

Deaf People's Education and Employment Experiences in Saudi Arabia: An Islamic
Social Model Perspective

Fatimah Al-Mulhim

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Abstract

This research investigates the barriers faced by deaf people before and after their employment in Saudi Arabia. 22 interviews have been carried out with those from diverse social and educational backgrounds. Traditionally, disability research studies have concentrated on disabled individuals as sick, and in need of care. This thesis is unique in that it has applied the Islamic social model of disability to explain the barriers encountered by deaf people in Saudi Arabia – this model is rarely used by other disability researchers in Saudi Arabia. This Islamic model is considered alongside the social model of disability and the rights-based approach, using them to inform the findings, solutions and recommendations related to the challenges outlined. The research has found that deaf people face educational barriers in terms of segregated and isolated classrooms and deaf-segregated schools. Deaf people are not mainstreamed in universities due to the inaccessibility of the environment and have additional prerequisites before they are offered places within these establishments. The absence of reasonable accommodation also operates within the employment sphere, and this has succeeded in weakening communication between employers and deaf people, providing further barriers. This study has also considered the intersectionality between gender and disability, and in particular the barriers facing deaf women face when accessing employment, such as stigmatization related to their gender. The findings show a lack of gender disparity in terms of education, as both men and women face similar issues and barriers; however, it is within employment that these differences are presented. Women are subjected to different work conditions regardless of their skills and qualifications, and furthermore are also paid less than

their non-disabled counterparts. This research has provided recommendations which will support deaf people's journey through education and into employment.

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1 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

In many countries, deaf people, and indeed disabled people, have come together to challenge the marginalisation that arises from their exclusion and discrimination experienced in different domains of life, including in education and employment. Education and employment are basic human rights in most locations, irrespective of people's capabilities (Kosygina, 2007). They offer a means of social inclusion alongside the economic resources that are necessary for their survival and well-being as humans (Jahoda, 1982). These domains facilitate the formation of social relationships, and ultimately, the development of social status. When deaf people are excluded from participating in schools and in the workplace, they suffer from marginalisation which leads to the devaluing of their contribution to society (Jongbloed and Crichton, 1990).

The marginalisation arises from the exaggeration of the struggles and health implications of disability for human beings. From a historical perspective, the challenges of deaf people have been linked to physiological challenges, punishment from God or failures in moral terms. On the contrary, the disability movement seeks to highlight the effects, including the social oppression, cultural factors and environmental elements linked to these disabilities (Shakespeare, 2006). For instance, the UK has adopted the social model of disability which discusses the structural assessment of disabled people and how they participate in social structures and systems (Shakespeare, 2006). Furthermore, the barriers that exist against equal participation in education and employment are due to the stereotypical negative attitudes towards deaf people's capabilities (Lewis, 2004). The convergent aspect is that these stereotypes are founded on assumptions that focus on the physical limitation of an individual,

rather than the presence of disabling barriers (Kosygina, 2005); this will be discussed later in Chapter Two.

As of 2018, it is estimated that almost 3.3% of the entire population of Saudi citizens comprised people with impairment (Bindawas and Vennu, 2018). There were variations in the prevalence of disabilities based on demographics, psychographics and geographical characteristics of the population. A majority of disabled people were elderly, and they had already retired from active employment, while an approximate group of 1,350,000 Saudis worked in the generic industries, at least 80,000 disabled people worked in sheltered workplaces, with an additional 1.5M having no official jobs. In 2015, Alkhoulī found that people with impairments who are unemployed found it more challenging to get a job. Alkhoulī (2015) claims that schools do not adequately prepare people with impairment academically and socially for working life, and preparatory programmes that exist in Saudi Arabia should be improved in order to fit the circumstances of the labour market in the country.

Over a period of 20 years, the Ministry of Health (MoH), working together with the Ministry of Employment (MoEM) have created a multiplicity of services for rehabilitating people with impairment (Alkhoulī, 2015). Most of the programs in place offer therapeutic options for physical, and physiological well-being, while targeting specific challenges with disabilities in hearing, speaking and occupational abilities. The goal is to ensure proper training of these individuals, and to enable them to understand the responsibilities of their work, so that they can generate a livelihood for themselves (Alkhoulī, 2015). Additionally, disabled people have improved access to infrastructure, such as roads, public spaces, parks and opportunities for education, which are availed through specialised organisations that are supervised by the MoEM and MoH (Jamali et al., 2005). The government also offers subsidised services to the value of SR 10,000 (GBP 1,684) per disabled person to enable them to modify their

automobiles from manual to automatic transmission to facilitate independence among this group (Jamali et al., 2005).

Several community organisations for people with impairment, such as the Saudi Autism Association established in 1997, and subsequently, the Saudi Association of Special Education established in 2001, are run by people with impairment themselves, their families, and allies, and are focussed on helping people with impairment in relation to their education, health and socialisation (Aldakhil, 2017). Moreover, the country offers free basic services to every citizen, including disabled people, including healthcare, transportation and education. However, there are still structural and non-structural barriers facing disabled individuals, and these barriers have direct and indirect effects on the ability of the disabled community to enjoy the multiplicity of benefits available, including those services designed specifically for their use (Aldakhil, 2017).

According to Aldakhil (2017), Saudi Arabia has taken a positive step to change attitudes towards disabled people. For instance, increased awareness is promoted through mass media. An example is Manarat (منارات), which is hosted by a member of the disabled community. Other measures include social activities such as sporting events, with domestic soccer clubs inviting organisations that work with the disabled, as well as parents, to bring the disabled to the events. However, these solutions do not target the primary problem, which requires a solution that goes beyond such simple programmes. After all, they are not enough to change attitudes toward disabled people and give them the full opportunity to live with the rest of society and enjoy benefits such as education and employment.

Within the education system, deaf learners are provided with only two options for learning placement: self-contained learning facilities, or deaf schools (in which they are separate from

other non-disabled individuals). However, this perspective has shifted over time, with moves to a more inclusive approach in which disabled students learn together with the non-disabled students in the same learning environment. Regrettably, many disabled learners face unique forms of marginalisation and exclusion (Slee, 2018). Despite the diversity of convergent views, exclusion is rooted in the structure of the learning systems across the globe (Slee, 2018), and Saudi Arabia is no exception. Even though the government is a signatory to a multiplicity of treaties and international agreements regarding to treatment of disabled individuals, deaf learners in the country still experience exclusion from mainstream learning environments, as early as at the primary level and in subsequent learning levels (Madhesh, 2019). The educational options for disabled people in Saudi Arabia will be covered in Chapter Three (see section 3.3).

Employment for disabled people, including deaf people in the country, is regulated by several laws, such as Labour and Workmen Law (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, no date). Article 51 of this law defines an impaired person as any individual with diminished capacity when performing or maintaining a suitable job, due to their physical or mental state. The laws provide a guarantee to the rights of the disabled person, while also advocating for fair treatment in the workplace and in within society in general. Additional Royal Decrees have been developed to address other aspects of fair treatment of non-disabled people in the labour market (Disabled Care System, 2000). The Decree provides policy-based changes to reduce adverse attitudes and discriminatory treatment of disabled people in the labour market (Kabbara, 2003). Coleridge (2000) established that disabled people are rarely employed. Saudi Arabia has laws in place that protect deaf people in the workplace. For instance, under the anti-discriminatory laws, a company can face civil liability for discrimination against deaf persons. However, civil claims and actions are not been utilised in the country, since disabled persons

do not have the resources necessary to launch such claims, and they rarely get opportunities for employment. This scenario indicates that the limited awareness of the capabilities of deaf persons from the employer's perspective (Labaree, 2002). It can be argued that the employment of deaf people has not been considered a priority in Saudi Arabia.

Despite the creation of various programmes and policies to support the education and employment of deaf people the country, research findings reveal that non-disabled people still harbour adverse attitudes towards them which leads to discrimination and exclusion (Walston, Al-Harbi and Al-Omar, 2008). To authenticate this position, this research project will appraise the existing barriers that deaf people face before and after they access employment, despite the many legal provisions which cater for disabled people, including deaf people.

A study by Noonan et al. (2004) demonstrated that disabled people can live successfully, both in the workplace and serve as inspirations in society, as well acting as mentors for peers in the workplace. In addition, Hernandez et al. (2008) illustrate that they can be loyal, hardworking employees, without the kind of high turnover that some employers might expect. However, deaf people are arguably at an elevated risk of marginalisation due to the ecological, institutional and economic discrimination which excludes them from certain activities. Luft (2015) highlights that deaf people characteristically leave learning institutional with lesser qualifications compared to their non-disabled peers. They are also more likely to fail to get opportunities for higher education and are less likely to get promoted. Deaf people face reduced chances for access to jobs in the market, and tend to remain unemployed, and when they do, they get underpaying jobs. They also face challenges getting accommodation (Jang et al., 2014). In Saudi Arabia, deaf people lack equal access to education and employment; this disparity prevents them from benefiting from participating equally alongside non-disabled people (Al-Jadid, 2013).

Understandings of the concept of disability vary according to religions, cultures and many other contextual factors. According to Hasnain et al (2008) some communities misinterpret the Muslim religion's view of disability. They see a disabled person as gifted from Allah and, therefore, as requiring support. This approach encourages people to treat disabled people charitably and help them, so that through this charity they will be rewarded by Allah. This is found to exist predominantly in Saudi society, where people tend to provide services for disabled people, believing that these are good deeds that can bring them closer to Allah (Elsheikh, 2013). This conflicts with the religion's principle that all people deserve respect, protection and support in their societies (Al-Jadid, 2013), which should treat them in the same way as non-disabled people. It confirms that people should support each other, regardless of their differences. Another interpretation of the concept of disability can be viewed through the lens of the individual model of disability in which focuses on the provision of medical support to treat and fix people's impairment (Barnes and Mercer, 1996). This means that the latter will not be able to function due to their physical limitations.

The third interpretation of disability is seen through the social model, whereby they are disabled by society and the surrounding environments not their physical limitation (Oliver, 2013). This thesis decides to combine the Islamic and the social model of disability due to the Islamic nature of the Saudi community, and to use the social model as a solution to remove obstacles that disabled people face. Combining both would be beneficial to this research, providing a new theoretical contribution when examining disability in the context of Islamic culture. The next chapter explains the Islamic perspective on disability, and the social model as a solution to removing barriers to education and employment facing disabled people. The research examines the concept of equality within Islamic religion to understand the degree to which it is compatible with advancing opportunities for disabled people to access community services.

However, it is a challenge to restructure the whole processes from the viewpoint of the institutions and government. Appreciating the challenges leads to the creation of better methods to meet the interests of disabled people.

Such a process leads to the determination of the frameworks most suitable for advancing the interests of disabled people. Therefore, understanding the disabling barriers may advance the means for assisting disabled people so they can achieve their respective objectives and prospects. Barnes and Mercer (2005a) state that disabled people, including deaf people, continue to report lesser rates of employment, have a higher likelihood of being underemployed, and earn less compared to non-disabled people in the workplace. They also have a higher likelihood of lacking the right skills, thus predisposing them to unskilled or semi-skilled roles. Al-nahdi (2014) discusses the low levels of employment amongst disabled people in Saudi Arabia, arguing that, despite the efforts by the government to enhance the extent to which the disabled people participate in the labour market, the number of disabled employees remains low.

Furthermore, research in this area has the potential to provide valuable recommendations. By considering the gaps preventing the effective inclusion of deaf people in the work environment, reasonable accommodations can be proposed that will support deaf employees. Indeed, these recommendations can be used to fulfil the needs of the employers themselves while also adjusting the workplace's norms and demands (Shaw, 2013). The outcome of this investigation can be applied as an illustration of what best practices entails, in addition to guiding human resource practices and principles designed to facilitate the education and employment of deaf individuals. This will produce a working environment that is both affirmative, and capable of accommodating deaf people, in line with the tenets of diversity in the workplace, thereby making them feel respected and recognised. This research is related to the timeline of this thesis

and the fact that the research was conducted during a period during which the policies in Saudi Arabia are giving greater consideration to the rights of marginalised groups, such as deaf women and deaf people in general. This ensures that the research is both topical and may be useful for both stakeholders and policy makers.

It is vital to note that, even though all deaf people fall into a particular definition of disability, some of them do not perceive themselves as disabled persons (Gannon and Nolan, 2006). Deaf people (when Deaf begins with a capital 'D') denotes the group of people who rely on sign language to communicate, and to whom Deafness represents a cultural-linguistic identity; they usually do not view themselves as disabled people (Padden and Humphries, 1988). When deaf begins with a lower case 'd', it denotes those who use spoken language and/or have a view of deafness as an impairment. However, these differences are not recognised within the Saudi context. Deaf people view themselves as disabled and consequently require reasonable adaptations to support their inclusion within their communities (Ladd, 2003). I, therefore, decided to use the terms 'disabled people' and 'deaf people' complementarily to refer to people with a hearing impairment with all degrees of hearing loss in this thesis. The research described in this thesis was conducted in Saudi Arabia; the results, discussions, assertions and recommendations are pertinent to an investigation of the position of deaf people in Saudi Arabia. This thesis, written in a way that may be acceptable to the Saudi authorities, facilitates the improvement of the lives of deaf people.

To understand the research carried out within Saudi society, the next section will present some general information about Saudi Arabia as it relates to disabled people.

1.2 General Information on Saudi Arabia

In 2019, the country had a population of 33,910,770, with 78% of the population being Saudi citizens (Worldometers, 2019). The country has a Muslim majority and Islam permeates every aspect of life for Saudis. Islam lies at the core of culture, business, and the law. Non-Muslims are allowed to live and work in the country but cannot practice their religion in public (Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006). The country does not allow non-Muslims to acquire citizenship, and Saudis are only allowed to practice Islam as a religion. The country practices an absolute monarchy in its political system, with the King serving as the Prime Minister. The king retains the power to appoint and discharge all government ministers, as well as other public servants in key government positions (Madhesh, 2019).

Education for male and female learners occurs in separate facilities across the country, in line with the religious and cultural norms. This segregation is evident in some levels of governance and work scenarios, including staff members of the same gender in certain professions. In Saudi Arabia, the government supervises the education system through the Ministry of Education. Education is obligatory for children from the age of 6 years, and it is framed across three levels, starting with elementary learning (learners aged 6-12), secondary school (for those aged 12-15) and high schools (learners aged 15-18). The country has established at least 32 public and private institutions of higher learning. In 2005, a scholarship program was introduced to sponsor learners from poorer backgrounds, including those wishing to learn abroad, with opportunities in over 24 countries.

Traditionally, Saudi Arabian family units are extended, comprising of parents, their married children and their grandchildren. The tradition of naming firstborns based on the father's and mother's names is present in Saudi Arabia (Alhammedi, 2000). In most Saudi family situations,

the parents are responsible for caring for their children, who also bear the same responsibility for their parents when they age. Children have the responsibility to care for their parents, which leads to them living in the households until they marry. Parents provide financial sustenance for the children until the children secure jobs. This perspective of familial living is emblematic of inclusive learning and employment, which entails the involvement of relatives and family in the education and employment of children. However, it is evident that the perceptions of the parents towards the education and employment of a disabled child are influenced by how society treats disability. These perceptions attribute the problem to the physical limitations of the individual, whereby the disabled child is characterised through the narrative of dependence and exclusion (Priestley, 1998). Since the challenge is perceived to exist within the individual as opposed to the society, most parents are inclined to focus on how to fit their children into the pre-existing social structures, including learning systems and the workplace, while forgetting that it is still possible to adapt those systems to the situation of the child. A study by Shah in 2005 claims that any predetermined prospects that parents hold regarding their disabled children are assessed based on the level of impairment of the child and are determined by how those challenges are mainstreamed in the community. Therefore, disabled people in Saudi Arabia have not gained acknowledgement of their rights, as will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

In the family, having a child with impairment creates differences within Saudi society. Parents with a child with impairment are criticised by their society. For example, having a disabled child is seen as a social stigma and a chastisement for sins that a family member has committed (Al-Ahmadi, 2009). Furthermore, it is common, particularly among uneducated people, to refer to people with mental impairments as ‘mad’ or ‘stupid’ and to hearing impaired people as ‘dumb’. Also, some people used to perceive the blind as disgusting, hence leading to avoidance

(Al-Jadid, 2013). These common stereotypes and misrepresentations of disabled people could create adverse perceptions among instructors who lack prior awareness of the capabilities of disabled people (Connor et al., 2008). These perceptions might also affect the non-disabled people as well. Disability stereotypes, attitudes, and misconceptions all combine further to exacerbate the problem of exclusion and limited access to education and gainful employment for disabled people (Kaye, 2009). For instance, the challenges to education and employment encountered by disabled people mean that they remain excluded in the long-term, due to the prevailing perception that they are less capable than non-disabled people (Kaye, 2009).

However, it could be argued that many parents have little knowledge or expertise to deal with their disabled children, and consequently are not able to provide and seek sufficient or appropriate care, although this kind of responsibility is a part of Islam; this will be discussed in the section on the model of disability under Islamism (See Chapter Two). According to Al-Jadid (2013), Saudi families have often marginalised their disabled children for different reasons, including the indignity linked to having a disabled child and a lack of awareness about accommodating their needs. Cultural beliefs can play an integral part in the determination of perceptions that a parent has about a disabled child. It also affects what preventive measures are taken, the treatment interventions, as well options for rehabilitation that the parents seek or accept (Sen, 1988). Therefore, it is common for families from certain cultural backgrounds to perceive disabled children as a barrier to living, thereby limiting the involvement of that child in society.

Partnerships with parents to support their disabled children can be vital for professionals to ensure that they are provided with the best support services. For example, parents of a disabled child are often assisted by providing support, while also playing a key role in service engagement and the provision of the accommodations needs that their child requires (Heller et

al., 2007). The family has a bigger effect on the well-being of children than any other factor (DCFS, 2010b). Providing family support services may help parents and make them more aware of the accommodations that their children need to overcome the challenges they face. One of these services is support groups. Research has shown that support groups can provide a channel for sharing experiences and obtaining support from sources other than friends or extended family (Chandramuki et al., 2012). It is arguable that this arises since the parents can share different experiences and barriers related to the accommodations that are provided to their disabled children. However, this kind of services is limited in Saudi Arabia (Alariefy, 2016).

1.3 Motivation for conducting the research

The motivation for investigating this research topic is threefold. First, as a precondition or my sponsorship in higher education, I was tasked to investigate a topic of social importance, one dear to my heart. Under the government sponsored higher education system, the government facilitates the research by students with the goal of finding research-based solutions to endemic issues facing the country. This thesis aims to promote research into complex social issues that have the potential to change the country for the better, across all aspects of life.

Secondly, and closely linked to the first motivation, my engagement with deaf people started even before I began university. During my own education, I was introduced to, and then learned, sign language, which gave me an insight into this world. I then decided to pursue my undergraduate degree within the Faculty of Education with a focus on special education. Through this, I learned more about the educational, employment, health, and other barriers that disabled people face. My desire was to focus on deaf people, which is why I decided to teach deaf students at a special needs school. Through my connections with NGOs and organizations

working in that field, I found that there was a lack of data available regarding the rights and demands of deaf people. Therefore, I decided to focus my MA dissertation research on investigating, for example, whether there exist any gender-based differences in employment. During my interviews with the participants, they mentioned employment as one of their major challenges, which is why I have decided to continue my academic journey by undertaking a PhD to investigate deaf people's pre-and post-employment challenges. At that time, my analysis of the educational, health, employment or other challenges facing deaf people was related to their impairments themselves, rather than the barriers added by their communities. This was, it might be argued, a reflection of the individual/medical model of disability. Ultimately, this approach was amended as a result of a meeting that I attended with my Leeds University supervisors prior to beginning my PhD. This introduced me to the concept of the social model and, indeed, enriched my understanding of the different ways in which disability can be seen. This became an important motivator for this research. It should be noted that some countries have managed to move forward with the application of this model, while others continue to inform their practices using the individual model.

Thirdly, the increased prominence of disability studies has offered novel approaches to perceptions on disability in society (Valle and Connor, 2011). The re-conceptualization of disability has occurred at various levels, including socially, culturally, economically, historically, resource-wise, politically and environmentally, in a manner that enables it to be seen as part of the human experience as opposed to being a medical challenge (Ferguson and Nusbaum, 2012). According to Shakespeare and Watson (2001), disability arises from the organisation of society, as opposed to the differences in the abilities of individual members. The perception describes the social model of disability, which presents opportunities for most Saudi Arabian institutions. Essentially, these institutions should consider approaches to

eliminate the obstacles that introduce challenges to the lives of disabled people, while introducing features that will make their lives easier. Disability within the Saudi context, however, is primarily seen through the lens of the physical limitations of individuals; this results in government programs that focus on individual rehabilitation efforts only (Al-Jadid, 2013). Elsheikh and Alqurashi (2013) argue that the definition of disability in Saudi Arabia should not be limited to individuals and their impairment/s but, rather, should keep the focus on external barriers. The employment of deaf people in the country has received limited interest from researchers and practitioners. There is a shortage of empirical evidence, information and knowledge about the barriers that deaf people experience in the Saudi labour market, so the lack of research on this topic highlights the importance of this study. By employing the Islamic social model in my thesis, I believe that this will support the removal of barriers for deaf people and provide them with inclusive, decent, and equal access to education and employment.

1.4 Aims and research questions

The research has been conducted to come to an understanding of the barriers that deaf people encounter on their journey to employment. More specifically, the research is concerned with external social, environmental and physical barriers, and it provides an indication of how deaf people can overcome these barriers. In this regard, the study employed a qualitative approach to fully explore this problem. The aims of the study can be outlined as follows:

- To gain a thorough appreciation of what barriers deaf people face on their journey to employment.
- To gain an in-depth understanding of barriers deaf employees face during their employment.
- To explore solutions and recommendations to overcome these barriers.

The concluding significant aim of this research is to come to a detailed understanding of external barriers that are encountered by deaf people before and after their employment, and how these can be overcome by presenting solutions for different agents in Saudi Arabia. The insight gained from these participants can play a significant role in adjusting current policies, or even formulating or creating new policies that address the accommodations needs of deaf people. The study has sought to capture the voices of deaf people and generate insight into the education and employment experiences of deaf employees.

This thesis focuses on the following questions:

- 1) What are the barriers and enablers that deaf people encounter on their journey to employment?
- 2) What are the barriers and enablers that deaf people encounter during their work?
- 3) How can deaf people be meaningfully included in the labour market?

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis comprises eight chapters. In the first chapter, the introduction and background to this thesis is provided, as well as the rationale behind this thesis and the research questions.

The succeeding chapters are arranged as follows:

Chapter Two: Understanding disability and deafness. This chapter acts as a foundation towards an understanding of the key concepts, approaches, and models used by the researcher to respond to the research questions provided above. Key terminologies employed in this research, such as disability and the individual and social models, are defined before moving on to engage with the language used to express the rights and demands of disabled people. This chapter moves from the discussion of disability and deafness to examine deaf people's situation

within Saudi Arabia. It begins by presenting the country's background, and cultural and family context, before moving to define disability within Saudi Arabia. Then the chapter engages with the differences between Deaf people with capital D and deaf people with small d, and an understanding of the language used to express these concepts is important when considering the degree to which they support the mainstreaming of disabled people, including deaf people, within their community.

Chapter Three: Education, Employment (Barriers to employment for deaf people) This chapter moves from the discussion of disability and deafness to examine education, viewing it as an important milestone in ensuring students receive the necessary qualifications and skills for future work. It analyses the movement of government and NGOs from segregated education to inclusive education. The chapter also considers the barriers that face deaf people when applying for, and studying at, Saudi Arabian universities. This includes the admission process through to course study and then exams. This is important, as providing deaf students with accommodations during their education can impact positively on their ability to compete in the labour market. The latter then becomes the focus of the following chapter (see below). It is worth noting that the translation of terms relating to inclusion in Arabic and within Saudi Arabia create some difficulties when comparing them to the global context. Therefore, introducing, comparing, and contrasting these definitions in both English and Arabic adds a further uniqueness to this research. This chapter explores what becomes of deaf people after they graduate and enter the world of employment. It considers their ability to access job adverts and the degree to which they can apply for jobs, including the restrictions placed upon them by the demands of the process. Comparing their situation with their non-disabled peers indicates the gaps and challenges that face them and inspires suggested solutions and recommendations to follow within the final chapter of this thesis. It is worth noting that this comparison has been

performed within the Saudi Arabian context only, as the goal is to consider how support can enable equivalent experiences given the financial, cultural, and social norms of their environment (i.e., it is more difficult to perform a comparison between different contexts given the additional impact of these norms). This literature review chapter, therefore, introduces the concept of employment and considers the pre- and post-employment barriers faced by deaf people. In doing so, the chapter relies on themes such as underemployment, communication, reasonable accommodations, and attitudinal barriers. Finally, Chapter Three acts as a foundation to the findings chapters, where primary data collected from participants are compared and contrasted with this literature.

Chapter Four: Methodology. The section is designed to introduce the research methods and strategies employed to answer the research questions. Emancipatory research, alongside qualitative data, and generational analytical methods are used, given that the researcher views them as the most viable strategies to support this research. In addition, the chapter outlines the process by which key informant interviewees were selected. It establishes the pre- and post-interview ethical procedures that were followed in order to ensure confidentiality and data protection throughout the process of this research. The section devoted to discussing data generation methods shows the reader the criteria upon which the researcher relied to design her interviews, including those conducted online.

Chapter Five: Pre-Employment Barriers and Solutions. This chapter examines deaf people's journeys prior to employment and applies a participatory approach to elevate their voices into the academic context. It outlines the employment process, including job applications and the subsequent selection process, including job interviews. Due to the influence that education brings to bear on employment, this chapter also considers the barriers that are presented to deaf students when accessing education. The goal is to illuminate their

perspectives on experiences and barriers, as well as to highlight potential solutions either provided by themselves or their employers. The generated data did not include information from employers. Therefore, the researcher has relied mainly on primary sources to understand the efforts undertaken by companies to support deaf people.

Chapter Six: Post-Employment Barriers and Solutions. This chapter builds on Chapter Six's consideration of pre-employment barriers and solutions to consider deaf participants' experiences following employment within either the public or private sectors. Their comments form the backbone of this chapter. Analysing their interviews highlights that barriers/experiences can be clustered into four categories: underemployment, gender inequality, communication, and "other" barriers. The second part of this section moves to address the lessons from best practice in other countries, alongside deaf participants' own recommendations. This leads towards recommended solutions for the barriers addressed that can then be put into practice within companies' policies, plans, and procedures to ensure that reasonable accommodations are made for deaf employees.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion. The concluding chapter of this thesis takes the reader back through the journey of the research and considers how the initially proposed research questions and objectives have been addressed/answered. It presents solutions and recommendations clustered in a thematic manner in order to better support policy makers and stakeholders in improving the situation of disabled employees. Finally, this chapter reflects upon the limitations inherent within the research, how these have been overcome, and what limitations remain that need to be borne in mind when considering the recommendations made.

2 Chapter Two: Literature Review: Understanding Disability and Deafness

2.1 Introduction

Disabled people, including deaf people, face many challenges within the workplace. The study seeks to understand the barriers that deaf individuals face in the Saudi labour market. To aid the analysis and ultimately offer a succinct appreciation of the research topic, the literature review is divided into the following sections. Firstly, there are reviews of the relevant literature in the disability studies area, because sources referring to disability in Saudi Arabia are limited. The second section then focuses on research located in Saudi Arabia that relates to disability in particular. Finally, the third section highlights the employment of deaf people and the barriers that they encounter in the workplace.

This first section begins with a consideration of the models of disability and addresses the Islamic model of disability in terms of the historical background, as well as providing examples from the Quran and hadith, to outline the attitudes towards disabled people. Also outlined are the individual model and the social model of disability. It also provides some consideration of the appropriate language, highlighting the decisions taken within this research regarding the use of terminology. The chapter then moves on to highlight disability and deafness, relating these to the social perspective on disability, and addressing the distinction between Deaf (with a capital D) and deaf in lower-case form. Once again, it provides a rationale for the terminology employed in this research.

2.2 Disability Models

According to Wade (2009), a 'model' is an abstraction applied for the description and analysis of the link between/among factors that contribute to an outcome of interest. Models are critical for understanding phenomena, since they contribute to the validation of professional actions (Bantinx and Schalock, 2010). Silvers, (2010) states that models differ from theories since models are “a standard, example, image, simplified representation, style, design, or pattern, often executed in miniature so that its components all are easy to discern” (Silvers, 2010: 22). Models and thoughts have interdependent relations, whereby they influence one another. In other words, models compile theories and ideas and limit the alternative forms of thinking practices (Hammell, 2006).

Like all disciplines, there are unique variables for disability studies, with these variables defining and denoting the research problems of interest under different methodologies. However, rather than being a separate academic discipline, disabilities studies fit into what is termed as a paradigm (Kuhn, 1961). Pfeiffer (2002) indicated that the terms ‘model’ and ‘paradigm’ have similar implications in research, due to the nature of variables that define their relationships. Likewise, Finkelstein (2004) highlighted the utility of the term “interpretation” in lieu of “model” or “paradigm” since it offers a richer conceptualisation when used in the same context as other paradigms and interpretations.

A historical assessment of the views on disability reveals an increased emphasis on migration of focus from individual (or medical) to the social model of disability. The change has led to a broader range of critiques of how society views and treats disabled people (Priestley, 2003). The change has contributed to the development of diverse disability models to describe and

understand the presence of different understanding of disability, and these models are a way of conceptualising a situation (Priestley, 2003).

Madhesh (2019) argues that the opposing viewpoints presented in the academic literature by scholars arise from the ontological stances on disability by the researchers. Researchers' positions differ widely based on their disciplinary affiliation, as well as their theoretical propensities. Ontology is the view of being or the appreciation of existence by an individual (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Ontological conceptions of disability support the negotiation of a change from the old-fashioned and current perceptions of disability. As indicated by Devlieger, et al., (2016), these origins of disability are deep-rooted in the academic literature. There is an ongoing debate about how disability should be understood. Stone (1999), for example, indicates that different models of disability produce different answers in terms of who is disabled and who is not. This directly impacts on how disability is addressed. In addition, Coleridge (1993) states that understanding of disability varies across cultures, religions, and historical periods. Fawcett (2000) observes that the concept of disability determines how disabled people are positioned in society. This has often led to adverse labelling and the development of stereotypes, with the related research promoting relatively simplistic perceptions of disability (Smart and Smart, 2006).

A noteworthy concern for many entities (such as learning institutions and workplaces) is to create an appreciation and interpretation of disability (Madhesh, 2019). The appreciation is integral for people facing disability, their relatives, friends, professionals, activists and researchers in the fields of disability studies and education. The goal here is appreciating disability from more than what is available under the models, while also raising the importance of the thought processes. Consequently, the next section examines three central models of disability – the Islamic model, the individual model and the social model – to illustrate how

impairment and disability have been interpreted over time, and how these different interpretations have influenced the conceptions of disabled people, including deaf people.

2.2.1 Islamic model of disability

The Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Hadiths), which are the key sources of teachings on Islam, do not reference the term 'disability' (Bazna and Hatab, 2005; Hassanien, 2015; Rispler-Chaim, 2007). There is no universally accepted definition of disability or a disabled person in Islam. However, researchers and practitioners have struggled to identify a convergent definition, especially for legislative purposes (Al-Saif, 2008). In Arabic, the term disabled person is not known, as they are identified in modern times as a physical impairment, such as deafness or blindness. In the context of physical disability, publications on Islam mention various terms, such as 'impairment', or *al-ajz* (العجز) which in Arabic denotes a kind of weakness or inability in a person, leading to the reduction of their capability to function and live a normal life, including deafness and blindness (Al-Muajall/Al-waseet, 1977).

Nevertheless, of importance to the discourse on disability is the way the Qur'an and Sunnah theorise 'human perfection'. The Islamic sources disclose that, since Islam perceives people to be "...biologically limited beings, we cannot possibly consider the idea of 'absolute' perfection, because the Absolute belongs to the realm of Divine attributes alone" (Asad, 1999, p. 21). Consequently, there is no conclusive declaration that fully characterises what perfection with reference to the physical (body), mental (minds), and psychological state of humans means (Bazna and Hatab, 2005), and "to suppose that all human beings should, or even could, strive towards one and the same 'type' of perfection" would be unreasonable (Asad, 1999, p. 22). As Asad (1999, p. 22) states, "If perfection were to be standardized to a specific 'type'... human beings would have to give up, or change, or suppress, all their individual differentiations",

which is arguably unmanageable. As a result, Islam obliges all Muslims, regardless of their capabilities:

“To make the best of [themselves] so that they might honour the life-gift which [their] Creator has bestowed upon [them]; and to help [their] fellow-beings, by means of [their] own development, in their spiritual, social and material endeavours. But the form of [one’s] individual life is in no way fixed by a standard”

(Asad, 1999, p. 23).

In this sense, Islam admits that any form of impairment is morally natural, and people have diverse capabilities and potentials which are helpful and important regarding how they interrelate with others within a community (Rispler-Chaim, 2007). Support for this position is provided by Bazna and Hatab (2005), who examined the two sources of Islamic teachings (the Qur’an and Sunnah) regarding disabled people and the disabilities they face and found that although the two publications do not directly address ‘disability’, they include accounts of people with different capabilities and bodies. However, some cultures believe these differences could be recognised as neither a chastisement nor a sanctification (Blanks and Smith, 2009), but rather as part and parcel of the diversity and experiences of human beings. Consequently, it is the duty of society to ensure that the requirements of each individual are met (Al Khatib, 2017). This was found to be obvious in this research through the application of Islamic social model of disability, as the country’s recent policies acknowledge disabled people’s different capabilities and, therefore, empower them to play their roles within their communities without discrimination and inequality. Despite the weak application of these policies, having them in place could be seen as a positive sign in response to both Islamic values and the principles associated within the social model of disability.

The religion of Islam does not represent disability as a punishment by Allah, or as consequence of the sins of an individual or their parents since that narrative is not present anywhere in the writings and teachings of Islam (Rispler-Chaim, 2007). A different but still traditional understanding views the disability as a result of parental sin, and that therefore it has happened as a punishment from Allah. (Gray et al., 2012). This interpretation is found in traditional Arab and African cultures. These views, however, rarely exist in more educated strata within Saudi Arabia (Turmusani, 2018). However, the representation of disability under Islam as a normal facet of the experience of human beings is reflected in the manner and degree to which Muslims are required collectively to partake in obligatory and elective activities, such as daily prayer and annual pilgrimage (Hajj), irrespective of their capability, skin colour, or social status (Hasnain et al, 2008). Regarding Islamic religious activities, individuals have a right to accomplish them in the manner, at the time, and to the extent that correspond to their individual requirements in terms of their capability, age and gender. As indicated in the Qur'an, "Allah does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear" (Al-Baqarah, v. 286, as translated by Asad, 1980). Also, the story of the blind person who came to the Prophet Muhammad to ask permission to pray at home is an example of the generosity of Islam, that promotes independent living and social equity:

Narrated Abu Huraira: A blind man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and said: Messenger of Allah, I have no one to guide me to the mosque. He therefore asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) for permission to pray in his house. He (the Holy Prophet) gave him permission. When the man turned away, he called him back and said: Do you hear the call to prayer? He said yes. He (the Holy Prophet) then said: Respond to it. (Translation by Sahih Bukhari, 2007).

Rather than seeking anyone's help to bring the blind man to the mosque, the Prophet put a rope around the edges of the building where the man had to walk so he would know the way.

The above example indicates how Islam promotes inclusion in all facets of life, particularly religious and educational activities (Al Khatib, 2017). In addition, inclusion is promoted under Islam due to the positive recognition of the differences among people, as part of the diversity of human beings (Rispler-Chaim, 2007). Miles (2001) supports the position by indicating that disabled people are treated as integral members of Muslim societies. Historically, there are numerous examples where disabled people in Islamic communities were included and played significant roles. For instance, at the height of the civilisation under Islamism, between the 8th and 13th century,

“a significant number of [people labelled] blind, deaf or physically disabled [...] played notable roles as philologists, transmitters of the law, teachers, poets, and social commentators, outstanding among whom were Abu'l Ala al-Ma'arri, Abu Uthman Amr bin Bahr (Al-Jahiz), Bashshar ibn Burd, Ibn-Sirin, Muwaffaq al-Din Muzaffar, and Atta Ibn Abi Rabah” (Guvercin, 2008, para. 8).

In Saudi Arabia, there are some disabled people who have been employed in powerful positions, such as Abdulaziz Al Ash-Sheikh (a blind person), who holds the most influential religious position. Another example is Professor Nasser Al-Mousa, (a blind person), who is a member of the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia and holds a PhD in special education from Vanderbilt University in the US (Aldakhil, 2017). However, this is not commonly the case, and many disabled people are discriminated against and excluded in Saudi Arabia (Alkhouli, 2015). For example, in order to mainstream disabled students in schools with their non-disabled peers, in Saudi Arabia, the student should meet specific requirements, such as not having a severe impairment, or complete blindness or deafness (Alquraini, 2011). As indicated by Alquraini, (2011), in 2008 the MoE 2008, estimated that at least 96% of learners with multiple and severe impairments received their education in segregated schools.

For deaf students, for example, segregated education may increase the level of isolation, which reduces opportunities to practice communication skills. This reduces the opportunities for developing relationships, marrying and getting employment. It also could decrease their self-confidence and independence (Shakespeare, 2006). The segregation influences non-disabled people as well, since they lack opportunities to understand how to interact with disabled people. For instant, some deaf people may face challenges in making eye contact and non-disabled people may not know how to communicate with deaf people (Shakespeare, 2006).

Islam prohibits the behavioural inclinations of isolation and emphasises that each human being deserves love, esteem, provision and safety (Al Khatib, 2017). The religion of Islam places emphasis on providing the necessary accommodations to ensure that everybody is deliberately involved in society (Blanks and Smith, 2009). Also, Islam does not accept the concept of labelling based on impairment or any other factor, viewing this as a matter of discrimination and inequality (Milles, 2001). This analysis matches with the views of Al Khatib (2017) and Bazna and Hatab (2005) that Islam emphasises that disabled people have the right to be mainstreamed in their communities. It is a collective responsibility to accommodate their needs so they can participate in building an inclusive society. Inclusion is appreciated and encouraged under Islamic teachings, while discrimination against, and the exclusion of, any group is prohibited (Hassanien ,2015).

The teachings under the Qur'an support this position, which prohibits the use of discriminatory language against other human beings, by stating that "...neither shall you defame one another, nor insult one another by [opprobrious] epithets" (Al-Hujurat, v. 11, as translated by Asad, 1980). This prohibition applies equally to capability, gender, and background. It is concluded that Islam does not promote the judging of people based on their mental abilities, physical limitation, race, gender or material attainments, but based on their humanity, morality, and

spiritual maturity. There can be no doubt about this since Prophet Muhammad explicitly states, “Verily, God does not look at your bodies or your appearances, but looks into your hearts” (Muslim, 1990, Hadith 2564) and the Qur’an points out, “O [people!] ...Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware” (Al- Hujurat, v. 13, as translated by Asad, 1980).

The above positions outline how disability is approached under Islam, as well as how inclusion and differences among people are perceived. However, it is important to mention that cultural barriers could lead to Islam being misused (Kelleher, 2007). Williams (1961, p. 57), defines culture as a “...particular way of life which expressed certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour”. Culture is dependent on a multiplicity of factors, including economic status, political inclinations and religious views, it changes over time (El-Islam, 2008). The behaviour and attitudes of people may indicate how they understand religion, but not necessarily the actual meaning of values, which are determined by culture (El-Islam, 2008). Some parents who have a disabled child choose to isolate them from their societies since they are afraid of the shame associated with disability and how it will affect the reputation of the family (Mackelprang and Salsgiver, 2016). Hassanein, (2015) states that the concepts of disability and inclusion are culturally constructed, and consequently influenced by the attitudes of each society. Not only does culture shape people’s views about disability and disabled people, but it also leads to the subjugation and exclusion of disabled people.

Musse (2002) highlighted that some Muslim people have barred disabled people from leadership based on the belief that such people are not acceptable by others, or they are incapable of positively contributing to the lives of non-disabled people. Ibn-Hazm (an Islamic legal specialist from Spain in the 12th C), however, argues that Islam did not stop anyone from

exercising leadership. There are numerous historical instances where people overcame their disabilities and served their community well (Musse, 2002). One example was the man to whom Prophet Muhammad gave the duty, on more than ten occasions, for governing Medina in Prophet Muhammad's absence. Abdullah Ibn-Umm-Maktum, was nominated by Prophet Mohammad to give Athan (Calling Muslims to prayer) and to pray for Muslims. The Prophet also asked him to lead one region, believing in his capabilities, and this can be seen as a form of empowerment where the Prophet placed him in a leading position (Musse, 2002). Despite this, the misinterpretation of Islamic principles has been behind many barriers faced by deaf people in their communities.

The definitions of disability imposed by society centre on the judgements of individuals' capabilities (Morris, 1991). In other words, the interpretations of communities provide a useful image of the societal outlooks toward disabled people (Ferguson, 2002). The dialectal aspects of a society may give an indication of communities' attitudes toward disabled people. For example, some communities use some expressions that reveal unwelcome insights, such as 'crippled', 'lame', 'invalid', and 'retarded', all of which imply the subservience of the individual, or a fear of disabled persons (Roush, 1986). These terms were acceptable in the past, but are now considered to be hurtful and unacceptable, which leads to discrimination and oppression (Graham ,2006).

Turmusani (2003) addressed different attitudes to disability and disabled people in Eastern and Western Muslim countries. He contends that the individual model of disability had a large effect on the perceptions of disabled people, and that people should be happy with services the provided and controlled by professionals. Indeed, Turmasani indicated that society's attitudes in Jordan, for example, it was necessary for change, moving from an individual model to a social model of disability. These attitudes will only change if disabled people are given an

opportunity to partake more in the economic and social aspects of life (Turmusani, 2003). A similar situation was found in Saudi Arabia (see the following section for more details).

According to Al-Saif (2008), the significance of disability and disabled people in a Western context, however, is more complex and can be assessed under the mainstream models of disability, which reflect the variations in the outlooks towards disability and disabled people. For example, the charitable model sees disabled people as the objects of charity. The individual model, as will be explained later, focuses on the physical limitation of people's impairment, and concentrates on its diagnosis and treatment (Marks, 1999). The social model of disability emphasizes on the environmental, socio-economic, and cultural obstacles met by disabled people (Oliver, 2013).

