Saudi society and how such views influence women's subject choices. This chapter gives a summary of my study, describing the findings, discussing the implications and limitations of the study, as well as suggesting further studies. The main aim of this study was to understand how gender expectations or norms influence these subject choices. In order to achieve this aim, I investigated the factors affecting women's educational choices, as well as women's views and attitudes towards certain subjects. This study did not treat the participants as a homogenous group, and in order to answer the research questions I adopted a qualitative method, that made use of interview questions. I also adopted narrative approach for this study (Chase, 1995) in order to understand the different experiences of women with regards to their educational choices.

My findings show the importance of understanding women's agency in making educational choices. Women resist, negotiate, bargain or accommodate patriarchal influences. On the whole, the literature on Saudi women does not discuss the influence of gender structures on women's subject choices. Furthermore, they overlook how women exercise their agency in order to mitigate the effects of a patriarchal system on their education. In this study I have attempted to fill this gap in knowledge about Saudi women's experiences in higher education.

2. *Ikhtilat* as a patriarchal influence in shaping Saudi women's experiences in higher education

Patriarchal influences and gender expectations lead Saudi women to choose the study of particular fields at university level. These patriarchal influences may take the form of a father's intervention in their educational choices. However, the patriarchal system works differently depending on a woman's father. Some women bargain with patriarchal constraints, whilst others accommodate patriarchal constraints. Accordingly, women's agency is deployed differently depending on their attitudes towards gender norms and their father.

In other words, some women come from traditional families and choose stereotypically feminine subjects because they want to meet their expected roles. On the other hand, some women from non-traditional families want to study traditionally masculine subjects. The father's attitude is reflected in the reasoning behind some women's choices to study traditionally masculine university fields of study, and others to reject them.

Women's subject choices were influenced too by whether the subject requires them to mix with unrelated men (*Ikhtilat*). Despite the ongoing debates amongst Saudi clerics around *Ikhtilat and* whether it is prohibited or permissible in Islam, the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fatwa* states that *Ikhtilat* is forbidden in Islam, based on its interpretations of the *Quran* and *Hadith*. Saudi people respect and trust in the Saudi state religious institution, which has great influence on Saudi public opinions. The reason for the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* is to protect a family's honour. In the Saudi context, this is linked to the chastity and purity of its female members (Kulczycki & Windle, 2011). Women who are involved in sexual relationships outside of marriage are perceived by society as impure and ineligible for marriage. Consequently, they bring shame to their family.

Saudi fathers are concerned that if their daughters work in places where they mix with unrelated men, they might become involved in sexual relationships. As a result, they prevent their daughters from studying subjects like medicine, media studies or nursing that would require working in the mixed environments of hospitals or TV stations. Some women wanted to study such subjects but their fathers prevented them because of *Ikhtilat*. Other women were able to study such subjects because their fathers were open to *Ikhtilat*. The difference in fathers' attitudes towards *Ikhtilat* is linked to their level of education and openness. Some fathers studied abroad, or at co-educational universities for example, which caused them to interact with different cultures. As result, they were more likely to see the prohibition of *Ikhtilat* as a social custom rather than as one of the Islamic teachings. On the other hand, there are women who self-impose restrictions on their education because of *Ikhtilat*. They believe that *Ikhtilat* is forbidden in Islam; therefore they should not study fields that require *Ikhtilat*.

Those women show a high degree internalisation of gender roles and expectations. Thus, they accommodate the patriarchal structures.

3. The differences amongst Muslim traditionalists and Muslim modernists on subject segregation

Participants' perceptions vary of the traditionally male subjects such as aviation, engineering, the judiciary and politics. Some women used religion in order to justify their views towards those subjects. The participants' views vary depending on their interpretations of Islam. Traditionalists - those who follow the traditional interpretations of Islam - support full subject segregation. They believe that such subjects are inappropriate for women according to their interpretations of *Quranic* verses and prophetic *Hadith*. Conversely, modernists - those who follow modern interpretations of Islam - argue that these subjects are not in conflict with Islam and should therefore be available to women. They claim that such subjects are appropriate for women based on their understanding of the *Quran* and *Hadith*.

The participants in this study opposed to women studying these subjects are mainly conservative or adopt the traditionalist interpretations of Islam, and are against changing the status quo of women. On the other hand, participants who think that traditions and customs are the reason behind the monopoly of these disciplines by men are more likely to follow modern interpretations of Islam and to call for change. The traditionalists internalise the traditional gender norms that derive from the patriarchal interpretations of Islam. Accordingly, they do not challenge the patriarchal system but rather they are in compliance with it. Aviation and media studies are examples of fields that are seen by the traditionalists as male fields that are inappropriate for women and conflict with Islamic teachings.

They believe that it is forbidden for Muslim women to travel without a male guardian or "*mahram*". Similarly, the traditionalist participants feel that the judiciary is not suitable for women because they believe that the employment of women in the judiciary is against Islam. Modernists, on the other hand, feel that women should be able to study the same disciplines as men. Modernist participants do not consider aviation, politics and the judiciary to be in conflict with Islam.

Rather, they believe that Islam strongly urges women to seek knowledge and education. Modernists, to some extent, do not internalise gender norms and thus resist patriarchal influences. In my sample, a great number could be described as traditionalists. Almost three quarters of the female students and lecturers are traditionalists. There is no difference between female students and lecturers in this regard. The nature of the field/profession itself influences whether it is perceived as suitable or not suitable for women and is another factor that influences women's subject choices.

4. The influences of gendered models of females and males in justifying subject segregation

Some women support full subject segregation because they hold essentialised views of gender roles. They seem to hold strong essentialised views of gender roles and indicated that subjects such as aviation, the judiciary and engineering could be inconsistent with women's qualities. Gender norms assigned by the patriarchal structure cause some participants to associate men with certain subjects. Participants who hold essentialised views of gender roles are reluctant to study engineering or aviation because they do not perceive them as suitable roles for women. They view women as physically weak and that engineering, for example, is beyond the physical capabilities of a woman. The softness and tenderness, which is associated with women, by both women participants and within patriarchal ideology, may make it difficult for them to work as engineers. They argue that engineering is suitable for men because men have the physical and emotional qualities to perform such work.

Those women believe that such subjects are in conflict with the expected roles of women. The gendered model of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners influences their views of subjects like aviation and politics. They argue that aviation is in conflict with their domestic roles. In their view, female pilots would not fulfil their assigned roles, as they would need to be away from home for long periods. Similarly, they also see women as emotional and thus unsuitable for the judiciary. They argue that women are not able to control their emotions, whilst men can put their emotions aside and think with their minds; therefore the judiciary is more suitable for men.

However, other women support part subject segregation since they hold less essentialised views of gender roles. For example, some members of this group claim that women cannot study subjects like aviation and petroleum engineering that in their view require physical exertion; however, they can study soft subjects which do not require physical exertion such as the judiciary and politics. Others argue that aviation and engineering are suitable for women, and at the same time perceive the judiciary as inappropriate for women, who they see as emotional. There is also a group of participants who believe that men and women are equal and thus should study the same subjects.

This study shows how the status of the subject influences women's educational choices. The status of the subject in the Saudi context has been shaped by social norms and religious beliefs. Subjects like nursing have a low status in Saudi society because of its working conditions, such as long working hours, mixing with men (*Ikhtilat*) and low pay. Subjects like medicine have a high status in Saudi society, since it is a well-paid profession. Nursing was the subject mentioned most often by the participants as an example of a low status subject. It is the most controversial subject available to women because of its nature. There is a lack of respect for nurses and the nursing profession amongst Saudis, as it is associated with non-Saudis. Despite the growing number of Saudi nurses the status of nursing has not changed. The tasks performed by nurses are seen in the Saudi context as being closer to domestic work.

5. **Saudi women bargaining with a patriarchal system to avoid the influence of marriage on their education**

The tasks involved in nursing are seen as menial by most Saudis, and there is a misperception of nurses in Saudi society, who are seen as maids. *Ikhtilat* was seen as one of the main factors that negatively affect the image of nursing in Saudi society. Working in mixed places such as hospitals makes female nurses subject to sexual blackmail and harassment. Another factor that contributes to the low status of nursing is the long working hours, which are in conflict with their roles as mothers and wives. As a result, men are reluctant to marry female nurses. A further factor is the inferiority of a nurse to a doctor in terms of the job and degree needed.

Accordingly, the participants view the relationship between doctors and nurses as resembling the relationship between the master and the servant. This study also shows how agency plays out and is used by different types of Saudi women. Most of the participants agree that home is the natural place for a woman and that being a housewife is the fundamental role for a woman. However, they act differently when they have to choose between their studies and marriage. The participants were divided into three categories regarding their attitudes towards marriage. Although most of the participants internalise traditional marriage norms, their attitudes towards marriage vary greatly. They exercise agency by resisting or bargaining with the patriarchal system. The first category of participants was married, and resisted their husband's influence on their studies by asking for a divorce.

They felt that they did not have the right to choose what they wanted to study because their husbands would not give them the freedom to do so. Their husbands forced them to study certain subjects because of *Ikhtilat* or because of conflicts with their family responsibilities. As a result, they resisted the patriarchal system by exercising their legitimate Islamic rights. This includes women being able to ask for a divorce to eliminate the influence of their husband on their education. Although divorce is discouraged by Islam, it is permitted when a marriage seems impossible to continue. As a consequence, some participants find divorce to be a way of eliminating the influence that their husband has on their educational choices. Another form of patriarchal bargaining is finding an "obliging" husband who allows his wife to complete her education, and writes this into the marriage contract.

Some Saudi men agree to allow their wives to work, but very often change their minds after marriage. Accordingly, they force their wives to sit at home and look after the children. Fearing this situation, women who want to study in a discipline such as medicine, law, nursing, or engineering stipulate in their marriage contracts that their spouses must allow them to work. Participants resist or negotiate patriarchal constraints without changing them. They accept gender norms and power relations whilst at the same time bargaining with the patriarchal system to maximise their choices. For instance, the roles of mother and wife are significant for Saudi women.

Hence, the idea of postponing marriage until after university is a tactical step that participants use to eliminate the possible negative influences that marriage may have on their education. In other words, delaying marriage might help them to avoid the conflict between studying and women's traditional roles. The role of the wife in Saudi society is similar to that of other patriarchal societies, limited to domestic work such as cleaning, cooking, and childbearing. These family responsibilities are expected from Saudi women after marriage, but could also be a burden on women in addition to their studies or jobs.

The second category of participants are reluctant to get married whilst they are studying, as they see marriage as a commitment and great responsibility that would stand in the way of their education. They think that if they get married, their husband will negatively influence their university education. Thus, they postpone marriage until after university so as not to affect their educational choices. Therefore, they bargain with patriarchal influences by postponing marriage until after they graduate from university. Finally, there are participants who comply with patriarchal norms without negotiating or bargaining. They get married at an early age and accept the influence of their husband on their education. Such participants are compliant with patriarchal influences regarding marriage norms so, they restrict their choices to certain subjects that they think will not be in conflict with traditional roles.