Having critiqued Islam and disability, the next section examines the individual and social models of disability.

2.2.2 The Individual Model of Disability

According to Hammell, (2006) and Oliver and Sapey (2006), the most widespread view of disability is based on the supposition that the barriers that are experienced by disabled people arise from their physical limitations. The model is also termed the clinical-pathological deficit model or the medical model (Finkelstein, 1993, Marks, 1999; Oliver, 1990). While it is apparent that the medical model is used interchangeably with the individual model, there are instances where they are applied differently. According to Oliver (1996a, p.31), "In short, for me, there is no such thing as the medical model of disability, there is instead, an individual model of disability of which medicalisation is one significant component".

The individual model views disability as a result of bodily limitations, inherent to the individual. The emphasis is on the limitations of the individual. As indicated by Barnes and Mercer (1996), it is theorised that an individual is 'disabled' by their deficiency. Disability is seen in terms of disease, sickness, difference, and personal tragedy, which leads to the assumption that these aspects are intrinsic to every person with a physical disability (Elliott et al., 2009).

Hunt (1966) claims that individuals with serious impairment are perceived as being unfortunate, in addition to being unlucky, poor, or underprivileged, all which contribute to their restricted lives. This, in turn, leads disabled people to being incapable of enjoying and participating in the pleasures of normal life and those aspects that non-disabled people enjoy and restricts their capabilities to contribute to the economy. Additionally, from the individual model perspective, it is the obligation of the disabled individual to adapt, be fixed, treated, or altered in order to meet the specification of normality in the world (Burchardt, 2005). This understanding of disability confirms that being a disabled person means becoming "less than whole" (Dartington et al., 1981). Therefore, once an individual has an impairment, he/she will never achieve a perfect life (Oliver, 1996).

Smart and Smart, (2006) indicated that this model is widely used in the health processes whereby medical personnel, while acting on the most viable evidence, provide advice, coordinate, and offer interventions for the improvement of the health status of disabled people. Other experts also acclaim the individual model as the most significant framework that enables advances in expertise and research in health, such as the introduction of antibiotics, anaesthetics, and x-rays among others (vanTeijlingen, 2005). The model has also facilitated the effective treatment of common health problems (Taylor and Hawley, 2010). However, there are criticism of the model, since it is considered that disabilities are impairments or differences

for which medical processes or interventions are necessary for modification, even when there is no need for such measures, as evidenced by lack of illness or pain (Reindal, 2008). Thus, the application of this model to disability leads to unnecessary adverse measures, such as the perception that there is a need for cure or treatment of the individual to improve the situation. It also indicates that the presence of disability arises from the inability or lack of willingness of the disabled person or their parents to take the necessary measures to prevent, treat or cure the condition, in order to restore their health, as is the case among normal people.

This perspective on disability has been strongly criticised by disabled scholars and activists. For example, Oliver (1990, p.3) argues that considering disability principally through the individual model has limited effectiveness. This is because medicine alone cannot improve the social context faced by disabled individuals, including deaf people. Furthermore, the individual model may divert attention from the very real social barriers that disabled people face. Of course, doctors can still assist disabled people by diagnosing their original impairment and treating any subsequent illnesses that may or may not be impairment-related; but, even then, there is a danger of conflating disability with impairment, and, in some cases, doctors impose unnecessary medications to treat something that is not, in fact, treatable. As Oliver and Sapey (2018) argue, thinking about disability from a purely medical perspective fails in several ways to identify what is necessary and important in the lives of disabled people.

Significantly, several researchers have indicated that there are apparent differences between disability and illness, even when the causes of illness include disability and vice versa (Shah and Mountain, 2007). On the contrary, disability is a long-term social state that doctors cannot use their knowledge and skills to treat, and which does not need medical intervention (Reindal, 2008). Thus, the individual model should only focus on treating an illness that may cause or be related to physical limitations. Such an approach implies that impaired people need to make

efforts to adjust to ‘the normal’ in order to overcome their personal “defect” and this has been increasingly challenged by disabled people. As Oliver (1996, p.44) states *“The disability movement throughout the world is rejecting approaches based upon the restoration of normality and insisting on approaches based upon the celebration of difference”*.

French and Swain (2014) describe normality as the dominant widely shared expectations regarding conduct and individual characteristics that denote what is perceived as being appropriate and desirable within a particular culture. The individualistic description of disability tends to predispose individuals to harm. For instance, the medicalisation of learning disability, which occurs when communities are abused and institutionalised, is emblematic of the situation (Potts and Fido, 1991; Brigham et al. 2000). Other instances include the practice of oralism, where deaf children were prohibited from the use of sign language and were castigated when they used it. In other instances, schools prevented blind children from using their sight under ‘sight-saving’ thereby, limiting the ability of the children to access full education (French, 2005). These practices were facilitated by policies established under the individual model of disability. The individual model has a limited impact on improving the lives of disabled people (Oliver and Sapey, 2018). Therefore, there has been an interest in embracing other models and why the social model of disability has risen in popularity over time.

Several practitioners and researchers advocate for the individual model of disability, for example, deaf people. Sibanda, (2015) states that deafness is in some cases conceptualised as a shortfall that needs therapeutic support by technological interventions that solve hearing problems and reduce its effects. A study by Skelton and Valentine (2003) interviewing deaf people found that some of those interviewed viewed their deafness as a shortfall that leads to a disability which necessitates medical interventions, such as cochlear implants. The same study

revealed that other interviewees perceived themselves as minorities with a unique tool for communication (sign language) within the society and they referred to themselves as capital D 'Deaf' (Skelton and Valentine, 2003). The differences between (capital D and small d) will be clarified later in this chapter.

A different form of intercession linked to the individual model is auditory-verbal therapy, which is performed by a professional with competence in auditory deficiencies. The intervention tools aim to improve and maintain residual hearing and to enhance skills in speech (Eriks-Brophy et al., 2006). This procedure is an example of the individual model of treatment for deaf children, designed to shift them from being perceived as disabled individuals to individuals who function normally. It is vital to assist deaf individuals to be involved in their learning environment, communities and life in general. However, Madhesh (2019) argues that the increased focus on therapeutic interventions to 'cure' deaf people contributes to the overlooking of the problems and social constructions that impede acceptance within society. It is apparent that the divergent positions are not compatible, although they could be applied concurrently to enhance the overall outcomes for disabled people, including deaf people. For instance, the use of medical intervention, including cochlear implants, can improve the opportunities for the deaf students in mainstream schools.

This model has been used in Saudi Arabia to identify the causes of these functional limitations or some medical facets of disabled children in Saudi hospitals (Al-Jadid, 2014, Al-Hazmy *et al.*, 2004; Al-Turaiki, 2000; Shawky *et al.*, 2002). Still, the criticisms do suggest that this model is by itself insufficient because it just focuses on the physical limitation of the disabled, and disability as a communal challenge is seldom recognised. Al-Jadid (2014) confirmed that stereotyping of disabled people is common in Saudi Arabia due to the Saudi community believing that they are not capable of grasping equal opportunities, for example in education

and employment, due their physical limitation. This interpretation holds that the impairment of the individual leads to their social and economic disadvantage. On the contrary, the social model of disability refutes this causal link between disability and impairment (Bailey et al., 2015).

2.2.3 The Social Model of Disability

The social model has appeared as a criticism of the individual model. As early as the 1960s to the present, literature on disability has advanced around the conflict between these two primary models. While the individual model presents impairment as an integral element of the social disparities and difficulties experienced by the disabled, the social model is developed as a substitute for the individual model, critiquing it for ignoring how social structures play a role in their subjugation and ostracism (Abberley, 1987).

Up until the 1970's, the dominant model of disability was based on a medicalised perspective. As explained above, this model of disability emphasized the impairment of the individual as being a key determinant of disablement. The opposing view that communities could be what disables individuals with impairments was overlooked until the publications of the '*The Fundamental Principles of Disability*' by the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation and The Disability Alliance (1976), which states, "In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society" (p. 3). This view was later renamed the 'social model of disability' by Mike Oliver (1983).

Disability is, thus, seen as the hindrance of activity arising from the contemporary social organisation that takes little or no account of disabled people and discounts them from

participating in conventional social activities. “Impairment” describes a condition affecting individuals, including the physical, intellectual, intellectual, and sensory, whereas “disability” refers to social disadvantage and discrimination (UPIAS, 1976). This differential jargon is critical for appreciating the contrast between the individual model and the social model of disability. This distinction between impairment and disability does not completely separate a person’s damage from their disability. The impairment can be a cause of incapacitation. The social model of disability merely highlights the numerous other socio-environmental issues that can contribute to disability.

One of the forms of disability comprises physical barriers, for example stairways for wheelchair-bound people, but it can also comprise socio-cultural barriers, such as the stereotyping of disabled people. The social model of disability focuses on the fact that disability can be minimised through removal of the barriers (Bailey et al., (2015). Rather than change the individual to meet the societal norms, the social model advocates for the reform of society to accommodate the needs of the person (People with Disability Australia, 2019). The model can lead to improvement in the prospects for interdependence between the various members of society, specifically those with impairment. In addition, it inspires relations between people and entities in society (Barnes, 2000). Additionally, the model offers a political-ethical scope to disability studies which leads to an increase in inclusion and participation for disabled people in their societies (Gleeson, 2002). This in turn means that the barriers and difficulties that disabled people encounter are society’s responsibility (Carson, 2009). This model endorses the identification of and challenge to the mundane barriers that are faced by disabled people. It also facilitates the availability of organisations to influence the perceptions of society through use of the media and helps to change views towards disabled people from needy to active individuals (Oliver, 2013). Moreover, applying the social model of disability ensures that

national policies can prevent discrimination and exclusion towards disabled people (Barnes and Mercer, 2004).

Recently, Saudi Arabian policies shifted to the concept of the social model of disability through strategies and laws; Article 24, for example, calls for inclusive education at all levels (for more such laws, see the section on disability and disabled people in the country in this chapter). Despite these policy improvements, examining the literature revealed that only a few studies are available that examine the social model of disability and its capacity to add more opportunity for disabled people to access jobs. The social model is principally vague or ignored in studies that focus on learning institutions. There are only a few Saudi studies which focus on the social model of disability as a new concept for understanding disability (Alamri, 2014; Alothman, 2014; Alshahrani, 2014).

This model had a robust effect on disabled people and their institutions, reinforcing the obligation to form inclusive societies where all members could have parity of opportunity. The tactic also affected the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), which in 1993 permitted 'The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities' (UNDESA, no date). After the deliberations activated by this novel approach, the World Health Organization (WHO) created the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) (WHO, 1980), its initial model of disability, still entrenched on therapeutic determinism. Following this, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (WHO, 2001) was introduced, which followed the UN's 'Standard Rules'. The social model was recognised and deliberated on, with enthusiasm, with disabled people learning and concluding that it is currently linked to their prevailing exposure to oppressive treatment and exclusion.

However, this model has been debated amongst disabled people themselves, and amongst non-disabled people. Disabled scholars such as Jenny Morris, Liz Crow, Sally French, and Carol Thomas have claimed that the social model tends to disregard the private experiences of deficiency, which are misconstrued to assume that there is a general understanding among disabled people (Barnes and Mercer, 2010; Shakespeare, 2006, p. 202, Swain and French, 2000, p. 571). Furthermore, this model indicates challenging concerns, including those for some disabled people who self-identify as disabled and feel estranged from other disabled people since they are not perceived as having disability (Humphrey, 2000, p. 66) or “not disabled enough” (Pfeiffer, 2005, p. 29). Additionally, the model has been criticised from a medical sociological perspective, and by policy researchers and makers, as well as providers of services for the disabled in communities. These entities insist on the connection between disability and impairment and disease, arguing that disability was triggered exclusively by sickness and that impairments are interpreted as personal health tragedies (Oliver, 1996; Barnes and Mercer, 2010; Shakespeare and Watson, 1997).

The above critiques have been disputed through clarification based on the notion that the model fails to refute the authenticity of the discomfort associated with sickness and the impairment that the disabled people experience, as well as the fact that it may not necessarily lead to disability (Bampi et al., 2010). The model has materialised as a counterargument for the leading model that posited the causal relationship among the factors, and which describes disability as a problem associated with an individual arising from sickness and impairment. The model argues that the problem is not caused by individuals’ physical weaknesses. Disability is from the failure of the society to offer suitable services and sufficiently ensure that the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation” (Oliver, 1999, p. 32). Thus, disability is essentially a communal challenge, and “a long-term social state is not

treatable medically and is certainly not curable” (Oliver, 1999, pp. 35-36). For this reason, this model emphasizes the economic, cultural and ecological barriers met by disabled people (Barnes and Mercer, 2010, p. 30).

To fully comprehend disability, it is necessary to simplify the experiences of impairment and disability. There is a growing denunciation of the rift between disability and impairment since they are essentially similar experiences. For example, disabled feminists claim that it is necessary to merge theorisations of disability and impairment since disabled people do not necessarily differentiate the two in their lived experience, and personal experiences are also important (Barnes and Mercer 2010, Crow 1996; Morris 1991). Ignoring the dimension of impairment is indicative that the physical disparities and limitations are founded only on a social construction (Morris 1991). In this regard, the appearance of disability may be deepened by gender, for instance women in some societies being treated in terms of passivity and helplessness (Asfar et al., 2007) Meekosha (2004, p.4) considers that these descriptions may have consequences for disabled women regarding "education, employment and abuse that then, in turn, reinforce the images in the public sphere." Gender-based studies on disability in Western countries show that disabled women are treated unequally as compared to disabled men (Meekosha, 2004); therefore, disabled women are more likely to experience socio-economic challenges and cannot achieve the same levels of education and employment as men (Rousso, 2003).

Concerning employment, Meekosha (2004) proposes that disabled women have lesser opportunities for gainful employment in comparison to men with impairment, and overall, they earn a lesser salary and fewer promotions. Rousso (2003) stated that socio-economic challenges are also linked with disability because disabled women are more likely than males to be deprived of necessities such as food and medicine. Rousso (2003) points out that disabled

females face higher divorce rates and have lower chances of finding marriage partners in comparison to disabled men. In the Middle East, disabled women also face numerous barriers accessing education and employment due to attitudinal barriers (gender bias compounded by their impairment) (Asfar et al., 2007). Thus, women face more exclusion and discrimination than men due their gender and physical impairment. Sheldon (2014) posited that more needs to be done for these disabled women, in addition to ensuring equality of access to rights in parity with men, since women face huge inequities. Consequently, disabled women also need to contest the community-based structures that establish and promote the forms of oppression linked to disability (Sheldon, 2014).

It is imperative to recognise that barriers within communities and those linked to social perceptions contribute to the shaping of the experiences of individuals. Essentially, changes within societies are incapable of addressing the experiences of impairment in their entirety. For example, loss of sight and hearing continue to impact the abilities of individuals daily, regardless of the barriers erected by society, which means that the personal and subjective experiences of disability cannot be ignored (Barnes and Mercer 2010; Crow 1992; French 1993; Scott-Hill 2004; Shakespeare 2006). When considering disability and research into the phenomenon, it is important to appreciate how the individuals are characterised, while noting the implication of the cultural and material context (Barnes and Mercer 2010; Shilling 2003; Turner 2001). Conversely, deficiency and disability are similar across a multiplicity of domains, including the social and cultural aspects (Barnes and Mercer 2010; Shakespeare 2006). Impairment and disability are two concepts that are difficult to extract or separate because of the intertwined biological, psychological, cultural, social, and political elements that shape both. It is important to understand that the social model does not explain what disability is, but how disability is shaped by social institutions (Barnes and Mercer 2010; Oliver

1996b). As a model the goal is to generate a social theory that provides explanations and understanding of disability that shift toward social and political change, and that improve the lives of those with disabilities by examining how family, education, income, financial support, employment, housing, transportation, and the built environment impact those very lives (Barnes and Mercer 2010; Oliver 1996).

Concerning deaf people, the social model advocates for the right to self-define and identity pride for people suffering from deafness (Oliver, 1993). In addition, the challenges with communication that face people with deafness are apparent under the model, where Oliver (1996) argued that the challenge is based on the limitations of society in communicating with the deaf, as opposed to it being the problem of the people suffering from deafness. Under the model, it is society which leads to exclusion of deaf people mainly due to the presence of disabling environments, structurally ingrained barriers, and adverse perceptions (Skelton and Valentine, 2003). This will be expanded upon later in this chapter.

Finally, the social model has clarified that it does not refute the claim that medical and rehabilitative services do not offer advantages for and are necessary for persons with impairments. The necessity for therapeutic interventions, professional backing, and the provision of technical aids that reduce the challenges associated with impairment, as well as the promotion of the independence and fairness of people with impairment, are acknowledged as important to them living a fulfilling life (Parnes et al., 2009; UNESCAP, 2010). The model posits that it is necessary to identify "...which aspects of disabled peoples' lives need medical or therapeutic interventions, which aspects require policy developments, and which require political action' (Oliver, 1995 cited by Hughes and Paterson, 1997, p. 330). This model aimed to discover, from a practical perspective, the necessary interventions for changing the

environmental blockades and social outlooks that restrict most individuals with impairment from enjoying life in the same way as other people do in their society.

Oliver (1996) clarifies that the social model of disability is not based on sociology but is a way of appreciating the way the world treats people with impairment, which leads to them become disabled. This model serves as an academic exposition for challenging the prevailing models on disability (Hughes and Paterson, 1997). Conversely, the model was envisioned as an influential instrument of the disability movement in the UK, specifically for their campaigns that targeted key types of unfair treatment of people with impairment (Shakespeare, 2006). The social model stresses political actions while addressing peoples' rights, equal opportunities, and inclusion. This model allows disabled people with impairment to express their experiences with disabling barriers, while also gaining an appreciation and control over their daily activities (Barnes and Mercer 2010; Johnstone 2001; Oliver 1992).

As mentioned in Chapter One, this thesis merges the principles of Islam with the social model, yielding a new concept called the Islamic social model. This model enabled the researcher to analyse the structural barriers (in education and employment), and to understand the factors that prevented deaf people from achieving a life equal to that of non-disabled people, considering the Saudi Arabian cultural context. Analysing relevant key principles of Islam and the social model of disability, the prominence of this model is that it enables collective work towards productive explanations for the presence of barriers to disablement, and to follow communal political action and social change to eliminate the barriers. Consequently, revising policies, plans of action and other practices within this framework serves to better support an inclusive environment for disabled people.

2.3 Language of disability

In addition to the above, language is also a vital part of the social model of disability since it indicates both the cultural conventions and thought processes within the surrounding society. In the UK, the use of the term ‘disabled people’ is common. As Priestley noted in 1999, the usage of the term ‘people with disabilities’ associates ‘disability’ with the physical aspects of the body, which has contributed to the rejection of the use of the social model thinkers in the UK. Under the terms of the social model, ‘impairment’ denotes the characteristics of the individual, while disability is perceived as being separate and distinct. This offers social model researchers and activists with the control to highlight the importance of change in the physical and social environment (Shakespeare, 2006).

People-first language is applied to communicate suitably and humbly with and about a disabled individual (Council for Disability Awareness, 2016). Such language emphasises the person first, not the disability. In Saudi Arabia for example, there is a preference for the term “people with disabilities” (Mansour, 2009). The social model of disability provides such agency and aids this research in helping to identify the barriers that make life harder for people with impairment. With respect to Saudi Arabia, in this research, the term ‘disabled people’ is preferred over ‘person with disabilities’ since it denotes that disability is created partly by prejudiced practises within society, as echoed under the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990; Reeve, 2004; Sawadsri, 2010).

Disabled people are not an identical group, given that they consist of people with different impairments, or indeed many other forms of disadvantage. The aim of this research is not to address the entire discussion over what differentiates deaf people from disabled people, but to highlight the specific challenges that deaf people encounter in education and the workplace, as

well as in terms of others' attitudes towards them. This is an important issue, given that recent research has highlighted a high risk of social exclusion and marginalisation due to discrimination. Deaf people typically do not perceive themselves as disabled people, and the existence of multiple identities associated with deaf people can lead to variations in the definitions of deafness. As such, it is essential to shine some light on the dissimilarity between the terms "Deaf" and "deaf" that consistently appear in the literature, as will be discussed later in this chapter. The next section examines several personal experiences of disability within the Saudi context.

2.4 Disability and Disabled People in Saudi Arabia

Having a distinct description of disability is crucial in order to achieve an understanding of disabled people and how they may be (more effectively) incorporated into the community (Acton, 1981). First, when I started my PhD, I was unfamiliar with the two models of disability, and initially believed that disability was an intrinsic aspect of disabled people, i.e., that they are disabled *because* of their impairment. This understanding arose from some of the reports published in Arabic. The definitions of disability in Saudi Arabia tend to focus on the health condition of disabled people, paying more attention, therefore, to the health services provided than to any other issues. However, researchers who have studied disability within the context of Saudi Arabia consistently claim that the definition of disability in the country should not be limited to individuals, and that their impairment should also encompass the external factors that impact the lives of disabled people, such as social and environmental barriers (Elsheikh and Alqurashi, 2013). According to the Saudi Labour and Workman Law Article 51, a disabled person is "any person whose capacity to achieve and continue a suitable job has diminished as a result of a physical or mental infirmity" (The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, no date).

This definition is fundamentally limited because it focuses on impairments as the sole cause of the difficulties that disabled people meet in the workplace, rather than proactively concentrating on removing the barriers that they face. Consequently, disabled people lack equal access to employment in Saudi Arabia and are not treated equally to their non-disabled peers (Al-Jadid, 2013). It has been widely assumed that people with impairments are less able or unable to perform productive work compared with non-disabled people, which is the key reason why people show disrespect towards disabled people (Barnes, 1999). Gain and Abdulwahab (2002) discussed the focus of disability within the Saudi research on medicalizing disability, based on the assumption that disabled people needed to be fixed or cured. A study by Hemdi (2009) found that society created the disability, and that family members need to be educated about their children's capabilities, recognizing that 'disability' is still understood at the most intimate level as a physical limitation, rather than a social or environmental one.

Given the definition of disability provided above, it can be seen that a focus on the individual model in Saudi Arabia has played a central role in the subsequent legislation developed to address disability. For example, the country's ongoing Development Plans, notably the Sixth (1995–2000) and Seventh (2001–2005), have tended to focus on increasing and extending the provision of healthcare rather than trying to ameliorate the social exclusion of disabled people (Sebai et al, 2001; Almalki et al., 2011). As such, the regional initiatives have focused on providing welfare and healthcare facilities for individuals, while neglecting their needs regarding social participation, such as employment.

Additionally, the government of Saudi Arabia offers free equipment and devices for assisting disabled people. For instance, deaf people and those with impaired hearing are provided with hearing aids, while those with physical disabilities are provided with rehabilitative therapies as well as modified automobiles to help with mobility. Although the Saudi government's financial

support for disabled individuals and their families is generous, it has been argued that it has a propensity to lead to dependency (Al-saif,2009). This discourages disabled people from searching for employment opportunities, especially if this is found to be difficult. Their families may corrupt the use of these benefits through spending it on other things, rather than primarily spending it to support their disabled children. A dated individual model of disability (Oliver and Barnes, 2010), where disability is seen as a pathological condition, appears to dominate these services.

These observations about the individual model and the focus on healthcare notwithstanding, it should be noted that the disability annual conference conducted in Saudi Arabia focuses on health care discussions and medical supports that should be provided to disabled people resulting on many advancements in this field, while unfortunately giving little consideration to other barriers. According to Mulazadeh and Al-Harbi, (2016), in 2014 the participants called for more attention to address the multitude of educational, employment and other barriers that face disabled people. In other words, they were recommending new routes to apply the social model of disability. However, these recommendations were not taken into consideration. While more efforts have been applied to the healthcare of disabled people, scant attention has been paid to other areas that impact profoundly on the future of disabled people, such as education, work opportunities and training (JICA, 2002).

Despite the global interest that disabled people have attracted, the enquiry regarding the experiences in the workplace, and opportunities for, disabled people in Saudi Arabia are minimal. This may be a result of factors such as the proportion of disabled people in Saudi Arabia (i.e., their representation and voice within the community) and unwillingness of families/individuals to identify either themselves or their relatives as being disabled (due to feelings of embarrassment and humiliation, for example). The Saudi Arabian Central Authority

of Statistics and Information (2014) estimated that the total population of Saudi Arabia was approximately 30 million people; this figure did not, however, detail the specific number of disabled people (Arab News, 2012). Few academic research reports have been published in this field, and there are no official government reports showing such data. Examining the disability statistics within Saudi Arabia reveals that it is difficult to know the exact number of disabled people within the country. According to Al-Gain and Al-Abdulwahab (2002), this is due to parents' reluctance to state that they have a disabled child, so wishing to avoid taking part in activities that might attract public attention, like research. Another reason is the large discrepancy between the numbers and information given by government, international organisations and other bodies. These depend on the way in which these organisations define disability, impairment, and the classification methods used to collect data. Arab News (2012) provided a general estimation of the proportion of disabled people to be 4% of all Saudi citizens. The year of 2016 witnessed publication of some reports and information about disability statistics. It seems that the country's signature to the sustainable development SDGs, which given focus to the desegregation of data, was behind the establishment of many detailed statistics to consider disability in relation to gender, age, geographical location and other factors. According to the National Library of Medicine (2018), out of 20,064,970 Saudi Arabia citizens, 667,280 are disabled persons. It is important to note that older males are found to have a higher percentage of impairment than females. Individuals who are at least 60 years of age (11,014) and males (3,818) had higher rates of prevalence of disability compared with females (2813). The same year witnessed the publication of a report by Statista (2022) which primarily focusing on examining disability statistics in relation to gender. This report states that the rate of prevalence of disability in Saudi Arabia for men was about 2.14%, in comparison to women at 1.66%.

The Saudi Labour law is mandated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) and implemented accordingly by the Minister of Labour and Social Development. The Labour Department under the MLSD performs administration functions that oversee labour matters, under the guidance of the Minister. The Labour Law ensures that work is a fundamental right for every citizen. The Saudi Labour Law (Ministerial Order No. 1982, 06/28/1437 corresponding to April 7th, 2016; ILO, 2014) specifies the conditions for employing disabled people to guarantee their safety and security, and to ensure that they are not discriminated against, be it based on their gender or impairment. However, as explained above, the labour market participation for disabled people of both genders is negligible in comparison to the rate of involvement of those without disabilities in the country (Kashrami, 2003).

The Saudi Labour Law, Art. 28, (Royal Decree No. M/51 23 *Sha'ban* 1426/27 corresponding to September 2005) necessitates that every employer employing 25 workers or more ensures that 4% of them are disabled. Institutions that fulfil this obligation are provided with financial rewards and incentives as stipulated by the MLSD. Companies that do not abide by this policy can face fines.

Based on the definition under Saudi Law, disabled people are entitled to services and adaptations to allow them to work (Ministerial Order No. 1982, 06/28/1437 corresponding to April 7th, 2016; ILO, 2014). Similarly, it is stated that an impairment should not be a key reason to deny anyone opportunity for work, promotion or professional development in the organisation (Ministerial Order No. 1982, 06/28/1437 corresponding to April 7th, 2016; ILO, 2014).

In addition, the Labour Law guidelines indicate that employees with impairments have similar rights and privileges as other workers (Ministerial Order No. 1982, 06/28/1437 corresponding to April 7, 2016; ILO, 2014). The same Ministerial Order states that, under Article No.10, it was newly instituted to ensure the implementation and enforcement of Article #28. This includes 12 sub-articles that support the provisions for suitable employment for disabled people. Some of these sub-articles provide new definitions of disability and employment, reasonable accommodation, the convenience of the work environment, fair pay, and equal employment opportunities.

Despite the consideration of disabled people evident in the regulations detailed above, and in line with a survey carried out in Saudi Arabia by Al-saif (2009) involving 500 disabled people, approximately 84% of the respondents reported that they had been exposed to unfair treatment in Saudi Arabia in terms of education and employment. Al-saif (2009) further stated that 69% of disabled people are uneducated. He argues that none of the education legislation directly prohibits discrimination against disabled people, and that this prohibition contributes significantly to fostering the prejudicial treatment of disabled people within the field of education (Al-saif, 2009). Moreover, the study reveals that 89.7% of the participants were unaware of their right to employment as identified within the legislation. The study results indicate that 68.3% of this sample's work applications were excluded, with the implication that these rejections were based on prejudice related to their disabled status.

As already evident from the above, disabled people encounter significant barriers in almost every aspect of life. The need for explicit legislation, alongside other actions designed to support them to gain employment, indicates that they face clear difficulties in obtaining and maintaining work. It is arguable, however, that – for similar reasons to those given by Al-Gain and Al-Abdulwahab (2002) – these difficulties begin much earlier in life, during their

education. Through the education system, people acquire the required economic skills and discipline to prepare for social participation – or at least they *should* do, if not impeded by aspects of the education system itself, such as the hidden curriculum. The next section, therefore, considers this as a significant barrier to disabled people that they need to negotiate long in advance of entering the world of employment.

2.5 The Difference between Deaf/deaf People

This section presents the differences between Deaf/deaf people in terms of their identity and the individual and social models of disability. It also provides a rationale for using the term “deaf” in this research.

In the 1970s, the Deaf cultural minority movement opposed their unfair treatment by a majority who did not suffer from hearing challenges. They argued against a disability perception of deafness as a form of impairment that ought to be ‘cured’ and stressed that Deaf culture is a culture that is unique with sign language as their first language (Ladd, 2003). On the other hand, the disability movement focused on social oppression, cultural discourses, and environmental barriers. The identification of people as disabled based on their environments as opposed to their impairment resulted in part in the identification of disabled people as a group that is ostracised due to their exclusion from their society and community. Through the social model, the Disability Movement has, as one of its main apprehensions, the acknowledgement of a culture of disability, founded on the shared experiences of a disabled identity.

Deaf people (With a capital D) are those who use sign language as their first or preferred language. The use of the term deaf (with a lower-case d) are those who are born severely deaf, rely on speech and lip-reading and consider English as their mother tongue (Ladd, 2003). It is

necessary to clarify that when the capital 'D' is used, it refers to the deaf community in the UK that use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language and are categorised with other categories of Deaf people who use the same language and have a similar history and culture.

The Deaf community emphasizes that the people in this community are distinct from the members of the hearing community. Essentially, the idea of a Deaf identity gives rise to a separate cultural and linguistic view of people with hearing impairments (McIlroy, 2008). Some members of the Deaf population in the UK view themselves as a linguistic and cultural minority group and, through doing so, discard the notion that deficiency and disability are individual constructs (Corker, 1998).

The Deaf community itself does not specifically delineate between disability and impairment. The focus of the members of this community is on seeking liberation from oppression by establishing a distinct community to which they belong (Corker, 1998). The Deaf community believes that their members should be viewed as different rather than impaired. At the same time, however, they also strive to access the legitimate benefits and adjustments that are provided for disabled people. This is somewhat of a dichotomy. While the Deaf community desires to access the protection and benefits and afforded for disabled people, they reject the fundamental notion that they have an impairment that gives rise to the lawful protection and advantages that they seek to enjoy. This viewpoint and other contradictions that relate to the Deaf Culture is problematic, and some critics question whether people who refute having a disability should benefit from the laws aimed to assist those with disabilities, and also whether there is a need for modifications or diversifications by the government to the existing laws to accommodate the perceptions of this community group (Harvey, 2008).

The British Deaf Association (2014) confirms that gaining access to public services, resources and social independence is challenging for D/deaf people, with Harris and Bamford (2001) highlighting the low awareness of deafness and the inadequate availability of services, interpreters, and information communicated in sign language. Kyle et al. (2005) note that this can lead to Deaf people isolating themselves from public services due to the frustration and shame they feel when dealing with negative or ignorant attitudes and a lack of awareness of what it means to be Deaf.

Skelton and Valentine (2003) performed a qualitative study involving 20 Deaf people designed to elicit insights into the extent to which they felt socially excluded in different situations. The researchers queried the participants about their views of impairment, identity and Deaf culture, and the findings revealed that the members of this population found it difficult to clarify their views about their identity. Those who regarded themselves as Deaf people constantly chose to be perceived and treated as affiliates of a language minority and to interact exclusively through sign language. Robinson and Adam (2003) further examined the cultures of disabled people and deafness. They described how the disability movement is significant because it emphasizes the structural and environmental barriers that serve to position disabled people as a troubled marginal group. This perspective opened new possibilities for an association between the Disability Movement and Deaf people.

Conversely, Knight and Swanwick (1999) explain that, under the social model, sign language is not approached as a lesser mode of communication, but a natural style of communication, just like any other language. Given this, Moore (1999) asserts that, under the social model, the challenges that deaf people encounter are thought to be due not to their individual impairment but to environmental factors. The social model, therefore, instead targets the issues caused by

societal and cultural perspectives. Frederickson and Cline (2002) further explain that, for this reason, the social model refers to society itself as disabling.

Like the social model of disability, the social model of deafness is based on the notion that the disabilities experienced by deaf people are not due to their hearing impairment but because of the way in which the wider society discriminates against or socially excludes them (Conama, 2004). To this end, proponents of the social model call for social and institutional changes as opposed to better medical interventions. They argue that the limited access to the conventional is the primary challenge and reiterate the need for more education for the deaf and technological aids, such as text telephones and subtitles on television programs, to help deaf people to assimilate more effectively into the mainstream hearing world (Kim et al., 2018).

As discussed above, this research identifies the numerous characteristics linked to impairment in hearing, and hence the term ‘deaf’ will be applied across this study to incorporate the wide range of hearing impairments, such as those who use sign language, oral and hearing aid users. My rationale in using the term ‘deaf’ to describe people with many types of hearing impairments is because the KSA has not benefited from the documentation of the historical experiences of deaf people; this constraint has adversely affected the deaf culture within the country. In comparison with countries in the West, some cultures have emerged, such as the differentiation in the circumstances facing the deaf in community. First, the D is capitalised in the word ‘Deaf’ when referring to culturally Deaf individuals, to enable them to share a unique culture and communication system using sign language. In comparison, the use of a lower case “d” refers to the audio-logical condition of being deaf, with limited or no contact with other deaf individuals (Holcomb, 2013). For the purpose of this project, the small “d” refers to deaf individuals in Arabia, as the Arabic language cannot differentiate between the two terms. Similarly, there is limited discussion on the variances between these two terms in the Saudi

deaf community. A different issue that has adversely influenced the spread of Deaf culture is that only a few families with deaf parents live with deaf children. The bulk of deaf children are born into families who do not have a history or experience with deaf relatives, implying that they have neither the experience with their language, nor their culture (Alqarni, 2017).

In this research, I will include people who are hard of hearing, who become deaf in adulthood or later in life, and people who are born deaf or become deaf at a younger age. These three groups all share hearing impairments, although they are different in many ways and have a variety of distinctive characteristics, needs, and ways of communicating. As this research utilises the social model of disability, which distinguishes between disability and impairment, I will not be focusing specifically on these groups' medical conditions but, rather, their disabling barriers in the work environment. As discussed by Conama (2004) with regards to the social model, deaf and hard of hearing people are at a higher risk of ostracism because of financial, environmental, and formal discrimination, which further omits them from participating in activities of social and economic value. Conama (2004) highlights that deaf individuals normally leave learning institutions with lesser credentials than non-disabled people, are less likely to pursue higher education, and stand higher chances of missing out on promotions in the workplace. These issues will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter began by examining the models of disability and how they define disability in fundamentally different ways. An extensive discussion of the key principles maintained under the individual and social models of disability has also been provided. The social model, which has been increasingly adopted in more recent years, states that people have impairments but that the oppression, exclusion, and discrimination they face is not an inevitable consequence

of having an impairment. Instead, the way in which society is run and organised impacts negatively upon their lives. This chapter has also presented a background to the topic of deafness as both an individual and social construct. Some members of the Deaf population in the UK view themselves as a linguistic and cultural minority group and, through doing so, reject the notion that impairment and disability are individual constructs. However, capital 'D' deafness arguably does not exist in Saudi Arabia and, therefore, a decision has been taken within this research to utilise the lower case 'd'. The meaning of disability and the situation of disabled people in Saudi Arabia will be explored in greater details in the following chapter.

3 Chapter Three: Education, Employment- An Exploration of Barriers to Employment for deaf People

3.1 Introduction

This chapter places into context the extant studies about disability, education, and employment in the KSA. Al-Gain and Al-Abdulwahab (2002) discuss the stereotyping and adverse views of disability within the country, as well as discussing how these adverse insights result in the exclusion of, and discrimination against, deaf people. Al-Gain and Al-Abdulwahab stress the extent to which KSA society intrinsically backs the unfair treatment and typecasting through all practices. Different social groups and communities in the country, however, vary in their perceptions of disability. These perceptions are swayed by the social and academic experiences of individuals and, thus, influence the culture around deaf people in the country (Al-Saiss, 2009). These negative societal perceptions result in major challenges which ultimately prevent disabled people from leading an equal life, and thus participating actively within society, education, and the workforce.

This chapter discusses education in general within Saudi Arabia, with a detailed focus on deaf education. In doing so, three main approaches to education for deaf students are defined: special education, integration, and inclusive education. These three approaches are contextualised within Saudi Arabia in order to understand the educational approaches employed for disabled students, and particularly deaf students, within the country. This provides an illustration of the barriers facing deaf students in Saudi Arabia and how they differ from those in other countries. Following this, the chapter will then examine the employment experience of disabled people, including deaf people, and the challenges they face within this area. Deaf women's experiences are also critiqued in relationship with the Saudi literature,

particularly the labour laws, which are intended to ensure that equal opportunities exist for all within the employment sphere.

This chapter explores the barriers encountered by deaf people in Saudi Arabia on their journey to and following their employment. It touches upon deaf people's experience of higher education as this greatly influences their ability to compete in the labour market. As Barnes and Mercer (2005a) state, it is imperative to apprehend the problems that disabled people, including deaf people, come across as being not due to their impairment but rooted in the broader disabling social environments. Deaf people face multiple barriers that make it hard for them to find or keep a job.

The chapter then moves to explore the different types of barriers, comparing how these manifest themselves in Saudi Arabia with the rest of the world. This, it is hoped, will support the thesis in its ambition to provide useful and tailored recommendations regarding the overcoming of these barriers that can have wide applicability even beyond the Saudi Arabian context. This chapter continues the previous chapter's discussion of education, exploring barriers and opportunities presented to deaf people in the context of higher education. A section is devoted to discussing the history of employment in Saudi Arabia before discussing the status of higher education for deaf people. After this, the pre-employment process – specifically job interviews – will be considered, exploring the potential reasons for difficulties presented to deaf people. The issue of underemployment is considered, and specific focus is then devoted to reasonable accommodations that need to be provided during the pre-employment process. Attitudinal barriers are also considered. Finally, this chapter examines the communication barriers that deaf people encounter in the workplace and the accommodation needs of deaf workers.

3.2 Education and disabled students

This section will look at education in general, then consider the educational journey for disabled students. Education is an important part of socialization, and a process that lasts throughout one's life. One's family, peer group, the mass media, and school are the agents of this socialization. Education is vital for every individual, regardless of their demographic, psychographic and geographical characteristics. Educating disabled students is a good investment from the perspective of a country, as well as an individual, as stated by Greenstein, 2015, p.6),

“Education is the process by which we become a part of society. It is through education that we learn what is expected of us and what we expect of others, what we can achieve and to what we may aspire. Through education we also learn who we must not be, what is forbidden and what is unspeakable.”

Peters (2004) indicates that it lessens their welfare costs and future dependence. In addition, it reduces their present reliance on other people and systems, and frees other domestic members of their caring duties, thereby enabling them to improve their occupation or engage in other productive activities. It also improves the potential of children to produce and create wealth, which leads to alleviation of poverty. In line with the individual model outlined above, disabled students are usually perceived by society as a disadvantaged group (Block, 1992). Hence, they miss out on certain benefits, including socio-economic and political types, including the right to equitable access to quality education and employment.

The following section explores the journey towards inclusive education for disabled students, and specifically deaf students.

3.2.1 From Special Education to Inclusive Education

This section offers a snapshot of special education, integration, and inclusive education. This consideration of these three concepts addresses the degree to which each one can be seen as a step forward towards inclusive education. Analysing the evolution of these concepts in this research is arguably beneficial before we move on to discuss the journey towards inclusive education within the context of Saudi Arabia in the next section. In short, there are three approaches to educating disabled students.

The first of these approaches (segregation) enables disabled students to learn in different schools or secluded classrooms. The term ‘special educational’ has retained an emphasis in education on the challenges of individual children, which often crosses over with approaches that segregate children. This approach began from the ontology of the individual model that perceives disability as prevailing within individuals (Slee, 2011). The view maintains that this group needs to be categorised and then allocated to suitable services in special educational settings. Due to this perspective of special schooling, each individual will have some label or classification. Furthermore, these practices of labelling and classifying emphasize the challenging and crude binary oppositions (abled versus enabled; normal versus abnormal) as discussed by Ashby (2012). In addition, any learning system founded on the tenets of special learning services leads to the segregation of the subjects into two categories: ‘disabled’ and ‘non-disabled’ (Connor and Gabel, 2013).

A different introductory notion supporting special education is that every student must be catered for as a unique case. Special education shapes individual plans for students with disabilities that focus on the complications to be handled, or the problem to be handled.

Shakespeare (2006) argues that this perspective leads to a focus on weaknesses, which can result in low self-esteem amongst disabled people. Furthermore, this strategy can lead to a culture where there exist low expectations of disabled students, encouraging them in turn to have low expectations of themselves (Kelly and Byrne, 2018). This may have an additional effect on whether they can recognise and/or seek out opportunities beyond education, i.e., perhaps preventing them from recognising that opportunities apply equally to them (Magasi et al., 2015). This, therefore, is a curriculum that fails sufficiently to address the skills required for individuals to become valued members of society (McCloskey, 2011).

Barnes (1991) indicated that the separation carried out under special schooling systems is determined by the individual model, which frames education as a low priority while focusing on equipping the disabled learners with valuable skills and opportunities. However, the position devalues their role in social structures, thus leading to the emergence of adverse stereotypes such as dependence, which then contributes to discriminative treatment. Barnes (1999) criticises special education, stating that it fails to provide disabled students with the skills and confidence to engage with their community. Additionally, special education has an isolating effect. Marschark et al. (2015) observe that disabled students who study in special schools receive a less thorough education than those who learn via more inclusive education. Shaver et al. (2013) further criticise special education in terms of its impact on social and communication skills; these are found to be less developed than in those students who experience inclusive education. Shogren et al. (2015) maintain that special education misses opportunities to encourage interaction between disabled students and their wider community. The absence of such skills and opportunities impacts upon both their social skills and academic outcomes in later life.

Within studies on disability, researchers have confronted those models of disability which focus on the deficits on individual. In addition, the social model of disability has started to affect the lives of disabled people (Thomas, 2007). As discussed in the second chapter above, the social model perspective focuses not on the impairment, but rather on the discrimination and prejudice faced by disabled people (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001). For the adverse aspects of disability to be eradicated, the social model advocates for the application of the inclusive approach by the entities that offer services for the identification and removal of barriers to inclusion, to enable disabled people to acquire control of their own lives. The enablement of disabled people is an integral element of the social model, with disabled and non-disabled people functioning in unison to realise change (Goodley, 2011).

The second form of education is integration, where students participate in distinct classes or units in conventional learning institutions. Dash (2006) states that assimilation comes from external scenarios from the learning institutions and utilises the capability of the disabled students to adapt and so be integrated into the school. Additionally, assimilation considers the school a partner in when assimilation is implemented, while the duty lies with the disabled student (Frederickson, 2009). Confusion between the concepts of integration and inclusion may give rise to difficulties with appreciating inclusion, since some instructors apply the two terms interchangeably (Mittler, 2000; Weber, 2012).

Brown (2005) demonstrates that, in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (GCC countries), inclusion is conceptualised as the translocation of learners from special learning environment to conventional institutions, although they still learn in special classrooms. This differs from the universal notion of inclusion, which applies to disabled students studying with their peers in the same class through adapting the environment, curriculum, and teaching strategies to suit all students (Mitchell, 2014). The outset of inclusive schooling is numerous and diverse which

necessitates the extensive contention regarding the term (Slee, 2011). He argues that several scholars have reduced the concept of inclusive education by narrowing it down to simply accommodate the interests of learners with disabilities in general schools without making any appropriate changes or reconfigurations. As outlined in Chapter Six below, similar confusion between the terms was evident in the responses of the participants in this study, as they tended use terms such as integration and inclusion to refer to the concept of inclusion.

Several authors, such as Pijl et al. (1997), argue that integration and inclusion are used to denote analogous procedures and results, stressing principally that there is broader concept of integration that come close to inclusion. Since there is a disparity between inclusion and assimilation as indicated in existing studies, it is essential to begin by describing integration and inclusion right from the start. According to Ashman and Elkins (2002) 'integration' involves attending to the students facing disability in an environment that is least restrictive, for instance, the general classroom or isolated (self- contained) classrooms inside general schools. Meanwhile, inclusion is defined by Ofsted (2000, p.4) as "...equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment, and background". Inclusion should pay specific consideration to providing an environment that is unique for the various categories of learners within the institution.

These initial disparities between the two terms are evident in the placement. For instance, regarding integration, disabled students move from a segregated school into special classrooms in mainstream schools (Thomas, 1997). In contrast, with inclusion, disabled learners become fully fledged members of conventional learning environments, without conditions (Antia et al., 2002).

Another difference between the two is evident from the systemic changes that are made by learning institutions in order to put up with disabled students. Under the integrated settings, there is no need for change to accommodate the learners with disabilities (Loreman et al., 2005). Similarly, in 2000, Mittler argued that, with integration, it becomes unnecessary for learning institution to accommodate the unique interests of the learners. However, with inclusion, these learning institutions must adopt a reform agenda that includes accommodating the diverse interests of the learners. In this respect, Mushoriwa (2001) stresses the necessity for school reform to consider the diversity existing among all students.

Moreover, the disparities between the two concepts are evident from the activities in conventional learning institutions. For instance, under integration, learners focus on adhering to the conventional curriculum as much as possible (Phadraig, 2007), which is not necessary under inclusion.

The report by Save the Children (2002) argues that education under inclusive systems entails the transformation of the culture, guidelines, and practices by the learning institutions to react to the uniqueness among the students in their own community. This means that all learners, including disabled students, not only have admittance to the learning facilities within their own community, but are also supplied with the necessary opportunities for learning so that they can achieve optimally (Save the Children, 2002). However, it is also important that all stakeholders, including the community, parents, and children have the support needed for the transformation of the outlook and appreciation of how inclusion works.

Barnes (1999) defines inclusive education as an educational practice that aims to increase the extent to which students learn and participate, facilitating meaningful opportunities regardless of any impairments. Singal (2009) argues that inclusive education not only requires that

teachers are trained, but also includes a change in the fundamental ideals and beliefs held throughout the system. Oliver and Barnes (2010) state that the social model of disability supports inclusive education.

The policy and practices adopted across the world have been impacted by Article 24 of the UNCRPD (United Nations, no date), which legalized children's right to access mainstream schools. Twelve years earlier, UNESCO (1994) published their Salamanca statement, which has been identified by researchers such as Armstrong et al. (2000) as a breakthrough in terms of moving from special to inclusive education. The concept, which is viewed as a robust start for inclusive learning across the globe, has been adopted across numerous countries since then. Duke (2009) reports that over 25 multinational entities and 92 countries were signatories to the Salamanca Declaration, which confirms their commitment to ensuring the right to education for all students, within an ordinary learning environment. Successive measures to improve inclusivity in learning have been adopted; as a case in point, the Education for All Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) confirmed many goals, such as the sharing and exchanging of efforts and experiences to enhance educational opportunities for all students. According to (UNESCO, 1994, p.viii), "Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning".

According to Jahnukainen (2015), the practicality of inclusive education differs from one country to another. Saudi Arabia for example, has responded to the education for all framework not through mainstreaming disabled children within same classrooms, but rather admitting them into segregated classrooms within the same school. This is due to the different definitions of inclusion in various countries and contexts. Practice also varies depending on dissimilarities in the conceptualisation within fields and subjects (Hyde et al., 2005). An assessment of how the social model of disability is being defined and applied within the context of Saudi Arabia

revealed that it is somewhat different than its interpretations within, for example, the UK. In recent years, Saudi Arabia's national policies have started to move from the individual approaches towards the social model as a legislative framework, redesigned to promote the removal of physical, attitudinal and other types of barriers. When it comes to practice, however, we can see that the interpretation of several concepts such as inclusion is different, and public schools still see locating disabled students in separate classrooms as a form of inclusive education, which is seen as a partial application in other countries. I can confirm that academia is still not teaching the concept of the social model of disability within the curriculum, but still referring to disabled people as having "special needs" and viewing disability from an individual perspective.

Oliver (2017) claims that it is not a matter of using the same term 'inclusion', but of understanding the concept and reflecting it in the subsequent education policies. The next section explores this conflict within the context of Saudi Arabia, after presenting the education history of disabled people.

The next section will, therefore, focus on the education of disabled, and specifically deaf, individuals in Saudi Arabia.

3.3 Disabled Students in Saudi Arabia: The Development of Education and Placement Options for deaf Students

Across the history of the education system in the KSA, it has undergone numerous phases in its reformation. In 1932, it was available only for 'intelligent people' and the families of politically powerful families who lived in urban areas (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in the United States, 2015). However, over the decade, the country established the first educational centres for male learners. In the same decade, considerable efforts were made to construct 226

institutes to accommodate nearly 30,000 male learners at the primary level of education. In the 1960s, the country introduced facilities for learning for female students at primary level. 30 years later, the country introduced facilities for mixed learning across the country, except in several marginal locations. In 2015, over 6M students were enrolled in Saudi learning institutions, from elementary to higher learning levels, with majority (60%) being female (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in the United States, 2015).

Two key public entities have played an integral role in this transformation, through administration, planning, supervision and implementation of the domestic education system. The MoE and the General Organisation for Technical and Vocational Training are integral in the formulation and implementation of strategies (Saudi Cultural Mission in the United States, 2013). The MoE, viewed as the most important of these agencies, was established in 1954. Its main tasks are to establish the educational standards and systems for mainstream schools, as well as oversee the quality of the education delivered to learners for both genders. It provides free public general education, including primary, middle, and secondary education. All Saudi schools adhere to a single education program, which involves teaching a similar curriculum. This is comprised of key subjects, such as maths, sciences, languages (English and Arabic), religious studies (Islamic studies), literature and history. The majority of the learning institutions have two campuses, one for each gender.

In the 1960s, some disabled people were placed on the program to receive official education through two unique, excluded placements. Under one option, the learners were placed in residential schools where disabled people were provided with accommodation and special education (Al-Hamli, 2008). Under the second program, the learners were provided with learning during the day, since there were no options for accommodation. The program involved learners with some impairment as well as disabilities. The participants were thus provided with

education and other forms of assistance, including speech and language support, and social and health care. For example, in 1960, in Riyadh, the Al-noor institute was established as the first special school for blind students in the country (Al-Mousa, 2010).

In 1964, special schools, termed 'Hope Institutions', were established for deaf students (Ministry of Education, 2016). Consequently, the deficient viewpoint of excluding disabled people by placing them in 'special' schools/institutes emerged and became the most common placement for disabled students. As Al-Mousa (2010) observes, the proportion of disabled students registered in isolated schools has grown extensively over the past decades on account of the growth of special schools/institutes domestically. This was also a result of the inaccessibility of mainstream school spaces, as well as the lack of suitable curricula and teaching methods for disabled students (Aldabas, 2015).

Although these exclusionary learning norms remain common in Saudi Arabia, the first test-run for education of children with disabilities in conventional schools occurred in 1984 in the city of Hofuf in eastern Saudi Arabia (Al-Mousa, 2010). The MOE relocated disabled students, including deaf students, from special schools to sequestered learning facilities and termed it inclusive education. The term 'integration' was used initially by the MoE in the mid-1990s (Allothman, 2014), unlike the globally accepted term 'inclusive education'. Scholars in the Saudi context tend to reduce the concept of 'inclusion' to mean relocating disabled students from special schools to segregated classrooms called 'self-contained classrooms.' Through this placement, disabled students, including deaf students, study in isolated classrooms in mainstream schools during the school day (Shaira, 2013).

3.3.1 Integration in Saudi Arabia

This section will now present the concept of integration within Saudi Arabia. As indicated above, the term ‘integration’ has been frequently used to denote to movement of disabled students from special to mainstream schools, irrespective of the definite situation in these locations. In Saudi Arabia, there is a degree of misunderstanding about the meaning of inclusive education. This is primarily due to the language used in the context of policies and scholarship. Indeed, the term ‘inclusion’ has been applied as a supplement ‘integration’ since the two denote the same meaning under Arabic, which has led most practitioners and researchers to use integration, while referring to inclusion in studies set in Saudi Arabia (Allothman, 2014; Shaira, 2013).

Zigmond (2003) views self-contained, isolated classrooms within the special education provision as useful, stating that the small number of students in such classrooms allows them to receive individual attention from their teachers. Armstrong (2016a) believes that this form of educational practice falls under the individual model of disability, where it focuses on the students’ impairments. Despite the policy at the domestic and global levels and extensive activism calling for inclusion, most of the deaf students across numerous countries face exclusion (Slee, 2018). One such countries is the KSA, which is the setting for this study, where all deaf students learn in special schools and self-contained classrooms in mainstream schools.

Deaf students, in common with other disabled people, need to acquire different skills, including creativity, interpersonal skills, all which contribute to enhancement of their engagement with their school and the wider community. Bain (1976) argues that the most suitable circumstances for learning those skills are in inclusive classrooms with non-disabled peers. The deaf students of today are expected to be the citizens of tomorrow, implying that they need to acquire strong

skills and qualifications to prepare themselves for independent living. Although including students within inclusive classrooms requires strategy and effort, it has greater potential for success than other options.

However, in Saudi Arabia, all students suffering from deafness are provided with two types of learning placement, all which are implemented under the 'Alamal', either under the segregated programs, or under the self-sufficient learning facilities (Al-Othman, 2014). Alamal in Arabic means 'hope'. According to the MoE (2016), most (90%) of deaf learners were schooled in secluded, "self-contained" classrooms while the remaining 10% attend segregated learning facilities for students suffering from deafness. Indeed, there are no deaf students presently participating any general classrooms in Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, 2016).

The MoE (2015) notes that autonomous classrooms are fewer than the standard general learning facilities, each containing five to ten students with the same type of impairment. Also, according to the MoE (2015), approximately 91% of deaf students are educated in self-reliant classrooms, and almost all the rest are still being educated in special schools. Despite the Saudi Arabian government's signing of the UNCRPD, such as Article 24, that appeals for inclusive education across all levels of learning (Al-Mousa, 2010), students still face systemic segregation. This may be indicative of a misinterpretation of the international policy. A self-contained classroom study placement can be seen as an isolated classroom since it is a form of special education provision that is located within a public school. It, therefore, represents an exclusionary practice.

An analysis of the integration and inclusion responsibilities according to the above discussion shows that inclusion is more aligned to the social model of disability than integration. The goal of the social model is to remove any barriers that hinder disabled students' access to equal

education. It could be argued that integration was a transitional phase that led to inclusion. Integration does not imply the adjustment of the learning environment to accommodate disabled students (Thomas et al., 2006). On the contrary, it means the adjustment of the environment to meet the needs of all categories of learners, regardless of their characteristics. Placing deaf students within conventional learning facilities without making any accommodation variations to, for example, the institution, program, teacher training, and learning strategies, doesn't refer to inclusion. Based on the evidence regarding the challenges that deaf people encounter when attempting to access high-quality education, a clear need exists to apportion resources to intensify opportunities for inclusion in the educational activities, in the hope that this will have a positive long-term impact on the work opportunities available to deaf people (although, of course, deaf individuals face further barriers related to seeking and gaining employment). Chapter Five below sheds further light on the barriers faced by deaf people during their education.

The next section details the history of higher education within Saudi Arabia, along with its importance to the country.

3.4 The History of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian MoE established the first college in Mecca in 1949. The first teacher training college was established in 1952 in the Holy City of Mecca, with two additional colleges created in Riyadh in the subsequent year (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013). The government revealed its commitment to improving education by establishing the first university in 1957, the King Saud University (Saleh, 1986). Although the post-secondary learning options were developed gradually, the introduction of universities provided the learners with additional opportunities for specialisation. The provision of different options

under the majors meant that by 1975, most of the specialisations required under the various professions were available in the universities.

In terms of providing specific support those with disabilities, a “Disability Code” was introduced by the government of KSA at the turn of the century to ensure that disabled persons can access educational and social amenities offered by public institutions. The code further stipulates those institutions should assist disabled persons to secure access to education, training and employment, as well as other services (King Salman Center for Disability Research, 2004). Most of the universities and technical institutes worked to increase their total of disabled students, including deaf student enrolment, after the announcement of the Disability Code in 2000.

Several the measures succeeded, and were adopted for long-term implementation, while others served short-term goals for the students. However, since the goal was to establish uniformity in the programs for encouraging the enrolment of deaf students, the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) introduced the first program for higher education targeting deaf students. In 2004, TVTC started to support the admission of deaf students at selected colleges, including the ones designed for skills in information technology (IT), telecommunications, and computer science as well as home economics. The colleges still facilitate the motivation for the enrolment of learners with disabilities, with operations in institutions across the 13 regions in the country (Alajlan, 2017).

The Arab Open University (AOU), which was established in 2005 in Riyadh, began providing specialised undergraduate programs for deaf students. The private entity has operations in multiple locations across the region, and offers diverse programs including IT, Computer Science, teacher training, business studies and language studies, and all of which facilitate

teaching. However, admissions for the deaf students into AOU is restricted to programs for teacher training in the country. Three categories of deaf students completed the program prior to its termination. Furthermore, there are no specific details on the success of the program, as well as how well the graduates performed after completing the program. Furthermore, there is no information on the rationale for why the program was cancelled (Alajlan, 2017).

In 2010, the KSU permitted some of the deaf students to enrol in its Education College, under a 4-year program leading to conferment of an undergraduate degree. The program allowed deaf learners to select which area of study to specialise in, out of physical education, special education, or art education. All deaf students were obligated to pass a rehabilitation program before registering at university. To date, 27 deaf students, including 6 males and 21 females have enrolled. In 2016, King Saud University accepted the first deaf student on its deaf education MA program. This student went on to graduate successfully. Despite this, and like other deaf people, he then found himself without work in deaf schools. No clear reason was provided for his lack of success in this regard. Despite these positive moves towards accepting deaf students onto programs of study, Alomary (2013) observes that their education has been dominated and controlled at a national level by non-disabled educators.

Hutcheon and Wolbring (2012) observe that students with disabilities face drawbacks due to the decision by institutions of higher learning to focus on the perceived inability of the students as well as their lack of functions, as opposed to the inability of the institution to accommodate and tackle the barriers.

For students with deafness, the ability to participate at higher levels of learning is a matter of empowerment and equality in opportunities. As it is for many non-disabled students, learning at university is also theoretically empowering for disabled students. As indicated by

Hurst (1996, p. 141): “When disabled people enter higher education, they are taking up an opportunity to increase their knowledge, to develop their social skills, to obtain good qualifications and to expose themselves to debate and discussion. It is an important experience for empowerment”.

The potential for higher education to empower students may not always be attained, however, as is evident from recent research in the UK (Fuller et al., 2004). While success at the undergraduate level is perceived as integral in the long-term in terms of earnings capacity and position in the labour market, this is not the case for disabled students. This demographic encounters a horde of novel barriers to learning in the colleges, and tend to achieve lesser qualifications at graduation, even though they may have qualifications that are comparable with other learners in the same institutions (Riddell et al., 2004). Higher education institutions are likely to have policies on disability designed to offer support for the inclusion of disabled students (Vickerman and Blundell, 2010). Despite these measures, students with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in institutions of higher learning and they continue to experience obstacles at a range of levels (Hutcheon and Wolbring, 2012).

The next section continues the discussion opened above about education, discussing deaf students’ experience within higher education. Analysing these experiences provides some indication of the barriers that later impact upon them as they move into the world of work.

3.4.1 Higher Education Barriers

Macleod and Cebula (2009) and Madriaga (2007) assert that, historically, disabled students have been diminished in institutions of higher learning. This, they say, is mainly due to exogenous social barriers, such as adverse views about the capabilities of the students by the

staff members and instructors and also stereotyping about their preferred specialisations based upon the category of impairment (Riddell and Weedon, 2014).

Since the mid-1990s, there has been an upsurge in the number of disabled learners, including deaf students, in institutions of higher learning in the UK. This is due to increased competitiveness among institutions offering various courses, which has led to greater attention given by law to the rights of disabled students, and the enforcement of policies and regulations for the monitoring of such provision (Smith, 2010). For instance, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlines that all persons have a right to education, as well as that there should be equality in access to higher education for all interested persons (United Nations, 1948). Moreover, the UNCRPD includes an entire section on the right to education for disabled people (Article 24). It indicates that disabled people have the right of access to education at all levels, including institutions of higher learning, and that it is necessary for their needs to be accommodated (UN, 2006). Some disabled students in Saudi Arabia now make use of these officially required disability agendas in order to access support and reasonable accommodations (Howell, 2018).

Weldon and Riddell (2007) observe that disabled students, including deaf students, place importance on higher education as a positive experience because it provides them with a standardised context. They also find that the mainstreaming of deaf students within higher education is beneficial to them as it adds to the inclusivity and diversity of the classroom, resulting in the provision of an inclusive environment where all students can work with each other. Consequently, the presence of students with hearing disabilities facilitates the development of a better university (Howell, 2018).

The needs and rights of deaf learners as students in higher education have been formally documented in most countries across the globe. The UK, Australia, and the US, for example, all introduced laws concerning the inclusion of disabled students within higher education. In the UK, with the establishment of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Part IV, in 2002, institutions of higher learning have a duty to not segregate directly learners who are disabled. In addition, the Disability Equality Act 2005 (incorporated into the Equality Act 2010) mandated all higher education organisations to deliberately endorse equality of opportunity for disabled people.

The next section focuses on the employment of deaf people, and particularly deaf women, in Saudi Arabia.

3.5 The Employment of Deaf People in Saudi Arabia

Work is a key issue in industrialised societies, due to economics as well as the fact that people are characterised based on their work in terms of their class and status. Essentially, the socio-economic status of an individual is dependent on their access to the job market. Most people establish their lives around their professional engagements. As a result, failure to participate in the job market through segregation leads to a unique form of social exclusion (Kitchin, 1998). Deaf people are arguably at a higher risk of exclusion because of the institutional, environmental, and economic circumstances that exclude them from participating in a multiplicity of activities.

Alofi et al. (2019) conducted research about two deaf males which involved them sharing their life stories. Both participants held a university degree. They found that deaf Saudi individuals face numerous barriers in their lives. One of the stories concerned the challenges related to finding work in the Saudi labour market and the poor work environment. After completing

college, both participants found it very difficult to find a job. One of the participants reported that he had attended many interviews before obtaining his first job. He stated that:

“My director had low expectations of my capabilities. At first, he asked my hearing co-worker to do all of my work. Then I set up a meeting with him to explain why I was unhappy with my work and that my hearing co-worker did not need to do my job. I could do more than he did. My director gave me a chance to input all of the information into the computer. A few weeks later, my director liked my work”.

(Alofi et al. 2019, p.1518)

Low expectations regarding the abilities of individuals with deafness in the labour force are regularly a significant barrier in Saudi Arabia. Both the participants in Alofi et al.'s (2019) study had undergone negative work experiences because of these low expectations. A study by Mansour (2009) revealed that the stereotypes regarding performance at work, as well as quality of output, and the absence of the required skills/experience, are the next highest concern for employers when considering hiring disabled people. The employers indicated that economic costs, reputation, attendance, and employee turnover did not suffice as key rationales for failure to hire disabled persons (Mansour, 2009). The study determined that the attitudes of employers significantly affected the employment of disabled people. These barriers will be covered in the next chapter in more detail, alongside other barriers that deaf individuals encounter in the workplace.

Al-khouli (2015) argues that the workplace environment, in addition to societal attitudes towards deaf people in Saudi Arabia, impacts considerably upon their unemployment or underemployment. She also concluded that the employers exhibit a lack of concern about the needs of deaf people in both the government and private sectors. Additionally, she showed that

the jobs that deaf people managed to obtain fell below their qualifications. These findings will be further addressed in Chapter Six below.

Al-khouli's (2015) study also claims that deaf people usually depart from learning institutions with lower qualifications as compared to non-disabled people, are less likely to undertake further studies, and have greater chances of finding themselves in scenarios where they are not promoted. Alkahtani (2016) explores the perceptions of the services related to the transition from school to work for deaf students in Saudi Arabia. The study focuses on the effects of the training provided for these students on their post-school success, and reveals that teachers have a low awareness regarding the transition services. In addition, they have a low assessment of their own readiness to plan and implement such services. One of the obstacles relating to the employment of deaf people in Saudi Arabia is their preparation and willingness to enter the workforce. Alkahtani (2016) states that, although transition programmes for deaf people exist in the country, and are enforced by law, these are often ineffective. These programmes are presented by the MoE in the country and offer vocational skills to enable deaf students to enter the workforce and live independently. The next chapter will examine the underemployment that results from the ineffectiveness of these programmes as one of the barriers that deaf people face when engaging with employment. The next chapter will consider in more detail the barriers faced by deaf people in the labour market. In addition to the above, deaf women in Saudi Arabia, like other disabled women, face difficulties and discrimination due their gender as well as their impairment. The next section will examine women in general, and deaf women especially, in Saudi culture.

3.6 A Synopsis of the Status of Employment of Females in the Country

This section will discuss the employment of women in the country, with a specific emphasis on deaf women. A report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), reveals that at a rate of 16.4%, the rate of workforce participation for all eligible women in Saudi Arabia is among the lowest in the world. The report indicates that women comprise of 20% the total labour force in the country (ILO, 2019). The projected rate of unemployment as of 2018 among women was 32%, which is higher than the rate for males, at 6% for men (Evidence for Policy Design [EPD], 2015). Labour-force participation for males in the country was estimated at 78.3% in 2016 compared to females at 22.2% (ILO, 2019). The ILO indicated that the employment-to-population ratio in general for men was 75.7%, while for women it was estimated at 16.8% in 2015, while the rate of unemployment of males in 2016 was 2.5%, and 21.1% for women (ILO, 2019).

The data from the ILO describes a unique employment scenario in the country which is supported by the report on the Global Gender Gap which was provided by the World Economic Forum. The report indicates that the level of participation of women in the labour force is low in the country, as well as the rest of the Middle East (The World Economic Forum, 2018). Saudi Arabia is a remarkable illustration of a country with ominously low rates of female labour force participation in comparison with other countries. The low rate of employment for female Saudis is attributed to gender-based discrimination in the workplace, where the employers, who are typically older males, hold a more traditional view about the role of women in the work force (Elamin and Omair, 2010). For some workplaces, the decision to hire a woman is perceived as an additional cost on the organisation. For instance, employers are required to offer separate facilities for female employees, including entrances, workspaces and other amenities, separate from the male employees, all to maintain gender-segregation. In addition,

employers are having to offer paid maternal leave and childcare services (EDP, 2015), all of which contribute to the increased propensity of employers to prefer male employees.

The social and cultural values in place within Saudi Arabia contribute to a set of norms and beliefs that influence the institutional structures as well as employers, including the belief that women are primarily meant to be homemakers. The belief propagates gender-based discrimination, including at the hiring phase (Al-Asfour et al., 2017; Elamin and Omair, 2010). These beliefs are not inconsistent with the emergent direction of Saudi labour policy, which encourages the employment of women. This is encouraging the employment of women who are always eager to find suitable and decent jobs that match their qualifications but who would have not done so in the past.

Saudi Labour Law prohibits gender-based discrimination in the workplace, whether the individuals have disabilities or not. Royal Decree No. M/134 was issued in 27/11/1440 (July 30, 2019), to amend several articles in the Labour Law that are more particularly focused on the employment of females. In the most recent version of the Labour Law, Article 2 defines a worker as: "Any person – male or female – who works for the benefit of an employer and under his administration or supervision for a wage, even if the employee does not work on the premises". The employment condition defined by the data from the ILO is supported by the Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum (2018), that notes that the participation of females in the Saudi labour force is persistently low, a situation which endures across the Middle East.

Al-Asfour et al. (2017) discuss the social, institutional and attitudinal obstacles that are faced by Saudi women when seeking to acquire and maintain decent work. The authors list other hurdles that affect the ability of women to advance in their careers. The main hurdles include

the predominant fixed role based on gender in the home, at the workplace, as well as the scarcity of opportunities for professional development. Similarly, there are extreme workloads arising from the inability to achieve a work-life balance, as well as perceived difficulties linked to their roles as mothers (Al-Asfour et al., 2017). These hindrances probably impact disabled women even more severely. These studies are integral in the discourse on the rarely discussed subject on the welfare of Saudi women (Al-Asfour et al., 2017), which further highlights the absence of empirical research on how disabled women cope with the challenges in the workplace.

3.6.1 Employment of Disabled Women (Deaf Women)

While there is a spotlight on the education of women in the KSA at the domestic and international level, the education of women with impairments still needs further consideration. Indeed, few studies have been performed on the learning experiences of females with impairments in the country. Although there exist provisions for the training of disabled women, many girls do not have access to conventional schooling and have no option but to seek education in specialised centres, including centres for rehabilitation.

Historically, the evidence suggest that women are faced with unfair treatment in the workplace, and that disabled females face unique disadvantages which magnify the type of disadvantages faced by the women (Al-saif, 2009). Disabled Saudi women face discrimination due to both of their identities: as women and as people with impairments. According to Koyame-Marsh (2017), disabled women in Saudi Arabia are underemployed or unemployed in a manner that is impacted by this discrimination. This echoes outlooks which are extensively rooted in the Saudi Arabian culture (Knabe et al., 2015). The study found that the workplace culture for Saudi females in the country is multifaceted and highly dynamic. They also found that disabled

Saudi women face the obstacles of stigma, limited expectations and over-protection. Despite the availability of policies which aim to remove this discrimination, service providers tend not to follow these policies and therefore prevent disabled people from realising their legal rights. The grounds for their behaviour may be attitudinal, but a substantial factor could be a result of a lack of knowledge about how to include disabled women.

Negative attitudes about the productivity and competency of disabled women, including deaf women, significantly affect their employment experiences. A recent study investigated the experiences of 12 disabled women in the Saudi labour market, focusing on the effect of employers' attitudes towards hiring them (Alem, 2020). Many of the participants shared their negative experiences; for instance, one of the participants said that the employer did not believe that disabled women had the ability to be productive. According to Nagata (2003), many disabled women in various locations across the globe, including countries in the Arabic peninsula, struggle due to gender-based segregation, which is magnified by disability. The rate of literacy among disabled women is significantly lower than that among women without disabilities, and men both with and without disabilities, in different Arab countries such as Syria and Bahrain (Nagata, 2003). The compounded impact of disability and gender have had a significant effect on women's access to higher education, as the proportion of women with disabilities who hold professional qualifications from higher learning institutions in the two countries is low in comparison with men with disabilities. Regarding employment, the labour force participation of disabled women in Arab countries, such as Kuwait, is considerably lower compared to that of non-disabled women and disabled men (Nagata, 2003).

In-depth interviews with disabled women conducted by Knabe et al. (2015) revealed that disabled Saudi women, including deaf women, seek to advance their state regarding their possibilities for learning, work and social status. The female participants indicated that they

have an interest in nurturing awareness in order to improve societal attitudes about disabled people and the view of disabled women as ‘helpless.’ Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of advocating enhanced opportunities for disabled women who may lack knowledge about how to advocate for themselves or access the available resources. Peter et al. (2018, p.265) posited that, “There is no extant research or policy literature regarding employment and women with impairment in Saudi Arabia”. Thus, there is a lot more to uncover concerning how women with impairments are disadvantaged in terms of employment within Saudi Arabia. The small number of studies that focus on Saudi women’s careers in general reveals the limited academic attention directed towards women with impairments in Saudi Arabia. Further studies are needed to explore the barriers that women with impairments face at the socio-cultural, systemic and institutional levels. My research invites both males and females to highlight the barriers that they face in the workplace. My interaction with deaf women during my fieldwork showed that this group faced difficulties in the workplace, and some of the participants emphasized that their managers were unaware of their needs and treated them as less capable than men (See Chapter Five for a more in-depth discussion of this research).

3.7 Types of Barriers

The investigation of barriers is a crosscutting theme throughout this research. Therefore, it is essential to define the meaning of barriers. In addition, it is necessary to interact with the differing definitions in order to learn about the intersection between each of them – in other words, how each barrier can affect the other.

This research defined barriers to employment as the challenges that stand between deaf people and their ability to secure a job. Authors such as Hales (1996) have divided these barriers into physical, attitudinal, and organisational.

Physical barriers refer to instances when disabled people have difficulty moving around or accessing facilities/places. This lack of access is mostly due to an absence of reasonable accommodation the during design and planning stages (the failure of reasonable accommodation being another crosscutting theme in this work) (Hales, 1996). Physical barriers can also include the absence of the necessary tools or equipment. These barriers may explain the reticence of employers to offer jobs to disabled applicants, and for potential employees to apply in the first place (Bengisu et al., 2008).

Attitudinal barriers can be defined as the adverse attitudes experienced by disabled workers from people around them, such as co-workers and employers (Bengisu et al. 2008). A piece of Saudi research identified the outlook of employers as one of the primary problems facing disabled people – employers and fellow workers view this type as more problematic than any physical barrier (Mansour, 2009).

Finally, institutional barriers denote the way disabled people are supported by an institution, based on the organisational culture and workplace policies. The social model of disability advocates for disabled people to be knowledgeable of their rights and supported with accommodations in an open and welcoming environment that supports them in carrying out their duties (Bengisu et al. 2008). According to Hales (1996), organisational barriers are presented when both parties (employers and employees) are not knowledgeable about these issues. This could include the enlistment, appraisal, and procedures for promoting employees within an organisation. The absence of these procedure may result in applying irrelevant criteria to the job or may result in decisions being made based on assumptions rather than fact. This can lead to discrimination against a person or a group. Deaf people may be faced by any one of the barriers cited above. For instance, deaf individuals invited to an employment interview may face attitudinal and environmental barriers at one and the same time.

3.8 Pre-Employment Process

This section presents the literature and practices relating to the pre-employment process for deaf candidates. This links with the findings of the chapter on pre-employment processes, where the participants of this research expressed their experiences and barriers, especially while being interviewed.

Watermeyer et al. (2006) indicates that personnel in the human resources department (HRD) are responsible for recruiting and selecting disabled people. If HRD personnel lack the necessary skills, proficiencies and awareness, this may produce barriers to inclusion. Indeed, disabled people may not be able to access advertisements or interview venues. They may not have their needs accommodated during this crucial period and this may impact on more than just their inclusion in the process – it may impact on whether they are selected for a position at all.

As indicated above, the most noteworthy impediment may be total exclusion from employment opportunities. McKinney and Swartz (2021) suggest that one reason is related to future retention and salary promotion. This may result in them not being seen as a preferred employer who perceives diversity as a serious human resources management issue. Furthermore, if disabled people are exposed to obstacles to employment, they will endure unemployment and will thus not be able to provide for their relatives, remain independent, and ultimately make a significant contribution to the economy (McKinney and Swartz, 2021). Employers report several apprehensions regarding the potential for disabled employees that draw from existing misconceptions and myths, as opposed to their actual experiences (Dovidio et al., 2011). These concerns relate to efficiency, quality of work and performance, and the inability to acquire the

required qualifications (Gustafsson et al., 2014). An additional set of challenges relates to the inability of employers to meet the needs of the disabled employees.

Kitching (2006) demonstrates how people face discrimination in employment recruitment procedures and highlights that disabled job applicants, including deaf candidates, may be segregated in comparison to the applicants without disabilities, even when there are no differences in their experiences and skills (MacRae and Laverty, 2006). According to Kadi (2018), there are several barriers that deaf people face when seeking work, and the reasons for these include poor education (specifically reading and writing deficiency), difficulty communicating with their non-disabled peers, and discrimination during the selection process. Duckett (2000) illustrates how many disabled people, including deaf people, experience discrimination during employment interviews. Some of the obstacles experienced arise from lack of access to venues where interviews are carried out, the deleterious attitudes of interviewers towards their impairment, unsuitable private questions relating to their impairment instead of the work position, and a lack of understanding of the importance of having interpreters (McKinney and Swartz, 2021). For deaf people to have equal opportunities of being selected during interviews for employment, the questions asked need to be free from private details, focusing rather on how they would perform their duties. It is for this reason that the location for the interviews should be easily accessible, and such information should be made available in a format that is easy to access and interpret (McKinney and Swartz, 2021). Cubero (2007) discusses how employers' attitudes towards disabled people, including deaf people, may influence the selection process. He found that impairments influence employers' decisions, while gender didn't have any effect on the process of selecting employment. This means that labels do indeed affect the overall evaluations. Cubero (2007) concludes that employers' attitudes are important and can have an impact at all stages of the employment

process. In accordance with the social model of disability, the process of applying for jobs, and evaluation of employees should focus on more domains than the potential impairments of the employees based on their disability, including the necessary elements that enable such employees (including those suffering from deafness) to participate fully. Interviewers should focus their questions on the intrinsic needs of the job, as well as fundamental functions of the employees, then determine whether it is possible to accommodate the employee as and where necessary (Gunderson and Lee, 2016). It is imperative that deaf people are chosen based on how qualified they are for the job, and their experience and ability to achieve the targeted goals, since this leads to greater inclusiveness, thereby benefiting the deaf employees as well as their employers and the organisation at large.

To avert obstacles to employment for deaf people, it is essential that the job interviews are impartial and fair (McKinney and Swartz, 2021). If the applicants reveal that they have impairments on their application forms or invitations for interview, which further highlights that they need reasonable accommodation, employers should be obligated to ensure that those needs are catered for (Hernandez et al., 2008). These measures ensure that organisations take the necessary measures to accommodate the applicants with disabilities or impairments, thereby enabling them to participate in the recruitment process. He/she should be encouraged to reveal these and offer details on their requirements at this stage.

The next part of the chapter moves to discuss the post-employment process, starting with the underemployment of deaf people due to its extent among deaf candidates.

3.9 Underemployment

This section explores the issue of underemployment as a global barrier faced by deaf people. It defines the term before giving examples to show how inferior positions and poor[er] payment

have been offered to deaf people, regardless of their educational qualifications and/or work skills. Disabled people are underprivileged when participating in the labour market by underemployment, including through "...poorly paid, low-skilled, low-status jobs which are both unrewarding and undemanding" (Barnes, 1991, p.65). Among other definitions of underemployment, Walker (1982) defines it as jobs for which disabled people are 'overqualified'. Further indications of underemployment consist of limited opportunities for advancement in careers, as well as the limited utilisation of the skills they acquired during training and development (ILO, 2019). According to Luft (2015) and Winn (2007), deaf people mostly finish their pre-university education with inequivalent educational outcomes in comparison to their non-disabled colleagues. Consequently, they are more likely find themselves in positions where they do not get promotions, whether upwards or laterally. They ultimately earn less and are less likely to work in occupations classified as 'high-status' (Meager and Higgins 2011).

This is found to be in the case not only in the majority world, but also within higher and middle-income countries. In Canada, according to Woodcock and Pole (2008), there exists a large degree of discrimination against deaf people, with only a few deaf doctors, lawyers and professors, and very few deaf executives. The situation was also similar in deaf-services agencies, schools, and many government institutions. In the United States, according to Bradley (2009), the unemployment rate for deaf people is also higher; even those who gained employment were found to be underemployed.

Such studies, along with the reviews conducted by Beatty et al. (2019), show that deaf people continue to be underemployed. This is, however, not entirely related to a lack of opportunities, and may also be due to the perception/s of deaf individuals leading to discrimination and barriers in the workplace. Metcalf (2009) demonstrates, for example, that they are more likely

to work part-time and do lower skilled jobs than non-disabled people. As a result, they receive lower salaries than non-disabled employees (Kruse et al., 2017). The lower incomes and salaries lead to their generally low levels of socio-economic capacity, including the inability to amass assets, not to mention higher rates of poverty, both in Saudi Arabia and around the world (OECD, 2010).

Therefore, on the one hand, deaf employees face discrimination at work because they are judged on their individual capabilities and qualifications, and these are either distrusted or found wanting due to the impact of their education on said qualifications. On the other hand, they also experience a higher level of ostracism in society due to the lack of information about their capabilities, thereby implying a failing in education not of the deaf individuals themselves, but of others in society who are ill-prepared to work with them.

Bressler and Lacy (1980) describe unfair treatment of deaf employees as a prejudice which leads to the use of unfair basis and comparisons of the capabilities of deaf employees with those of employees without disabilities in terms of quality of work and productivity. Stereotyping is the most detrimental attitude that a deaf person can face in the workplace, particularly in instances where they are perceived as lacking by their leaders (Cubero, 2007). In other words, the attitudes of employers towards the capability of deaf individuals leads those individuals to be underemployed.

To sum up, deaf individuals are found to be both underemployed and paid less than their non-disabled peers. Weak educational qualifications, alongside community stigma, influence employers' evaluation of deaf people's capabilities. This section provided examples from the USA and Canada, demonstrating that this is a global issue. Chapter Six responds to this underemployment barrier within the context of Saudi Arabia.

The next section investigates how non-disabled people's attitudes impact upon deaf people's employment.

3.10 Non-Disabled People's Attitudes

Discrimination against deaf people continues to pose a serious problem for deaf individuals, despite the efforts, legislation, and identified benefits associated with hiring them (Ruggeri-Stevens and Goodwin, 2007). Attitudinal barriers have been labelled as the most rudimentary yet challenging category to address since they are emerging from the deep-rooted beliefs held by key personnel about the characteristics of an individual or group (Sahu and Sahu, 2015). According to Gasper et al., (2019) this discrimination was mainly due to employers' attitudes resulting in attitudinal barriers to unemployment and underemployment for deaf people. A UK study also confirms the negative influence of attitudes on deaf people's employment (Atherton, 2020).

Louvet et al. (2009) argue that managers are inclined to assess deaf employees as being less capable from a professional perspective than non-disabled people. These negative evaluations reduce the likelihood of deaf people being hired (Thrasher et al., 2021). According to the British Social Attitudes Survey (NatCen, 2006), most of the people in the job market concur that the primary challenge facing disabled workers, including deaf workers, is non-disabled people's prejudices rather than people's impairment. This can be seen as a reflection on the individual model of disability. Research by Burke et al. (2013) documents that employers' attitudes were behind their concerns about hiring disabled people. Employers' concerns comprise productivity at work, opportunity cost of accommodating their needs, additional time for supervision, and the potential negative reactions of co-workers. However, Hernandez and

McDonald (2010) confirm that disabled workers have similar performance and higher retention rates than non-disabled workers, and that the costs of accommodations are low.

Smith et al. (2004) performed research focusing on Australia to inspect the satisfaction of employers with employees with disabilities, compared to those without disabilities. The study used three variables for performance at work, including the organisational climate, the rate of work and quality of work. The study involved 656 respondents who are employers of disabled people. Employers displayed low levels of satisfaction with their disabled employees in comparison with employees who are not disabled. The researcher concluded that employers assigned lower ratings for employees with disabilities compared to those without disabilities, based on the level of employer satisfaction, as well as other variables relating to performance at work.

The adverse attitudes of employers towards disabled employees start from the selection process and run all through the process of hiring for disabled people. For example, the perceptions of disabled people on recruitment are often adverse, since they assume that most employers perceive them as incapable of taking on the job opportunities that they seek or that their 'limitations' will not get in the way of the work they have to undertake (Molloy et al., 2003).

Studies performed about the perspectives of employers have reported conflict perceptions comprised of optimistic and pessimistic views towards the employment of disabled people. For example, Morgan and Alexander (2005) assessed the insights of employers, including those who have had experiences working with deaf people, and those who hadn't experienced such scenarios. More benefits were recognised among employers who had prior experiences, compared to those who were new to this kind of environment. The most commonly acknowledged benefits were reliable turnout, diversity in the workforce, limited employee

turnover and favourable relationships among co-workers. It seems that certain individual features, for example, past work experience, affect individuals' attitudes towards deaf people (Unger, 2002), thus potentially leading to reduced discrimination.