This group of participants is mainly studying traditional subjects such as education, as these subjects do not conflict with their family responsibilities. Furthermore, they avoid professions that might require evening-shift hours, such as nursing or medicine. The internalisation of gender norms and roles appears to influence their views, choosing traditional subjects and professions that do not conflict with the roles expected by society. These participants accept patriarchal influences without resistance. Instead, they comply with the patriarchal system. Thus, they accept marriage at a young age and their husband's influence on their education. Cultural expectations about gender roles influence the participants' views of their own abilities and qualities. These internalised cultural beliefs about gender direct some participants to choose certain subjects.

8.6 Implications of the study

The findings of my study have a number of significant implications for higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. This study discusses an interdisciplinary topic that brings two different fields together. That is, educational research based on a feminist perspective that addresses women's experiences within Saudi higher education. One of the major insights is regarding the influence of gender structures on Saudi women's subject choices. It clearly shows different women's attitudes towards traditionally masculine subjects such as aviation, politics, engineering and the judiciary. This study reveals that the majority of Saudi women internalise the traditional gender roles and that these traditional views of gender roles affect their educational choices. Such findings suggest that the majority of Saudi women are likely to be reluctant to study traditionally masculine subjects, if they were available to them. However, in the past, there was reluctance amongst Saudi women to study subjects like medicine because of *Ikhtilat*. This attitude has gradually changed as more women have become interested in medicine, particularly now there are fewer jobs in education available. Accordingly, women's attitudes towards the traditionally masculine subjects could change, especially if there were successful female role models in these subjects.

This study revealed a high demand from women for recently available subjects such as law and engineering. This indicates that there are prospects for change in women's higher education subject choices, particularly, if the Saudi government continues to make male-dominated fields available to females. Historically, women's education in Saudi Arabia was founded in the sixties based on a royal decree. Social changes in Saudi Arabia very often come from the Government and are gradually accepted by members of society. The current Government's initiatives are helping to expand women's education, especially in terms of certain fields of study. Accordingly, in the near future Saudi women will have more options in terms of university subjects. During the interviews, many of the Saudi women expressed their desire to work in non-teaching professions. They identified a need to open non-teaching subjects to increase women's job opportunities. This study helps us to understand how patriarchal systems work differently depending on a woman's father in the Saudi context. The research shows how important the father's influence is on a woman's education.

Women who come from a non-traditional family are more likely to resist or bargain with the patriarchal system. Women who come from a traditional family are more likely to accommodate the patriarchal system. Two different forms of patriarchal influence on Saudi women's education can be seen: the influence of fathers and gender internalisation. These two forms shape women's experiences within higher education.

The findings of this study help to identify the reasons for fathers' decisions in relation to their daughter's education. The findings highlight that a father's influence is most strongly linked to their attitudes towards *Ikhtilat*. Moreover, the findings of this study contribute to showing how femininity is understood in the Saudi context. An important implication is that Saudi women are active agents who can make agentic choices. The findings of this study demonstrate that not all women in Saudi Arabia accommodate the patriarchal system, but there are women who exercise limited power by resisting and bargaining with the patriarchal system. The findings show how the factors that influence women's and fathers' attitudes interlink and overlap. The findings demonstrate that Saudi women are not a homogenous group, but have a range of different experiences within higher education. This study gives Saudi women a voice in expressing their views and attitudes towards sensitive issues like *Ikhtilat* and gender norms, as well as listening to their opinions and dreams about the future of women's higher education in Saudi Arabia.

Appendix A: Interview schedule for students

The interview schedule is designed to gather information on female students' perceptions of gender and subject choices in Saudi higher education. The study is purely an academic exercise and all information gathered will be handled as strictly confidential. I would be thankful if all questions were answered .

(A) Background information
- Age
- Field of study
- Year of study
- Type of high school (public or private(
- Parents' educational level
- Parents' occupation
- University name

(B) The social and cultural factors influencing female students' subject choices

1. What are the reasons for choosing this particular academic subject?

2. What are the reasons to continue your higher education?

3. Did you face any challenges when you chose your field of study?

4. What is the role of relatives and your tribe in your decision to study a particular subject?

5. What was your parents' attitude when you decided to study this subject?

6. Do you think your current field of study would affect you as a mother and wife in the future? And why?

7. Do some cultural values (traditions and customs) of your society affect your education? If so, in what way?

8 .Do you think being a veiled or unveiled woman might affect your decision when choosing your academic field?

9 .How might the male guardian's permission affect your decision to study this subject?

(C) Students' perceptions of the effects of gender on subject choices at university

1. Why do you think some courses are not currently available to female students?

2. Are there any courses that you think should be available to female students?

3 .How would you feel if the Ministry of Higher Education made courses such as engineering open to female students?

4 .Why do you think these courses should not be available?

(D) The implications of limited subject choices on students' future careers

1. What career would you like to go into?

2. What future career options are open to you?

3 .Do you think the courses available to you will affect your future career? Why?

4 .What do you think the reasons are for the high rate of unemployment of female graduates?

5 .Do you think you will achieve your dreams and ambitions ?

 6 .What factors might help or hinder these goals?

Appendix B: Interview schedule for lecturers

The interview schedule is designed to gather information on female lecturers' perceptions of gender and subject choices in Saudi higher education. The study is purely an academic exercise and all information gathered will be handled strictly confidential. I would be thankful if all questions were answered.

(A)   Background information

-      Age

-      Years of experience

-      Field taught

      -University name

(B) The social and cultural factors influencing female students' subject choices

1. Tell me about your academic history and how you came to be where you are now?.

2 .Did you face any challenges when you chose your field of study?

3 .What do you think the reasons are for students to choose a particular field of study?

4 .Do some cultural values (traditions and customs) of your society affect students' education? If so, in what way?