On the positive side, therefore, some employers have been observed to favour the recruitment of disabled people (Chan et al., 2010). In addition to previous experience working with them, the frequency of their interactions (i.e., how much they encountered disabled people) was also an influential attitudinal factor (Perry et al., 2008). Employers with greater exposure/experience reported that they were also more likely to hire disabled people again in future. Dixon et al. (2018) indicate that having a relationship with disabled people can make a positive difference to non-disabled people's attitudes. This is in line with Lundberg et al.'s (2008) previous study that suggested that adverse perceptions, such as prejudice and discrimination, can be modified through positive interactions between disabled people and non-disabled people. Increasing the understanding amongst employers of the benefits that deaf individuals can bring to their businesses will help employers change their attitudes towards them. For example, they can bring extra abilities to the organization, such as the ability to use Sign Language, which could lead to more savings.

Many employers and co-workers, however, have limited awareness of deaf people's needs and how to communicate with them. Deaf Awareness Training (DAT) is an effective way of accommodating deaf individuals in any work environment. Organizations might also consider employing modern technology to facilitate communication, but there is, of course, a need for individuals to be trained in its use. The employer, therefore, should establish policies on deaf awareness and a department responsible for their application (Camulli and Xie, 2019). The DAT program should be made compulsory for everyone. The program may help the workers learn more about deaf people's needs. As such, deaf workers may feel accepted in the

workplace, as they will have co-workers who understand them. Deaf people must be fully involved in conceptualising, analysing and discussing the solutions, and developing policies and programs. The participation must be reinforced by the sufficient financing of the institutions that support disabled people. Organisations that serve disabled people play a crucial role in accessing and involving disabled people, increasing their confidence and skills and supporting them, but they cannot do this with inadequate resources.

To conclude, deaf people's progress in the world of employment can be significantly influenced by attitudinal barriers, most specifically concerning employers' perceptions of their capabilities. Such attitudes can result in a reluctance to provide reasonable accommodations as it may be felt that weak qualifications are to do with inherent weaknesses in deaf candidates, rather than – as might more often be the case – inherent weaknesses in the education system that has failed to support them up to this point.

The next section addresses another important barrier that affects deaf people's employment: communication.

3.11 Communication and Social Barriers

Communication is critical in all occupational facets. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that communication and social difficulties have also presented some of the primary barriers to work retention and advancement for deaf individuals (Shuler et al., 2014). Rosengreen and Saladin (2010) indicated that all the participants perceived communication as having a noteworthy impact on effective performance in the workplace. Boutin (2010) further reports that communication difficulties largely impact on social interactions, as they can exclude deaf people from work activities.

Examining the influence of communication on disabled people's employment finds that it is a crosscutting theme throughout the process. Despite applicants disclosing their impairment within job applications, employers were reluctant to provide them with the reasonable accommodations known to be prerequisites for equal opportunities (Hernandez et al., 2008). According to the Americans with Disability Act (ADA National Network 2022), reasonable accommodation is any adjustment, adaptation, or change to the work environment that will enable disabled people to perform the job or access the benefits available to non-disabled employees. In other words, accommodations enable the removal of the barriers that hinder deaf people in performing their work tasks.

According to the National Deaf Center (2019), no "one-size-fits-all" approach has been developed for communication purposes. Each individual has unique characteristics and their contribution to communication is novel and unique, due to the type of preferences and needs, as well as the purpose and context of interactions. Communication strategies for deaf people include both the visual and the auditory, and these are used as needed to express information and ideas. The most widely used forms of visual communication include gestulation, lip reading (speech reading), cued speech, and sign language. On the other hand, auditory communication involves the utilisation of the available hearing capabilities, which is supported by the aid of implants in various locations within the ear to facilitate the capture and interpretation of sounds.

It is important to ensure that necessary/appropriate accommodations are made for deaf applicants to participate actively in the recruitment process. A study by Boyce (2015) finds that the absence of reasonable accommodation/s during the application and selection process impacts upon deaf candidates' ability to communicate with their prospective employers. Moreover, when examining the pre-employment interview stage, they find that communication

is one of the common negative factors affecting the work opportunities for deaf candidates. Based on the study by Action on Hearing Loss (2007), most employed deaf people report facing social isolation at work, with roughly 25% reporting cases of harassment at work. This makes it problematic for maintenance of paid work, and the attainment of economic independence. For example, deaf workers may have difficulties communicating and socialising in the workplace, including during contact with customers, peers and superiors based on the nature of the work environment (Foster and MacLeod, 2003). In these instances, difficulties with communication may isolate deaf individuals, as well as limit their ability to perform their work to the best of their ability (Shuler et al., 2014).

In addition to the above, deaf people lack access to sufficient information for decision making and choosing, forming autonomous opinions, or expressing themselves sufficiently other than by sign language interpretation and other services (Haynes and Linden, 2012). Al-Mousa et al. (2008) state that the situation is even more difficult for individuals in Saudi Arabia. For deaf workers, the shortage of sign language translators is one of the main barriers in the work settings. Also, the use of support personnel tends to be on an informal rather than a formal basis; for example, a co-worker might agree to make telephone calls on behalf of the deaf worker (Crawford and Martin, 2000). Employers and non-disabled workers may prefer text-based communication, such as emails as alternatives to other forms of communication at the workplace (Smith, 2020). Employers may also decide that delegating responsibility for *ad hoc* accommodations to the colleagues of deaf employees, e.g., telephone conversation or writing e-mail communications, is a suitable low-cost solution to the 'problem'.

The speedy improvement in technology in recent times means that the expansion in the range of devices and systems may serve to increase access to jobs for deaf people (Punch, 2016). Despite this, many employers lack a sufficient appreciation of how to accommodate the needs

of their disabled employees, as well measures that foster the work performance of deaf employees (Haynes and Linden, 2012). Employers may also consider making accommodations for deaf workers to be too costly, leading to the kinds of behaviour and *ad hoc* solutions outlined above. Nonetheless, increased knowledge about the best means by which deaf people's needs can be accommodated may well increase workforce participation. In addition to the above, both deaf people and employers need to be aware of the policies that are available for them regarding employment support. For instance, in the UK, the Access to Work Scheme is one policy that supports disabled people, including deaf people, and aims to provide practical and financial support to help them find or stay in work. This includes support with communication. Also, in 2017, the Human Resources Development Fund in Saudi Arabia provided practical guidance for employers on specific topics relating to the employment of deaf people. These guidelines will be principally useful for managers in different functions, including under HRD, as well as others who promote employment of deaf people.

To conclude, communication is a barrier that impacts upon deaf employees throughout their employment process. It influences their efficiency, social interactions with their colleagues, and connection to their managers. There is a correlation between the theme of communication and providing reasonable accommodations. Increasing the availability of tools for deaf people increases their ability to communicate with others and, consequently, helps them to be more efficient at their jobs.

3.12 Summary of the Chapter

As discussed above, there is a noteworthy lack of research on the employment experiences and opportunities of disabled people, including deaf people and disabled women generally, in the KSA. This chapter provided a review of existing publications that relate to disability from the

perspective of education and work, and disabled people and experiences of disabled women in education and work in Saudi Arabia. This chapter presented a literature review examining the barriers that deaf individuals encounter in the workplace. Despite the proven benefits of employment for deaf people, they remain underrepresented in, and excluded from, the labour market. The literature indicates that deaf people face barriers in their career arising from the nature of their working environment, as well as stigma, social attitudes and discrimination. The barriers, including attitudinal and environmental barriers, contribute to the difficulties experienced by many deaf people as regards gaining employment and career advancement. The adverse attitudes, prejudices and misconceptions against the capabilities of deaf people have been given as the reasons for their disadvantages in the labour market. Employers with experience of working with people with impairments tend to hold more positive attitudes towards this group as employees.

4 Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of how the study was designed to answer the research questions and describes the rationale behind the methods used for gathering the data. Firstly, the chapter presents for a second time the aims and the research questions, which were presented in the first chapter. After that, it reviews the interpretive approach that was adopted in this research and its philosophical assumptions. Thirdly, the chapter describes the processes through which data was gathered, which consisted of online and face-to-face interviews, and includes the rationale for employing an online platform. This is followed by a discussion of the ethical concerns that arose in the context of the study. Finally, the chapter moves on to highlight the fieldwork preparation, before concluding with data analysis, proposed dissemination strategies, and limitations of the research in the final section.

4.2 Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this project is to conduct a qualitative investigation into the experiences of deaf people before and after their employment. As explained in the Literature Review (Chapter Two) above, much of the previously conducted research in Saudi Arabia focused on the impairment of disabled people. However, very few studies have examined the barriers that hinder their inclusion within society, thus overlooking the context of deaf people's life experiences, specifically in the workplace. The current study aims to fill this gap by using qualitative methodologies to investigate the experiences of deaf employees, in order to understand the barriers they confront before and after securing their jobs, and how these barriers can be overcome.

The first step towards increasing the participation of deaf individuals is to identify strategies to help sustain deaf workers in employment (Pederccen, 2018). In this regard, Bowes and Dar (2000) argue that the users' voice is important in acquiring a new perspective on services, as well as to develop more suitable provision. In order to overcome the disabling barriers that deaf people face within the labour market, they should be asked about solutions. Therefore, this research consulted deaf individuals and asked them how these barriers could be removed.

To achieve these objectives, both online and face-to-face interviews were undertaken. The study utilises the exploratory design and is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are the barriers and enablers that deaf people encounter on their journey to employment?
- 2) What are the barriers and enablers that deaf people encounter during their work?
- 3) How can deaf people be meaningfully included in the labour market?

4.3 Philosophical assumptions

A paradigm is a way of defining a universal view that is cognisant of the assumptions about social reality, which can either be known as ontology (what we believe about the nature of reality and about ways of knowing) or epistemology (how we come to know what we know).

4.3.1 Ontology and epistemology

To explain the philosophical expectations underpinning this research, this section first will define the two important philosophical concepts, ontology and epistemology. Beginning with the term ontology, Hudson and Ozanne (1988) define ontology as the study of the nature of

being or what constitutes reality. A simple explanation of this term has been suggested by Crotty, who defined ontology as ‘the study of being’ (1998, p. 10). Creswell (2003) defines epistemology as the study of the characteristics of knowledge and how it is acquired. Hence, epistemology relates to understanding how knowledge can be transferred, acquired and disseminated. Cohen (1998, p. 10), indicated that epistemology is “concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge” and relates to the source knowledge. It indicates the production and communication of knowledge, thereby revealing the implications of knowing, as well as any assumptions under the epistemology. Epistemology is asking questions such as: “...what is the nature of the relationship between the world- be knower and what can be know?” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110).

According to Galliers (1991) educational research is dominated by two philosophical paradigms: the positivist - or so-called scientific - and the interpretivist. These paradigms each have their own theoretical framework in order to answer different questions. This research is rooted in an interpretive paradigmatic approach to answer the research questions.

4.3.2 Interpretivism

Based on the exploratory character of this study, the natural orientation of interpretive, qualitative research is the proper choice. Therefore, this research will clarify how meanings and explanations are implemented and given meaning in the participants’ experiences, which is the purpose of interpretive research (Radnor, 2002). Creswell and Creswell state that interpretive research is “typically seen as an approach to qualitative research” (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p.7). Interpretivism seeks to understand the world as others experience it, based on the supposition that subjects seek an understanding of the world in which they work and live, and develop meaning directed toward certain things or objects from their experiences

(Crotty, 1998). The aim of interpretive research is to rely on the opinions and views of the participants in the situation being studied (Taylor, 1995). In this research, I believe that reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) are socially constructed and recognised through the process of data generation, analysis and interpretation. It describes the experiences of deaf people before and after their employment in order to better understand them within the Saudi context. This is, in essence, the ontological foundation of this research, and the questions presented to the participants focused on environmental barriers rather than individual aspects of impairment. As highlighted throughout this thesis, the social model perceives disability as existing not within the individual, but instead within the attitudes and limitations of society (Oliver, 1990). By adopting this model during the data collection stage, it is hoped that this study will create new insights into the key issues faced by the Saudi deaf community regarding employment and the workplace.

As a participant in an epistemological field, I am actively involved in undertaking research, predominantly via collecting information and analysing the gathered data. This research was undeniably subject to external influences, such as my geographical location and the way in which I was perceived, both physically and socially, by deaf people. For example, such influences might derive from the fact that I am a woman from the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, employed as a lecturer in the field of deaf education with extensive experience working with deaf people. This research aims to improve the current societal, ontological model relating to disability by encouraging the inclusion of the experiences of the deaf population within the workplace. In this study, based on the social model, the participants were considered experts in forming the epistemological grounding of this work.

Furthermore, a key norm of research on disability is that the researcher should attempt to optimise the social relationships during the research process (Stone and Priestley, 1996). To do

this, I contacted each participant via Twitter direct message prior to the interview and allowed them to discuss their work experiences in general, with the aim of removing any social barriers in order to build a good relationship with that participant. This project aims to use the researcher's skills to highlight the experience of deaf employees and their attitudes towards them by involving deaf people themselves as the focus within this research. This type of research has not been undertaken previously in a Saudi context.

Qualitative methods explain behaviours from the participants' perspectives, as was the case with the semi-structured interviews which were performed for this study, and do not dominate the participants. Scotland (2012) indicates that analysis is a result from the interpretation of the researchers, and so they need to articulate their value systems and agenda from the start.

4.4 The Rationale Behind Using an Online Medium as the Main Data Collection Method

As mentioned in Chapter Two above, this target population is difficult to reach because of the absence of accurate figures regarding the number of deaf individuals working, or the number of deaf people, in the country. Therefore, I decided to use an online platform for the process of data collection, and the following section will explain the rationale behind this choice.

This section explains the reasons for choosing an online platform as an essential way to conduct the research underlying this thesis. Hine (2005) highlights the increased adoption of online research methods over the last decade. O'Connor et al. (2008) note that social research witnessed an increasing use of asynchronous online interviews conducted with participants. They also highlight that few scholars have evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of synchronous (real-time) online interviews, with little being known about why fewer researchers have adopted this approach as opposed to the alternative. They further explain that, when

conducting online interviews, researchers must choose a suitable online messaging platform to host the interview.

As reported by the OECD (2017), there is an increase in the use of social network platforms in the recent past, based on the number of individuals, households and institutions that use the platforms. Twitter, for example, has 316 million active users on a monthly basis, with 500 million active engagements, 80% of which are through a mobile device (Twitter, 2020). In addition, Twitter offers numerous options for a new age of research into social scientific phenomena (Golder, 2017). It is worth noting that the usual debate and discussion opened through Twitter every day could be used as a material for social scientists to explore new areas of research.

With the increased use of Twitter for communication, its utility for performing primary research has grown, especially for online data collection (Klar, et al., 2020). For instance, I have many deaf people in my own Twitter network with whom I regularly interact. Townsend and Wallace (2016) argue that social media data better reflect the everyday social experiences than ethnographic work. Ramo and Prochaska (2012) identify that the researcher can encounter particular challenges when investigating specific, hard-to-reach populations. For example, finding information regarding the locations in which deaf people are employed can be challenging, particularly as information on the number of deaf employees within institutions in Saudi Arabia is unavailable.

Twitter provides a virtual space where people can learn about what those around them think, do and feel, even when co-presence is unviable. They can share their mental state and status so that others who care about them can feel connected (Boyd, 2009). Twitter has been used in this study in order to attract respondents, and this promised to be effective considering that the

Saudi Arabian usage of Twitter is high. Qatar's Northwestern University, for example, identified that 47% of its Twitter users were Saudis (Northwestern University in Qatar, 2018). Therefore, with the high rates of internet and social media use, Twitter was perceived as a model platform for the goal of the study. However, Twitter has a limitation when recruiting research participants, an issue that will be covered later in this chapter.

4.5 Data Collection Methods

The methodology of this research uses a qualitative approach to aid in collecting data about the disabling barriers faced by deaf people, and how these barriers can be overcome in the Saudi labour market. According to Flick et al. (2004), qualitative research seeks to describe the world from the perspective of an insider. They posit that qualitative studies seek to offer intricate appreciation of the occurrence being examined, as well as the social realities researched. Additionally, the process indicates the process, pattern meaning, and structural features of the study. The phenomenon is approached from a more open and engaged manner as opposed to the rigorously homogenous methodologies found within quantitative research (Flick et al., 2004). Creswell and Clark (2009) state that the qualitative research approach provides an open atmosphere, permitting strong opinions to be expressed, and provides a wider foundation to construct the data collection and analysis. It was apparent that, during this investigation, it would be difficult to obtain relevant quantitative data without first undertaking some form of qualitative research (Rossi, 2008).

In order to answer the research questions, the present research employed semi-structured interviews. For collecting in-depth information in research, interviews are commonly used (Cohen et al., 2018). The aim of using semi-structured interviews in this research was to gather detailed data about deaf people's experiences, perceptions, and views about disabling barriers.

According to Arksey and Knight (1999), interview is one option through which people of the world, and the world of meanings and opinions, may be explored. Cohen et al. (2018) pointed out that interviews are "...a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural setting" (p. 29). Kvale (1996) defined the interview as "a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee' with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the 'described phenomena'" (p.174). Semi-structured interviews were preferred for this research for many reasons. For example, Bernard (1988) states that when the researcher wants to have more than one chance to interview someone, semi-structured interview is the best method. Semi-structured interviews are preferred when the researcher seeks additional data to be gathered from more intensive investigation. In addition, the semi-structured interview schedule is usually configured around a set of pre-arranged, open-ended questions, and additional questions that may emerge from the interactions during the interview process. Kajornboon, (2005) added that the use of a semi-structured interview allows the researcher to prompt and probe deeper into a given situation.

The researcher may clarify any misunderstandings or acquire additional depth, which enables them to test the limits of the participants' knowledge. Thus, through semi-structured interviews, I probed and asked more in-depth questions about the participants' responses and did not simply follow the interview schedule to the letter. Additionally, the semi-structured interview offers some flexibility while giving the interviewee a certain level of agency in the conversation (Curtis et al., 2000). One more reason is that the researcher has a chance to clarify or rephrase questions that interviewees do not understand. However, probing deeper into a situation is not simple, hence the need for use of tact and skill. Despite the advantages of semi-structured interviews, one of the difficulties is that the researcher should possess the right skills and experiences, because an unskilful researcher is often unable to ask prompt questions, meaning

that important information could be missed (Kajornboon, 2005). However, as a researcher, I have had experience in interviewing deaf people, as I had already interviewed them for my master's dissertation.

22 deaf individuals employed in Saudi Arabia were interviewed for this research. The semi-structured interviews were performed in Arabic Sign Language and lip reading (some of the participant's lip read and use sign language at the same time). The researcher used open-ended questions which enabled the interviewees to clarify their responses using examples from practical situations to back their perception of those experiences. An outline of the interview questions is included in **Appendix 2** below. The questions aimed to provide data about the disabling barriers impacting upon employment, exploring personal experiences alongside other systemic barriers to obtaining work. The questions aim to provoke answers related to recommendations and solutions to overcome these barriers.

The semi-structured interview was considered appropriate for this research since it allowed the interviewees to clarify their views and outlooks concerning the barriers and difficulties they face within the work environment. Interviews enable the interviewees to articulate ideas using their own words, which captures their experiences more precisely, and also provide a more detailed range of responses compared to surveys or questionnaires that allow a more limited scope of responses (Cohen et al., 2018). In addition, interviews, unlike surveys, allow the respondents to redirect or clarify the information offered by the participants.

4.6 Fieldwork Preparation

This section explains the methods used during the fieldwork stage of the research. Firstly, I began the data generation after receiving the Ethics Approval from the University of Leeds on the 2nd of January 2019. The second step was to post a Tweet explaining the aim of the study

and my desire to interview deaf employees by direct message. The Tweet from my personal Twitter account, written in the Arabic language, is shown below as well as the number of people engaging with it. In order to attract a higher number of potential participants, I asked deaf Twitter groups to share my project with their followers through retweets.

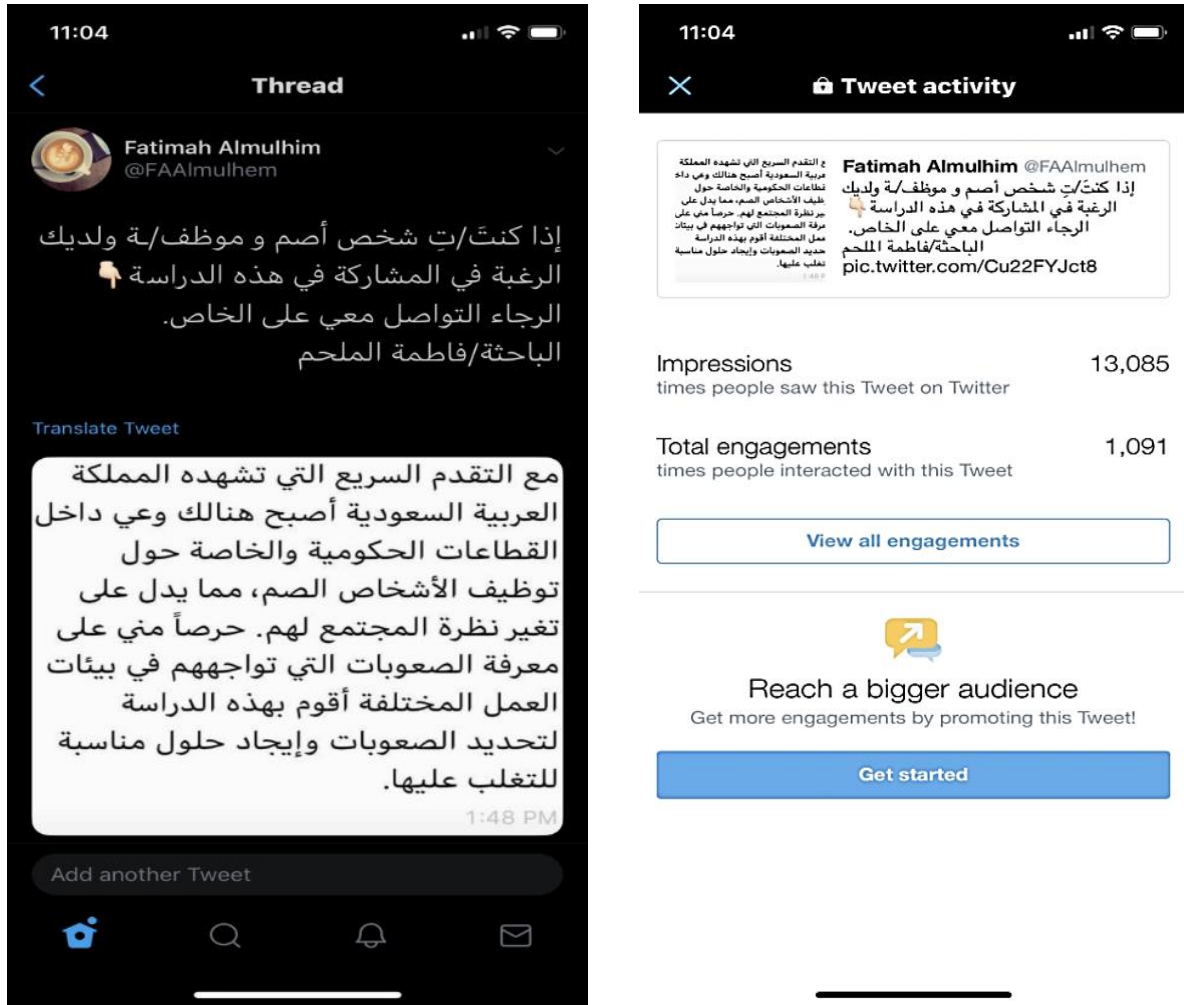


Figure 4.1: Screenshot illustrating Twitter exchange with participants.

The post's English translation: If you are deaf person male/female, employed and interested in taking part in the study or just want some more information, contact me by direct message.

I received many messages from deaf people who were willing to be interviewed and asked for more information about the project. One of the participants made some suggestions and informed me about the Twitter accounts of other deaf employees. Then, I sent out the consent form and asked them to read it before determining the date and time of the interview (See Appendix 1). The next step was to email a brief questionnaire to the participants asking for their details, namely, their gender, age, educational qualifications, sector of employment, marital status, and years of professional experience (See Appendix 2).

4.7 Sampling Method

This research aims to fully understand the barriers faced by deaf people before and after their employment. In line with this, I needed a sampling strategy that could help me to achieve the aim of this research. This research used purposive sampling which involves selecting participants in line with the researcher's purpose (Neuman, 2014). This strategy assisted me in using my judgment to choose people with rich and varied knowledge about barriers to employment to answer the research questions (Schreier, 2018). Classifying the study sample through this strategy was useful for obtaining in-depth details with a deeper understanding about the barriers by choosing participants according to various criteria, which helped to make the research sample more diverse (Robson, 2011). This research follows the social model of disability definition which sees deaf people as those who are disabled by external barriers (See section 1.2 for more details).

The research was based on several sampling criteria that I considered to be of the greatest potential relevance for this study. Gender was the first criterion; it seemed important to sample those who were of different genders, as they were likely to have different experiences and thoughts about barriers. Secondly, was education level; the sample comprised individuals from

diverse educational levels in order to explore whether thoughts about the barriers were different depending on educational level. The years of employment was the third sampling criterion, given the belief that the barriers that were experienced could be interconnected with their work experiences.

A qualitative sample is usually small compared to a quantitative sample. Schreier (2018) stresses that the size of the sample in qualitative research is not important, because the approach doesn't aim to provide numerical generalisation, but rather aims to access deep information that is linked to the research questions. However, it could be difficult to anticipate in advance the number of research participants before starting fieldwork (Mason, 2002). The target for the sample size was twenty-two, on the assumption that this number would enable me access sufficient data about barriers to employment in Saudi Arabian society. The table below shows the final sample that was achieved, including the sample's characteristics.

Pseudonym	Gender	Work sector	Qualification/s	Years Employed
Abdullah	Male	Government sector	Vocational training	Prefer not to answer
Abeer	Female	Government sector	Prefer not to answer	Four years
Ahmad	Male	Government sector	Primary to secondary education	Six years
Ali	Male	Private sector	Bachelor's degree	Three years
Ammar	Male	Private sector	Bachelor's degree	Three years
Aziz		Private sector	Vocational training	Four years
Ebrahim	Male	Government sector	Vocational training	Four years
Fahad	Male	Government sector	Vocational training	Three years
Faisal	Male	Government sector	Vocational training	Prefer not to answer
Fatima	Female	Government sector	Diploma degree	Six years
Jodi	Female	Government sector	Diploma degree	Ten years
Latifah	Female	Government sector	Diploma degree	Two years

Maryam	Female	Private sector	Master's degree	Two years
Mohammad	Male	Private sector	Bachelor's degree	Five years
Mona	Female	Government sector	High school and training courses	Three years
Noor	Female	Private sector	Diploma degree	Five years
Omar		Government sector	Vocational training	Two years
Salam	Female	Government sector	Bachelor's degree	Three years
Saleh	Male	Government sector	Bachelor's degree	Two years
Sami	Male	Private sector	Vocational training	Prefer not to answer
Sara	Female	Private sector	Bachelor's degree	Three years
Yousef	Male	Government sector	Vocational training	Six years

Table 4.1 Participants' demographic information

The above data reveals the gender of the participants, their employment sector, qualifications, and years of experience (see Chapters Five and Six for further explanation about their experiences). The graph below provides an overview of the sample's graduate qualifications.

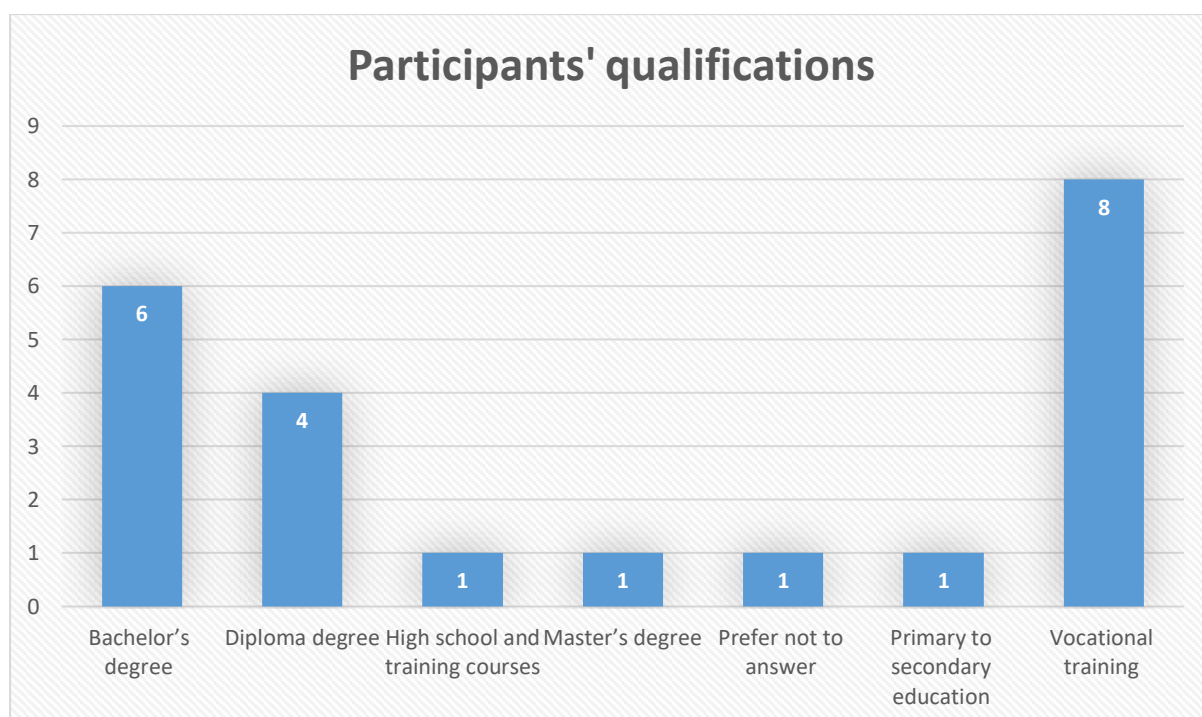


Figure 4.2: Participants' qualifications.

The above graph breaks down the qualifications of the interviewees; it indicates that their educational attainment is disparate. This is mostly due to the various barriers that they have faced within their journey to pre-university and higher education. 36% of the participants have certificates of vocational training acquired through government-recognised bodies. These participants have been unable to continue their post-secondary education, because the majority of Saudi universities are not accessible for deaf people (Yousef, 2019). Those who did succeed in accessing higher education included those with a BA (27%; six individuals in total – five of whom were male and only one of whom was female) and a diploma (18% or four individuals in total – this recognises study for two years after the completion of secondary education). It is perhaps notable that only one participant (4.5%) had attained a master's degree – this participant is female. Equally, one of the participants holds a secondary education degree, one had successfully completed a training course after higher education, and one was not comfortable to share information about his pre-university education.

Lack of access to education has its issues in terms of performance, and this will have a knock-on effect on the employment opportunities for deaf participants. According to Schley et al. (2011), education is perceived as a channel to enhanced work life after graduation, and higher education is viewed as a growth industry. Furthermore, Williams and Swail (2005) confirm higher education improves the opportunities for access to better employment, more comfortable lifestyles, and improved economic status. The statistics above, however, reveal that the majority of deaf participants usually receive poor education, and they also found difficulties accessing higher education. For those interviewees who were offered places within universities, they received poor and inaccessible higher education in comparison to non-deaf students (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five).

4.8 Recruitment of deaf People via Twitter

This section will clarify the way the deaf participants were recruited for the research via Twitter and its limitations. A passive recruitment process was followed for this study as it permitted me to contact additional deaf people with varying viewpoints. I also managed to discuss my research with several deaf people during the fieldwork. The fieldwork began through pilot interviews, the first being conducted with a deaf female who had worked in the government sector for more than ten years. We agreed on a day and time for a formal online interview, and I sent her the consent form by email, which she signed. That participant was very cooperative in her responses during the interview. She also suggested contacting two other deaf employees that she thought could be potential participants for further interviews and shared with me their Twitter account details. As a result, I conducted two other interviews with these deaf employees (male and female), which was very easy to arrange as both employees were keen to share their experiences and views about the barriers they faced in the workplace and their preferred solutions.

As argued by Otieno and Matoke (2014), one of the primary aims of researchers should be to develop an approach that provides the best information, whereby the adoption of certain methodologies can vary according to the study's desired information, topic, and the type of problems being explored. For this research, I determined to make my Twitter account more 'attractive' in order to improve my chances of interesting and then recruiting participants, and to make sure the information about the study reached deaf people on Twitter.

To achieve the above aim, the first method was to tweet out interesting information before the study began, such as the evolution of the meaning of disability from the focus on hearing impairment as a cause of disability (individual model) to the surrounding factors that disable

deaf individuals (social model). This method demonstrated to other users the sort of tweets they could expect to see from me. The second method was to provide personal information and an outline of my interests on my Twitter profile. Choosing to follow deaf people was another of the ways I used to attract followers, as they were likely to follow me back. The third method involved retweeting other people's tweets, making comments about tweets, answering other people's questions, and replying to any answers received. I found this helpful in terms of building relationships with deaf people and ensuring that they understood what I wished to know about them.

This research decided to use Twitter direct messaging as a communication tool to ensure confidentiality of participants' information as well as anonymity of responses. Twitter is a public forum and the research is related to a sensitive subject, so I chose to reply via direct message which is the more appropriate approach. I have also used a snowball strategy where I have asked one deaf organisation to provide me with contact details of some potential participants, with the latter also introducing me to their colleagues. The result was that I managed to recruit 22 deaf individuals who acted as participants in this research.

Twitter is a personal tool; people like to engage with people (University of Kent, 2017), which suggested that it could be useful if the researcher were prepared to tweet a few interesting things about their research, as these engage people far more than requests for them to do something alone. To do so, one of the Twitter users (a deaf person) recommended that I post a video using Saudi Sign Language (a copy of the video is provided in Appendix 4) to explain the research question, what I needed from deaf employees, and who is the target of the research.

It is essential to note that Twitter is a useful tool to support the researcher in recruiting a wider range of participants. One disadvantage, however, is that he/she would have little control over

the tweet invitation once it is posted. As a solution, I sent another tweet at the end of recruitment process to thank all participants for their interest, and to announce that this recruitment process was now concluded. For sure, I had done this after communicating with my participant list to ensure that they are willing and available to partake in my research. In addition, when the researcher got replies from twitter users who did not belong to the research population target, I made sure to clarify who was my target in this research. As cited above, the video posted helped me to target deaf employees. I reached 22 participants within two weeks, and then I posted a tweet with thanks to all the participants without mentioned their names. By utilising the strategies outlined above, I did not receive any further messages from deaf Twitter users. Each interviewee was asked to recommend a date and time for the interview via direct message.

Before starting the Twitter interview, their personal information was gathered, including their name, qualifications, and years of experience. Most of them provided their email address, and I sent the demographic questionnaire to them, but two of them did not have an email address. In that case, I shared a photo of the questionnaire via direct message and asked them to send their answers by return of message. As a result, I managed to record their personal information, as highlighted in the above section (see **Table 1**). I sought their approval by asking them to write their names in place of a signature.

While using social media platforms, I observed that Twitter affords deaf people a chance to demand their educational and employment rights. For example, deaf people suffer from a lack of sign language interpreters, and this causes communication barriers. Consequently, they have taken to Twitter to call for an increase in the number of Saudi Sign Language interpreters. Some deaf people are very active on Twitter, trying to make their voices heard through social media. For instance, hashtags have been created by deaf people such as #اسمعي-ترجمة-اسمعي، #الإشارة *listen to me* .

The above indicates that some deaf people are very active on Twitter and support each other as part of a community. For instance, one of the participants mentioned having created a Twitter account for future interpreters and inviting Saudi Sign Language interpreters and deaf people to get together to help deaf people to attend events, workshops, and other social activities. This account helped me locate two interpreters to support me while conducting the face-to-face interviews. In addition, through Twitter, I found several hashtags created by deaf people and hard of hearing individuals, claiming their rights within different aspects of social life and education. For example, Saudi Arabia now allows women to drive, but that does not apply to deaf women. Therefore, some of them tweet actively about this issue and are still awaiting their right to drive just as their peers without disabilities. In addition to the Twitter interviews conducted with the above participants, 6 out of 22 participants expressed a preference for a face-to-face interview. To comply with this request, I arranged to meet with those participants in person, as described in the next section.

4.9 Recruitment of deaf People for Face-to-Face Interviews

Six participants contacted me via direct message to express their preference for a face-to-face interview. To do this, approvals for ethical review was necessary from the University of Leeds to ensure any additional ethical issues had been attended to when embracing this additional approach (See appendix 5). The ethical review was approved, and all the requirements were completed. The researcher took measures to ensure that the interviewees appreciated that their contribution was as volunteers. Furthermore, the researcher would anonymise their identities when reporting the data. Each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure their identity could not be revealed. The interviews, which took approximately an hour, were carried out in Saudi Arabia in Arabic. Before the process was started, the interviewees were provided with an information sheet regarding the study and were asked to sign a consent form.

The six interview participants comprised four males and two females. All interviews were pre-arranged and conducted in semi-formal environments outside their workplaces. There was no need to hire an Arabic Sign Language interpreter as the participants suggested that a family member or trusted friend could fulfil this function. The researcher provided the information sheet to the interpreters before starting the interview (see Appendix 1) to ensure they understood their roles. In addition, participants were asked for their permission to record the interviews. As all participants declined to be video recorded, interviews were audio recorded, with their permission, using a mobile phone. Transcription was challenging as interviews needed to be transcribed into Arabic first, then translated into English.

These interviews were carried out in public places such as cafés and restaurants. I ensured that the seating area was partitioned off from other customers in order to ensure that our conversation was secure and private. The interpreters sat beside me, opposite the deaf person, to facilitate the communication. In order to ensure that I understood the participants' comments, I repeated their answers after the interpreter using Saudi Sign Language, as I have sign language skills. One of the participants disagreed once with the interpreter's translation. As he shared his experience and expressed his feelings, I managed to understand what he was trying to explain, but the interpreter said something different. I took this point into consideration during the following interview and used my sign language skills to summarise the participant's answers. This problem did not arise with the online interviews.

One of the disadvantages of face-to-face interviews is related to time. For example, some participants only had a limited amount of time available to be interviewed, while others arrived late. Two of the participants had cancelled their interview date a few hours before the interview was due to be conducted. As a result, the researcher re-arranged the interviews with the other interviewees. However, no difficulties were encountered related to time with the Twitter

interviews due to their asynchronous nature. Some responses were received the next day or at the end of the day.

4.10 Transcribing the interviews

This section explains the transcription process for the data gathered from the twenty two interviews (sixteen online interviews and six face-to-face interviews). According to Flick (2009), the transcription process is the first step in analysing the data, and an important stage in qualitative research on which the interpretation and findings of the research are based. There are two types of transcripts: open and closed transcripts (Jenks, 2018). An open transcript is a transcription of all features of the participant's speech, while in a closed transcript, only the data that answers the research questions is recorded. In the present research, I decided not to use software to transcribe the participants' speech, as it was not beneficial for me; I decided to do the transcription myself due to ethical issues that could have been raised by allowing a trained transcriber to do the transcribing. However, this process was not an easy task; it was the hardest, longest, and most tedious part of the whole study. An open transcript was used in this research, and all the recorded data was transcribed. However, the data which had no connection to the research topic are not in the transcripts.

In the first phase, the online interviews, each conversation was translated into English and saved as a pdf document via (Twdoc). This document contained the conversation between the researcher and the interviewee.

In the second phase, the face-to-face interviews, the recorded interviews were played back in order to make sense of the data. This enabled me to identify the patterns and was a very valuable step, as it afforded the opportunity to familiarise myself with the data, thereby setting the basics for the analysis of data. However, translation is a key weakness regarding work of this kind.

Although it is a vital phase of the study, it is nonetheless a good investment for producing quotes. It took the researcher took 3 months to conduct the online interviews, and another six participants for the face-to-face interviews; this included six weeks for translating and grouping the data, and a further eight weeks for analysing the interviews and writing up the report based on the data generated during the first six weeks.

4.11 Data Analysis

This section explains in detail the general steps through which the data was collected and analysed. After the data collection and transcription, the next step is preparing the data for understanding and interpretation (Creswell, 2009). The popular analytical method in qualitative research is thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012). Thematic analysis is used to help the researcher to identify themes within the research data (Evans and Lewis, 2018). It involves searching the data (in this instance interviews) for repetition of meaning and themes that should be connected to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A thematic analysis approach was implemented for the data analysis; this involved categorising the data into themes and sub-themes according to the outline provided on the interview sheets.

In their debate on how to handle interviews, King and Horrocks (2010) posit that there are diverse methods of analysing transcripts. According to Tracy (2013), analysis requires listening to and/or reading repeatedly the recorded data, which can assist in early analysis. Additionally, fact checking and listening to records while reading over transcript helped me to correct any mistakes made during transliteration. The next paragraphs will explain these steps.

Once all the interviews (online and face-to-face) with deaf participants had been conducted, I started the second stage, which was the analysis of all data. In this stage, six main steps were performed. Firstly, all data (interviews) were recorded and transcribed, with a total of 22

interviews. This procedure offered me opportunities to familiarise myself with the data and gain a better understanding of it. To avoid losing the meaning and clarity, I attempted to transcribe the actual words that the participant used in the interviews, avoiding summarising them; this is called verbatim transcription. The data were collected and transcribed in Arabic, then translated to English. This was hard for me because I tried to not lose the meaning when the transcript was translated to English. For the purposes of supervisory support, I showed them one example of a transcript.

Secondly, I listened to and carefully read the transcripts many times, before highlighting the important parts, in order to understand the data fully. Then I wrote down any initial impressions that came to mind about the data in the form of my notes. The third step was to import and organise the data by using descriptive codes. Coding represents an extremely helpful approach for handling interview data. Saldana (2015) describes coding as using a short word or phrase to describe a segment of collected data. This approach involves attaching a meaningful interpretation to every specific datum which can later be analysed for pattern detection, categorisation, assertion, or proposition development. Coding the transcripts manually with the goal of identifying the common themes from the phenomenon of the research has been used in this stage. I read the data carefully, which was in Arabic and English, identified all data statements relating to my research questions and assigned a code to each of them. After that, the codes were noted in English and each related statement was organised under the appropriate code – these were shared with my supervisor. The names of some codes were then changed, and additional codes were included. After that, I looked again at these codes and observed that some codes were related to others and that several codes could be grouped under one general code. This method reduced the number of codes and facilitated their organisation. At this stage, I again looked at the codes and tried to organise them by grouping them into common themes

so that similar codes were clustered into themes (Biddle et al., 2001). These emergent main themes were: 'educational barriers' 'barriers at work interview' 'underemployment' 'attitudinal barriers', 'low expectation', and 'absence of sign language interpretation'. During the writing-up stage, several theme names were changed and developed.

The first step taken prior to the fieldwork was to ensure the study was conducted following strict ethical guidelines and to consider any potential ethical issues that might arise in this research. The following section outlines these ethical considerations in more detail.

4.12 Ethical Considerations

1- In order to start the fieldwork (collecting data), ethical approval was required from the University of Leeds to warrant adherence to all ethical concerns that are perceived as integral in the research process. The ethical review was approved, and all the requirements were completed in line with policies and procedures set down by the University (See Appendix 4).

2- Capron (1989) indicated that all empirical studies must be framed around the principles of benevolence, which involve respect for people, and that respect is the recognition of each participant's rights. This includes their right to be advised regarding the aim of the investigation and procedures, their option to determine whether to take part in the research or not, and their right to withdraw at any time during or after the data collection period. The process of informing the participants is carried out by using consent forms and information sheets; these were sent to the participants with sufficient detail about the inquiry to enable participants to take a decision to participate in this research (See Appendix 1).

3- Confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees. The two principles relate to providing respect and safety to interviewees by ensuring the information that they provide is only

available to authorised individuals. All hard copy documents (transcripts) were stored in a locked drawer and will be destroyed after completing the PhD. The recordings were kept on the recorder (in my phone) and transferred to the interview file on the university M-drive my passport- as soon as possible, usually on the day after the interview. The recordings were then immediately deleted from the phone to ensure that there was no possibility of them being accessed at any other time. All data reported are anonymised – deaf individuals or companies are not named, and every effort has been made to ensure that participants cannot be easily identified.

4- The fourth ethical consideration relates to the face-to-face interviews. Participants were advised that they were able to bring along a personal assistant to the face-to-face interviews, such as a friend or family member, whom the respondent felt comfortable with to type or translate their responses.

5- The fifth ethical consideration is related to the use of social media. Twitter's (2018) privacy policy states that the company stores users' personal and communication data shared through direct messages and keeps a log of the usernames and times associated with the direct messages. However, Twitter does not keep a record of the message content itself. Therefore, according to Twitter's policy, all participants were ensured that their messages and conversations associated with the research would be private. The participants were also made aware that their communication with the researcher would be included in the data analysis. No public tweets would, however, be utilised, only private conversations. The Twitter archive feature allows users to create a backup file containing all their tweets, with the online *TwDocs* tool enabling users to save their Direct Messages in various formats (i.e., HTML, XLS, TXT, CSV, XML, DOC or PDF) (Technobuzz, 2022). I also explained how the data would be secured using the M drive on the Leeds University network.

6- No harm to deaf participants. Deaf people in any country are likely to be a cultural minority, so that researchers are often retesting or over-testing deaf people, potentially putting them at risk.

This was considered during the data generation to make sure that no harm, detriment or unreasonable stress was caused to the participants. The data were about the experiences of deaf participants before and after their employment, attitudes and other sensitive issues so they were very comfortable talking with me and, as a previous teacher of deaf students, I knew how to communicate with them. All the data generation process was carried out fluently and in a respectful way; so, no distress was caused during this process.

7-I was aware of my position as a researcher in this research, and the interactions between myself and deaf participants. My background, qualifications, and experiences as a teacher of deaf students in Saudi Arabia has made me familiar with the culture and context of the participants. This being so, I was aware of possible issues that could arise, given that I have worked as a teacher, which may lead to bias in the data, in that I accept responses from participants that simply conform to what I want to hear, rather than based on their own beliefs and opinions. To combat this possibility, I attempted not to ask leading questions, and instead articulated open questions designed to give rise to in-depth data and information about the issues being researched. I have been determined to listen to participants' perspectives and beliefs in this research, and not simply express or confirm my own perspective.

8- Because the research was conducted in the Arabic language, this gave rise to the second ethical consideration. Since the data was translated from Arabic to English, this meant that some specific meanings might be to be lost in the translation process. Reasonable care and skill

were applied in translating the terms, phrases and sentences to ensure that all meanings were preserved.

This chapter now concludes with consideration given to the dissemination strategy for this thesis' findings and the limitations inherent in the research that need to be considered.

4.13 Dissemination Strategy

Numerous strategies will be employed to ensure that the findings of this research, including its conclusions and recommendations, are able to reach wider audiences. The plan is to distribute my research among academics, policy makers, deaf people, and their organizations. In addition to a general belief that research ought to be made available to other stakeholders, I also believe strongly that reaching an inclusive employment environment for deaf people requires comprehensive and galvanized efforts and providing research evidence of this kind can only support those.

The first element of the strategy is to submit three articles to academic journals. Suggested titles are:

- Best practices to achieve employment environment for deaf people in Saudi Arabia.
- Deaf people's post-employment experience: barriers and solutions.
- Deaf students' pre-employment journey: barriers and solutions.

The second is to organise a conference which could be funded by The Ministry of Labour and sponsored by some NGOs who are working in the field. The goal is to present my research findings in addition to the findings of other researchers who are working within a similar field.

Engaging policy makers and stakeholders through debates and seminars would hopefully spark continued discussion to find the best solutions to implement policies that will support a decent life for deaf people.

The third is to publish a policy brief including a summary of the study findings and recommendations. This should be provided in simplified language and an accessible format to advise organizations of some of the means by which inclusive education and employment for deaf people within Saudi Arabia can be achieved. It is worth noting that while Saudi Arabia will be considered as a case study for this publication, the researcher will also ensure that these publications are useful to other countries and organizations.

4.14 Limitation of the Thesis

The following three limitations should be considered when applying the findings from this study.

Firstly, the present research investigates the barriers facing a particular group of disabled people (deaf employees). Consequently, participants with other impairments, such as blind/deaf employees, were excluded. Including other groups of disabled people could add more data about their disabling barriers, and other information that could enrich this research.

Secondly, this research utilized snowball sampling through Twitter to recruit deaf employees. This sample thus includes only deaf Saudi nationals who have a Twitter account, and work in both the governmental and private sectors. Deaf employees who do not have access to the internet were not included in this research. This means that this research sample does not represent all deaf employees in Saudi Arabia.

Thirdly, also impacting upon the conduct of this research and the resulting thesis is the researcher's inability to interview employers, managers, and company owners due to the limited time available for the fieldwork. While this would enrich the research with the perspective of Saudi Arabian companies, the researcher has attempted to compensate for this by exploring best practice within the literature from other countries.

Overall, despite these limitations, I believe that this work enables deaf people to have a voice and that it will ensure their views regarding education, employment, and the barriers they have encountered in accessing both, are able to be disseminated widely. Through this study I hope that other disabled people in Saudi Arabia, and society, will participate in demanding change. Disabled people need more support from others and from the Saudi government that has promised to do more to support the rights of disabled people. I believe it is our role as Saudi citizens to come together assist disabled people across the country.

4.15 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the fieldwork undertaken for this study, with particular respect to its exploratory nature, relying mostly on qualitative data gathering and analysis through interviews. As explained and justified in the chapter, an online platform was used as the main method for recruiting deaf participants. This chapter also explained the sampling strategy adopted for recruiting and selecting participants and how data were generated. As explained above, in the present study, the interviews were conducted asynchronously, and participants were instructed to contact me via Twitter direct message if they wished to take part in the study. The direct message approach was considered an effective way to ensure that all participants' information remained confidential and secure, as only the researcher has access to the Twitter account in question.

5 Chapter Five: Deaf Student's Pre-Employment Journey

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the experiences of deaf employees in the workplace. It is specifically concerned with the barriers that influence disabled people's ability to be equally employed; these range from school education, through higher education, and right up to the employment process including the interview phase. The social model is used to investigate these barriers; having previously analysed secondary literature in both education and pre-interview/interview barriers to the workplace, this chapter uses interview data to further explore these issues and suggest how best to deal with barriers facing deaf people in Saudi Arabia. Best practices are considered alongside strategies employed within other countries; this will inform the recommendations section of this thesis where further consideration is given to the means by which barriers can be removed/ameliorated.

This chapter will be divided into three main sections. Firstly, the chapter will look at pre-university educational experiences of deaf participants, including deaf schools and mainstream schools. Secondly, the chapter will move to the experiences of deaf participants during their higher education. Finally, the work interview with deaf candidates will be examined.

The findings from the research reveal that participants are segregated in deaf schools or self-contained classrooms. The teachers within these spaces lack formal qualifications and fail to accommodate the needs of the deaf students through support material to facilitate education. Additionally, some families prevent their deaf children from moving into mainstream schools, hoping that their child will receive more attention within deaf schools. There is an absence of family support within the Saudi community to try to help families fight for their child's right

to appropriate education. This chapter analyses these issues as well as others, starting off with perspectives on segregated schools.

5.2 Pre-University Educational Experiences

To better understand the barriers facing the participants in this study, this section will reopen the discussion about their experience of pre-university education. The participants in this research discussed the importance of good quality primary education as one of the most important elements that affects the level of their engagement within the employment market. Learning about these barriers demonstrates the cause of current difficulties faced by deaf participants to obtain decent employment. It will clarify whether their poor primary education is one reason behind their inability to get jobs that match their educational qualifications. This reinforces the argument made by Baum et al. (2013) who confirm that the acquisition of education has favourable impacts on the social and professional lives of most individuals, including deaf people. They also state that obtaining a good education is essential to achieve healthy and satisfactory lives with a “secure lifestyle” and for improving the probabilities of employment and a stable career, as well as for participating actively in civil society.

As highlighted in the literature review (Chapter Three), all deaf learners in the country have either one of two options of educational placement: segregated schools and self-contained classrooms (Al-Othman, 2014). The participants interviewed within this research were enrolled in both placements: segregated schools, and self-contained classrooms in conventional schools. This allowed a comparison to be made between their experiences and reflections on the two different settings. These settings have already been discussed earlier in Chapter Three, which found an inclusive educational system in Saudi Arabia for deaf students whose practice of integration is integrating special units or classes within mainstream school (Shaira, 2013). This

form of education influences a significant percentage of all deaf learners across the country. According to Alothman (2014), this has turned out to be the most shared mode for deaf learners to receive their education. However, because of this, the research found that some deaf students prefer to complete their education in a deaf school. Various important barriers related to pre-university education were experienced by the research participants. These obstacles were largely related to the lack of a suitable environment for mainstreaming deaf students, parents' refusal, and unqualified teachers.

This section critically examined the experiences of participants who had studied in segregated schools. They stated that studying in segregated schools rather than mainstream schools is the best choice for them for several reasons. The first is to do with inability to join mainstream schools due to issues of access and difficulties in managing this process. Also, as discussed in Chapter Three, the admission system for deaf people within Saudi Arabian education has been found to be somehow arbitrary. Some schools do not accept students with severe hearing impairment, and others accept deaf students only if they are able to pass some written exams (Alquraini, 2011). Therefore, these regulations were sometimes behind deaf students' decisions to study in segregated schools. It is not clear whether this is due to the weak pre-university education received by deaf students, or due to the complexity of these exams. Noor, for example, decided to study in a segregated school after failing to meet the school acceptance criteria. She stated that:

“Applying for mainstream school required me to pass some writing and verbal exams and I did these exams twice, but I did not pass, that why I prefer to be in deaf school”.

Public or private schools in Saudi Arabia refuse to accept disabled students who have severe hearing impairment, assuming that it would be hard for them to study alongside non-disabled students (Alquraini, 2011). This was found to be upsetting for some research participants who favoured studying in segregated schools. According to Sami:

“when I was in primary school my parents heard that deaf students could be integrated in public schools (mainstream school) so, they welcome the idea and apply for it, the school however, rejected me without reasons... maybe due to my severe hearing impairment”.

From the quotation above it can be observed that Sami’s parents accepted the idea of moving to a mainstream school; however, the school did not accept him due his hearing impairment. The example reflects how Sami located the problem in his hearing impairment as the reason for not being included in mainstream school, instead of blaming the education system which is the real cause for preventing him being mainstreamed. Villa and Thousand (2000) stress that the barriers that disabled students encounter, including deaf students, are not associated with their deficiency but to the education system. Likewise, in line with the view of the social model of disability, the difficulties that deaf students face should be winnowed out within the educational environment (Villa and Thousand, 2005). Practices and situations in line with such views can be achieved in the Saudi education context, if instructors in the institutions commit more efforts by requiring the education system to accommodate the needs of deaf students, and by creating appropriately equipped environments to reach the goal of inclusive education.

Indeed, some exclusionary practices that deaf students faced are due to the belief that those learners are of less concern and prominence than non-disabled students. This can also be perceived as disregarding their rights to impartial services and education. Latifah was angry as

she found herself obliged to study in a segregated school as her application to study in a neighbourhood school was not accepted. She said that:

“I was not able to join the nearest public school because they still do not accept deaf students and every semester, they promised to open a class for deaf students... this is why I have continued my education in segregated school”.

In addition to such discrimination and abandonment of deaf students in Saudi conventional schools, they cannot attend their local neighbourhood schools. In Saudi Arabia, the proportion of students with disabilities enrolled in isolated institutes grew momentarily over the past decades on account of the spread of these schools across the country, the remoteness of conventional schools' spaces, and syllabuses and teaching approaches for disabled students (Aldabas, 2015). This increase of segregated schools may prevent disabled people from being able to attend their neighbourhoods' mainstream schools. Cologon (2013) shows that deaf students who join their local zonal mainstreaming school with their area peers attain better learning outcomes than those who studied at segregated schools. However, examining deaf students' ability to access mainstream schools and other organizations in the context of Saudi Arabia faced difficulties. This is similar to other countries where deaf individuals face methodical denial and segregation from access to available services in many organisations such as neighbourhood schools (Oliver, 2017).

On the contrary, this research argues that having an inclusive education environment for deaf students would increase their academic and social interaction with their non-disabled peers. Ali, who was accepted to study in a neighbourhood mainstream school, shared his positive experience, saying that:

“A new school was opened near to my house; at that time the country achieved some success to move some deaf students to mainstream school. I was lucky because that I am one of them and it was a good experience that I have non-deaf friends.”

Ali lives in the capital city of Saudi Arabia and had a chance to continue his education in the neighbourhood school. Despite this, he did not study within the same classroom as his non-disabled peers, but rather segregated in a specific classroom. This is one example to show that determining educational placements for deaf students in Saudi Arabia is not clear. It could be argued that it is necessary to utilise the suitable approaches to practice inclusivity in learning within the education system in the country for deaf students in the future. Slee (2018) argues that despite the existing policies at the domestic and global level, as well as extensive activism for inclusivity, many deaf learners in most countries still face exclusion in learning and the job market.

The analysis above indicates that most deaf students interviewed in this research had a preference to study in a segregated school due to their awareness of several barriers that they would have faced if studying at mainstream schools. For example, the absence of reasonable accommodations and adequate support inside public schools are among the reasons for being in segregated schools. This prevents some deaf students from studying in mainstream schools, assuming that they will not be able to receive an adequate education. Ahmad shared that:

“At that time, I chose to continue my education in [a] deaf school, because deaf students were not given full opportunity to equally study in mainstreaming school therefore, I will not be given my full opportunity”.

This is unfortunate, as it deprives them from being in the mainstream with their peers, therefore contributing to the community's unawareness of their capabilities, which may lead to the current associated stigma. Fahad is another example who preferred to study in segregated schools due to his awareness that public schools were not yet able to apply the full concept of inclusive education, and that he would be in a self-contained classroom. He expressed his dissatisfaction saying:

“Some of my deaf friends told me that in public school deaf students are standing together in a separate area in the breaktime and are excluded from non-disabled students. That’s why I prefer deaf school over public school”.

Yousef, who also continued his education in a segregated school, said that:

“I decided to be in deaf school and complete my education journey with deaf people. For me, studying in deaf school is better because we (deaf students) are not able to join non-deaf in school activities and other classes”.

This confusion between integration and inclusion has been discussed in Chapter Three which illustrated that moving deaf student from segregated learning institutions to conventional ones, where they then learn in specialised environments, is interpreted as inclusive education in the Saudi education system (Brown, 2005). The position differs from the generic notion of inclusivity, which denotes that deaf students study with their peers in a similar environment with variations to certain elements such as the settings, the syllabus, and instruction strategies to ensure suitability for all learners (Mitchell, 2014).

One negative outcome of deaf students' exclusion from the mainstreaming of classrooms is that they will have negligible representation in society. As adults, they lack sufficient access to

HRDs, communal resources, jobs and ability to fit into the economic systems. Additionally, these adverse effects serve to separate deaf people from other members of the society, due to the challenges in interaction and communication, specifically in instances where there is no past experience with people facing similar challenges in a different setting. Failure to participate in a learning environment comprises the propensity for exclusion, and the risk grows when disabilities are involved (Riley, 2017). Some studies such as Bond et al. (2007) and McGraw et al. (2008) reveal that perceptions of a sense of connectedness and fitting in within the learning environment is linked to favourable outcomes, such as social, behavioural, academic and psychological consequences. Thus, an increase in the opportunity to improve the perception of togetherness and belonging with nearby societies boosts the accomplishment of inclusive practices for disabled students (Prince and Hadwin, 2013).

Goodley (2016) describes deaf student as having a status of powerlessness, being seen as children. They are excluded from school activities and overall classrooms, and as a result have little representation in society. During adulthood, they lack unbiased access to HRD in the workplace, participation in economic activities, work and communal resources. Furthermore, these adverse outcomes play a role in the separation of deaf people from other people in the society, since they have challenges in interacting and communicating like other non-disabled persons, especially if there is a lack of experience for these people in their school days (Goodley, 2016).

Deaf students' families also believe that locating their children in a deaf school would increase their opportunities to receive an adequate education. Two of the participants in this research were not able to join mainstream schools due to their families' refusal to locate their deaf children in direct contact with non-disabled peers. It may be that their parents were aware of

the limitations of the services that were provided for deaf students in public schools; it might also be a form of prejudice. Salma for example, shared that:

“My parents sent me and my sister to deaf school from primary to high school believing that this form of school is better for me to meet other deaf students also my teachers give more attention to us”.

This quotation raised two elements; the first is that some families' beliefs about their deaf children hinder efforts to remove barriers. In this case, Salma's family acted against her rights to be mainstreamed alongside non-disabled students. It seems that her parents perceived the problem as being with her hearing impairment rather than the educational system. Some parents tend to lay emphasis on how to position their children within the existing structures such as education, rather than adapt those structures to fit the needs of their children. This is also agreed by Priestley (1998), who holds that the attitudes of parents towards the education of their children, including their aspirations, may be affected by the medical perspective on disability. The perspective associates the challenge with the individual and classifies children with disabilities based on the narratives of exclusion, vulnerability and dependence.

Secondly, her parents' preference for a segregated school was due to what they perceived as extra protection of her needs with appropriate teaching. This point is highlighted by Zigmond (2003), who demonstrated that deaf school is better for deaf students' education due to their studying in small classes with others who share a similar impairment, thereby allowing teachers to give more attention to their needs. However, it could be argued that this educational context employs the same purpose as the individual model, as they both concentrate on the student's impairment and build an educational experience around this problem.

Family support services could help parents and make them more aware of their child's rights, enabling them to offer the best quality of life to their disabled child and rise above the related problems. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, parents may need a level of assistance and support to better play their roles, especially in locations where development towards inclusive treatment is slow or lacking, as is the case in the KSA (Alariefy, 2016). The absence of family support in Saudi Arabia maybe be behind families' desire to allocate their deaf children to segregated schools to ensure they enjoy extra protective measures. Abeer and Salma are not happy that their parents had placed them in segregated deaf schools. When they were asked why a segregated school was not a good choice for them, Salma shared that:

“If I had another chance, I would not accept my parents’ choice. Even when studying in a separate class at least I would be able to be familiar with contacting non-deaf students and see how they are acting”.

Abeer also expressed her frustration about this, saying:

“We can still be learning from each other if we participate with non-disabled students in any school activity, we will be able to communicate and understand each other. I meant not just for academic but for other social life”.

Abeer's and Salma's comments align with the issues examined in Chapter Three, which concludes that the best environment to study numerous skills, including creativity, problem-solving and social interaction with schools and the wider community is inside inclusive classrooms with non-disabled peers. Lynch (2017) confirms that deaf schools appear to have an adverse result on deaf students in diverse ways. This comprises undesirable effects on language development and a restricted awareness and knowledge of the surrounding world (Marschark et al., 2015). Additionally, schools are said to offer a limited syllabus for deaf

learners which leads to low academic results and attainment (Lynch, 2017). As a result of these inadequacies, deaf students' preference to study at segregated schools is a consequence of public-school rejection or a lack of equipment and resources to accommodate their needs. The question is whether the situation will be different if these barriers were to be removed. Further research could be undertaken to learn about other constraints that hinder deaf students from being mainstreamed in public schools. On the contrary, deaf participants who graduated from self-contained classrooms found it a very fulfilling and useful experience, both at academic and social levels. Four of them expressed that being in such a placement was better for them than being admitted into a special school. For instance, Aziz stated that:

“I studied in public school, and I found it very enjoyable in terms of meeting non-deaf students in some events and some school activities... I studied at this school for about 5 years for me it is better than deaf school”.

Some deaf students decided to study in self-contained classrooms for better education and social inclusion. Mohammad also has emphasised his positive experience when moving to a self-contained classroom, sharing that:

“Moving from deaf school to public school give me a positive energy to complete my study and see the world in positive way... I have lots of friends from public school whom I am still contact with”.

These examples shows that although they studied in segregated classes, they view it positively, as they can participate with non-deaf students in some school activities. They do not, however, detract from the difficulties faced by deaf students who were admitted in self-contained classrooms. This research found evidence about the difficulties for deaf students in attaining equal education or mingling with their non-disabled peers. They shared their experience of

moving to mainstream schools where little effort had been made to prepare the environment for them. This was in line with the literature review of this thesis (Chapter Three). Singal (2009) documents numerous attitudinal, educational, and other barriers facing deaf students, which prevent them from enjoying a full, decent and inclusive education. Saleh moved to a mainstream school but faced difficulties with studying within the same classroom as other students. He shared that:

“I prepared myself to study with non-deaf students but they, but the school put me in separate class with other four deaf students”.

Fatima who lives in the same city shared similar experience stating that:

“When I saw some of my friends in deaf school moved to mainstream school, I decided to move with them, but we found ourselves studying in a separate class. I mean not with other non-deaf students”.

Both Saleh and Fatima referred to the challenges they faced because the school environment was not adequate for them to learn effectively. They need, in common with other disabled people, to learn academic and social skills such as social interaction that enhance their engagement with schools and the wider community. To do this, an inclusive classroom with non-disabled peers is the best environment to learn those skills (Bain, 1976). Ammar illustrated this by saying:

“Public education of deaf students within general school settings is acceptable if the school provides all the essential facilities and needs. Also, studying in the same class with non-disabled students will make the education interactive as they learn from each other”.

Mona also, reflected on the extent to which academic and social skills were impacted through studying within the same classroom with non-disabled students with the provision of accommodations. She said that:

“Being in the same classroom allowed us (deaf students) to experience real life situations, as well as acquiring natural skills in terms of communication and people skills... also this will affect positively our academic outcome”.

Mona suggests that educating deaf students alongside their non-disabled peers will have a positive academic outcome. This has already been mentioned in the literature review section, as Marschark et al. (2015) confirmed that deaf students show considerable academic enhancement due to inclusive learning environments. Aldabas (2015), Al-Jadid (2013) and Alquraini (2011) clearly stated that even though the legal provisions regarding disabled people were instituted almost 17 years ago, they have neither been applied seriously, nor have they been enforced actively, which prevents the deaf learners from accessing their legally mandated legal and civil rights as native Saudis, including access to conventional schools. Policy and laws associated with disabled learners occasionally also rely on misconstructions regarding the relationship between the learner and the disability. In this scenario, policies fall into the diagnostic and classification trap, which contributes to the systemic isolation of learners with disabilities (Slee, 2011).

As stated in Chapter Three above, Saudi researchers such as Alquraini (2011) associate the absence of inclusivity for students with disabilities, including those suffering from deafness, to the scarcity of consultants, absence of activists, and limited financial support. Slee (2011) reiterated that despite the multiplicity of domestic and international policies, as well as increased activism for classes to increase inclusion, a large number of deaf learners in different

countries still experience exclusion. Saudi Arabia is one such country, where most deaf students learn in separate and isolated learning environments.

One of the steps that Saudi education has taken to mainstream disabled students, including deaf students, is that Saudi universities have Departments of Special Education for the training of instructors who teach disabled people and develop special education research programmes. The result of this is that the majority of those who teach disabled students have inadequate information about the practice of teaching deaf students. Alquraini (2011) argues that they lack the essential information and abilities to teach certain content, including, such as reading, mathematics, and science. In addition, teachers of deaf students have been found to have weak communication skills, especially using sign language. This challenge affects their delivery of information as well as assessing deaf students' progress, and it is arguable that some of the participants' comments in this study reflect the weaknesses that Alquraini discusses.

Participants who studied in segregated schools and self-contained classrooms were asked questions regarding their experience during their education and about the struggles they faced. The majority of them mentioned the lack of qualifications amongst those employed as teachers. This raised various difficulties in understanding teachers and teaching content during their classes. One participant (Yousef) shared the following experience from their studies:

“Teacher: I forget the sign of these words, deaf students: then I just note it down as it is. None of my teachers were using sign language professionally. Usually, I write down what my teachers wrote on the board without understanding it”.

Sami echoed this, stating that:

“Some of my teachers did not teach the contents of subjects properly; if I asked them to explain back to me, they could not deliver information well”.

Ahmad also confirmed this issue, stating that:

“I think many of my teachers in primary school did not have any knowledge of sign language.”

This is significant as, according to Smith et al. (2014), deaf students can lose confidence in their teacher’s ability to assist them in improving their knowledge and skills. Indeed, many deaf students in Saudi Arabia complain that their teacher’s weak capacities to teach and communicate with them seemed to have been as a result of shortcomings in their technical training (Hsien, 2007). Failures within universities to prepare teachers can result in them having less confidence, as they have limited knowledge and skills relating to successful engagement with deaf students (Shadreck, 2012). Also, the lack of belief in the capabilities of deaf students from teachers encourages their scepticism about the attainment potential among deaf students (Cook et al., 2009). Additionally, this situation leads to neglecting their accommodations needs, in terms of providing equitable and adequate educational services. Maryam, for example, mentioned that:

“Most of my teachers do not teach us as they should do...they maybe do not trust our ability to be educated as other students.”

The above quotation shows that there are major issues with the number of unqualified teachers who teach deaf students. From my experience with teaching deaf students, I was trained for one year to teach them in primary schools, however, when I did my fieldwork, I noticed that the majority of teachers who teach deaf students were not so professionally equipped. In other words, they do not have sign language skills, and are not specialised in teaching deaf students. Also, the low expectations of teachers who teach deaf students are a central factor that expressively influences deaf students in numerous ways. For example, the conviction that deaf

students should not be expected to be academic achievers as are non-disabled students (Rouse, 2017). The assumption that deaf learners would fail in their education is itself based on the belief of low expectations. A related challenge is that teachers are somehow discriminating against deaf students' capabilities, viewing them as limited. As a result, they teach them simple content which raises questions rather than engaging them within the curriculum. Ebrahim, who was upset by this behaviour, expressed that:

“My teachers used simple ways during my studies... they gave us some questions in the end of each semester... they do not try to teach us by using accessible material to make the subjects understandable.”

The above quotation shows that the bulk of teachers are not qualified to educate deaf students. This research did not interview the teachers of deaf students and, therefore, it is difficult to know about their motivations for teaching deaf students. However, some of the participants tried to explain their teacher's motivation. For example, most of teachers may be reluctant to teach deaf students, feeling that their capabilities are weak and will not develop. Abeer shared some of the barriers that she experienced related to complications understanding the questions being asked and having to refer to Arabic language. She stated that:

“I can't always follow my teachers because they don't repeat the question. I mostly, do not understand their answers to students' questions”.

The above statements clearly illustrate teachers' lack of awareness and appreciation of the learning style of deaf students. Preparing and training teachers who teach deaf students to accommodate their needs during the classes is one of the ideologies of the education of deaf students. As cited in the literature review, Al-Musa (2008) illustrates that the main aims of the teachers' programme for deaf education are to address deaf students' needs, helping them to

reach the best academic level possible, and to prepare them for an independent life. However these programs are not effective as deaf students struggle with their teachers. There is insufficient preparation for teachers, limited monitoring and poor follow-up mechanisms. Noor and Abdullah faced the same problem and challenges with their teachers. Noor overcame this by asking her classmate for support, saying that:

“If I need to ask questions related to any subject always my classmate helped me because I can’t understand my teachers”.

It is obvious from the above quotes that deaf students support each other during their classes. In transitioning from verbal metaphors to observed conduct, a key question emerges regarding whether the knowledge possessed by teachers is sufficient to transform the prevailing educational situation of deaf students in inclusive classrooms. To answer this question a further study would be needed to investigate teachers’ knowledge of deaf education. Teachers’ lack of knowledge and training about accommodating deaf students’ needs will affect their actual teaching styles. Abdullah added that:

“I found difficulties to understand my teachers in primary and secondary school... they do not use sign language, maybe there are one or two teachers who can sign”.

This affected the students in that they struggled to develop their academic skills such as reading and writing. This was also evident in the email interviews which were conducted, which were poorly written and illegible. It is clear that the provision of only verbal instructions in some classrooms, rather than writing them on the board, leads to some students failing to capture some key information, as well as the development of anxiety due to the insecurity from not knowing. Solutions need to be designed to make the learning more accessible for deaf people (see conclusion for more details). Omar and Jodi shared their experiences regarding this issue

in the quotations below. Omar explained how the educational difficulties he faced affected his academic skills, saying that:

“I cannot read and write in a good way because I did not get good quality of education.”

During the interview with Jodi, I observed that she clarifies why her teachers do not teach deaf students probably:

“My teachers were not qualified to teach us... they think that we (deaf) students and not able to learn as non-deaf students... our system of course is the responsible for this tragedy”.

This means that the absence of clear guidelines for accommodating deaf students, starting from the admissions process and throughout their journey within university, is one reason for this failure. This includes the unavailability of budgets to provide necessary equipment and train university and admin staff with the machines needed to deal with different impairments. Examining the level of support provided by some universities in other countries, it is found that they have equality services or specific departments to provide disabled people with the necessary assessment, guidelines and support so they can receive a decent and equal education (see recommendations section). In general, all the participants involved in this research openly or subtly acknowledged that the education system for deaf people in Saudi Arabia is inadequate and leads to a negative experience for deaf students. They all expressed this issue at the beginning of interviews when asked about this educational system. Fahad expressed this, saying that:

“The Ministry of education should give more attention to deaf students’ education...I did not get enough education as I feel that I don’t have a chance to receive similar quality education as other colleagues.”

Some of this research’s participants were found to be dissatisfied with the equality of the education system when it comes to students with hearing impairments, with Fatimah saying that:

“Our education system unfortunately differentiates between the level of education according to the severity of students’ hearing impairment rather than provide accommodations to reach equal opportunity for everyone”.

Maryam also offers evidence of this argument, as she states her low level of hearing impairment was an important reason for her being able to receive a good education. Consequently, she managed to get onto a course in university. She shared that:

“The degree of my hearing impairment did not prevent me from receiving a good education... I live normally as other students”

The education system in Saudi Arabia views deaf students through a medical model, and those who are not able to learn in a normal way are categorised into multiple groups based on the challenges they face, so they can get special treatment or education. For instance, it approaches deafness from a clinical perspective, and seeks to identify therapeutic approaches to diagnose deafness, while also helping them to learn how to converse. This represents a unique view on the medical model, which does not consider the variables in education, including the quality and type of learning. Inclusion in learning offers a clear message that the students suffering from deafness should get similar opportunities as those without disabilities. Its existence is

founded on the belief that inclusive treatment leads to more robust social ties, and better academic achievement (Bunch and Valeo, 2004). In this respect, one of the key philosophies of this model is that none of the students have learning difficulties, but institutions with teaching challenges, and in cases where the model has been introduced in response to the clinical medical model it affected the lives of students (Villa and Thousand, 2005). According to the social model of disability, a society involved in the development of inclusion in its learning institutions should eliminate all barriers that may contribute to deaf students being isolated. This means that the problems deaf students encounter are triggered by the community in which they live, and are not the fault of the individuals suffering from disability, or a result of the deficiencies.

Deaf participants in this research discussed the educational barriers that they had faced which prevented them from continuing their academic journey. These barriers had the result of presenting further difficulties when seeking employment. The research participants argued that improving the education system to better accommodate deaf people is the first milestone to ensure that deaf students have the equivalent level of education to non-disabled people. This enables them to better contest opportunities in labour market. The majority of participants agreed that this accommodation is the pathway to inclusive education. This means the provision of sufficient resources and extra support services. With this, learning institutions should be able to assist deaf students to succeed in school. Inclusive classrooms do, however, require strategy and effort to be successful, and deficiencies in this regard were identified by the research participants. Noor for example shared that:

“All students should be seen as having something special and unique to contribute.

Deaf Students will feel that they are part of a learning community in their classroom because of the belief in inclusion by their peers and their teachers”.

To expedite the inclusivity of students with deafness within the learning environment, some key factors need to be considered. Firstly, mutual collaboration is necessary. Accomplishing success in inclusive learning environments involves several collaborations between associated stakeholders, such as learning institutions, instructors, academicians, policymakers, and members of the community (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010). Combined action and the participation of the various stakeholders is integral in the creation of effective transformation to inclusive learning environments, as well as the ability of all members of the team to respect one another while participating in their different roles (Armstrong, 2016b).

Looking at examples of best practices of inclusive education globally there are examples of mainstream schools that have been restructured to support learning for all students, irrespective of impairments, and where facilities and services enable all students to be supported in their learning journey by responding to their individual needs. This would lead to the application of inclusion within the education system. Schoeman (2012) argued that from a practical perspective, the establishment of inclusive learning communities involves taking account of the interests of all learners. This involves inculcating a sense of shared duty amongst all school professionals, changing institutional structures to endorse collaboration during the making of decisions, as well as creative solutions to key problems, while also making the necessary adjustments to the current professional roles and school practices. Applying the Islamic social model could positively influence Saudi policy in terms removing barriers to learning. As demonstrated above, the Saudi education system has focussed on integration rather than inclusion, and the prevailing practice of teaching deaf students involves special classrooms or special schools. The review, implementation and development of policies are integral issues in inclusive education and have been recognised in multiple locations in Western countries, as a key means by which inclusive education may be promoted (Lindsay, 2007). In line with this,

some of the research participants called for a reconsideration of disability policy/regulations, establishing the transformation of the policies or regulations into practice, and the development of novel policies/regulations to eliminate or reduce the oppressive treatment and exclusion of disabled people within the learning institutions that they attend. Their suggestions are as follows:

- The government and educational institutions could introduce supplementary budgets for supporting or accommodating the unique needs of disabled students.
- Educational institutions should create plans, based on their contexts, to favour and support disabled students.
- The Saudi government could articulate laws to address the issue of offering support to disabled students.
- Guidelines and plans from government to organisational levels concerning disabled students must be put into action.

Building on these participants' views, it is arguable that stakeholders in educational and public institutions should make sure that all students get equal accessibility to education. It is the duty of each member of the community to respect and value the presence of disabled people as they do normal people, and to ensure they have the right to access education and all other services.

The next section addresses the barriers to education that deaf participants in this study experienced in university.

5.3 Barriers to Education Experienced by deaf People in Higher Education

This section moves to examine the experiences of deaf students and the obstacles they face during their higher education. Disability laws mandate that Saudi universities should provide the necessary support for disabled people to ensure opportunities for learning equivalent to those of their non-disabled peers (Al-moady et al., 2013). This research, however, found that

deaf participants reported challenges when accessing higher education, and these challenges prevented them from enjoying their university studies and associated social activities.

As shown in Table 4.1, only 6 out of 22 participants were able to continue their education at university. And one of the participants preferred to secure a job instead of continuing his higher education due to the difficulties associated with the acceptance procedures in Saudi universities. As argued in the literature review in Chapter Three, deaf students have been underrepresented in higher education (Cebula, 2009 and Madriaga, 2007). The absence of sign language interpretation and the lack of good education resulted in students' poor academic outcomes. Further problems were caused by the inaccessibility of admission procedures. These were mainly due to external social obstacles, including adverse views of such students' capabilities by lecturers and staff, and stereotypes of preferable subject areas of study based on the type of impairment (Riddell and Weedon, 2014). One of the participants holds a master's degree from an Arabic country (i.e., not Saudi Arabia) and had a positive experience with her education journey. However, the others found difficulties and challenges when applying to Saudi universities. This section looks at the education process within Saudi Arabian universities to understand deaf participants' experience during admission, course study and the exam process.

One of the participants shared his experiences of the challenges he had faced when seeking to enrol at a Saudi university. He was frustrated and decided for search for a job instead of going through a complex process to apply for higher education. Aziz decided to find a job instead of waiting without benefits, especially as he was not sure of whether the university would accept him or not. He expressed that, saying:

“The enrolment procedures at university were difficult. Being accepted for deaf people is a challenge, as the universities in Saudi Arabia are not accessible to deaf students. In this case, I prefer to work instead as this is better than nothing. During work I have managed to attend training courses in different subjects, for example, computers.”

Aziz’ decision to work rather than continue his higher education career seems due to the universities’ failure to support his hearing impairment accommodations, especially in the admissions process. While his case could be due to personal or financial reasons, his peers also shared similar levels of frustration due to a lack of support through the admission process, during course study, and during exams. This practice was in opposition to the stance of many scholars, who hold that everyone should have equal access to higher education (Fuller et al., 2004). It is a way to empower students, arming them with the essential credentials to access the labour market. Aziz’ perseverance to complete his higher education encouraged him to improve his skills in writing and computing, before applying again two years later to study at one of the Saudi Arabian universities. Luckily, the university accepted him, but only after passing a written exam. Unfortunately, most of the interviewed participants confirmed that written exams are an essential requirement for being accepted into universities. They reported that this type of exam is difficult to pass due to the poor quality of writing skills that they had acquired through their previous schooling. Aziz’ example shows that the application of the Islamic social model of disability would not be achieved only through the provision of equipment or tools, but rather when building deaf people’s skills and qualifications, so they can compete in higher education, the labour market, and in society as a whole.

Deaf students’ poor pre-university education is another barrier that hinders their acceptance in Saudi Arabian universities, especially because universities insist that they do not accept deaf

students unless they have moderate/high level of writing or computer skills, which may be seen as a form of discrimination (Reed et al., 2015). Ali, for example, applied for a Saudi university that accepts deaf individuals; however, due to the low level of some of his academic skills, he was not accepted. While this might be argued as only “right”, given the demands of higher education, the fact that previous academic barriers may have resulted in this situation highlights the fact that disabled students are disadvantaged by this point in their educational journey. Omar is the second example who found it challenging to attend university due to required exams in specific academic skills:

“It is very challenging to attend university; it requires exams in specific skills. I tried to apply to a university that accepts deaf students, and I received an email inviting me to attend a written exam but then, unfortunately, I got a rejection letter”

Examining Saudi Arabian university procedures for disabled students found no clear guidelines or procedural manuals documenting the process of enrolling disabled students. It should be noted that Omar’s family had provided him with a great deal of support in applying for university twice, especially as the one university which accepted him was in another city. This provides an example for families to support and encourage deaf students to face any educational and employment barriers they may face during their life journey. Additionally, analysis of participants’ responses revealed that many Saudi universities focus on the level of hearing impairment of deaf individuals as a reason for rejection. Sami is an example who was found to be dissatisfied, as many universities rejected him due to his hearing impairment:

“Many universities rejected my application only due to my hearing limitation. I am sure that their decision was influenced by this”.

The above quotation showed that universities mostly discriminated against deaf students through rejecting their applications. Society also stigmatises deaf people, viewing their capabilities as weak. These discriminatory attitudes conflict with the Islamic social model's principles which confirm that we are all equal regardless of impairment, and therefore the community should work to meet the needs of each member. It can be argued that universities did not consider the Islamic social model of disability which focuses on the provision of equal opportunities and reasonable accommodation. The absence of this model hinders the availability of guidelines and action plans that support deaf students' access to accommodations and which generate an inclusive educational environment.

The absence of regulation also left the acceptance decision to the discretions of Faculty Deans. This makes it arbitrary instead of having systemic rules that guarantee support for disabled students in their higher education journey. Latifah stated that she was not able to join the university due to:

“The absence of accommodation requirements is the reason for excluding deaf students from universities... If the Saudi universities prepare the academic environment for us, we can study with other students”

It is positive that Latifah was aware of the social model of disability and the importance of removing barriers as a means to achieve equal opportunities in higher education. She is also aware of deaf students' limited access to Saudi universities, and the reasons for segregation and/or rejection which include an inaccessible academic environment. This research observed that removal of the variety of barriers through the provision of reasonable accommodations and assessment does not yet exist in the majority of higher education institutions. Evidence shows

that most universities reject deaf students for reasons related to their impairment, or to their lack of academic skills such as writing.

Two participants who managed to finish their bachelors' degrees shared their experiences. The first is Mohammad, who was happy to be accepted at university with proof of his impairment:

“I was able to join one of the Saudi universities that accepts deaf students... They asked me to provide a report that describes the level of my hearing impairment... I got accepted without any exam”.

This quotation reopens the discussion about the absence of university policy and procedures to admit deaf students. As a result, it is left to the discretions of the Deans and managers to accept or reject disabled people's applications. Some of the research participants had been asked to complete written exams and provide other documents to prove their hearing impairment, while others were accepted without any regulations or procedures. These arbitrary decisions raise questions about the reasons for a lack of acceptance procedures for deaf students, despite the country's ratification of the UNCRPD, and the national policy that confirms disabled students' right to receive equivalent and decent higher education. Salma also got accepted without restrictions, and said that:

“The university has accepted me without any restrictions... they just requested a medical certificate to prove my hearing impairment but no other requirements, documents, or test.”

While it is positive that these two students were able to study at universities in different cities, some participants who got accepted in Saudi universities found that they were able to study in only very few departments and not according to their choices. As stated in the literature review (Chapter Three), Saudi universities approve deaf students to study in three main fields, these

are special education, art education, or physical education (Alajlan, 2017). It is important to note that their certificates are not considered while applying to teach at public or private schools, and this will be discussed further in Chapter Six (see underemployment).