5 .How do current reforms aimed at empowering Saudi women in society affect your role as a university lecturer?

6. From your experience as a lecturer, have you ever come across a student who was dissatisfied with her subject?

(C) Lecturers' perceptions of the effects of gender on subject choices at university

1. Why do you think some courses are not currently available to female students?

2. Are there any courses that you think should be available to female students?

3. How would you feel if the Ministry of Higher Education made courses such as engineering open to female students?

4. Why do you think these courses should not be available?

5. From your experience as a lecturer, have you ever come across a student who was dissatisfied with her subject? If yes, why?

(D) The implications of limited subject choices on students' future careers

1 .What are the reasons for choosing an academic career?

2. What are the job options available to your students?

3. Tell me about the curricular in your departments and how they cope with the current reforms in Saudi society in terms of empowering Saudi women.

4. What are changes you would like to see in your field?

5. To what extent do the cultural values of your community affect your teaching style?

I understand that I am being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jawaher Alwedinani.

I understand that the purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of female students and lecturers concerning gender and limited subject choices in Saudi higher education. I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from participation at any time during the interview or for up to one week after completion of the interview. At that time, I know that I may indicate whether or not the data collected up to that point can be used in the study, and that any information I do not want used will be destroyed immediately. I understand that if any of the topics discussed make me feel uncomfortable or distressed, I do not have to continue participating in the discussion.

I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded, and this recording may later be transcribed. I understand that I will have an opportunity to comment on the written record once it has been produced, for accuracy only. I understand that the information gathered from me will be confidential (no one other than the researcher will hear my responses) and anonymous (no one will be able to identify which responses I have given). I accept that the information gathered from me will be used for academic purposes .

Do you agree to participate in the study?

Yes ___ No___

Name of participant_____ :

Signature of participant_____ :

Glossary

Arabic Term	Definition in English
Fatwa	Religious opinion
Fitna	Temptation
Haram	Forbidden in Islam
Ikhtilat	Mingling or socializing between women and unrelated men.
Ihtisab	The promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice according to Islamic teachings.
Mahram	Male guardian, the protector of a woman, who could be her father, brother or husband.
Qiwamah	"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women," (Roded, 2008, p 28).
Sahwa movement	Awakening movement
Zina	Adultery

References

Abu-Baker, K. (2005). The impact of social values on the psychology of gender among Arab couples: A view from psychotherapy. *Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, 42(2), 106–114.

Alexander, A. & Welzel, C. (2011). "Islam and patriarchy: How robust is Muslim support for patriarchal values?" *World Values Research*,4(2), 40–70 .

Al-Bassam, I. (1984). Institutions of higher education for women in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 4(3), 255-258

Adely, F. (2004). The Mixed Effects of Schooling for High School Girls in Jordan: The Case of Tel Yahya. *Comparative Education Review,*48 (4), 353-373.

Adler, S., & Goodman, J. (1986). Critical theory as a foundation for methods courses. *Jouml of Teacher Education, 37,* 2-8.

Agger B. (1993). *Gender, Culture and Power: Toward a Feminist Postmodern Critical Theory.* Greenwich, CT: Praeger

Aksan, N., Kisac, B., Aydin, M., & Demirbuken, S. (2009). Symbolic interaction theory. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *1*, 902-904. Retrieved from ScienceDirect database.

The Ouran, *Al-Ahzab*,32 &33.

Al-Fayez, K (1978). Economic development of Saudi Arabia: a case study of the government propelled economy (unpublished doctoral thesis). Oklahoma University, USA.

AL-Ghathami, A. (2015). *After the awakening movement.* Morocco: Arab Cultural Centre.

Al-Jarrah, I. (2013). Associate nursing students' perceptions toward nursing profession in Jordan. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(6), 147–166.

Al-Khateeb, S. (2007). The oil boom and its impact on women and families in Saudi Arabia. In A. Alsharekh (Ed.) The gulf family: Kinship, policies, and modernity (pp. 83-108), London: Middle East Institute.

Allen, B. J. (2000). Learning the ropes: A black feminist standpoint analysis. In P. M. Buzzanell (Ed.), *Rethinking organizational & managerial communication from feminist perspectives* (pp. 177-208). Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage.

Al-Misnad (1995). *Fatwas on Ikhtilat and Khulwa*. Riyadh: Dar AL-Qassim.

AL-Mohsen, M. (2000). An exploratory study on the views of modernization of educated Saudi women (unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Pittsburgh, United States.

Al-Mohamed, A .(2008). Saudi women's rights: stuck at a red light. *Arab Insihght*,2(1),45-51 Retrieved from www.arabinsight.org. [accessed 12th December 2015]

Al-Omar, B. (2004). Knowledge, attitudes and intentions of high school students towards the nursing profession in Riyadh city, Saudi Arabia. *Saudi medical Journal*, 25(2), 150-155.

Al-Otaibi, A. (5th April, 2014). Muslim Brotherhood and Saudi Arabia …the whole story. *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Newspaper*, 12012. Retrieved from http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?issueno=12912&article=767266#.Vy9f udJQ6ko

Al-Rawaf, H., & Simmons, C. (1991). The education of women in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Comparative Education*, 77, 187-295.

Alriyadh Newspaper. (2010). Ghamdi: Declared *Ikhtilat* is permissible in Islam. Retrieved from www.alriyadh.com

AL-Saif, M. (February, 2013). Gender Segregation in Higher Education. *Arab news*, Retrieved from http://www.arabnews.com/gender-segregation-higher-education

AL-Saif, T. (2014). Political Islam in Saudi Arabia: recent trends and future prospects. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*,7(3), 398-420.