Analysing accommodations provided to deaf undergraduates revealed that they were limited, which is unfortunately similar to pre-university education. Deaf students require support to receive and communicate information to and from non-disabled people. This can be achieved through the presence of translators who interpret for them, allowing deaf students adequate access to information and encouraging better communication interactions with non-disabled people. According to Napier and Barker, (2004) deaf students who mainstream into universities often need to be supported by having interpreters and note takers. On a related matter, universities tend to spend little money resulting in weak resources to support deaf students. For example, Ammar's college did not provide a specialization in sign language and other accommodations needs:

“The department did not provide sign language interpretation during lectures or any other support ... we are three deaf students who struggled to receive lecture information like others”

Analysing this shows that there are a variety of barriers faced by deaf students inside universities. One of them is already highlighted in the above quotation, namely ignoring their accommodations needs during the lectures. Despite the presence of more than one deaf student in the same lectures, the college did not consider their accommodations needs. Accepting deaf students into universities should have a clear policy in terms of providing assistive technologies or other services to support their inclusion. A study by Alkharji (2010) confirmed that the staff members recognised the existence of some barriers during lectures, such as a failure to equip

classrooms to address the accommodations needs of deaf undergraduates. Due to limited time, this research was not able to interview Saudi Arabian universities' staff, but Omar (2008) pointed out that these barriers could be linked to the adverse outlooks of the university society, and the limited expectations of the faculty members which are seen as severe impediments to the student's ability to study equally like others. These negative attitudes and low expectations affect the way in which teachers instruct deaf students, and they may give them low priority or not assess their papers and exams in equivalent manner; this, in turn, leaves deaf students with an unfair evaluation in their exams. In research set in the UK, Kim and Lee (2016, p.41) define the availing of reasonable accommodations as one of "...the most critical tools to facilitate learning for disabled students in higher education". The study defines reasonable accommodation as the essential adjustments in terms of programs, learning and physical characteristics that lead to equality in access to higher education for disabled students (Barnard-Brak et al. 2010). A variety of actions have been taken to make institutions of higher learning more accessible for disabled students, including measures to increasingly be committed to inclusivity (Barnes, 2007). In responding to the existing policies and laws, most institutions of higher learning have created offices that support the learning needs of disabled students and have further assimilated the use of novel technological innovations to elevate the utility of inclusivity in educational practices. Ali shared his experiences with providing sign language interpretation, saying that:

"The interpreter was often absent, I felt that deaf students were not important in the university, our department did not pay attention to our accommodations"

This is an example of the many participants who repeatedly shared that the universities do not offer reasonable accommodations. The recommendations section of this thesis suggests various

actions to support higher education's inclusive environment. But this finding shows university policies, regulations and plans are not aware of the Islamic social model of disability. Also, they do not know enough about global disability discourses (UNCRPD), and therefore do not view responding to deaf students' reasonable accommodations as a must. One of the solutions that Sara put forward is for universities to provide funding for an Arabic Sign language interpreter, saying that:

“Having a Sign language interpreter is very important at the university. The Sign language interpreter is so important to understand the lesson, the lecture”.

Having an experienced sign language interpreter who has some knowledge of the translated subject is very important (Gal, 2015). It supports deaf students to engage with the lectures and fully understand the subject matter. Their role is essential to lead the communication, opening space and discussion between deaf students, lecturers and their colleagues.

Saleh argued that their ability to achieve the same level of university education as others is practical evidence of their ability to be mainstreamed within employment and other fields within the community:

“If deaf people have an equal education as non-disabled people, this will enhance their position in work activities and other social settings”.

It is possible, for example, to provide support to students with disability through disability units or support services. Staff located in the units or services would be accountable to request and provide support, including reasonable accommodations and services. Donohue and Bornman (2014) state that documents to verify, ensuring that accommodations can be delivered, as well as liaison with the wider faculty in order to deliver support, are vital in order to retain students

in higher education. Salma struggled with the interpreter during her lectures, and as an alternative she decided to study with her deaf colleagues to help her understand the lectures:

“The only problem I faced was some of the interpreters were not professional enough to teach us. We are more than 7 deaf students and we relied on our non-disabled colleagues to help us”.

This example shows the poor quality and unavailability of sign language interpreters which forced deaf students to rely on their peers. While this is a positive step forward to compensate for the poor accommodations, deaf students mostly will feel that their peers are not as proficiently trained as working sign language interpreters, and therefore not as skilled in accurately and efficiently sharing information. It is important that universities undertake arrangements and preparation to bring about success in inclusion for deaf students. For example, conventional instructors and administrators should acquire in-service training about the modifications that should be made to facilitate access to all disabled students, and that the syllabus should be adjusted to mirror the needs of deaf learners (AlAmri, 2009). Universities that accept deaf students must provide reasonable accommodations to be mainstreamed in their lectures and university campus. Deaf students need some intervention to enable them to access the information delivered verbally during lectures: for example, sign language interpreters, extra tutorials, and provision of note takers. More solutions and recommendation will be discussed in Chapter Seven. In the case of hiring interpreters, they should be specialists who have advanced proficiency in language skills (Viera and Stauffer, 2000).

Overall, deaf participants reported that they lacked access to sign language interpreters as part of universities' reasonable accommodations. They perceived the quality of services as poor. The research participants were, in the main, unaware of any institutional accommodation.

While two of the participants knew of the existence of such policies, they did not know where to access them and had, therefore, not been able to read them. It could be that institutional policies relating to deaf students are not disseminated to either incoming deaf students or to their lecturers. It also seems to be the case that the material was not publicly available on the higher education institution's website.

Decreasing the academic qualifications required by deaf people when applying for vacancies is the first steps taken by the country to overcome the barriers of poor education discussed above. There have been consultative talks between the public entities and employers in attempt to guarantee that the basic academic qualifications needed by people with impairments are lowered in order to accommodate the quality of education that they have received (i.e., also reflecting their lack of opportunity) (Al-nahdi,2013). However, one undesirable effect of this decision on the minimum academic qualifications for deaf people may be that there is a reduction in the need for them to acquire a higher education, potentially disadvantaging them further. This is confirmed by Swail and Williams (2005) who confirm that higher education increases the opportunities for better jobs, better lifestyles, and enhanced economic status. However, since only a small proportion of deaf participants in this research enrolled in higher education programs, they subsequently faced challenges in finding employment. As mentioned above, the Saudi government, through the Ministry of Education, has provided vocational and technical programs to help deaf students access work. This provision of vocational education and training programs by the Saudi government is beneficial to the future employees, preparing them for employment opportunities (Alshahrani, 2014). However, these vocational training programs may not meet the market's demands.

The next sub-section discusses the third set of barriers that the research participants faced, including examples of discrimination, during their journey to employment.

5.4 Barriers at Job Interview

The previous sections have examined deaf people's experiences in education and higher education to learn about the barriers they face. This section continues this journey through examining their experience in accessing jobs, including the application process. However, it is important to mention that not all the participants undertook job interviews, as some of them were employed without this requirement. Therefore, this section will only focus on deaf participants who had experiences with job interviews to learn about any barriers faced during the interview process, and whether their impairments affected the decision of employers regarding their employment.

It considers the specific difficulties they face due to their weak qualifications and skills and builds on the consideration above about the reasons for this, including the failure of schools to support teachers in ensuring accessibility and inclusion. This section describes the interview process for those short-listed, as experienced by the participants in this study. It is important, for example, for individuals to discover whether accommodations (reasonable and otherwise) are to be provided to ensure equal opportunities in the interview situation. This also includes any associated tasks that may otherwise present themselves as barriers to success. Finally, attitudinal barriers and discrimination during this process by some institutions will also be investigated, again as reported by the interviewees.

The fundamental discrimination that deaf participants go through during the job search period is based on prejudices. For example, Sami completed vocational training courses which focused training on a specific subject, as he mentioned (computing). He was invited to a job interview according to his qualifications. However, the questioning of the capability of Sami excluded him from an administrative job opportunity at one of the Saudi universities:

“The managers that interviewed me said that they cannot employ me because my hearing impairment would limit my capacity to do the job. They think that I cannot do a demanding job because of my impairment”.

The above example illustrates that Sami faced discrimination during his first work interview due to the low expectation of his professional capabilities. It could be also that inability to meet his accommodations needs is the other reason for not being offered the position. The manager, assuming that Sami will not be able to do the job, did not describe what type of job he would undertake. One result of this discrimination is that the ability of disabled people is annulled and ignored by employers' perceptions of disability (Shier et al., 2009). Sami would have been able to perform this job eventually if the university had provided him with some reasonable accommodations, such as assigning an interpreter of sign language to facilitate communication with students and with his colleagues, but this was unfortunately not the case.

A study performed by the ESF SEQUAL project in 2004 found that getting a job based on the application process is one core difficulty facing deaf people on their job-seeking journey; they require sign language interpretation along with other support during interview (The University of Bristol, 2015). In terms of appraising applicants, large organisations judge the suitability of employees based on the information they provide in their application forms, aptitude tests and resumes. Conversely, the small and medium-sized entities (SMEs), select their employees based on the intuition of the employers, which is a more complicated process (Zabella, 2015). These methods of recruiting employees tend to propagate exclusion of disabled individuals, in particular of deaf workers, as they probably do not have the chance to follow the same route, and accommodations mostly are not available to equally support their engagement with this process. Ammar, a university graduate, talks about his job seeking process before getting employed:

“I applied for more than 15 companies, I have decided to only mention my hearing impairment to some of them. The ones that were aware of my impairment refused my application.”

This expresses his fear, and his decision to not clearly mention his impairment before being employed. He decided to exclusively mention his hearing impairment to some employers, but not others. Some of the companies rejected him due to his impairment, and others did not consider his work applications, which is seen as a form of discrimination. Hanley (2014) argues that despite the legislative measures and government policies for reducing discriminatory treatment against disabled people, they remain at a disadvantage when looking for employment. Hanley blames the discriminatory attitudes of employers. Noor shared a similar experience, as the employer was not enthusiastic to continue interviewing her, despite solutions that she provided to help her perform the job’s duties. She said that:

“During the interview they wonder how I will cope with my job requirements. I told them that I can use a computer and how I can do it, but the interview ends even before I can convince them.”

The observation shows that the predisposition by the employers cannot be fully eliminated, and deaf people are turned down having been labelled as having no capacity and being insufficient. Employers are integral participants in guaranteeing that workers with disabilities can find and maintain employment (Barnes & Mercer, 2005a). In most cases, these employers have divergent views on disabilities as well as the individual candidates, especially since those candidates have a poor workplace history (Shier et al., 2009). In general, employers who are experienced in working with disabled people have greater chances of finding a rationale to employ them, especially if they have had positive past experiences, than those who lack

experience in hiring such individuals (Morgan and Alexander, 2005). This is found with one case in this research, Abdullah, who said that:

“I did the interview and the manager told me that there are three other deaf employees working with him and he accepts me as a new deaf employee in this company.”

However, several past studies have concluded that numerous employers hold adverse attitudes towards employees with disabilities (Scheid, 2005) based on concerns linked to the costs of accommodating their needs, as well as concerns about legal liabilities. Or it could be that managers’ negative previous experiences with disabled people could affect hiring them. As a result, they avoid employing them and reject their applications. Saleh holds a bachelor’s degree and has been rejected and never invited to undertake a job interview. He illustrated that:

“They do not care of how successful you are, it is impossible for deaf people to go through the interview. They set their own criteria at the interviews and one of these criteria is not to have hearing impairment.”

The quotation above shows the existing prejudices which obstruct candidates’ applications because of their impairment. Employers are found to be also concerned about paying too much for making the work environment accessible for deaf persons, and this negatively influences their employment decisions (Vinzer and Roth, 2013). As explained in the literature review (Chapter Three), deaf people face several barriers when seeking work. According to Kadi (2018), the reasons for these include poor education (specifically reading and writing deficiency), difficulty communicating with their non-disabled peers, and discrimination during the selection process. As also mentioned in the literature review, McKinney and Swartz, (2021) claim that this prejudice will keep deaf people unemployed, making them reliant on their

families for financial support. They may also lose the interest to participate in community activities, believing that their capabilities are weak, and their skills are low. Together these affect their self-esteem, not being seen as an equal citizen and not being able to be independent. The job interview experience of Sara at a public institution is as follows:

“The institution booked an interview with me for 10 a.m. I waited until 12 noon. They read my CV and I mentioned my hearing impairment. the manager said that I was able to do the job. However, I was not employed as they said I did not meet their application criteria”.

This example shows employers’ unawareness of deaf people’s capabilities. They fear employing them and may reject their application based on their impairment rather than evaluating their qualifications. In contrast, some employers recognise the value of making their organizations more inclusive through providing deaf people with the required adaptations, such as sign language interpreters and other services. For example, Ali, who had three years’ work experience in one of the big institutions in Saudi Arabia, shared that:

“There were approximately five deaf co-workers, and my supervisor had a good knowledge of sign language. I found the interview very helpful. I even requested to have a family member with me to assist me with the interview”.

This is similar to the other two deaf employees who had received a positive experience during their job interviews. As Al-Asfour et al. (2017) argue, deaf people can achieve a career equal to non-disabled people if the work environment is suitable for them, especially if employers have responded to their needs by treating them equally as non-disabled employees. For example, preparing the interview questions in written form, and asking the candidate about their needs before the job interview, has been shown to have a positive outcome on

employment. Mohammad confirmed these barriers, which were mainly related to his interviews with companies. Holding a bachelor's degree, his experience with a male interviewer was as follows:

“He dealt with it very badly. He was like, have you applied for this job and not told us you have a hearing impairment? I said, ‘Well, look at my CV. That’s what you should be looking at’.”

Rather than assess and focus on the personal skills and capabilities of the deaf candidate, employers seemingly make their decisions based on their own personal definition of disability (less able to work due their impairment) and can ultimately determine not to hire individuals as a result. However, it seems that the research participant, Mohammad (above), had not mentioned his impairment in the application. This raises the question as to whether the job application form had included a section for the candidates to state their impairment and the required reasonable accommodation (and if it did, why Mohammad might prefer not to answer these questions – perhaps fearing discrimination). Mohammad's comment shows the pros and cons for deaf people of stating their impairment before the interview. Some found that stating their impairment before attending the interview went on to affect the panel's decision, which was discriminatory due to their impairment (Davidson, 2011). According to Mohammad, the reason for not saying anything was because he wanted to be measured according to his competence rather than his impairment.

Another participant did disclose her impaired hearing in her work application forms. It seemed like a reasonable assumption that if more people were honest about their hearing impairments, this would increase the support for requests (demand) and this improve the provision (supply), which could lead to changes in institutional culture. On the other hand, however, when deaf

people choose not to disclose, their access to support will remain limited as it will not be apparent to employers just how much this support is needed. In addition, their ‘voices’ would be silenced since they did not have the power to contribute to the development of policies and procedures related to disability. The overall effect of this is that awareness of deaf people will remain low which, moreover, leads to negligible effects on transformation of the organisational culture. Jodi disagrees with this behaviour, believing that it is important to be honest and state impairments upfront during the application process so that companies can make any reasonable workplace adaptations both during the interview and after starting work. It should be noted that the deaf participants did not seem confident in their ability to do tasks equally well as their non-disabled peers. Jodi argued for the need to be honest about impairments when applying for work, so that employers can know “what you can and cannot do”:

“It is very important to be honest from the beginning because they have to know about my impairment. They need to get to know you and your needs”.

Ammar agrees with Jodi, confirming that it is important for companies to ask a deaf person about the communication method before the interview, as this makes the interview more successful. Ideally, companies should have clear guidelines to accommodate deaf candidates during interviews. The bulk of the research participants stressed the importance of understanding the need for sign language interpreters in the workplace. Ammar, for example, has been rejected after an interview due to the communication barriers and his needs not having been addressed. He said that his requirement for a sign language interpreter was not taken into consideration, but he suggested that they can use other methods:

“In the case of unavailability of language interpreter, there are other methods can make the work interview accessible. For example, I can invite one of my family to support me during the interview.”

In 2017, Saudi Arabia built a business disability network call “Qaderoon”. Khalid Sindi, Executive Manager of the Qaderoon Network, emphasizes that the organisation is moving forward with the implementation of the Saudi National Vision (SNV) 2030 which aims to guarantee suitable opportunities for employment and education for disabled people, as a way of ensuring their independence and active participation within the society (Saudi Vision, 2021). This is to be achieved by offering guidance advice, training, and best practice to enable employers to hire, retain and include all employees with disability in the workplace, through inclusive work environments and favourable policies. Their resources ought to be particularly helpful for human resources managers and recruitment officers, with employers now required by law to make reasonable accommodations. Good practice relating to the needs of deaf people are explained, with examples provided as to how employers can make interviews accessible. To encourage additional people with deafness to apply for work, managers could clearly state on application forms that they offer accessible interviews for deaf candidates.

5.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has built on the overview of literature presented above by considering the barriers to education and employment as experienced by the participants in this research. Amongst the findings is that there was an absence of reasonable accommodations made to ensure the inclusion of the participants. In addition, staff were arguably not qualified due to school management failures. The failure to provide sign language interpreters, alongside other deficiencies in accessible communication, added to the barriers. This chapter has detailed the

limitations of the educational experience of many deaf people, but these constraints also affect their employment journey. The stereotypes associated with deaf students is prevalent amongst employers and can impact upon their consideration of other attributes, such as skills and qualifications. The next chapter will present the barriers faced by deaf participants after being employed. Also, solutions and recommendations to overcome these barriers will be discussed.

6 Chapter Six: The Post-Employment Experiences of deaf People - Barriers and Proposed Solutions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the barriers facing deaf people within their work environment. It considers individuals who have secured employment following successful interviews and were now settling into work. Considering the journey into employments gives us a clear picture of experiences both before and after securing a job. The participants interviewed within this research were at different stages of their employment (i.e., they had been employed for differing periods of time) and this provides an insight into their experiences from the period immediately following interview through the probation period, and beyond. This offers an opportunity to see if, perhaps, a longer period of employment results in greater levels of trust being shown by the employer, alongside greater support for the deaf employee via necessary tools which can ultimately enhance performance and achievement.

This chapter will be divided into Six sections. The first provides the contextual experience of deaf employees in the Saudi labour market. Secondly, the chapter will look at deaf people's underemployment, since it is a major challenge mentioned. This section is divided into two sub-sections: working below their level of qualifications and skills, and salary and promotion. The third section addresses the additional barriers faced by deaf women when it comes to equal access to employment. Moving on, the chapter will examine the theme of communication barriers that are faced by deaf employees. The fifth section will complete this picture through engaging with other barriers, such as the negative attitudes and low expectations that deaf employees' encounter. Finally, the last section of this chapter will draw upon the preceding

analysis by summarising recommendations to support deaf people to have decent, inclusive and equal access to the labour market in Saudi Arabia.

6.2 Experiencing of Working as A Deaf Employee

The first three months of employment were described by the respondents as the most difficult period, as they make additional efforts to orientate themselves to the work environment. While it might be hoped that employers would provide them with the requested (accessible) equipment and support, as well as changing some of the work procedures to empower them in achieving their tasks, this is not always the case, as was discussed by the participants in this research. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the degree to which companies provide speedy accommodations to individual needs is a key element in the level of accessibility and inclusion provided for such employees.

In order to consider a candidate's/employee's journey through the employment process in Saudi Arabia, this chapter analyses four main elements that indicate the degree to which an accessible and inclusive work environment has been provided. These are: underemployment, deaf women's experiences, communication barriers, and 'other barriers' (the latter to be determined after analysis of the participants' comments). The chapter addresses these elements in terms of both barriers and solutions, and ensures the voice of deaf candidates is included throughout. This research relies upon the generated data to understand their perspective on the solutions that may limit the challenges faced following their acceptance of any employment role.

The findings from the research reveal that the majority of deaf participants were found to have been offered low-level positions, regardless of their educational achievements. Even when offered positions which were equivalent to their qualifications, they still received lower pay

when compared to non-disabled colleagues. Furthermore, the negative cultural attitudes towards deaf women have a greater influence on their chances of employment. There is multiple discrimination and oppression due to gender as well as impairment. As a result, employers may judge individuals who fall into these two categories as less capable, unqualified, and possibly requiring expensive workplace accommodation. Companies' communication strategies and budgets do not extend to providing accommodations such as sign language interpreters. This impacts upon deaf people both socially and professionally. Absence of sign language interpretation and transcription of meeting discussions, for example, affected deaf employees' ability to become involved in the workplace. This leads to a sense of isolation and may explain why deaf people prefer to sit with deaf colleagues.

6.3 Underemployment

Disabled people face disadvantages in the way they participate in the job market through underemployment, which refers to – "...poorly paid, low-skilled, low-status jobs which are both unrewarding and undemanding" (Barnes,1991, p.65). The objective of this section is to investigate forms of underemployment that faced deaf participants. In doing so, this topic will be tackled from two angles: working below qualification-level and salary and annual promotion.

Among several definitions of underemployment, Walker (1982), for example, sees it as happening when disabled people attain a job that is beneath the level of their qualifications. Other definitions of underemployment consider lack of progress in their careers, as well as limited utilisation of the skills and training of disabled people once they get employed (ILO, 2019). Disabled women, for example, are overly concentrated in repetitive clerical and personal service work and concentrated in the increasing number of workers involved in remote

working— be it due to the lack of access to transport, or challenges in getting flexible working hours. Even in instances where the employers take advantage of emergent technologies, they still perpetuate exclusion and discrimination, since these jobs involve social isolation and poor pay (Jolly, 2000).

According to Alkhouli (2015), workplace environment as well as the attitudes of the society towards disabled people in Saudi Arabia impact the extent to which they are underemployed. The study reveals that the lack of effectiveness in the prevailing policies on facilitating the employment of disabled people leads to low job expectations and this is seen as one reason for underemployment. Metcalf (2009) examines the reasons for underemployment, finding that deaf people are more likely to work part-time or work in jobs below the level of their qualifications. Beatty et al. (2017) and Jones (2007) further consider the reasons for underemployment. They determine that deaf people continue to be underemployed, which is not entirely related to a lack of opportunities but may be also due to the perceptions of deaf individuals and discrimination existing in the workplace.

6.3.1 Working Below Qualification-Level

The first form of underemployment that deaf participants experienced was working below the level of their qualifications and skills. This occurs when employers seem reluctant to offer deaf employees jobs that match their educational qualifications and skills (Lee, 2013). This is disappointing, as the employee would not be able to apply what has been learned and consequently would be deprived of the opportunity to develop their skills. In 2014, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) in Saudi Arabia declared it had drawn up guidelines that guaranteed disabled employees got benefits equal to those enjoyed by non-disabled employees (Saudi Gazette, 2014). The policy further states that disabled people's impairments shouldn't be the main

reason to deny workplace advantages, such as job offers, promotions, or opportunities for professional development within institutions (Ministerial Order No. 1982, 06/28/1437 corresponding to April 7th, 2016). Despite policies protecting the employment rights for deaf people with no discrimination based on impairments, some governmental institutions still refuse to employ deaf people in accordance with their qualifications. Instead, they provide them with lower status/paid jobs or employment opportunities. Two of the research participants mentioned some of the reasons they are working below their qualification level; this will be discussed before moving to the second form of underemployment.

The education field is a specific example where disabled candidates are at a disadvantage, despite their experience and skills. The majority of teachers who teach deaf students are non-disabled teachers. In other words, deaf people do not have the same opportunities to teach in Saudi Arabia as non-disabled people (Alomary, 2013). Three of the participants were excluded from practicing their teaching skills. Sara shared her experience of being excluded from opportunities and her inability to practice her teaching skills. She talked about this in detail,

“After graduating from high school and gaining a bachelor’s degree in special education, I couldn’t be a teacher like other non-impaired people. I wanted to be a teacher, but that wasn’t an option for me”.

Sara did not specify the reasons for this rejection; however, this is seen as an example of the discrimination faced by deaf employees when it comes to job opportunities as discussed above. The quotation above demonstrated that Sara does not have the opportunity to practice her teaching skills in the same way as non-disabled people. It could be due to her impairment or maybe her gender as a woman. It should be noted that there is no clear policy in place to address this issue. Alomary (2013) confirms that many Saudi deaf teachers travel to other Arab Peninsula countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to be employed as teachers

and have, indeed, found some success there. Alomary (2013), for example, states that the first deaf teacher employed outside of Saudi Arabia worked in Qatar. Alomary (2013) further suggests that such successful experiences beyond the country could be transferred into the Saudi Arabian workplace and context, adding to the knowledge relating to disability within the Saudi Ministry of Education, and ultimately aiming to ensure that a greater number of deaf teachers are employed within the country (see the recommendations section for more details).

Another participant, Mohammad, had similar experience as he is not employed as a teacher in accordance with his area of specialisation. As a result, he found a job that is below the level of his teaching qualification:

“I graduated from art education, but I was not employed in the same field. I also work in a job that is below my qualification and skills which is not related at all to my background, and consequently I got paid less”.

Comparing the experiences of Mohammad and Sara reveals that both were rejected from teaching because of their impairments. This means that people with impairments encounter major barriers, regardless of their gender. This research highlighted many examples of qualified candidates who do not have the chance to work according to their qualifications. They were employed in lower-level jobs with poor salaries, and this dissatisfied them as they feel that they are not benefiting from their qualifications.

During the interview with Saleh, the research revealed that he had similar experiences as Mohammad and Sara:

“I cannot be a deaf teacher because of my hearing impairment ... I think if we teach deaf students it may fix the problem that deaf students faced with their hearing teachers.”

The consequences of this discrimination could include inefficient production, not being enthusiastic and eager to work, and as a result they will not be paid the salary that matches their educational qualifications. Even when applying to teach deaf students in segregated schools, employers usually refuse to recognise their certificates. Saleh suggests that it would be more professional if deaf teachers were assigned to teach deaf students. This would remove various barriers that face the latter. For example, it will provide them with more opportunities in universities, more qualified deaf teachers employed in mainstream schools, which will lead to inclusion.

The question would be about reasons for these rejections. Is it the associated stigma and the fact that employers usually refuse to employ deaf people in leadership positions? Or is it due to many practices which mean that despite these certificates the majority of deaf people are not able to be responsible for teaching deaf students? More research may be required to cover this issue. Mohammad also shared his experiences after getting his current job, stating that:

“My manager changed my position twice and all the tasks that I did were below my skills. I am always required do simple tasks for the whole day. For example, re-organise the files, scan, and printing papers... I think my (manager) believes that I cannot do the same job as my non-disabled colleagues because of my impairment.”

The above quotation is an example to show employers' lack of belief in deaf employees' qualifications and capabilities. Many participants shared that managers usually asked them to do simple tasks which are smaller and simpler in comparison to their qualification level, and not like their non-disabled colleagues who are working in same position. This quotation is in line with Hannon (2007), who stated that disabled people work below the level of their qualifications and are on the receiving end of low expectations from their managers. Also, a

Saudi researcher, Alkhouli (2015), argues that the societal attitudes towards disabled people in Saudi Arabia considerably influence their underemployment. She discusses the noteworthy link between lack of attention to requirements for access and underemployment and/or unemployment of disabled persons. Moreover, the higher costs of employing deaf people lead to their marginalization in the Saudi labour market. She also discusses employers' inaccurate perception that disabled employees are less productive than non-disabled employees. Alkhouli (2015) concludes that most jobs disabled employees obtained were below their qualifications and/or capabilities. Consequently, they could have low self-esteem, less confidence, and it may be that the community is not benefiting as much from their capabilities as it should.

The low expectation of deaf people's skills could be a reason for not employing them in an appropriate job. In this study, both Latifah and Fatimah were working below their qualification levels and were restricted to administrative tasks. They shared what seem to be similar reasons for this. Latifah has a computer degree, and, after a short period, her manager changed her position with the result that, at the point of being interviewed, she was fulfilling simple tasks to support a different department within the institution. She shared that:

“My manager always checks my work...She asks me to give my work to other colleagues which is I think is due to my impairment, usually because she disbelieves my capacity.”

This example illustrates that some managers' misunderstanding of disabled people's capabilities lead to them believe that, irrespective of their level of education, they are incapable of performing at work. It seems that their frustration in finding a job made them always happy with whatever role they secured, regardless of their employment status, duties and responsibilities of their employment status. The result is that they would be scared to ask their

managers for promotion, or to change their position to match their qualifications, as this may lead them to leave the jobs.

Fatimah also was upset as her manager viewed her ability as less than that of other employees, and did not acknowledge her skills and qualifications:

“My manager looks at me as less able and thinks that I am not able to do the work like my colleagues, all of which is due to my hearing impairment.”

This quotation is another example that confirmed employers' lack of belief in deaf people's capabilities, an issue that negatively influences their performance. This research found two examples of deaf candidates who usually blame their impairment for the failure to find a suitable job, rather than being angry about employers' attitudes and other barriers such as working below their qualification and skill levels. The solution might be to presents deaf employees' capabilities to managers and employers, to build evidence to prove deaf people's capabilities (see recommendation section for more details). Abdullah also shared his manager's and other colleagues' attitudes towards the work required of him, saying that:

They never trust my ability to work... all of the work that I had never requires effort, simple tasks do not fit my ability

This example parallels what Fatimah and Latifah have faced, as discussed in Chapter Three; many employers and co-workers don't have information on the needs of deaf people, including how to communicate with them, which could lead to denigration of their skills and capabilities. This is confirmed by Coffey et al., (2014), who argue that lack of knowledge of what deaf people can accomplish impacts upon the positions they are prepared to offer them (Coffey et al., 2014).

A study by Louvet et al., (2009) indicates that managers appraise deaf employees as more incompetent from a professional perspective as compared to the non-disabled employees. Turnbull and Stowe (2001) see this adverse perspective on disabled people as resulting from the different ways in which people perceive disability, their personal backgrounds, and also their understanding of the concepts. They claim that disabled people are often underemployed as a result of social discrimination which results in fewer opportunities for promotion and decision-making opportunities in employment. Employers' negative attitude is one of the major barriers faced by deaf employees, something which is difficult to remove without defending their rights. None of the participants complained to the MLSD about not receiving an equivalent salary to the other employees, although they understand that this is not fair.

It's been claimed that managers play a key role in the working in partnership with deaf employees to assist them to fully engage in the workplace (Migliore et al., 2010). Tomlin and Haring (2010) state that it is vital for employers to identify further ways in which disabled workers can be included within the work environment. Managers can profit from job-related training, as this may help them to develop more positive attitudes towards deaf employees' capabilities, ultimately resulting in higher levels of social involvement for all workers (Farris and Stancliffe, 2001). This will be discussed further in the solutions section of this chapter.

6.3.2 Salary and Promotion

The second form of underemployment this research found is that deaf participants gain less salary and no promotions at work. Most public policies have been planned to increase the employment outcomes for disabled people. For example, in line with the Royal Decrees that have been agreed upon by the Office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, disabled people, including deaf people, must receive fair treatment in the labour market in Saudi Arabia,

which means rewarding them equally to others, especially when it comes to promotions and salary (Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, 2000).

According to Kruse et al. (2017), employed deaf people earn less on average than non-disabled employees. Since they receive lower pay, this contributes to their limited socio-economic status and the inability to amass assets, which contributes to higher rates of poverty, both domestically and across the globe (OECD, 2010). This has been confirmed by Al-saif (2009), who states that disabled people in the country face unique forms of underemployment and discrimination despite the current existing laws that grant them rights. For example, they face barriers when it comes to monthly salary and annual promotion.

It is necessary to highlight that, when asked about salary and promotion, only 12 participants described their challenges, while others refrained to responding to such questions. This may be due to the sensitivity of this topic. People in Saudi Arabia may feel reserved/shy when discussing their salary challenges or financial needs in front of an external researcher, or just someone that they do not know.

Kruse et al. (2017) examine why disabled people, including deaf people, receive lower salaries. One of their potential explanations is that deaf people tend to achieve productivity levels that are lower than the company requires as a result of the variations in competency, training, and/or functional limitations. It is unfortunate that this was the case, despite the positive examples of many participants in this research who have demonstrated their manager's happiness with their performance and level of productivity. Ibrahim confirmed that, while he is doing similar work to the same efficient level as his colleagues, he does not receive the same salary and opportunities for annual promotion as other employees. He shared that:

“My colleagues and I have the same level of work and we have similar work experiences... but I have not received an equal salary or annual promotion since I have worked there”.

This quotation compares deaf persons and non-disabled persons, who have similar duties for their jobs and years of work experience. It shows that deaf workers are treated unequally in terms of salary and promotions. This could affect the social life of deaf person, for not being able to achieve the same living standards as non-disabled people. On a personal level, Dooley and Prause (2004) argue that a decline in income can reduce the workers' personal agency to plan and affect a healthy lifestyle, triggering other stressful life events such as separations or divorces. Furthermore, a worker's job insecurity can impact their perception and optimism about the future in general, and can potentially affect mental health, which are linked to the psychosocial functions of employment (Dooley and Prause, 2004). Thus, loss of status, time structuring and collective work towards a common purpose resulting from unemployment or underemployment can lead to mental health consequences. Ammar was not satisfied about the salary he receives every month:

“The salary I received is less than other employees. My manager does not pay me equally because they do not trust my abilities to do the job's tasks as [effectively as] other workers.”

This quotation shows the other reasons for salary and promotion challenges which are related to discrimination. For instance, evidence reveals that disabled people face dismissal, or denial of promotions just because of their impairments (Migliore et al, 2010). This discrimination negatively affects Ammar's ability to pursue his social life, not only in terms of being able to take care of his family, but also to have the financial resources to engage with different community activities. He may decide to engage in criminal activities, or to work in several

simple jobs at the same time, just to gain more money, to the detriment of developing his professional career. Saleh also get less salary and he felt that this is due his hearing impairment:

“I have worked in this company for more than five years, but my salary is still the same. I’m not happy as this was not the case for my colleagues who were offered promotion after two years of the work...I felt this is because I am a deaf person.”

This participant feels that his hearing impairment is the core reason for his lower salary and lack of promotion. Ali also offers similar reasons for not having a salary equal to that of other employees:

“Because of my hearing impairment I get less salary than normal workers. They think that I cannot be productive as other workers”

These examples show the influence of impairment on salary performance, as well as on the assigned tasks given to deaf employees. This is different to what is found by Jones and Sloane (2010), as they found no pay gaps for disabled people especially when the environment is prepared for them to perform like others. Meanwhile Longhi et al. (2012) finds that differences in compensation dissipate when workplace performance metrics are considered, such as the number of days of sickness leave, as well as whether the productivity of the individual is adversely affected by the impairment. The findings are understood to be indicators of the ability of the individual to work and be productive. This argument, however, does not suit deaf people as their impairment does not require frequent visits to hospitals or conducting periodical therapies which could be the case with other severe physical, mental and intellectual impairments.

Two of the research participants have suggested solutions to increase their salary and to protect their rights to promotion. Noor shared that:

“I have sent reports multiple times asking for a promotion, like the other employees, but I haven’t received any response.”

Ahmad said that:

“I tried to ask for promotion like other employees, but my manager ignored my request...this is not fair”.

Ahmad has been working for more than four years and neither he nor his other disabled colleagues received an annual promotion. Ahmad and Noor are the only participants who managed to ask for their rights to promotion, although ultimately their requests were not considered.

These results support findings from the literature discussed above of the lesser incomes offered to deaf workers are potentially associated with discriminatory treatment. A competing explanation for deaf people receiving lower salaries is that discrimination reduces their employment and earnings, primarily due to the prejudices by the employers, discrimination based on metrics, and the power balance due to the limitations in job mobility amongst disabled people as a minority group. Also, it could be that deaf people accept wage discrepancies for complimentary job characteristics, including flexible working conditions. Current evidence supports the productivity-oriented and discriminatory treatment explanations, based on comparison of different disabilities with the associated types of stigma, or comparisons of people who do, or fail to report any disabilities that limit their ability to work (Jones et al., 2007).

The next section interacts with gender inequality to learn about the degree to which it has affected deaf employees' opportunities at work.

6.4 Deaf Women's Work Experiences

This section explores deaf women's experience in the workplace, using examples from the primary data generated to show how the context of a male-dominated community, in addition to the stigma towards some groups, creates multiple oppressions for deaf women when attempting to gain equal access to the labour market. The section classifies these barriers into two dimensions; the first is to do with the stereotypical and family understanding of the role of women as home and domestic workers. The second relates to the employer perspective, which considers the employment of disabled women as leading to additional costs relating to financial and administrative facilities. Despite the sensitivity of the gender inequality discussion within the context of Saudi Arabia, this section aims to consider how these barriers may be overcome, further aiming to explore the measures already taken by employers to support the mainstreaming of disabled women.

The term 'multiple discrimination' is perceived as an all-encompassing ideology for diverse forms of unfair treatment rooted in more than one basis, whereas 'intersectional discrimination' denotes unfair treatment where the various rationales are not distinguishable (Lawson and Schiek, 2011).

The analysis of the concept of multiple discrimination from the perspective of access to employment denotes an emphasis on the structural interrelationships between gender and disability, thereby creating disparities in accessibility to key resources and jobs. Thus, the combined effect of gender and disability discrimination differs from what each might cause when considered separately. The adverse impacts of disadvantages facing women in the labour

market are further magnified by the introduction and combined interaction of the disability parameter. In other words, "...disabled women face penalties related to both their sex and impairment" (TUC, 2015, p.18).

There are often extensive and incorrect conventions that disabled women don't have to work, and that their families and relatives will provide financial security. Their key role is, therefore, seen to be within the households, since their ability to perform other duties is limited (Beleza, 2003). On many occasions disabled women are expected and motivated to work in 'traditional womanly jobs' or may be perceived as being unsuited for any form of work (Al-Asfour et al., 2017). Furthermore, in comparison with men, women have a five-fold chance of being inactive from an economic perspective, since they are seen as being limited to taking care of households (TUC, 2015). Research participant Jodi confirmed that her family view her primary role as staying at home; she stated that:

"My family believes that because I am a woman, I should stay at home...what makes it harder is that I am also deaf"

This illustrates the continuation of an unfair burden of responsibilities within households as faced by women. She has, however, managed to convince her family that she was able to work in the same way as other women in the workplace, saying that:

"I was able to convince my parents [that I should be an] independent woman and find a job that suits my hearing impairment".

Mona shared the challenges that she had faced on her journey to employment. These included the degree of support she received from her family:

“My family stopped me from moving from school to university as they thought it would be better for me to stay at home serving other family members. It is only after three years of this that I have managed to resume my higher education”.

Peter et al. (2018) found that most women from Saudi Arabia who had graduated from institutions of higher learning were then incapable of finding work. In 2015, around 68% of these women who hold post-secondary credentials did not have jobs, while over 33.8% of the women in Saudi Arabia were unemployed (Koyame-Marsh, 2017). The rate of labour participation of females in the country was 17.3%, amongst the lowest globally. Conversely, the only 5.3% of the male population is unemployed, with a rate of labour participation of 61.4% (Koyame-Marsh, 2017). There are also disparities in the participation of women in certain sectors, with most women concentrated in the education sector (77%), healthcare sector (11%), and administrative services (6%) (EPD, 2015). In terms of the education sector, one restriction presented to female employment was the fact that only female students could be taught. However, in more recent times, Saudi Arabia has moved to mixed gender education.

Recently, the Saudi government has taken several actions to open more opportunity to engage women in each and every job as long as they have the required skills. This was not previously the case, as women’s employment opportunities were restricted only to some fields such as education. In addition, the requirement for women to have permission and supervision from male guardians at work has been withdrawn. Saudi women are also currently allowed to work in other service sectors, such as hospitality, retail, and professions such as legal services. Like in learning environments, workplaces in the country are separated by gender, and the Saudi government enforced obligations on employment regarding, for example, distinct workspaces and also isolated access points for employees of either gender. Against this, however, Al-Asfour et al. (2017) observe that the government also now requires substantial paid maternity

leave, as well as privileges and obligations for childcare paid for by the employer. While these seem to be positive things that might encourage women themselves into the world of work, employers might well find them a costly disincentive to hiring them.

Analysing the above shows that there are many factors that influence deaf women's employment/lack of employment/underemployment. These are family constraints, community judgment, weak education, and employers' lack of belief in their capabilities. In Saudi communities, it is normal for men to offer protection and security for females. Even with these social norms that portray male relatives as being responsible for their families, they also have responsibilities towards women with disabilities. However, in reality most women, including those with disabilities, can take care of themselves, and can work if given the opportunity. Knabe et al., (2015) support the idea that disabled Saudi Arabian women are keen to attain independence from male dominance, through a diversity of ways, including employment.

In Saudi Arabia, the HR Director of a company dealing in consumer goods indicated that the organisation has invested in hiring disabled people. However, the proportion of disabled male employees is considerably higher than that of female employees with disabilities. He states that the firm hired four female employees with disabilities as compared to 80 males with disabilities (Alem, 2020). The reasons for these percentages are not clear, however, but it may be because the company had received more male job applications rather than female, or due to employer reluctance to employ more females suffering from deafness. Stamarski and Hing (2015) argue that if employers provide reasonable accommodation to their disabled employees, it would be easier for them to employ deaf women as it may not cost very much more.

Tlaiss (2013) argues that stereotypical social and culture norms also hinder women from accessing jobs. Consequently, this negatively influences their opportunity to access

professional training and promotions opportunities. Sara, for example, worked in a company with a female department, but her manager was male. She blames him for not believing in her work skills and stated that:

“My manager changed my position because he didn’t believe that I’m able to work like other employees...my manager always provides training for the male employees, and we have never attended any of them”.

The socio-cultural norms of Saudi Arabia generate values and beliefs which not only discourage disabled women from performing their tasks efficiently, but also influence the institutional structures and leadership, as well as the employers who hold beliefs that are fundamentally established around the perceptions that women have the primary role as homemakers (Elamin and Omair, 2010). These ideals aren’t easy to transform through government proclamations, and the attitudes of most employers towards giving opportunities to women are inconsistent with the emergent policies on labour norms in Saudi Arabia. The negative evaluation of deaf women’s capabilities often underpins employers’ underestimation of their skills, viewing them as low. Latifah shared her experience of not having a salary equal to that of disabled male employees. She said that:

“I am not satisfied with the salary that I obtain because someone with my work experience should receive more salary. This is not fair as the salary of my deaf male colleagues increased every year.”

In 2018, Saudi women were able to obtain a driving license for the first time, and it could be argued that these recent policies and other changes to community practices have helped to change the community’s attitudes towards women. Regardless of these problems and overall absence of chances, most women in Saudi Arabia have managed to access training and employment and have been able to rejoice in their accomplishments in the work environment.