Al-Sayegh, N. (2005, March). The prospects of Saudi women's participation in the municipal councils and the right to vote. A paper presented at the symposium of the Saudi Management Association on 3/3/2005 .

Al-Sayegh, N. (2013). A proposed strategy for Saudi women's participation in the decision-making. *The journal of Arab studies in education and psychology,* 37(2), 4-56 .

Al-Sheikh (2010). *Ikhtilat* is permissible and it is not prohibited by Islam. *Al-Jazirah Newspaper*, Retrieved from www.al-jazirah.com

Al-Shubaili, A. (2011). *King Faisal: Prince and king*. Riyadh: King Faisal centre for research and Islamic studies.

EL-Sherbeeny, A. (2014, June 15-18). Highlighting the need for engineering education for females in Saudi Arabia. Paper presented at 121st ASEE Annual conference & exposition, Indianapolis.

Alsweel, R .(n.d). Education and the role of women in Saudi Arabia. Doctoral thesis, George Mason university, US .

Al-Thagafi, H. (2006). Change of attitudes towards nursing of a sample of Saudi youth engaged in a counselling program: Experimental study of a sample of students. (Master's thesis), department of social sciences, Prince Naif University for Security Sciences

AL-Torki, S. (1986). *Women in Saudi Arabia : Ideology and behavior among the elite.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Al-Turaif, G. (2014). The obstacles of the empowerment of Saudi woman in the labor market. *The future of Arab education Journal*,21(88), 12-107.

Altwaiji, M. (2011). Twenty-First Century Arab Feminism: a movement from Islamic to the Secular, *International Journal in English*,2(5), 175-183.

Apple, M. (1990). *Ideology and curriculum* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge, Chapman, & Hall.

Archer, J. (2000). Sex differences in aggression between heterosexual partners: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*,126(5), 651–680

Asselin, M. E. (2003). Insider research: Issues to consider when doing qualitative research in your own setting. *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development, 19*(2), 99-103.

Adler, S. , & Goodman, J. (1986). Critical theory as a foundation for methods courses. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(4), 2-8.

Aswad, N. & Vidican, G. & Samulewicz, D. (2011). Creating a knowledge-based economy in the United Arab Emirates: Realizing the unfulfilled potential of women in the science, technology and engineering fields. *European journal of engineering education*, 36(6), 559-570.

Baki, R. (2004). Gender segregation education in Saudi Arabia: Its impact on social norms and the Saudi labour market. *Education policy analysis archives,* 12(28), Retrieved from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v12n28./

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Journal of Qualitative Research*, 15, 219-234.

Bhasin, K. (1993). *What is patriarchy?* New Delhi: Women Unlimited.

Bohman, J. (2005). Critical theory. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from: http:/plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/

Bonnot, V., & Croizet, J.-C. (2007). Stereotype internalization, math perceptions, and occupational choices of women with counter-stereotypical university majors. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, 66(3), 169-178.

Bradley, K. (2000) The incorporation of women into higher education: paradoxical outcomes? *Sociology of Education*, 73 (1), 1 – 18.

Bratti, M. (2006). Social class and undergraduate degree subject in the UK. Economia, IZA Discussion Paper no.1979 , Retrieved from http://www.iza.org/

Brooks, J. G., & Brooks, M. G. (1993). *In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Bagguley, P. and Hussain, Y. (2016) Negotiating mobility: South Asian women and higher education. *Sociology,* 50 (1), 43 – 59.

Bruner, E. M. (1984). Introduction: The opening up of anthropology. In S. Plattner & E. M Bruner (Eds.), Text, play, and story: The construction and reconstruction of self and society (pp. 1-16). Washington, DC: The American Ethnological Society.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*.(2nd Ed), New York: Oxford University Press.

Buisson, J. (2013). Gender Segregation in Islam :Protection or Destruction?. *Kufa review*,2(1),99-122.

Charrad, M. (2011). Gender in the Middle East: Islam, state, agency. *The annual review of sociology,* 37, 417-437.

Chase, L. (1995) Ambiguous Empowerment: The Work Narratives of Women School Superintendents, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press

Chunghee, S. (1993). Fathers and Daughters: Paternal influence among Korean women in politics. *Ethos*, 21(1), 53-78 .

Clarke, A. (2001) Looking Back and Moving Forward: A Biographical Approach to Ageing. Department of Sociological Studies. [Unpublished Thesis] Sheffield. University of Sheffield.

Collis, J. & Hussey, R. (2009) *Business Research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students,* (3rd edition), New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

Connelly, M. F., & Clandinin, J. D. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Journal of Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.

Connor, H., Dawson, S., Tyers ,C., Eccles, J., Regan, J., and Aston, J. (2001) *Social Class and Higher education: Issues Affecting Decisions on Participation by Lower Social Class Groups.* Research Report RR 267, Department for Education and Employment, London.

Correll, Shelley J. 2001. "Gender and The Career Choice Process: The Role of Biased Self-Assessments." *American Journal of Sociology,* 106,1691-1730.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: SAGE publications.

Cutcliffe J. (2003). Reconsidering reflexivity: Introducing the case for intellectual entrepreneurship. *Journal of Qualitative Health Research*, 13, 136–148.

David, M. E., Ball, S. J., Davies, J., & Reay, D. (2003). Gender issues in parental involvement in student choices of higher education. *Gender and Education*, 15(1), 21–36 .

De Tona, C. (2006). But what is interesting is the story of why and how migration happened. Forum: *Qualitative Social Research*, 7. Retrieved from http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-06/06-3-13-e.htm

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive biography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Dhunpath, Ruby (2000). Life History Methodology: "Narradigm" Regained. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 13*(5), 543-551

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40, 314-321.

Doumato, E. (1992). Gender, monarchy, and national identity in Saudi Arabia. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 19(1), 31-47 .

Doumato, Eleanor Abdella (2010) 'Saudi Arabia', in Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin, eds., (2010) Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa, New York, NY: Freedom House; Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2002). Writing as inquiry: Storying the teaching self in writing workshops. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32(4), 403-428.

Elliot, J. (2005). *Using Narrative in Social Research. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

El-Sanabary, N. (1994). Female education in Saudi Arabia and the reproduction of gender division. *Gender and education*,6(2), 141-150.

Emeghebo, L. (2012). The image of nursing as perceived by nurses. *Nurse Education Today*, 32(6), 49-53.

Evans, S. (2009). In a Different Place: Working-class Girls and Higher Education. *Sociology*, 43(2), pp340–355 .

Emihovich, C. (1995). Distancing passion: Narratives in social science. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*,8, 37-48.

Fargues, P. (2005). Women in Arab countries: Challenging the patriarchal system. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 13(25), 43-48 .

Finlay, L. (2000). Outing' the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*,12, 531–545.

Finlay L. (2002) Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 2, 209–230 .

Fiorenza, E. (2013).Critical feminist studies in religion. *Critical research in religion,*1(1),43-55.

Foong, A. L. S., Rossiter, J. C., & Chan, P. T. (1999). Socio-cultural perspectives on the image of nursing: The Hong Kong dimension. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 29(3), 542–548.

Galinsky,A. D.,Wang, C. S.,& Ku, G. (2008). Perspective-takers behave more stereotypically. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 404–419.

Gazzaz, L. (2009). Saudi nurses' perceptions of nursing as an occupational choice: a qualitative interview study. PhD thesis, University of Nottingham

Gillespie, A. (2004). The mystery of G. H. Mead's first book. *Theory & Psychology,*14, (3), 423-425.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research . *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-607.

Goodman, J. (1992). *Elementary schooling for critical democracy*. Albany: State University of New York Press

Gerber, T. P. and Cheung, S-Y. (2008) Horizontal stratification in postsecondary education: forms, explanations and implications. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34 (1), 299 – 318.

Gratton, C & Jones I.(2010*). Research methods for sport studies*. Routledege: USA.

Greenhalgh, T., & Calman, S. (2006). *What seems to be the trouble: Stories in illness and healthcare*. Abingdon, Oxon: Radcliffe Publishing.

Haddad, Y. & Esposito, J. (1998). *Islam, gender, and social change*. Oxford: Oxford university press .

Grix, J. (2002), Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Social Research. *Politics*, 22: 175–186

Halabi, J. (2005) Nursing Research with Refugee Clients: A Call for More Qualitative Approaches. *International Nursing Review*, 52, 270-275.

Hamdan, A. (2005). Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements*. International Education Journal*, 6(1), 42-64.

Hegghammer, T., & Lacroix, S. (2007). "Rejectionist Islamism in Saudi Arabia: The story of Juhayman Al-ʿutaybi revisited." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39 (1), 103-122.

Hamzeh, M. Z., & Oliver, K. (2010). Gaining research access into the lives of Muslim girls: Researchers negotiating Muslimness, modesty, inshallah, and haram. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(2), 165–180.

Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Harding, S. (1987). Is there a feminist method? In Harding, S. (Ed.), Feminism and methodology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hardy, P. (2007). Pilgrim Project: Voices from the heart of health care. Retrieved from www.Patientvoices.Org.UK .

Harnois, C. E. (2013) *Feminist Issues in Survey Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hassan, J., Hassan, A., & King, M. (2012). Nursing image in Qatar: Past, present
and future. *Middle East Journal Of Nursing*, 6(4), 2010–2012 .

Haveman R., Smeeding T. (2006). The role of higher education in social
mobility. *Future of Children*,16, 125–150.

Holloway,W., & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently.*
London: Sage.

Igbinedion, V.I. (2011). Perception of Factors that Influence Students" Vocational
Choice of Secretarial Studies in Tertiary Institutions in Edo State of Nigeria.
*European Journal of Educational Studies, 3(*2), 325-337.

Jackson, C. L. & Gray, R. (1991). Nursing: Attitudes, perceptions and strategies for
progress in Saudi Arabia. *Annals of Saudi Medicine*,11(4),452-458.

Jarman, R. (2005) 'Science learning through scouting: an understudied context for
informal science education', *International Journal of Science Education*,
27(4), 427–450

Johnston, J., Reeves, A., & Talbot, S. (2014). Has economics become an elite
subject for elite UK universities? *Oxford Review of Education*, 40(5), 590–609.

Jonsson, J. O. (1999) Explaining sex differences in educational choice: an empirical
assessment of a rational choice model. *European Sociological Review*, 15 (4), 391
– 404.

Joseph. S. (2010). Patriarchy and development in the Arab world. *Gender &
Development,* 4(2), 14-19

Kacen, L., & Chaitin, J. (2006). The times are a changing: Understanding qualitative
research in ambiguous, conflictual and changing contexts. *Qualitative Report*,
11, 209–228.

Kajornboon, A. B. (2005). *Using interviews as research instruments*. Retrieved
from: www.culi.chula.ac.th/e-journal/bod/annabel.pdf

Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender and Society*, 2, 274-289.

Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social
work research as an insider. *Social Work,* 45(5), 439-447.

Keene, D. (2003). Saudi Arabia, friend or foe? Washington, DC: FrontPage
Magazine Retrieved
from: http://frontpagemag.com/ Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=11501

Khoja (2012). How Ikhtilat become religiously prohibited. *Al-Jundi Al-Muslim*,41,147,18-24.