The medical field is one example. According to Vidyasagar and Rea (2004), gender disparities and other inhibitions in Saudi Arabian communities do not interfere with the participation and progress of women as doctors. The country's 2030 vision obliges each public or private organisation to employ a women and disabled people, confirming their equal rights to access employment. An exploration of the recent literature found no evidence to confirm the degree to which deaf women have benefited from these positive developments towards more equality and inclusivity, which therefore adds to the uniqueness of this research.

Two participants confirmed that these developments positively impacted the community's perceptions of them. They stated that their voices and demands started to be recognised through various media channels and more rights and opportunities were offered, which had not been the case before. This poses the question of whether change was the result of the country's ratification of the UNCRPD and the development of its national policies, or the result of an increasingly inclusive 'atmosphere' within Saudi Arabia. According to the labour laws in Saudi Arabia, discriminatory treatment in the workplace of disabled males or females is not allowed. Royal Decree No. M/134 was provided in 27/11/1440 (July 30, 2019), to adjust a number of articles that are more precisely oriented towards the employment of women. Sara, for example, was happy about these developments saying that:

“Previously, the disability legislation was available but not implemented... We were not even given the chance to complain about any challenges to the implementation of these laws...but now I am able to attend any training courses for employees, and a sign language interpreter has been provided for me and other deaf women employees.”

Another, research participant, Nora, shared her experience, noting that her manager's attitude toward providing reasonable accommodations for her and other deaf women employees had

changed in recent times. According to her and other deaf colleagues, it is extremely important for them to share their voices for their demands to be recognised. She stated that:

“My manager’s attitude and support has totally changed. His consideration of my capabilities, as well as willingness to give me support, is much better now than in my first months of employment.”

Hamdan (2005), indicated that women in Saudi Arabia develop their personal novel strategies to overcome gender-based discrimination, and attain social fairness across all domains of life, such as in school and in the workplace. Fatimah’s strategy for example was to write a report as well as conducting a meeting with her manager to discuss the reasons behind her request. In other words, to convince him of her argument. She stated that:

“Me and the other deaf women employees recognised that if we remain silent [that] means that [we] are ok with it. This is why we started to ask for our needs [to be addressed] ... in my case I have discussed with my manager that I should receive my early promotion equally to my non-disabled colleagues. I have asked him why everyone is promoted except myself... and I got my demand with the coming salary.”

Stamarski and Hing (2015) argue that once companies invest in hiring their first female employee, it’s considerably simpler to hire other female employees. Based on the available data, when organisations offered work to women, they hired multiple women, rather than just one. This corresponds with the findings of this research as deaf employees confirmed that others were employed as a result of being hired themselves. Stamarski and Hing (2015) confirm the importance of understanding and addressing gender issues and how these have an impact on the employment of women. They argue that this is important when developing strategies to establish and enforce basic human rights, with a goal to remove the discriminatory barriers.

This is particularly useful when it comes to ending the marginalization of deaf women and empowering them economically.

The next section examines the level of communication between deaf employees, their managers, and their non-disabled colleagues.

6.5 Communication Barriers

Communication is integral in all facets of the workplace. The work environment is an integral determinant of how people in the organisation communicate. Various communication challenges are identified as the main causes of differences in rates of employment, and they play a key role in limiting the advancement of employees with deafness (Luft, 2000). This section reopens Chapter Four's discussion about communication and social barriers with a greater focus on deaf employees' post-employment journey. It demonstrates that deaf workers experience communication and social barriers when interacting with their co-workers, supervisors, and customers (Foster and MacLeod, 2003). Shuler et al. (2014) indicate that challenges in communication contribute significantly to the low rates of employment, and still emerge as a barrier in the turnover and promotion of employees with deafness. This section examines the experience of deaf employees while communicating with their managers, non-disabled and disabled colleagues, and their co-workers to understand the degree to which this has influenced the efficiency and productivity of deaf people at work.

According to Luft (2000), communication tends to be the most important tool through which people can intermingle with their co-workers and colleagues at work. Most of the suggested reasonable accommodations from participants could be linked with communication. The absence of text description, sign language interpretation, and accessible telephone equipment is a core part of communication.

Employers themselves also recognised communication skills as central factors when decisions on promotions are made in the workplace, with deaf people being viewed as facing obstacles in communicating with co-workers and superiors. Rosengreen and Saladin (2010), in exploring the views of graduates from the Australian College, found that all participants reported that they perceived communication as a major challenge in the workplace, with the absence of clarity in communication causing difficulties for them as they performed their roles, and met their expectations at work. The assertion is aligned with the study by Perkins-Dock et al. (2015), which involved participants from the US, and which determined that challenges in communication were the primary barrier in the workplace. There are several options for facilitating communication, including sign language, gestulation, written language, lip reading and measures to provide repetition for those who absorb knowledge more slowly. Most of the participants in Rosengreen and Saladin (2010) recognized these strategies as being key to effective communication.

Boutin (2010) reports that challenges in communication have an impact on social interactions, as they exclude deaf people from work activities. Similarly, a study by Al-Mousa et al. (2008) in Saudi Arabia found that deaf people faced increased barriers in the workplace due to communication problems with their non-disabled colleagues. They stated that the shortage of interpreters for sign language is one of the main barriers in work settings. Fears associated with the accommodation of employees with deafness is a key variable contributing to communication barriers. Although there is research that indicates that the provision of reasonable accommodations enabled employers to retain employees already engaged in the workplace, while also increasing their productivity, evidence reveals that these decisions involved financial implications (Solovieva et al., 2010).

The above implies that deaf people are failing to communicate and perform in the work environment due to mini practices, procedural, attitudinal, and financial barriers. Despite the country's ratification of the UNCRPD and declaration of national policies guaranteeing legal rights to deaf people when seeking employment, it appears that these have not yet been put into practice. According to Arab News (2012), employees can launch civil claims against employers who treat employees unfairly under the Civil Court established through the anti-discrimination laws in the country. However, these claims can be drawn-out and complex –, thereby leading disabled persons who have perfectly valid claims to prefer not to endure the stress and costs associated with the processes, considering that the outcome is not predictable. Therefore, deaf employees have been reluctant to complain, with one of this research's participants stating that this may lose him work. Saleh expressed that:

“I have a fear to request the needed accommodations for my work... I feel I may lose my job if I said so”.

Al-Jadid (2013) clarifies that Saudi Arabia has failed to pursue such legal frameworks and policies optimally. In his view, the lack of effectiveness in implementing these guidelines has led to the emergence of a gap in what the law provides, and what is achieved through application of those laws. The apparent result is the absence of provision of learning opportunity, and the consequent absence of opportunities for work for disabled people, including people suffering from deafness across both genders.

The second barrier to communication is that some companies' communication strategies do not include sections specifying the reasonable accommodations required to support communication preferences for deaf people at work. This was commented upon by most of the research participants. Ali, for example, commented that:

“Our accessibility and communication tools are not included within the communication strategy... this is why our needs are left behind.”

In addition, Sally added that:

“As a deaf worker, I need something to facilitate communications...my manager and other staff are not aware of my communication needs”.

According to Lempka, (2019), the adoption of appropriate communication strategies will establish productive mechanisms which can increase deaf people’s efficiency at work. The third communication barrier was found to be highly influenced by the absence of reasonable accommodations. The lack of sign language interpretation and note-taking, for example, were responsible for deaf employees’ inability to join work meetings, both internal and external. This research finds that 8 out of 22 participants were not able to attend internal work meetings, even though they were invited, due to the absence of sign language interpretation or subtitling during such meetings. Saleh found that he was not able to join his manager in business meetings as he was not able to communicate with his colleagues due to the absence of a sign language interpreter and other support services:

“I was invited to attend work meetings, but I did not attend because I will not understand them without any support services”.

A related barrier is that employers seem to prefer not to invite deaf employees to work meetings at all. This is the situation before the Pandemic period, according to Kruse et al., (2022). The COVID-19 pandemic led to a multitude of socio-economic challenges across the world, especially among disabled people. However, their study found that many disabled people benefit from remote work, and the pandemic has driven most employers to accept these novel work arrangements. For deaf people, the measures for physical distance under COVID-19 measures have a direct effect on social engagement, leading to increased loneliness, poor

employee welfare and limited physical activity. A case study in Scotland indicated that deaf people cannot hear online, and the companies do not have a budget for communication support (deafscotland, No date).

Despite several deaf people employed in the same company, Jodi has never been invited to attend work meetings due the absence of a sign language interpreter or other support needs:

“I’m never invited to attend formal meetings because there is no interpreter, and there are seven other deaf females working for the company. My manager was supposed to provide sign language interpreters or note-takers, but this was not done”.

The fact that the company which employed Jodi, alongside seven other deaf people, did not offer sign language interpretation or note-takers may be evidence of their limited belief in, and underestimation of, deaf people’s ability to perform equally to other employees. Whether this is due to additional financial cost, or to a lack of awareness of what reasonable accommodations may be required, is a question discussed later in this thesis. These reasonable accommodations are essential in order to mainstream deaf employees into the workplace (Haynes and Linden, 2012). One of the participants was unable to respond to her manager’s phone calls due to the absence of accessible equipment. Abeer stated that:

“I couldn’t answer my manager’s calls and instead relied on my colleagues to do so. This is my seventh year working for this company and I don’t have a speech to text telephone so that I can communicate with my manager independently. I have asked for this many times but got no response.”

This can easily affect communications between both parties. Difficulty with communication also impacts upon deaf people’s social interactions with their work colleagues and this is seen

as the fourth barrier in this section. Non-disabled people are commonly troubled or mortified when their hopes on how to communicate are not met (Scheetz, 2004). Deaf people realize that non-disabled colleagues may be uncomfortable communicating with them, which can cause feelings of isolation (Scheetz, 2004). One suggestion for easing the impact of such difficulties, and potentially also reducing isolation, is that non-disabled workers can consider alternative communication modes, such as emailing or use of text messages (Smith, 2020).

Failure of/lack of communication can lead to a lack of self-esteem and poor self-image. This can then affect the psychological health of a person. One research participant, Ali, for example, commented that:

“I am not enthusiastic to go to work every day as lack of communication between me and colleagues affected my productivity, they think I am absent because I am sick but not due to the absence of reasonable accommodation”.

Difficulties with communication can also result in deaf employees having poor relationships with their non-disabled colleagues. Omar, for example, shared that:

“I cannot have hearing friends because they did not know how to use sign language. I prefer to meet with my two deaf colleagues, but I can't as they work in a different department.”

The participant further expressed that, in his view, companies should offer the necessary accommodation for deaf people if they have made the decision to employ them. These larger perceptions relate to the structural and cultural barriers deaf employees may face. This is in line with Al-Mousa et al.'s (2008) research, which found that disabled people, including deaf people, face an increased number of obstacles at work due to their difficulty communicating with their colleagues. This research has found similar barriers with Omar, for example,

confirming that he prefers to work with other deaf people as it is easier for him. He clarified that this was the case in his previous job, where he worked with his deaf colleagues. Omar is one case amongst many participants who found more support and solidarity with their deaf co-workers than others.

The fifth communication barrier is at the professional level. Verbal communication is the most predominant form of communication in the workplace, for purposes of effectiveness in communication (Kooser, 2013). Participants identified communication difficulties in various situations and considered these to be the main barrier to the employment of deaf people. This is supported by Punch (2016). Additional demands for communication impose additional stress and functional obstacles on workers who face communication difficulties. Even when sign language alternatives are present, facilitated by translators, technological advancement and interpreters, the increased demands through active listening in a group setting can exhaust employees (Punch, 2016).

According to Rosengreen and Saladin, (2010), lack of communication was the core reason for the associated stigma between employers and deaf employees, it also affects the employer's perception and judgment about the level of task that can be given to deaf employees, regardless of their level of qualifications. It was frustrating, for example, for the deaf employees to be misunderstood and unable to engage in a smooth discussion. One research participant, Fahad, said that:

“Sometimes my manager gives me the sign of understanding, but I know she doesn't...I feel depressed when someone pretends to understand me when they don't”.

Another participant (Salma) said that:

“My manager avoids talking to me and we never have a conversation about anything”.

This discussion could be connected to the concept of psycho-emotional disablism, where attitudinal barriers and the associated stigma lead some people to feel threatened, or in other words scared, to communicate with their disabled colleagues (Reeve, 2012). This causes disabled people to have low self-esteem regarding their capabilities. The feeling of facing exclusion from the physical work environment is a reminder that the disabled employees differ from others, and the feeling can drive them to think and feel that they do not belong in public, as well as in private spaces (Reeve, 2004). The situation was found to be different when companies considered the provision of reasonable accommodation for deaf employees. This enhances communication between both parties and has a positive impact on employees' performance. Ebrahim, for example, shared that:

“I’ve a good relationship with my manager and don’t struggle to achieve my work duties”.

It appears that some individual features – for example, past working experience – have a positive effect on individuals' attitudes towards deaf people. This, therefore, can result in decreased discrimination (Unger, 2002). Ammar said that:

“My manager decided to give sign language training to all of my non-disabled colleagues which enhances the communication between us.”

Accessible communication facilitates face-to-face meetings between the employees and their supervisors. It also allows them to ask about the challenges that may hinder the fulfilment of their tasks and duties. This research has identified some positive examples, as mentioned above, of managers who had received training in sign language, which made them better able to communicate with two of the participants.

The next sub-section will consider other barriers that influence deaf candidates' engagement in the labour market.

6.6 Other Barriers

The previous sub-section has examined underemployment, gender inequality, and communication barriers in detail, as this research views them as core themes that impact upon the mainstreaming of deaf people in the labour market. There are, however, other barriers that affect their employment. The goal of this section is to assess the degree to which these hinder deaf participants' opportunities to access an inclusive work environment. It is worth noting that this section draws on deaf employees' perspectives regarding employers' reluctance to offer them decent employment. In pursuing this, the section also relies on the available literature to understand the perspective of employers in countries other than Saudi Arabia.

The perspective of the employer on disability tends to influence the unfair treatment of some employees, including the degree to which disabled people participate and are included in the workplace (McKinney and Swartz, 2021). Employers play a key role in relation to mainstreaming disabled people at work. Although the legislation in many countries forces them to employ deaf people, they still decide against hiring them. Besides a mutual absence of knowledge regarding disability, employers lack awareness of the needs of employees and lack information on what to do to accommodate them at work. Employers frequently state concerns about the process of accommodating employees with deafness, including the time and financial costs linked to the process. As opposed to what most people know as shown in existing literature, employers do not perceive deaf employees to as performing poorly, lacking in dedication, failing to turn up, or being unable to perform at par compared to the co-workers who are not disabled (Gustafsson et al., 2014; Kaye et al. 2011). Additionally, employers did

not display concern about the legality and financial implications of working with disabled employees. This suggests that employers are more concerned about having a workforce that is efficient and employees who are dedicated to their work.

As suggested by Wilson-Kovacs et al. (2008), prejudiced practices from employers adversely influence chances for work and promotions. Stam et al. (2013) found that deaf people took at least 12 months to land a job and tend to retire earlier than people without disabilities. The employer's attitudes, as well as those of supervisors and peers, have a direct impact on the experiences of disabled employees (Matthews, 2012). These prejudiced practices in the work environment present a major problem to inclusivity and advancement in careers, as well as chances to get promoted. Wordsworth (2003) discovered that prejudices and assumptions linked to unfair treatment have contributed to employers believing that disabled employees were not suited for their workplaces and the vacant positions. Similarly, as indicated by Barnes (2003), employers believe that most of the vacant positions in the organisations are not suited for employees with impairments. Sara, for instance, commented that:

“My manager changed my position because he didn't believe that I'm able to work like other non-disabled employees”.

Fahad also shared the same issue with his non-disabled colleagues, saying that:

“Since I work, the tasks that I do are always checked by non-disabled colleagues... they do not trust my ability to do the tasks.”

In the UK, the Disability Discrimination Act (HMSO, 1995) which was superseded in 2010 by the Equality Act, bans discrimination against disabled people in any aspect of employment. Under the Act, employers are required to make reasonable accommodations for workers with

impairments. Such adjustments include modifying the working environment, offering adapted equipment, and providing interpreters.

The absence of disability strategies to guarantee decent employment for disabled people within public and private sectors is also an issue in Saudi Arabia. According to Ríordáin (2015) the strategy for employment is an approach used by different governments to merge the actions from different institutions and government agencies in a combined effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on the employment of disabled people. It also seeks to ensure there will be combined services and assistance at the grass-roots levels for people as they transition into employment. Having a job implies independence in economic terms, inclusion in society, as well as fulfilment at a personal level. Therefore, a government strategy for employment of disabled people is important. Haynes and Linden (2012) argue that many employers do not know enough about strategies that foster the successful work performance of deaf employees. Other employers only offer a small number of accommodations for deaf workers, stating that it is too costly for them to invest in them. This is regardless of the fact that it does not comply with legal requirements.

Regardless of these requirements, employers are not obliged to invest money to provide reasonable accommodation for deaf employees (Houtenville and Kalargyrou, 2011). The interviewees in this study felt that the lack of such accommodations resulted in them being given simple tasks despite their qualifications.

Another mutual physical impediment stumbled upon relates to the telecommunication systems designed for deaf people. Employers could ensure the accessibility of a telephones with audio-visual features for deaf employees. This would provide visual signals, including a flashing light to make telephone communications easier (Smith, 2020). The below quotation expresses the

situation of a deaf person working as a teaching assistant. The class teacher was reluctant to provide her with complicated tasks and therefore did not invest time or accommodations to support her. Noor said:

“I work with hearing teachers, and I always struggle to keep to time because they won’t listen to my request to add a light alarm.”

Noor added that:

“I work in a shared room with three other hearing teachers. They speak very loudly, and I can’t focus if I have to work; I prefer to find a quiet place, or I take the work home with me”.

Yousef also shared the same issue, saying:

“I worked with other three deaf people in the same office, and we just need to work in a quiet place.”

This discussion could be linked to Saudis’ interpretation of the social model of disability as described in Chapter One. Employers seem to perceive disability as lying inside the person, limiting expectations of their capabilities as a result (Oliver, 2004). Barriers to employment appear when training opportunities are not made available to disabled workers (Balsler, 2002). Potentially, stereotypes based on the impairment and ‘job-fit’ can impede deaf employees from receiving training (i.e., they are deemed not to be suitable for training opportunities). Three of the research participants confirmed that had not been able to join any work training alongside their colleagues. Ali for example, shared that:

“The company that I worked with provide some training workshops for employees [but] I [was] never invited to attend them.”

It is unfortunate that deaf people face a high level of discrimination despite the ministerial decrees guaranteeing their equal employment rights. According to the existing Royal Decrees provided by the Office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Saudis with disabilities deserve fair treatment in the job market (Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, 2000). The decree provides for policies that seek to minimise discriminatory treatment towards disabled people in the workplace, including opportunities in training and hiring.

According to Al-saif (2009), legislation on disability in the country lacks effectiveness. In addition, the study finds that there is a lack of practicality in the enforcement mechanisms that seek to cater to the needs of disabled people. The study indicates that the rights of people are perceived as a form of charitable contribution, rather than upholding justice and ensuring the rights of individuals (Al-saif, 2009). According to Arab News (2012), it is possible for civil claims to be brought against employers who are perceived as practicing discriminatory activities against disabled people, within the Civil Court system in the country. However, lawsuits under these categories have a lengthy procedure and are often complicated, which may discourage disabled people who have valid claims from launching those claims, rather than endure a costly and stressful process whose outcome is unpredictable. Two of the research participants demonstrated that they have chosen to not request accommodations despite their awareness of it. For example, Yosef said that:

“I know that the company should pay for sign language equipment for me to be able to communicate with my colleagues, but I will not ask for it, as I do not want to lose my job”.

These participants feel that informal discussion between deaf employees and employers would be more productive and less likely to result in tensions. The company may, indeed, already have considered accommodations and the employee might have needs that have yet to be

considered but which the company are prepared to discuss. This absence of knowledge could be due to the lack of a participatory approach where employees are periodically asked about their needs. In some workplaces, there is still a prevailing culture impacting on individuals feeling uncomfortable raising their impairment needs. One research participant, Latifah, stated that:

“I do not feel comfortable when I ask for my needs as this will make them discriminate more about my impairment.”

Individuals may be viewed as less capable and may, therefore, miss promotions or even lose their jobs (O'Mahony, 2017). There are many examples where deaf people take the initiative to suggest reasonable accommodations and low-cost solutions to their managers. These include sign language volunteers, connecting with other organizations to fund assistive technology, and the provision of devices such as hearing aids. Ali mentioned that his non-disabled colleagues' job descriptions included some recognition of supporting him in his job. He emphasized that:

“My colleagues always support me if I need help to do my work... this makes my job more enjoyable.”

Part two of this chapter proposes solutions to overcome the above barriers. In doing so, it employs case studies from Saudi Arabia, in addition to best practices from other countries.

6.7 Solutions and Recommendations

This section builds on the underemployment, communication, and reasonable accommodation barriers identified above to offer solutions for deaf people. It makes use of the research participants' perspectives – for example, all participants offered two proposals to improve the current and prospective situation of disabled people in Saudi Arabia. Pedercen (2018) and

Bowes and Dar (2000) claim that the voice of users is integral in providing new perspectives on services and the development of provisions that are more suitable than those currently available.

The first recommendation is to change employers' and employees' appreciation of disability. The concept of disability should be introduced as a community challenge that must be addressed. It is unfortunate that the social model of disability seems not to be understood by the majority (19 out of 22) of my participants. Most of them blame their impairment as a reason for underemployment or not being promoted at work. Fahad, for example, said:

“Due to my hearing impairment, I cannot receive the same benefits as other people.”

Ali said that:

“The main reason for being less capable is my hearing impairment”

Three participants had a more positive understanding of disability, considering that the community has a responsibility to remove physical and environmental barriers. They were eager to provide solutions to overcome their challenges. Saleh said:

“From my perspective, looking at disability as incorporating factors outside us will help the community to change their attitude toward deaf people and other disabled people”.

Noor added that:

“Deaf people need [others] to fix the workplace for us and provide what we need”.

Developing employees' and employers' understanding about disability and its social model would help to eradicate the current associated stigma. On many occasions employers are not

aware of the processes for hiring people with an impairment, how to interrelate with them, how to deal with their issues daily, or how to confront their obstacles without appearing to be disrespectful. Consequently, they choose to evade these issues (Punch, 2016). This relates to one of the major concerns raised by participants: that there is limited cognizance of issues related to disability as well as a lack of thoughtfulness amongst communities and non-disabled people. The limited awareness and knowledge also imply the possibility of unwanted and discriminatory conduct. The provision of awareness training on deafness whereby and co-workers acquire better awareness and acquire appreciation of the effects of having impaired hearing is integral to the degree of success, and is positively associated with employee retention (Punch, 2016).

Reasonable accommodations are integral in successfully retaining employees suffering from deafness, boosting morale across the organisation, and shaping novel attitudes among all employees and superiors. This can then allow skill sets to come to the forefront (Shaw, 2013). Kooser (2013) suggests that the provision of hearing impairment awareness training for fellow employees motivates them to rely on the most appropriate strategies for communication, take responsibility for providing the necessary accommodations, and displays a willingness to achieve optimal productivity and efficiency at work. This was apparent from the interviewees in the current research. Reasonable accommodations avert employment barriers and allow deaf employees the chance to stop stereotypes by revealing how well they can perform, their competence and their proficiency at work (Shaw, 2013). Maryam recommended that:

“I would like to suggest that sign language training can be a solution... instead of having sign language interpreters in the institutions.”

Migliore et al. (2010) argue that employers are key players as they work in partnership with disabled people to ensure success in the workplace. It is imperative, therefore, for them to

identify additional approaches for inclusion of disabled employees. Employers benefit from job-related training since it creates more favourable outlooks towards disabled people and creates better levels of social interaction for all employees (Farris and Stancliffe, 2001). Comparing this literature with the research participants' responses revealed similar opinions. They have suggested conducting orientation workshops between managers, colleagues, and deaf employees so people can be introduced to each other and learn about each other's responsibilities. This should create a friendly and informal environment where employees can support each other, thereby creating an inclusive and accessible environment for everyone. Ammar recommended that:

“I highly recommended that [employees] establish courses for managers and non-disabled workers to change their view about deaf people”.

According to Bartram and Cavanagh (2019), these training workshops would contribute to positive changes to non-disabled people's attitudes toward deaf employees' ability to perform. Gradually, this then would break the stereotypes and stigma against them, influencing others to view them as productive employees. The disability awareness training will involve deaf persons, their colleagues, and the HR staff, thus initiating an overall awareness-raising process.

Employers can draw benefits from implementing programs for awareness on disability, through training, by focusing on how to make workplaces more accommodative of deaf employees. Training is vital since deaf people are an integral part of our population with numbers anticipated to increase (Smith, 2020). Introducing awareness on disability would better prepare administrators to offer impartial occupational access to deaf employees. This has the potential to contribute towards overall inclusion of employees, while getting rid of personal prejudices, stigmas, and helping in the professional attainment and retention of deaf employees (Smith, 2020).

The second recommendation is to remove the attitudinal barriers found within the employment sector. Adverse outlooks arising from myths lead to the belief that deaf people differ from and not comparable to their non-disabled colleagues (Snyman, 2009). These outlooks may be obscured, but they emphasize the dissimilarity among workmates, and thereby discourage deaf employees (Smit, 2012). These attitudes and insights emerge from the lack of appreciation of the circumstances, and they commonly propagate isolative work environments, with limited support for those who need it most (Baldrige and Swift, 2016). Thus, it is necessary for people in authority within the firms to participate in ongoing communication with deaf employees to ensure that their needs are being met.

Lu et al. (2018) explore the transformation in the explicit and implicit attitudes of viewers toward disabled people after they have seen evidence focusing on the real-life experiences of disabled people. This, therefore, exposes them to their perspectives and opinions about how they are treated. 53 undergraduate students were randomly classified into two separate groups: a control and experimental group. The experimentation started with the assessment of the explicit and the implicit attitudes of those under the control groups, with measurements for before and after three body-scan sessions. For the experimental group, similar measurements were taken for before and after seeing three videos. Based on the results, it is apparent that the explicit attitudes of the participants changed from negative to positive, while the implicit attitudes changed to negative under the experimental group. However, there were no variations in the attitudes under the control groups. The findings have novel implications for the use of person-centred videos to transform outlooks toward disabled people, especially in learning institutions and centres for rehabilitative counselling. One of the participants in this research (Sara) echoes this recommendation, saying that:

“We should rely on social media channels such as videos and Facebook to change disability understanding about what disability means.”

A Taiwanese study by Huang and Chen (2015) demonstrates that working environments and educational societies that accept and support disabled people correlate significantly with success in employment. The outlooks, thoughts and impressions, of non-disabled people regarding those with disabilities affect their success or lack thereof, in opportunities for employment. It also reveals that training in communication, as well as introduction to the specific population, can help in changing the problem in the long-term. A study conducted involving 71 students in graduate school concluded that most learners who had friends who faced mental health challenges displayed limited propensity to socially distance from these individuals, while also showing limited restrictions towards the population of disabled people (Covarrubius and Han, 2011). Such an approach might also benefit deaf people in the community. If people get to know deaf people, the personal connection changes the initial perception or judgment.

The third recommendation is to enhance the skills of disabled people to match the needs of employers' alongside making adaptations to the environment to suit deaf employees. One research participant, Ahmad, suggested that his manager should periodically ask deaf employees about capacity-building requirements. This should improve their capacities and make sure they are equipped with the necessary skills to pursue tasks on a par with their non-disabled colleagues. He said that:

“Employers should ask deaf employees about their requirements and talk to them [in the same way as] other employees.”

Ahmad also thinks that attitudinal barriers are the key reasons behind ignoring deaf employees or not considering them to be equivalent to other employees. He considers that it is crucial for

all persons to have favourable outlooks towards people with deafness. This argument is held by Al-Abdulwahab and Al-Gain (2003) who concurred with the assertion, discussing the importance of increasing knowledge about disability and considering awareness as an important factor in creating a positive attitude towards capabilities.

As discussed in the work-related barriers section (see Chapter Three), some of this research's participants may choose not to request accommodations or may not know what accommodations are available. Therefore, discussion with all staff members is seen as predominantly influential in bringing about change. This removes the onus from individuals, whilst adding to their confidence and productivity. It may also assist in them being promoted to higher levels (Wehman, 2011). There were some instances where interviewees felt that their employer was adhering to the best practice and establishing platforms to consult on change in the workplace, although there were more of exceptional cases. Jodi explained that:

I think it may help a lot if employers come and discuss with deaf employees if there is anything that can be changed and what type of accommodation is needed to feel more comfortable in the job.

Additionally, and according to Zolna et al. (2007), workstation accommodations are individualized solutions that enable disabled people, including deaf people, to fulfil work-related responsibilities, and achieve higher productivity. Employers have numerous options under this category of solutions, including measures to ensure that the workplace procedures are selected based on their accessibility to all employees, that there are alterations made to the work environment, and that assistive technologies are provided. Furthermore, workload modifications can be provided alongside a redeployment of tasks that are not critical to other workers. Thus, the implementation of workstation accommodations is a vital tool to increase the employment of disabled people. Four of the research participants mentioned the importance

of making the work environment [more] accessible for deaf employees. Latifah for example stated that:

“Deaf employees require some special accommodations to fulfil their tasks...changing the work environment will make it possible for them to do so”.

As discussed in the underemployment section (see 4.7 above), some of the participants found that their skills and qualifications were much weaker than those of their counterparts. They see this as the main reason for their failure to be promoted at work. This could be overcome through training and coaching. Six of the participants discussed that receiving job coaching for at least one month to help deaf employees become familiar with the work would be beneficial. Fahad, for example, suggested that:

“organisations [could] provide us with support in the first [few] months; this would help employers to know our accommodations and skills.... It would also ensure that we are as productive at work as others”.

According to Coleman et al. (2013), writing in the UK and employing a quantitative research method, disabled people are more likely to say they would be helped by a job coach than to ask for changes to their work area or modifications to be made to buildings and working procedures. Evidence recommends that this type of inventiveness can effectively assist people into a sustainable work situation (OECD, 2010). One research participant suggested that mainstreaming deaf employees as part of assessment and performance evaluation would be useful so that they can become aware of their areas for development and work on these to improve their performance. Latifah expressed that:

“Our managers should tell us about our weak skills compared to others and provide us with capacity building workshops to improve them”.

Companies should offer their employees information and tools on issues related to disability and employment. These include examples for best practice and guidance on subjects including legislation on disability, hiring, and the retention of employees with disabilities. They could also cover the management of disability in the workplace, rational accommodation/s, and accessibility. The other solution that could be utilized to support deaf people within Saudi Arabia is for employers to talk to their disabled employees to understand their accommodation needs. When it comes to providing reasonable accommodation in the workplace, it is best to adopt an individual approach. Each employee's needs will be different depending on their impairment and qualifications, and understanding these needs is integral to making the right adjustments in their office. This was found to be evident in this research, as two participants requested different tools within work meetings. Saleh said:

“Meetings should be transcribed so I can participate and understand.”

Others prefer to have sign language interpretation for them to interact with their non-disabled colleagues during meetings. The final recommendation is for companies to have clear policies and internal guidance relating to disability mainstreaming. In addition, deaf employees (and others) should be fully informed of such policies via training sessions. For the removal of barriers, it is necessary to establish clear and explicit policies. Legislative measures are not sufficient in achieving the necessary levels of equality in the workplace but are still necessary in establishing the guidance and structure for achieving such outcomes. However, due to the complications linked to policies and legislation, such as lack of civic knowledge, these measures fail to create a supportive working environment (Punch, 2016). When asked about internal policies, most of the research participants stated that their company did not share these with them. Jodi stated that:

“Communicating companies’ internal policy to us would ensure that we can work efficiently. It will also tell us more about our duties and rights”.

Majola and Dhunpath (2016) state that the lack of in-house policies has negative effects on the effectiveness of inclusion of disabled people. In support, Maja et al. (2011) suggest that the lack of such policies leads to lack of clear guidelines on how to handle any emergent challenges. van Staden (2011) posits that the absence of these in-house policies contributes to the emergence of workplaces that fail to prioritise the matters linked to disabled people. If policies are not developed at the workplace level, it is unlikely that disabled people will witness much progress. The solutions considered in this chapter are only applicable if policy makers, NGOs, and deaf people can work together to facilitate an inclusive employment environment. It should be noted that Saudi Arabia is currently embracing positive changes where policies acknowledge equal rights for the disabled in terms of education, health, employment, and other areas.

6.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has continued the exploration of deaf people’s journey to employment through interacting with their experiences and the barriers they faced following their employment. The chapter also presented some of their recommendations and solutions to overcome these barriers. These solutions were accompanied by a consideration of the literature and the practices from other countries. This supports a consideration of the procedures and guidelines that might be employed within Saudi Arabia. This chapter has clustered the barriers faced by the participants into four main dimensions: underemployment, gender equality, communication barriers and the other barriers that faced them on their route into employment. They have tried their best to overcome these discriminations by complaining to their managers, but seemingly

with limited success. Some of the participants in this research reported another level of discrimination as managers changed their positions only a matter of months following their employment.

7 Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

Recently, national policies in many countries, including Saudi Arabia, have given specific attention to disabled people's rights and demands. They have declared articles, ministerial decrees, and strategies to encourage the community to provide disabled people with equality in access to decent education, work, and other services in a mainstreaming manner. This research has focused on Saudi Arabia as a case study, demonstrating that, despite these policy developments, deaf people still face numerous challenges to live as productive citizens and enjoy equal access to their rights within their communities. The aim of the research was to investigate the disabling obstacles faced by deaf employees before and after their employment, and how these barriers can be overcome. This research has made use of the Islamic social model of disability as a vehicle to answer its questions, viewing that the removal of environmental and legislative barriers constitutes a way forward to ensure inclusive education and employment within Saudi Arabia.

Education: This thesis reveals that the majority of this research's participants preferred to study in segregated deaf schools due to multiple reasons. These include absence of reasonable accommodations, poor quality of school staff, and low quality of the educational curriculum and materials. Also, Saudi Arabia's application of inclusive education was found to be somewhat confusing, because public mainstream schools were found to mostly refuse acceptance of students with severe hearing impairment and, therefore, they have been restricted to deaf schools.

Examining the concept of inclusive education within Saudi Arabia found that it relies mainly on the idea of the self-contained classroom which it seen as only a partial application of the

concept of inclusive education. This segregation prevents deaf student from participating with others in academic studies and extra-curricular activities, and therefore losing the concept of inclusion despite studying within the same school with non-disabled peers. In general, deaf participants were not happy about the quality of education within Saudi Arabia, suggesting that it had a negative impact on deaf students' qualifications and skills, which leads to weak preparations to be engaged with the labour market.

The poor level of education attained by deaf students, which then results in teachers and others doubting their capability, further impacts upon their ultimate qualifications and capability to contest for opportunities in the job market. This is despite the government's efforts to offer vocational training programs. Poor quality education acts as a barrier to deaf individuals' access to high-level jobs, as these require exceptional technical and technological qualifications.

Job interview: deaf participants in this research faced difficulties during their journey to employment. When applying for work, the deaf candidates did not, at least according to their own recollections within the interviews, find a section on the job application form where they could state their impairment and what reasonable workplace adaptations they would require. Some of them preferred not to mention their impairment during the application process out of a fear that they would be rejected by the employer based on their impairment. Others preferred to state their impairment at an early stage so that the employer could prepare the necessary, reasonable workplace adaptations for them. Also, the interview process was also found not to be accessible for deaf people; examples of this include the absence of sign language interpretation.

Employment: moving to the barriers that were encountered by deaf participants during their employment, the research found that they are working below the level of their qualifications and receiving lower pay/fewer promotion opportunities. Most of the participants in this research were dissatisfied with the jobs they were offered as they did not match their educational qualifications. They feel they were obliged to accept whatever was available due to limited opportunities. Deaf people were also found to be dissatisfied due to the additional efforts required once in the job to convince their managers of their qualifications. Underemployment was also found to be influenced by managers' and companies' negative attitude towards impairment. This impacted upon decisions made about positions, monthly payments, and the number of tasks individuals could fulfil.

This research has engaged with the available literature and primary sources to understand the degree to which gender inequality stands as a barrier for deaf women to pursue careers on an equal basis to others. It should be noted that due to the sensitivity of this topic, there is not much in the way of gathered data from participants to support the purpose of this section. Therefore, the researcher does not consider this sample as representative and suggests that further research is required to consider in more depth the barriers facing disabled women.

Furthermore, this research has interacted with the varying effects on employees' performance and self-esteem that can result from poor communication. The primary and secondary data collated for this research has recognised the presence of a gap in how policies are transformed in practice in relation to accessing reasonable accommodations in the workplace. Companies' communication strategies arguably fail to mainstream deaf people. This impacts upon their work and leads to issues with communication that do not just affect managers and partners, but also social interaction with non-disabled colleagues. The latter can result in feelings of isolation.

Also, this study has presented several obstacles that hinder the inclusivity of deaf people when it comes to employment. They include employers' discriminatory practices, the absence of disability contents within company strategies, a lack of reasonable accommodation, and deaf people's perhaps understandable wariness regarding the disclosure of their impairment needs at such a vulnerable time. The eradication of these challenges will afford them a better environment in which they can more readily demonstrate their skills.

7.2 Original Contributions to Knowledge

In this section, I will identify the areas in which this research adds to the body of knowledge in this field. This research has contributed to several methodological and hypothetical areas concerning the experiences of deaf people in Saudi Arabia. The literature review identified gaps in terms of understanding the experiences of deaf people before and after their employment, and the current study helps to address the five main gaps identified. Firstly, a substantial amount of research in this field considers the barriers faced by deaf people due to their hearing impairment, exploring their experiences in the inclusive setting. However, this research looked at the barriers faced by deaf people due to the external factors such as society, negative attitudes and other factors. This research argues for the application of the Islamic social model of disability and the idea that removing barriers can hinder physical, cultural, and attitudinal barriers facing deaf people. Since the model and approach taken by this research are unique, using the Islamic social model of disability may open new research avenues as well as invite new scholars to write about different areas of disability in line with this model. Universities may also open departments to teach Disability Studies using these new approaches, as currently all modules rely on the individual model of disability and use of disablist language.

Secondly, much research in the fields of disability and deafness focuses on parents', teachers', and employers' views about barriers, revealing a need to understand the experiences of deaf people from their own perspective, and therefore the present study focused on deaf people's own perspectives. This research recognizes the importance of the deaf employees' perspectives, which is vital for ensuring success in the employment of deaf people and the provision of measures for support at work. Thirdly, in terms of an empirical contribution, this research has a qualitative nature as it attempts to offer in-depth insight into the barriers facing deaf people, situating these within Saudi Arabia and the global context. This knowledge is vital for organizations, disabled people and their relatives, policymakers, and the society in general. Identification of the factors determining the low workplace inclusion of disabled people helps in formulating suitable strategies for solving the problem. Fourthly, research has typically concentrated on the experiences of deaf people in terms of one aspect only, such as academic achievement or social participation, and very few pieces of research have looked at the experiences of deaf people before and after their employment, and therefore the present study does so from the perspectives of both academic and social aspects.

This research has further contributed to knowledge through its design and methods and can help future research in Saudi Arabia and other countries through its examination of the interpretive research framework, especially with regards to how to conduct research on Twitter (online platform) through Direct message, something that has not been used in previous research in Saudi Arabia.

In addition, this research contributes to knowledge through its findings, which cover the entire spectrum and complexity of the experiences of deaf people before and after their employment, and the factors that have influenced inclusion for them. This research has found that there are complex interrelationships between different aspects of barriers to inclusion (parents' attitudes

toward inclusion, inaccessible environment, lack of qualified teachers, lack of sign language interpreters and other support services, and low expectations), which affect deaf people's feelings of belonging in an inclusive setting.

In relation to contributions to policy, this research presents ideas for improvement and changes to policy around education, careers and disability. It also points to the need to improve the debate around disability, education and careers, seeking a purer and more broadly acknowledged rationale for the accommodation of deaf people in educational settings and the work environment. This is of consequence since it proposes that the existing policies' approach to disability and employment is insufficient due to the lack of acceptability by all the affected stakeholders. The suggestions within this research can enhance extant literature and establish more guidelines that are disability-specific and can be sanctioned by pertinent stakeholders to campaign for improved and better opportunities for deaf people. The next section benefits from the discussion relating to barriers to education, higher education and job interviews discussed in Chapters Five and Six, in order to provide solutions and recommendations. These recommendations not only rely on available literature resources, but also benefit from the research participants' suggestions, including suggested interventions, provided within their interviews.

This thesis has managed to uniquely combine the Islamic and the social models of disability, arguing that both include similar values and support the concepts of empowerment and inclusion. The Islamic social model of disability was found to be beneficial and supportive of the concept of inclusive employment, given the Islamic culture of the Saudi community rather, than relying only on the social model of disability.

Analysis of the various Quran verses and Hadeeth found that Islam was keen to empower, mainstream and call upon disabled people to play their roles within communities, as well as receiving their equal rights. It also fights all forms of bullying, discrimination and stigma that may happen due to impairments. This is found to be similar to the principles enshrined within the social model of disability. It rejects any form of discrimination and calls for the removal of attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers that hinder disabled people's ability to access their rights and services equally. this recommendation section therefore provides a set of guidance to support disability mainstreaming within education and inclusive employment, but with consideration for the Islamic social model of disability, as the researcher views it as a means to enhance disabled people's inclusion in the labour market.

7.3 Recommendations to overcome educational barriers

This section will be organised into four dimensions: policy, curriculum, support, and the inclusive classroom. The principle of inclusivity is designed to ensure access to learning for all students by reforming learning institutions to fit the needs of all students, making sure that the institutions support learning, and react to individual accommodations needs. Schoeman (2012) highlights that, from a practical perspective, the development of inclusive learning communities' entails accommodating the rights of all learners. This involves inculcating a sense of communal responsibility amongst all school professionals, changing organisational structures to encourage collective decision making and creative problem solving, and making the necessary changes in existing professional roles and school practices. To respond to the varied interests of all students, the current education system should be transformed from a system comprised of multiple settings into an inclusive system. The existence of

legislation/policies that support the implementation of inclusion is one factor that should be considered during the implementation of inclusion.

7.3.1 Policy

Policy can expedite the implementation of inclusion by offering guidance on, for example, the recommended number of classrooms and the capability of the instructors (Agbenyega, 2007). In Ghana, Gyimah et al. (2009) discovered that changes to policies are necessary to enable the implementation of inclusive practices. Chopra (2008) suggests that these policies must be structured in a manner that enables disabled learners to have access to conventional schools. In addition, Agbenyega (2007) argues that to make inclusive education work well, it should be developed separately from any other policy. Booth and Ainscow (2011, p.15) indicate that one of the pointers of inclusion is that "...the school ensures that policies about 'special educational needs' support inclusion."

Indeed, the under the domain of Disability Studies in Education, there is backing for inclusive treatment of all learners, which is integral in ensuring that all needs of learners are considered. Inclusion works by shifting the focus from the functional flaws of disability to the reassessment of the structures of the learning institution, thereby leading to reconfiguration of obstacles to education for disabled students (Collins and Ferri, 2016). In the UK, the model is commonly termed a 'big idea' (Hasler, 1993, p. 280), since it is an integral contribution to the awareness and appreciation of disability and the social and political movements of disabled people. It places the challenges linked to disability within the community, rather than on the individual (Oliver, 1990). The radical perspective contributes to social transformation and development of policies, not only in the UK, but across the world (Barnes and Mercer, 2005b).

The next section considers other factors that are important in facilitating the inclusion of deaf students, such as the curriculum itself.

7.3.2 Curriculum

Another factor that plays an important role in promoting and enhancing the inclusion of deaf students within the classroom is the curriculum. The development of a dynamic curriculum built around the learners rather than teachers is integral (Armstrong, 2016a). In addition, the use of peer techniques for instructors to supplement other methods of teaching provided the possibility for increased interdependence and inclusivity in the learning environment, specifically for learners (Murawski and Scott, 2017). Although these are not the only requirements, they form a key foundation for consideration and change. The interviewees in this study reflected upon the role of the curriculum in their own academic success, or otherwise, and this section reflects both upon the literature, as detailed in Chapter Two, and on their comments and observations building on their personal experience.

UNESCO (2000) suggest that most universal syllabi are offered in mainstream schools without considering the disparities between students. Also, in the Saudi context, Alsud (2009) reports that the syllabus that is offered for disabled students is not equivalent to their non-disabled peers. Furthermore, Alotaibi (2011) finds that some of the contents of the provided curricula for deaf students are unsuitable for their needs and do not adequately consider the differences among students.

Teachers, therefore, are presented with a challenge in providing a programme that is appropriate for all learners (Noble, 2004). The rigidity of the syllabus is part of the reason for the obstacles linked to implementation of inclusive measures (Peters, 2004). UNESCO (2000) emphasised that dynamicity and accessibility are important concepts when wishing to support

inclusion. Such flexibility would help teachers adapt the curriculum to the interests of all learners. On the same note, Booth and Ainscow (2011, p.15) observe that "...constructing curricula for all" is a variable associated with the evolution of inclusivity practices.

To guarantee availability to the universal syllabus for disabled learners in a similar manner as for non-disabled students, as well as to aid their academic progression, adjustment of the syllabus is necessary (Lee et al., 2008). Wehmeyer et al. (2001) propose a model that assists students with disabilities to get learning under the universal syllabus. The Curriculum Decision-Making Model is based on three types of modifications to the existing curricula. First, is curriculum adaptation, which is defined as the measures to adjust the presentation or representation of the syllabus, or modification of the engagement of the learners with the syllabus. Second, is curriculum augmentation, which is defined by Lee et al. (2008, p.92) as "...efforts to augment or expand the curriculum to include instruction on skills and strategies that help students succeed within the general education curriculum". Third is curriculum alteration, which is defined as "...the addition of content specific to a student's needs, including functional skills or life skills not found in the general curriculum" (Lee et al., 2008, p. 200). Normally, instructors apply these adaptations to help disabled learners to access the universal syllabus, thereby supporting the learners to meet their learning goals (Wehmeyer et al., 2001).

Similarly, UNESCO (2000) suggest the use of curriculum differentiation to manage the uniqueness of learners in conventional learning environments. The differentiation of curricula is framed around the notion that each learner participates in lessons designed to address their own level. This enables them to achieve notable results. It also entails the use of varied teaching approaches that meet the interests of all learners. UNESCO (2000) claim that the use of curriculum differentiation facilitates the reduction of the risks of learners failing to participate in learning environments, including lessons and other activities. It facilitates the reduction of

the need for placing some learners in different classrooms. In the same manner, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides flexibility within the syllabus to consider all students (Rapp, 2014). UDL is described as “a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn” (Rapp, 2014, 12).

According to Lieber et al. (2008), UDL provides specific principles for curriculum development that give disabled learners equal chances to learn in the general learning environment. More specifically, it offers an outline for developing suitable objectives, instructional, appraisal, and educational resources that reflect and take account of students' differences. In other words, a collectively planned syllabus is critical to develop a learning environment and learning practice that accommodates all scholars despite their personal differences and backgrounds (Lieber et al., 2008). The authors emphasize that the implementation of UDL has a positive impact on the academic achievement of disabled students, helps them to perform at higher standards and to gain access more successfully to the general education curriculum. The goal of Universal Design and its educational applications reflects the social model of disability in which inadequacies are not associated with the individuals, but with the environment. As a result, it is necessary to fix the society, to make it suitable for people to fit in, rather than vice versa (Oliver, 1990).

There are three Universal Design principles that are openly linked to access to the universal education syllabus (Rapp, 2014). First, instructors offer varied approaches for representation, where activities such as the learning, teaching and assessment activities are offered in unique ways and at varying levels (Lieber et al., 2008). Second, instructors offer varied approaches for expression, meaning that learners can utilise a multiplicity of approaches when responding to questions, or when presenting novel ideas and information. The last significant principle is provision of different forms of engagement, thereby enabling instructors to focus on the

attention, motivation and curiosity of each learner. This last principle is useful for teachers to learn more about the background, culture, and knowledge of the students, then apply that awareness to encourage them to engage in classroom activities and dialogues (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2013). In addition, to guarantee access to the universal syllabus for the disabled learners in a similar as for non-disabled learners, it is necessary to modify the curriculum, since students with disabilities achieve better academic progress when such modifications are made (Lee et al., 2008).

7.3.3 Inclusive Classrooms

One important pathway to increasing the mainstreaming of deaf people within the labour market and inclusive employment is the development of inclusive classrooms. Such classrooms provide an environment in which deaf learners can learn together with other students without the need for isolation. In this form of learning environment, opportunities for learning are improved, while obstacles are eliminated, and in turn, it guarantees optimal circumstances for deaf learners to achieve their potential. Armstrong (2016a) states that transformative strategies are employed that ensure equitability in access for students, despite their disabilities. Indeed, this approach to placing learners is viewed as a part of the rights for students with deafness, as opposed to it being an alternative. Furthermore, inclusive learning environments as part of educational placement have numerous advantages in socio-cultural and academic terms.

Beyond academic benefits, Marschark et al. (2015) indicate that students with deafness display significant enhancement due to inclusion in regular classrooms. Social contact and communication skills are improved by inclusivity. van Gent et al. (2012) claim that deaf students in inclusive learning environments are found to develop better social and emotional skills as compared to those who are isolated. The inclusion of deaf students in classrooms,

therefore, contributes towards refining their communication, socialisation, and interaction skills so they can adapt better to life after school, including in the workplace. Dudley-Marling and Burns (2014) confirm that deaf students who are assigned to learning environments acquire better abilities and competences in these activities as compared to those who are assigned to segregated classrooms.

Furthermore, in the changeover from elementary to secondary levels, Wolters et al. (2011) report that deaf students who study in inclusive environments record superior performance in social and interaction skills as compared to those who started out in separate classrooms. Moreover, by the time they reach high-school school level, most of the learners suffering from deafness prefer to be registered in inclusive classrooms (van Gent et al., 2012). This provides some indication that they, at least, may perceive that such classrooms address their needs (it does need to be noted, however, that there may be several other factors involved in this perception).

As discussed in Chapter Three, deaf students must acquire a diversity of additional skills, such as creativity, interpersonal skills, and interaction skills that improve their engagement with the society. An argument can be made that the best settings to acquire those skills is within inclusive classrooms with non-disabled peers (van Gent., 2012).

In the USA, Brock et al. (2016) recommend that improving the relationships between non-disabled students and disabled students and providing peer support are approaches that can facilitate the improvement in social contact in conventional schools. In addition, Carter et al. (2015), also in the USA, suggest the development of a plan for mutual support helps peers to interact effectively with learners with disabilities. Additional measures for increasing favourable links and outlooks towards disabled learners include offering training for non-

disabled learners. Alaisqih (2002) in Saudi Arabia suggests that the provision of an all-encompassing program for non-disabled students via talks and activities improves attitudes towards their disabled peers.

Having addressed the role of the inclusive classroom in informing the provisions needed to support learners with disabilities in education, the next section turns to the question of student support.

7.3.4 Support

Across the literature review, it is apparent that supporting teachers to implement inclusive strategies is necessary to ensure the success of the process (Gyimah et al., 2009). Furthermore, Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) noticed that most forms of assistance are integral determinants of success in inclusion. There are different types of support. This section will focus on physical and human support.

7.3.4.1 Physical Support

The term ‘physical support’ relates to the material resources assisting teachers in their teaching in inclusive classrooms. Across the literature review, it is apparent that supporting those who are willing to work in an inclusive manner is essential to ensure success in the process (Gyimah et al., 2009). Furthermore, the accessibility of educational materials is a key factor supporting the enhancement of lessons and lectures to accommodate deaf students. The use of educational materials is important in the inclusive classroom; thus, in Saudi Arabia, it is the role of the MoE to provide schools with such accessible materials. In addition, they could offer more in the way of financial resources for schools to employ sign language interpreters as well as to purchase required assistive tools.

Deaf students can also benefit from the Ministry of Education's effort to provide Saudi Arabian schools with modern technology such as assistive technology. Furthermore, as argued by Heckendorf (2004), one additional benefit for making such an investment is that the use of graphic technologies makes the lectures more attention-grabbing, not only for deaf students but also for their non-disabled peers.

It is necessary to consider other services to guarantee the successful inclusion of all deaf students in education. Heckendorf (2004) emphasizes the integral nature of assistance in taking notes for these learners, since they face challenges in watching the instructors and interpreters, as they take notes on what is being taught. There are different ways through which assistance to take notes is offered. Firstly, deaf students can be given printed copies of the lecture notes from a capable learner in the same classroom. Secondly, the student can use electronic options, whereby qualified teachers can who use computers or other portable word processors can provide summaries for the content of the lessons or lecturers. Thirdly, assistive technology, that converts the handwritten materials from the learners or instructors into computer generated text, may be used.

7.3.4.2 Human Support

Avramidis et al. (2000) state that human support means teachers obtaining support from specialists in order to assist them in implementing inclusion effectively. Additionally, human support is evident through the establishment of teams for support and cooperation among the members of staff. This could help to remove barriers to implementing inclusion (Ahmed et al., 2012; Chopra, 2008).

Several studies stress the integral nature of collaboration between teachers involved in general education, and those assigned to special education classes. Cooperation at work between the

two categories of teachers reflects positive aspects of inclusion (Haider (2008) and Allison (2012)). It also stimulates the development of mutual respect between teachers under the two domains, while also enabling teachers from the general category to participate in special education classes. Furthermore, Alquraini (2015) indicated that in Saudi Arabia, the cooperation between these two classes of instructors enables deaf learners to have access to the general syllabus.

In support, Stanovich and Jordan (2002) posit that the implementation of an inclusive curriculum is dependent on the actions of the instructors. This is because teachers are responsible for the management of the classroom, and because the learning opportunities themselves are facilitated by them. They are responsible for removing any obstacles that might impact on students' learning. This matches the views of the research participants, four of whom confirmed that headteachers and school staff should be trained about deaf students' needs and the importance of inclusive education for deaf students.

By perceiving inclusivity as a positive element, these teachers can promote the policy as being the right one for learners with deafness, thereby leading to various social and academic benefits (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007). In the context of Saudi Arabian learners, Alanazi (2012) reports that the positive outlook of some teachers regarding inclusion is evident from the Islamic perspective, which is based on the duty and responsibility to assist others who require support.

In contrast, the adverse perceptions of instructors towards inclusive learning for students with disabilities are attributed to the view that inclusion places these students in positions where they must work more than they are capable of, or than what is provided for. Furthermore, they may perceive the absence of clear guidelines on their (the teachers) roles within the inclusive setting as a justification (Gaad and Khan, 2007). There may, for example, have been a lack of

teacher training at university, and this may result in a lack of confidence among the teachers regarding their ability and knowledge to support deaf students in inclusive settings.

To help teachers, Aldabas (2015) stresses the importance of incorporating modules that focus on the preparation for teaching disabled students. This will ensure that they are familiar with supportive approaches. In addition, Alquraini (2015) proposes introducing new modules covering how learners with disabilities can access a similar standard of education as non-disabled learners, i.e., through increasing accessibility and rethinking teaching strategies. Koutrouba et al. (2006) in Cyprus suggest the establishment of university departments that provide training for teachers to overcome their concerns about inclusion. Gaad and Khan (2007) further propose that the departments dealing in general and special education should cooperate when designing the modules and thereby provide future instructors with the skills and information necessary for working disabled students.

Praisner (2003) argues that support for teachers from the top management, including the administrative staff and principal, is integral for success in inclusion. Hassanein (2015) argues that ineffective leadership in conventional schools in Egypt led to challenges in the implementation of inclusion, while Rayner (2007) indicated that staff members in conventional schools can be motivated to adopt inclusive learning through better support from the head teachers. This is due to the notion that principals provide leadership during the implementation of inclusion, and they also act as supervisors, while also exercising control over the allotment of the available resources.

In a study on Bangladesh by Mullick et al. (2012), where the school management systems are centralised, head teachers perceive the lack of authority as the primary barrier to implementation of inclusion. They reported that they faced challenges in getting involved in

policy development, the recruitment of instructors and the training of prospective instructors, all which were restricted to higher management.

These issues notwithstanding, training may have a role in improving the confidence of teachers and head teachers during the implementation of inclusion. Allison (2012) argues that training helps instructors to improve their confidence, something that is necessary for teaching disabled students and to perceive themselves as being ready to work in an environment designed for inclusion. In support, Agbenyega (2007) states that instructors who have not been trained on how to work with disabled students seemed less able to work in such settings, and they perceived themselves as not being ready to implement inclusive programs.

Slee (2011) argues that disability does not exist in the individual but is manifested by the characteristics of the learning systems in place, the organisation of learning institutions, as well as assumptions by people. This perspective on disability is lacking among scholars and instructors in Saudi Arabia, due to the predominance of the medical perceptions of disability, as well as the lack of empirical research to prove otherwise to teachers and stakeholders in the education sector. Goodley (2007, p. 319) concurs with this argument when he states that, “while the individual model continues to dominate thinking about disabled people, critical disability studies call for counter-hegemony with disabled people”. As a result, I am confident that the time is ripe for an initiative to reveal to educators, scholars on disability studies, activists and policymakers on disability-related services across Saudi Arabia how the philosophy differs from the outdated views on special education in terms of, for instance, perceiving disability as an issue centred on society, rather than being seen in terms of the individual's impairments (Oliver, 1990; Goodley, 2017). Only then can initiatives leading to radical change take place.

Such training would include consideration of the range of reasonable accommodations required to support disabled students. The next section provides a focus on these, beginning with a UK study.

7.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided based on the findings from the study, and for different purposes as deemed necessary.

7.4.1 For inclusive higher education

This research proposes that staff members attached to units designed for disabled learners should advise the lecturers about the impairments that face the learners, as well as the type of accommodations necessary for the learners based on the circumstance. Although contentious, this recommendation serves to account for the students right to self-advocate for their needs, while also ensuring that the disability units are involved as and when necessary. The role of both is integral in achieving optimal results. Before the start of learning in each phase, the disability units should disclose such information to the lecturers (with authority from the learners). Furthermore, the disability units should clarify the kind of adjustments and accommodations needed to support the academic and social needs of the learners, including communication and accessibility requirements. Based on the information, the lecturers should then congregate and deliberate on those needs and ensure that they constantly communicate with the learners during the year to register progress. This approach to tailored provision of support for each student based on their needs is proposed by Norton (1997).

Faculty members have tendencies to underrate or stereotype the aptitudes of deaf students, thereby leading to vindication, and a reduction in the level of inclusion (Hadley, 2011). The

outcome often arises from not appreciating the issues that relate to disability. Therefore, Spratt and Florian (2015) state that institutions of higher learning should facilitate the training of the faculty members on the domains that they teach and investigate in, as well as how to teach the skills. The strategies and methodologies for instruction on accommodating the needs of students with disabilities should be mandated for all staff members. It is also necessary to sensitise, inform and train the faculty members on how to perform inclusion in teaching, as well as apply the normal designs for learning.

Finally, the research recommends the creation of policies for deaf students within the university, as well as the enforcement of such policies by all administrators on campus. These would be supported by the introduction of a committee on governance of disability to address the issues highlighted by deaf students.

In response to the research participant who expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of their higher education, including the accessibility of materials and the negative attitude of university staff (see Chapter Five), certain steps should be taken to provide them with equal opportunity. This includes:

- The establishment of an Equality Services Office within each university to ensure the required pre-admission assessments which will identify case-by-case indications of reasonable accommodation. This office would also support disabled students throughout their academic journey, including course of study and exam arrangements.
- Additionally, the university's extra-curricular activities should be prepared in a way that suit disabled students, thus creating meaningful interaction outside lectures and seminars.

The next section considers the support required by deaf individuals in what ought to be the final stage of pre-employment – accessing job interviews. This builds on the considerations

above regarding the accommodations necessary for them in higher education; accommodations that, in many cases, are not provided.

7.4.2 For Conducting Job Interviews

As discussed in this chapter, some of the interviewees in this research encountered unfairness during the hiring process. This research suggested approaches that may be employed to overcome the barriers they faced to make interviews accessible for deaf candidates. For example, to ensure that a deaf candidate is treated fairly during the hiring process, employers can amend the usual interview protocol. Removing the communication barrier is an important step that will allow employers to fully explore the applicant's background, skills, and suitability for the position. This research recommended that asking a deaf person about the communication method before the interview positively will make the interview more successful. For example, before the candidate visits any company, employers can make sure that everyone who is part of the interview process understands the guidelines for interviewing deaf candidates. Most of the interviewees stressed the prominence of understanding the need for sign language interpreters in the workplace.

In the UK, the Equality Act (Legislation.gov.uk, 2010) mandates all employers to provide for the needs of deaf candidates to ensure that they are not put at a significant handicap in comparison to the non-disabled candidates (Royal National Institute for Deaf People, 2014). In addition, Access to Work provides financial support that could help to pay for any assistive devices or communication support deaf candidates require in their employment. In 2017, Saudi Arabia built a business disability network call "Qaderoon". Khalid Sindi, Executive Manager of Qaderoon Network, emphasizes that Qaderoon is continuing in tandem with the SNV 2030 which aims to ensure suitable opportunities for education and learning are guaranteed for

disabled people, as well as ensuring their independence and active participation in society (Saudi Vision, 2021). This is to be achieved through the provision of direction, instructions, training, and creation of action plans for the employers when recruiting, retaining and including disabled employees in their work environments.

These resources ought to be particularly helpful for human resources managers and recruitment officers, with employers now required by law to make reasonable accommodations. Good practice relating to the needs of deaf people are explained, with examples provided as to how employers can make interviews accessible. To encourage people with deafness to apply for work, managers could clearly state on application forms that they offer accessible interviews for deaf candidates.

In the UK, Disability Confident (Department for Work and Pensions, no date) is a voluntary scheme developed by the government to enable employers to access guidance and resources necessary for the employment of disabled people. The scheme has been established by employers, as well as representative of disabled individuals. The Scheme is comprised of multiple levels which are implemented in succession, including the “Disability Confident committed employer, Disability Confident employer, Disability Confident Leader. Employers can sign up and use the facilities for free. As with other initiatives detailed above, it aims to contest outlooks on disability, by increasing the understanding of what it means to be disabled, eliminating the obstacles that disabled people face, as well as the potential long lasting health conditions at the workplace. It also guarantees that disabled people get chances to achieve their full potential and attain their goals. Employers can achieve the state of ‘Disability Confident’ through recruitment and retention of disabled people, as well as people facing certain health conditions, for their abilities and aptitude. By establishing a reputation as a Disability Confident employer who is actively involved in the search for and employment of disabled people,

institutions help to stimulate positive change in attitudes, cultures and behaviours, both internally and externally.

7.4.3 To Reduce Employment Barriers

The mainstreaming of disabled people's rights has increased within Saudi Arabian national policies in recent years. This, however, has widened the gap between these policies and the level of services provided to deaf people. Despite these advancements, disabled people still face discrimination, marginalization, and an absence of reasonable accommodations. One recommendation to bridge this gap is to accompany these advanced policies with some monitoring and coaching mechanisms. Al-Abdulwahab and Al-Gain (2005) argue that, to institute inclusive disability policies in Saudi Arabia, more time and effort is required from decision makers. Strategies should offer disabled people the right to complain and report any discrimination they face during their employment. This would oblige employers to provide them with equal rights and to gain a better understanding of their capabilities.

To facilitate the implementation of these policies, the Ministry of Labour should publish a procedural guide containing information for companies supporting disabled employees through the pre- and post-employment process. This procedural guide should also include a disability and inclusion checklist which employers can use to assess the degree to which their companies are inclusive and welcoming to disabled employees. Such a guide could not be fully implemented unless companies ensure that there is an adequate budget, human resources, and physical environment. Punch (2016) recommends that HR professionals, experts, and managers should cooperate to foster supportive working environments. This could be achieved through initiatives to decrease the implications of deafness within the work environment.

The Greater Manchester Coalition of disabled people (GMCDP) is dedicated to the Seven Needs of Independent Living, a program that was initially created by disabled people. Under the program, persons with disability determine the basis for their needs, so they can determine what they need to do to achieve similar opportunities, to live independently, and to achieve full inclusion in society. One of the seven needs is that information must be easily accessible to disabled people. Based on the program, accessibility is dependent on the information being in the right format for use by the individual, based on the disability. The evidence from this thesis recommends that disabled people must have access to handy information, failing to access which they will experience isolation, segregation, or remain uninformed with regarding developments in society and other opportunities for work. The MoL should cultivate educational resources for employees with disabilities on their right careers, freedom from unfair treatment, accommodation of their needs, and the process through which grievances for violations can be handled under the Labour Laws. The information should be available through the online platforms for the MLSD. Disabled people may also benefit from recent national policy developments such as *Tawafuq program*, which focuses on the inclusion of disabled people in the Saudi labour market by adapting policies that guarantee crucial training programs for both the employed and non-employees. *Tawafuq* aims at supporting and empowering job-seeking disabled people through the adoption and implementation of the program's core principles (Trenwith, 2013). Among the set principles by *Tawafuq* are individuals' rights, skills, inclusion, and services. The program provides advice concerning the advancement of freedoms and equal opportunities in the office. Furthermore, it encourages practices that eliminate exclusion and discrimination against disabled people. Another program, *Qaderoon*, means "Together we are able" (Trenwith, 2013). This enhances the opportunities available for disabled people, guaranteeing them inclusion and independence within their respective societies. The program's vision and mission encourage employers to consider disabled

individuals as equal workforce members. Also, *Qaderoon* provides guidance, consultancy, and advice, alongside training and essential employer practices to recruit disabled people throughout their performance in the workplace (Qaderoon, 2020). This aims to create a suitable work climate and organisational culture that increases the involvement of disabled people in the workplace. The monitoring and evaluation of existing and new programs for disabled people is essential.

Another way to reduce barriers to employment is the creation of an ‘Employer Brand’ to develop the good name of the company as a preferred employer of choice for disabled people. As indicated by Croston, (2008), employee engagement plays a key role in the development of the reputation, with consideration given to the five elements, including satisfaction, awareness, understanding, and commitment (SAUCE), all which contribute to increased engagement. This engagement is integral to the improvement of the brand image of the employer. A ‘golden rule’ rule is for the employer to appreciate their own institution, asking questions to the staff about what is effective and what is not (Taylor, 2014).

7.4.4 To Reduce Communication Barriers

This thesis has illustrated that communication is a central tool for employees to perform efficiently at work. It can impact upon interaction between employers/managers and their teams, and its lack can lead individuals to feel isolated, further impacting upon their ability to work (Boutin, 2010).

Training employees in effective methods of communication will reduce the risk of isolation and improve work productivity. Examples mentioned in this research include assistive technology, which is one of the seven needs for people to live independently in the UK. For example, the use of closed caption videos has demonstrated their usefulness during the

induction and training process for deaf employees (von Sikorski and Schierl 2014). Captioning helps to eliminate misrepresentation and miscommunication of the message displayed.

Inclusive technology such as using email as the primary form of communication (alongside using texts on mobile phones) contributes to the provision of supportive accommodations for deaf employees. Other assistive technologies include augmentative devices, voice recognition, and voice to text software (Haynes and Linden, 2012). Such devices allow staff members to communicate successfully with deaf colleagues as well as create favourable working conditions. They provide support for deaf employees working in noisy workplaces, for example, where the noise makes it difficult for their hearing aid devices to filter the necessary audio input. Of course, the provision in the first place of a quiet working environment makes for more effective communication and improved productivity.

7.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This research discovered gaps that need to be further investigated. Firstly, while this research investigated the barriers facing deaf employees, further research is required to understand the employers' perspective and their impressions about the employment of deaf people. Listening to their concerns and what they consider to be their own barriers may help policy makers and experts to provide solutions for a better and more inclusive employment environment.

Secondly, the limited time offered for this research made it harder to generate data from a wider sample of deaf people. Therefore, conducting further investigation into the employment situation of deaf people in rural areas, for example, can enable comparisons to be made between their situations and those of the participants detailed here.

Thirdly, it may be advantageous to conduct research utilizing the mixed-methods, or multi-methods approach, whereby the qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined when investigating complex phenomenon. The combination of the two approaches provides sufficient flexibility in investigating the two complex issues, including the obstacles to enforcing the policies and regulations relating to the employment of disabled people. The approach also introduces higher processes for integrity in research, while also extending the ways through which the concepts are understood with reference to the settings in Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, it would be also helpful to document success stories of deaf people pre-and post-employment which would encourage others to learn about methods to create their own reasonable accommodations towards an inclusive employment environment.

7.6 Final Conclusion

In conclusion, this research found many barriers to deaf people's employment. The interviewees had experienced a level of discrimination on their journey to and within employment, and their suggestions ultimately built on these experiences to enrich the recommendations made here. These recommendations include the development of new policies to ensure disability mainstreaming and further consideration given to adaption of the work environment. Such measures are important not only for deaf people in employment but for everyone currently unemployed and seeking work. The solutions and recommendations made above will, however, only be possible if the policy makers, NGOs, and deaf people are able to work together to facilitate an inclusive employment environment. Recent positive moves made by Saudi Arabia in this direction suggest that this is possible.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Study title: A Social Model Perspective on the Experiences of deaf People in the Saudi Labour Market

My name is Fatimah Almulhim, researcher from University of Leeds. I am asking you to take part in the above research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please ask me. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thanks for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

I would like to identify and understand the experiences of deaf people in the workplace in terms of others' attitudes toward them and how they are overcoming the impacts of negative attitudes from people around them. The research will use the social model of disability, which locates the disability issue in society instead of the individual.

The existing disability research in Saudi Arabia explores the disability within individual which focus on their impairment instead of the social structure. This research, however, will focus on the barriers that faced by D/deaf people in the workplace. Thus, involving deaf employees can improve the quality of research by ensuring it addresses the most relevant issues faced by deaf people in the workplace. In addition, the research might help to identify policy solutions to any disabling barriers identified.

In order to understand the experiences of deaf people I am carrying out two steps:

- A short questionnaire via direct message (general information).
- Online interview via Twitter (Direct Message).

Participant information sheet**Do I have to take part?**

No—it is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you decide to take part you are free to withdraw at any time up until three months after the interview without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?

1. If you would be willing to be interviewed about your experience in the workplace, please return the consent form using direct message and type your name on the signature place.
2. I will then contact you to arrange a convenient time to be interviewed over Twitter.
3. The interview will last around 45 minutes and I will be interviewing you about your experience in the workplace.

Please be assured that only yourself, and I will have access to the conversation, and any personal information will be removed and the whole transcript will be unknown; the data will also be highly secured and kept strictly confidential. You will be able to choose a false name. Parts of the interview such as quotes will be used within the thesis. You will be updated as to when the study will be published, and you will be able to gain access to the publication if you wish. You will have my upmost respect and integrity throughout the process.

Yours sincerely,

Fatimah Almulhim

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: *The workplace experiences of deaf people in Saudi Arabia: a social model perspective of urban elites*

Name of Researcher: Fatimah Almulhim

Tick the box if you agree with the statement

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet provided, explaining the above research project and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this project.

2. I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not want to answer.

3. I understand that my response will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified in the report(s) that result from the research.

4. I am aware that the interview will be via Twitter (Direct Message). I agree the information I supply will be transcribed.

5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research and for this anonymised data to appear in any publications and presentations resulting from this research.

6.I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.

Name of the participant

Date

Signature

(To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

Lead researcher

Date

Signature

(To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

نموذج موافقة المشارك نموذج معلومات المشارك

عنوان الدراسة :

العوامل التي تؤثر على تجربة الأشخاص الصم في مكان العمل من منظور النموذج

الاجتماعي في المملكة العربية السعودية

أنا فاطمة الملحم ، باحثة من جامعة ليدز. أتمنى مشاركتكم في مشروع البحث المذكور أعلاه. وقبل أن تقرر ، من المهم أن تفهم دوافعي واره إجراء هذا البحث وما ستشمله الدراسة. ولذا يُرجى أخذ الوقت الكافي لقراءة المعلومات التالية بعناية ومناقشتها مع الآخرين إذا كنت ترغب في ذلك. وإذا كان هناك أي شيء غير واضح ، أو إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على مزيد من المعلومات ، فلا تتردد في سؤالي. وخذ ما يكفيك من الوقت لتقرير ما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة أم لا.

ولكم جزيل الشكر على قراءة هذا النموذج.

ما هو الغرض من هذه الدراسة؟

أود تحديد وفهم تجارب الأشخاص الصم في مكان العمل من حيث مواقف الآخرين تجاههم وكيفية التغلب على تأثيرات المواقف السلبية الصادرة عن الناس من حولهم. وسيستخدم البحث النموذج الاجتماعي للإعاقة ، والذي يحدد مشكلة الإعاقة في المجتمع بدلاً من الفرد.

ويتناول بحث الإعاقة الحالي في المملكة العربية السعودية مسألة الإعاقة في الأفراد والتي تركز على ضعفهم بدلاً من البنية الاجتماعية. كما سيركز هذا البحث على الحواجز التي يواجهها الأشخاص الصم في مكان العمل. وبالتالي ، قد يحسن إشراك الموظفين الصم من جودة الأبحاث من خلال ضمان معالجتها لأكثر القضايا ذات الصلة التي يواجهها الأشخاص الصم في مكان العمل. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك ، قد يساعد البحث في توضيح حلول السياسة لأي عوائق تم تحديدها.

ولفهم تجارب الأشخاص الصم ، أقوم بخطوتين :

- ❖ استبيان قصير عبر رسالة مباشرة (معلومات عامة).
- ❖ مقابلة إلكترونية عبر تويتر (رسالة مباشرة).

نموذج معلومات المشاركين

هل يجب عليّ المشاركة؟

لا ، فلك حرية اختيار القرار حول ما إذا كنت ستشارك أم لا. وإذا قررت المشاركة ، فلك مطلق الحرية في الانسحاب في أي وقت حتى شهرين بعد المقابلة ودون إبداء أي سبب.

للحصول على مزيد من المعلومات :

إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة أو استفسارات أخرى حول هذا البحث ، يرجى الاتصال بـ:

فاطمة الملحم

رقم الهاتف : 0568873722

البريد الإلكتروني : ml15faa@leeds.ac.uk

كما يمكنك الاتصال بمشرفي فاطمة :

أندريا هولوموتز

البريد الإلكتروني : a.hollomotz@leeds.ac.uk

البريد الإلكتروني : a.sheldon@leeds.ac.uk

ماذا سيحدث إذا شاركت؟

1. إذا كنت ترغب في إجراء مقابلة معك حول تجربتك في مكان العمل ، فيرجى إعادة نموذج الموافقة باستخدام الرسالة المباشرة واكتب اسمك في المكان المخصص للتوقيع.
2. سأقوم بالاتصال بك للاتفاق على وقتٍ مناسب لإجراء المقابلة عبر تويتر.
3. ستستمر المقابلة حوالي 45 دقيقة وسأجري المقابلة معك حول تجربتك في مكان العمل.
4. بعد المقابلة ، يرجى حذف محادثتنا من الرسائل المباشرة.

في حالة استخدام المساعدة الشخصية :

1. يتعين عليك اختيار شخص ما تشعر بالراحة معه وتثق به.
 2. التأكد من قراءة نموذج المعلومات وفهم مبدأ السرية.
 3. إذا كان / كانت سعيدًا بذلك ، فيمكننا بدء المقابلة.
- يُرجى التأكد من تواجدك بمفردك ، وسيكون لديّ إمكانية الوصول إلى المحادثة. وبعد المقابلة سأنقل المحادثة إلى مستند ورد (Word) وسنُزال أي معلومات شخصية وستكون النسخة المطابقة للأصل مجهولة المصدر. وستُحفظ البيانات آمنة للغاية مع ضمان السرية التامة. وسأقوم بعد ذلك بحذف محادثة المقابلة من "الرسائل المباشرة" بمجرد اكتمال النقل إلى مستند ورد (Word). كما يُرجى حذف المحادثة من جهاذك. وسيتم استخدام أجزاء من المقابلة كإقتباسات داخل الأطروحة. وسنحيطكم علمًا عند نشر الدراسة ، وستتمكن من الوصول إلى المنشور إذا كنت ترغب في ذلك. ولك منا أقصى درجات الاحترام والنزاهة طوال العملية.

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير ،،،

فاطمة الملحم

نموذج موافقة المشارك

عنوان مشروع البحث : تجارب مكان العمل للأشخاص الصم في المملكة العربية السعودية: منظور النموذج الاجتماعي

للنخب الحضرية

اسم الباحث : فاطمة الملحم

ضع علامة في المربع إذا كنت توافق على العبارة

1. أؤكد أنني قد قرأت وفهمت نموذج المعلومات المقدمة ، الذي يشرح مشروع البحث المذكور أعلاه وأنتني أتيتحت لي الفرصة لطرح أسئلة حول هذا المشروع.
2. أتفهم أن مشاركتي في هذا المشروع البحثي طوعي وأنتني حر في الانسحاب من البحث في أي وقت. كما أتفهم أنه ليس عليّ الإجابة عن أي أسئلة لا أريد الإجابة عنها.
3. أدرك أن إجابتي ستبقى سرية للغاية. كما أدرك أن اسمي لن يكون مرتبطاً بالمواد البحثية ، ولن يتم تحديد هويتي في التقرير (التقارير) الذي يسفر عنه البحث.
4. أدرك أن المقابلة ستكون عبر تويتر (الرسائل المباشرة). وأوافق على نقل المعلومات التي أوردتها إلى مستند ورد (word) ، مجهول المصدر ومن ثم يتم حذفها من تويتر.
5. أدرك أنه ينبغي عليّ أيضاً حذف المحادثة من "الرسائل المباشرة" على تويتر فور الانتهاء منها.
6. أوافق على استخدام البيانات ، التي تم تحصيلها مني، في الأبحاث المستقبلية كما أوافق على ظهور هذه البيانات المجهولة المصدر في أي منشورات وعروض تقديمية يُسفر عنها هذا البحث.

315
7. أوافق على المشاركة في مشروع البحث الوارد أعلاه.



اسم المشارك : التاريخ : التوقيع :

الباحث : التاريخ : التوقيع :

اسم الباحث : فاطمة الملحم

Appendix 2: Demographic Questionnaire**1. What is your gender?** Male Female**2. How old are you?** 18-24 years old 25-34 years old 35-44 years old 45-54 years old 55-64 years old 65-74 years old

3. At present, what is the highest educational qualification you have received? If you are now enrolled in a course, please indicate the highest qualification you have received. (Please mark only one answer).

 No educational qualifications Primary / intermediate education Some secondary school Secondary school graduate Bachelor's degree Trade/vocational training Master's degree PhD degree

4. Are you currently in employment? Yes No**5. What is your occupation? (Please write your answer on the line provided).**

6. How many years of work experience do you have in your current role? Less than 2 years 2-4 years 5-9 years 10-14 years 15-19 years 20 or more years**7. Are you married?** Yes No**9. What is your monthly income (in SR)?** 3000 SR 4000 SR 5000 SR 6000 SR Other Prefer not to

answer

10. How would you describe your social class?

Upper

Middle

Lower

Prefer not to answer

الاسم: _____

1. ما هو جنسك؟

 أنثى ذكر

2. ما هو عمرك؟

 25 - 34 سنة 18 - 24 سنة 45 - 54 سنة 35 - 44 سنة 65 - 74 سنة 55 - 64 سنة

3. في الوقت الحالي، ما هو أعلى مؤهل تعليمي حصلت عليه؟ وإذا كنت الآن مسجلاً في دورة تعليمية ، فيرجى الإشارة إلى أعلى مؤهل حصلت عليه. (يرجى تحديد إجابة واحدة فقط).

 التعليم الابتدائي إلى المتوسط غير حاصل على مؤهلات تعليمية خريج المدرسة الثانوية بعض المدارس الثانوية تدريب مهني / تجاري درجة البكالوريوس

درجة الدكتوراه

درجة الماجستير

4. هل أنت حالياً موظف؟

لا

نعم

5. ما هي مهنتك؟ (يُرَجَى كتابة إجابتك على الخط المقدم).

6. كم عدد سنوات الخبرة العملية لديك في وظيفتك الحالية؟

2 - 4 سنة

أقل من سنتين

10 - 14 سنة

5 - 9 سنة

20 سنة فأكثر

15 - 19 سنة

7. هل أنت متزوج؟

نعم

لا

8. ما هو دخلك الشهري (بالريال السعودي)؟

5000 ريالاً سعوديًّا

4000 ريالاً سعوديًّا

3000 ريالاً سعوديًّا

أفضل عدم الإجابة

أخرى

6000 ريالاً سعوديًّا

9. ما هو توصيفك لفننتك الاجتماعية؟

الطبقة الدنيا

الطبقة المتوسطة

الطبقة العليا

أفضل عدم الإجابة

Appendix 3: Interview questions for deaf employees

1-In your opinion, what are the barriers to deaf people obtaining employment?

2-I understand that you are currently employed, can you please describe how the education that you receive helped you to find a job?

a-Tell me more about your educational background?

b-What are the difficulties faced you in your educational journey?

3-Do you think these difficulties affected you while looking for a job? If yes, can you explain more?

a-How do you feel about your job search?

4- Have you faced challenges in finding a job? If yes, tell me about those challenges.

5-Tell me about your current workplace.

a-Are there other deaf people in the workplace?

b-Are there other disabled people in the workplace?

c-Do you feel support from your colleagues and supervisors?

d-What special accommodations are you receiving or would like to receive?

6-In your opinion, what would possibly improve the employment opportunities for deaf people?

Appendix 4: Ethical Approval

ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee

University of Leeds

10 January 2023

Dear Fatimah

Title of study: **The factors that influence the experience of D/deaf people in the workplace from the social model perspective in Saudi Arabia.**

Ethics reference: **AREA 18-012 revised application, response 1**

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and following receipt of your response to the Committee's comments, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 18-012 Ethics 2nd submission responses to feedback.doc	1	12/11/18
AREA 18-012 Ethics Form 12-11-2018 (1).docx	3	12/11/18
AREA 18-012 Participant Information Sheet 12-11-2018.docx	3	12/11/18
AREA 18-012 Questionnaire 12-11-2018.docx	3	12/11/18

Committee members made the following comments about your application:

- The reviewers recommend that there is a discrete process of information provision and negotiation around questions of confidentiality.

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment>.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation and other documents relating to the study, including any risk assessments. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits>.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie

Senior Research Ethics Administrator, the Secretariat

On behalf of Dr Kahryn Hughes, Chair, AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 5: The Ethical Approval to conduct Face-to-Face interview

The Secretariat
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT
Tel: 0113 343 4873
Email: ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk



Fatimah Almulhim

School of Sociology and Social Policy

University of Leeds

Leeds, LS2 9JT

ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee

University of Leeds

10 January 2023

Dear Fatimah

Title of study: **The factors that influence the experience of deaf people in the workplace from the social model perspective in Saudi Arabia**

Ethics reference: AREA 18-012 amendment February 2019

I am pleased to inform you that your amendment to the research application listed above has been reviewed by the Social Science, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 18-012 Amendment February 2019 Amendment_form.doc	1	28/02/19
AREA 18-012 Amendment February 2019 Participant Information Sheet 12-11-2018.docx	1	28/02/19
AREA 18-012 Amendment February 2019 Fatimah Ethics Form minor amendment.docx	1	21/02/19
AREA 18-012 Amendment February 2019 scan_ml15faa_2019-02-21-13-05-44.pdf	1	21/02/19
AREA 18-012 Ethics 2nd submission responses to feedback.doc	1	12/11/18
AREA 18-012 Ethics Form 12-11-2018 (1).docx	3	12/11/18
AREA 18-012 Participant Information Sheet 12-11-2018.docx	3	12/11/18
AREA 18-012 Questionnaire 12-11-2018.docx	3	12/11/18

The Committee Chair made the following comments:

- The only suggestion is that, where any form of sign language is used in a public place that the interview be kept as private in terms of visibility as possible. Just a general awareness of this should suffice – perhaps the interviewer positioning herself in a way that precludes other people having direct visual access to the sign language.

Please notify the Committee if you intend to make any further amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment>.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits>.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie

Senior Research Ethics Administrator, the Secretariat

On behalf of Dr Kahryn Hughes, Chair, [AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee](#)

CC: Student's supervisor(s)

Appendix 6: Translation the main research questions by deaf person (sign language) to deaf people (Twitter users)

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1193883591945728001>

[https://twitter.com/FAAlmulhem/status/1193883820711464960?s=20&t=UUUrwwJb\]esZcggCZ\]gxLw](https://twitter.com/FAAlmulhem/status/1193883820711464960?s=20&t=UUUrwwJb]esZcggCZ]gxLw)