Kian, A. (2011). Gendered occupations and women's status in Iran. *Middle Eastern Studies Journal*, 31(3), 407–421.

Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2002). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In Y. Zou & E. T. Trueba (Eds.), *Ethnography and schools: Qualitative approaches to the study of education* (pp. 87–138). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

King, V. (2003). The influence of religion on fathers' relationships with their children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65(2), 382-395.

Kosygina, L. V. (2005). Doing gender in research: Reflection on experience in field. *Qualitative Report,* 10(1). 87–95.

Kruger, A. (2000). Empowerment in social work practice psychiatrically disabled: model and method. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 70, 427-439.

Kulczycki, A., & Windle, S. (2011). Honor killings in the Middle East and North Africa: A systematic review of the literature. *Violence against Women, 17,* (11), 1442-1464.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews—An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lamadah, S. M., & Sayed, H. Y. (2014). Challenges facing the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Biology, Agriculture and Healthcare*, 4(7), 20–25.

Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in thepostmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Le Renard, A. (2008). Only for women: women, the state, and reform in Saudi Arabia. *Middle East Journal*,62(4), 610–629.

Lerner, G. (1989). *The creation of patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lörz, M., Schindler, S., & Walter, J. G. (2011). Gender inequalities in higher education: Extent, development and mechanisms of gender differences in enrolment and field of study choice. *Irish Educational Studies*, 30(2), 179–198 .

Lovering, S. (2008). Arab Muslim nurses experiences of the meaning of caring. (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Health Sciences, the University of Sydney). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2123/3764

Maines, D. R, & Morrione, T. J. (1990). *Industrialisation as agent of social change: A critical analysis by Herbert Blumer*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Mansour, A. (1994). Continuing education in Saudi Arabia: The missed sonata. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*,25(2), 90-92.

Marlow C. (2010). *Research methods for generalist social work*. Pacific-Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole

Marshall, J. (1986). 'Living life as inquiry'. *Systematic Practice and Action Research,* 12(2), 155–171.

Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs*, 30(3),1771-1800.

Measor, L. & Sikes, Patricia J. (1992). *Introduction to education: gender and schools*. Biddles Ltd : UK .

Mehran, G. (2009). "Doing and Undoing Gender": Female Higher Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran". *International Review of Education*, 55(5-6): 541–559 .

Meijer, R. (2010). The gender segregation (Ikhtilat) debate in Saudi Arabia: Reform and the clash between Ulamah and liberals. *Journal for Islamic Studies*, 30, 2-32.

Meleis, A.I. (1980). A model for establishment of educational programs in nursing in developing countries(The nursing paradox in Kuwait) **.** *Journal of Advanced Nursing*,5,285–300.

Metcalfe, B. (2007). Exploring cultural dimensions of gender and management in the Middle East. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 49(5), 630–631.

Meyer, K., & Helen, R., & Yousef, A. (1998). Islam and the extension of citizenship rights to women in Kuwait. *Journal for the Scientific of Religion*, 37(1), 131-144.

Mishler, E.G. (1986). *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Miligi, E., Selim, A. (2015). Saudi nursing students' attitudes towards the nursing profession. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 6(29), 197–208.

Moen, T., & Gudmundsdottir, S. & Flem, A. (2003). Inclusive practice: A biographical approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19, 359-370.

Mellor, J. (2007) *Parallel Lives? Working-Class Muslim and Non-Muslim Women at University*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Centre for Women's Studies, University of York.

Mellor, J. (2010) Ethnicity as social capital: Class, faith and British Muslim women's routes to university. In Y. Taylor (ed.) *Classed Intersections: Spaces, Selves, Knowledges*. London: Ashgate.

Moghadam, V. M. (1992). 'Patriarchy and the politics of gender in modernising societies: Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan'. *International Sociology*, 7(1), 35–53.

Mohanty, C. (2003) "Under Western Eyes" revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles *Signs,* 28(2), pp.499-535.

Moghadam, V. (2013). Modernizing women and democratization after the Arab Spring. *The Journal of North African Studies*,19(2), 137-142 .

Morris-Thompson, T., Shepherd, J., Plata, R., & Marks-Maran, D. (2011). Diversity, fulfilment and privilege: The image of nursing. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 19(5), 683–692 .

Mostafa, M. (2005). Attitudes towards women managers in the United Arab Emirates: The effects of patriarchy, age, and sex differences. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 20(6), 522–540.

Murenga, H. M. & Chacha, B. K. & Bageni, M. (2013). Social Factors Influencing Educational Attainment Among Muslim Women In Mumias District, Kakamega County, Kenya. *Baraton Interdisciplinary Research Journal*,3(2), 77-85

Naugah, J. (2011). Factors affecting the choice of science subjects among girls at secondary school level in Mauritius. (Doctoral dissertation, School of Sport and Education, Brunel University). Retrieved from http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/bitstream/2438/6450/1/FulltextThesis.pdf

Nicol, D. (2003). Commentary *Journal of Interacive Media in Education: Special Edition on Reusing Online Resources*. Retrieved from: http://www-jime.open.ac.uk/2003/1/JIME-2003-1.html#c2

Norris, P. (2009). Why do Arab states lag the world in gender equality? HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP09-020, John F. Kennedy School of

Government, Harvard University. Retrieved from https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/4415905

Norton, S., & Tomal, A. (2009). Religion and female educational attainment, *Journal of Money, Credit and Banking*, 41(5), 962-986.

Oliffe, J., & Mroz. L. (2005) Men interviewing men about health and illness: Ten lessons learned. *Journal of Men's Health and Gender, 2*(2), 257-260. Retrieved from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jmhg.2005.03.00

Omair, K. (2010). Typology of Career Development for Arab Women Managers in the United Arab Emirates, *Career Development International*,15 (2), 121-143.

Oakley, A. (1998) Gender, methodology and people's ways of knowing: Some problems with feminism and the paradigm debate in social science. *Sociology*, 32(4), 707–731.

Overcash, J. (2003) Narrative Research: A Review of Methodology and Relevance to Clinical Practice. *Critical Review in Oncology*, 48, 179-184.

Padgett, D. K. (2008). Qualitative methods in social work research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Parasuraman, A. R., Grewal, D., & Krishnan, R. (2006). *Marketing Research.* Boston: Cengage Learning.

Parker, J., Ashencaen Crabtree, S., Baba, I., Carlo, D.P. & Azman, A. (2012).Liminality and learning: international placements as a rite of passage. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Social Work & Development*, 22(3), 146-158.

Price, S. L. (2011). The experience of choosing nursing as a career: Narrative from millennial nurses. (Doctoral dissertation, Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto). Retrieved from https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/31905/3/Price_Sheri_L_201 111_PhD_thesis.pdf

Reid, K., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring the lived experience. *The Psychologist*, 18, 20–23.

Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1981). Hermeneutics and the human sciences. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press .

Riessman, C. K. (1990). *Divorce talk: Women and men make sense of personal relationships*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Roded, R. (2008). *Women in Islam and the Middle East: A reader*. London: I. B. Taurus & Co. Ltd .

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2010). Essential research methods for social work. New York: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

Sabbagh, Suha. (1996). *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint.* New York: Olive Branch Press.

Saleh, J. (2013). Women occupying judging positions: A doctrinal comparative study. *The Journal of Jerusalem University for Research and Studies,* 30(2), 146-185 .

Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (2014). Retrieved from: www.moh.gov.sa

Sahih Muslim, Book 4, Hadith 147, n. d – p. 75

Schanzer, J. & Miller, S. (2012). *Facebook Fatwa: Saudi Clerics, Wahhabi Islam, and Social Media.* Washington: foundation for defence and democracies .

Seymour, E., & Hewitt, N. M. (1997). *Talking about leaving: Why undergraduates leave the sciences*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Shukri, R.(2005). Status of nursing in the Arab world. *Ethnicity and Disease*, 15,88-89 .

Sianou-Kyrgiou, E., & Tsiplakides, I. (2009). Choice and social class of medical school students in Greece. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 30(6), 727–740.

Sianou-Kyrgiou, E., & Tsiplakides, I. (2011). Similar performance, but different choices: Social class and higher education choice in Greece. Studies in Higher Education, 36(1), 89–102.

Skeggs, B. (1997) Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable. London: Sage

Smith, S. (1996) Uncovering Key Aspects of Experience: He Use of in-Depth Interviews in a Study of Women Returners to Education. IN E. Lyon & J. Busfield (Eds.) Methodological Imaginations. Hound mills, Macmillan:58-74.

Spencer, J. N. (1999). New directions in teaching chemistry: A philosophical and pedagogical basis. *Journal of Chemical Education, 76*(4), 566-569.

Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1990). Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes. In L. Stanley (Ed.), Feminist praxis: Research theory and epistemology in feminist sociology. London: Routledge.

Sultana, A. (2011). Patriarchy and women' s subordination : A theoretical analysis. *The Arts Faculty Journal*, 4, 1-18.

Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resources* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons

Tohidi, N. 2003. "*Islamic Feminism:" Perils and Promises. In: Middle Eastern Women on the Move*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars.

Trusty, J., C. R. Robinson, M. Plata, and K.-M. Ng, 2000, Effects of Gender, Socioeconomic Status, and Early Academic Performance on Postsecondary Educational Choice, *Journal of Counseling & Development* 78, 463-472.

Tsagala, E., & Kordaki, M. (2006). Critical factors influencing secondary school pupil's decisions to study computing in tertiary education: Gender differences. *Journal of Education and Information Technologies*, 12(4), 281–295 .

Vincent-Lancrin, S. (2008) The reversal of gender inequalities in higher education: an on-going trend. In OECD (ed) *Higher Education to 2030. Volume 1: Demography*. OECD, Paris.

Vidyasagar, G & Rea, D.(2004). Saudi women doctors: Gender and careers within Wahhabic Islam and a westernized work culture. *Women's studies international forum*,27, 261-280.

Walby, S. (1996). *Key concepts in feminist theory*. Alborg: Alborg University.

Werfhorst, H. Van Der, Sullivan, A., & Cheung, S. Y. (2003). Social Class, Ability and Choice of Subject in Secondary and Tertiary Education in Britain, *British Educational Research Journal*,29(1), pp. 41-62 22 .

Wenrich, M. & Curtis, J. (2006) Narratives of Critical Care: The Missing Link. *Journal of Critical Care*, 21, 248-249.

Wertsch J. (1991). Voices of the mind: *A Sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

William, D.M. (1994). The Morphology of Biblical Greek. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Witherall, C., & Noddings, N. (1991). *Stories lives tell: Narratives and dialogue in education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Young, J. (2011). Leadership Styles and Gender Role: Internalization among Female Managers in the United States. *Advancing Women in Leadership*,31,102-112.

Zeilani, R., & Seymour, J. E. (2010). Muslim women's experiences of suffering in Jordanian intensive care units: A narrative study. *Intensive and Critical Care Nursing, 26*(3),175-184.

Ziknali, J. & Maphosa, C. (2012). Exploring College Students' Attitudes towards Female Lecturers' Competence in Teacher Education Colleges in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe. *Anthropologist*,14(5), 393-399