Using the Concept of Work Alienation as a Lens to Explore Academic Females' Experiences at King Saud University

By

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

Leeds University Business School

September 2023

Declaration

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Irena Grugulis and Professor Charles Umney. I very much appreciated their support and kindness during my PhD journey. I am proud to have Professors Grugulis and Umney as my supervisors as they have a high level of professionalism they are highly qualified in their subject areas. From them, I have learned not only how to conduct research but also how practise my academic job. I profoundly thank them for their respect, their efforts and their consideration.

I am also grateful to the University of Leeds. From moment I enrolled as an international student, I have received a great welcome and support from staff and other members. I have appreciated access to the University's facilities, such as its rich libraries and study zones. Also, I have met kind colleagues from different cultures and have benefitted from their expertise.

I would like to thanks everyone who participated in the interviews. Your valuable data has increased the value of this study and has helped me to achieve my research aim. Thank you for being welcoming to my questions during and after Covid-19.

Also, I would like to thank my country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I want to thank King Saud University in Riyadh, which gave me a scholarship to study in the United Kingdom. I would like to thank the Saudi Embassy in London for being ready to help and support Saudi students. I will not forgot their support during the global Covid-19 pandemic.

A big thanks to my family. I thank my father, who believed in me. He used to call me "Dr Dunya" when I was a child. My father left this world before I had a chance to say goodbye and make him proud. Father, this is my thesis, and I am glad I could complete it after your traumatic death. Farewell, beloved one. To my mother, who has always been there to support me. My mom has always encouraged me to continue. She tried to help me to keep going and never give up.

A huge thanks to my husband, who strongly supported me during this time. He has stood with me during my difficult times, and he has encouraged me to work and never give up. And another big thanks to my children, Mohammed and Sulaiman, because you make me strong.

To my sisters, Diana and Deema, and my niece Reema, I enjoy talking to you during my times of stress. You provided me with emotional support and you always

succeeded in increasing my self-confidence. To my brother, Badr, thanks so much for visiting me in Leeds during my study. I highly appreciated when you came to help me with the kids and made us happier. To my nieces and nephews: Fahad and Dana, you are the reasons for my happiness; Sa'ad, you helped me to think outside the box; and Sara, your smile is a reason to relieve my stress.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the experience of Saudi women working in academia by using the concept of alienation as a lens. With this aim, there were three research questions:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

The paper begins with a literature review, which established the starting point for answering the research questions. After that, a qualitative methodology was selected to collect and analyse the research data. Data collection took place via face-to-face and Zoom interviews. The study comprised 33 female academics working at King Saud University. Ten of those interviewees were interviewed more than once to collect more data about the Covid-19 pandemic. Thematic analysis was used to highlight codes and develop themes from the data. The results and discussion show that alienation is a valuable concept in exploring phenomena related to women in the workplace. Academic careers were found to have positive features, but these were based on employees' culturally determined points of view. Aspects such as the level of autonomy enjoyed by the participants, the degree to which they felt they were under control and their sense of meaningfulness is better identified from employees' perspectives within a specific context. The results also indicate that negative feelings, such as sadness, should not always be understood as a sign of alienation. In contrast, sadness and tiredness arose in informants as an indication of high engagement with their work. Further recommendations include more exploratory studies to enrich the concept of alienation and to provide organisations with an understanding of specific issues rather than just symptoms.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is witnessing a significant transition as a response to the new Saudi Vision 2030. The goal of Saudi Vision 2030 is to bring about improvements in different aspects of the country's economic and social life. It aims to enhance the efficiency of the Kingdom's resources and strengths and reduce the dependency on oil. From a societal perspective, significant changes are taking place in regulations related to customs and traditions; for example, there is now some mixing of genders in primary schools. There is also an increase in participation of women in the workforce, and an increased sense of empowerment for women; women are now occupying leadership positions that they have never held before, such as cultural attachés. These significant changes are having both effects on employees. In addition to these changes, King Saud University is encouraging the introduction and use of workplace technologies for different aims. This dependence on technology increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for distance working (King Saud University, 2023; Alqahtani, 2015; Alqahtani, 2016; AlArabiya, 2021).

These changes in the workplace are attracting attention and raising interesting questions about how they will impact employees' wellbeing. To answer these questions, it is useful to look at rich theoretical concepts, which may help to shed light on these complications of life development. One such concept is the concept of alienation, which has proven valuable in the understanding of social phenomena. It takes a deep view, which enables the researcher to look beyond symptoms. For example, the idea of alienation is based on rich concepts such as powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Examining workplace issues through these lenses helps the researcher to understand the existence of symptoms such as job satisfaction, sadness, happiness and motivation, and to determine the core issues at the heart of these.

In the literature, a number of definitions of 'alienation' are presented; however, these definitions focus on specific aspects, or few aspects, of alienation. For the purposes of this research, I have selected the definition provided by Seeman (1959) as the most comprehensive definition and as one that allows the transfer of the concept of alienation from classical writings in a clear way. According to Seeman (1959, p.783), alienation encompasses a number of dimensions: “powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement”. Each aspect of an employee’s work life will be explored by examining one dimension of alienation. This will enhance the ability to understand the aspect through the lens of alienation within a specific context. For example, the lens of powerlessness/powerfulness will explore where, why and how employees feel the sense of powerlessness/powerfulness.

Indeed, using each dimension of alienation in this research to explore each aspect provided detailed results because it has the ability to find the issue and explain it. It is interesting because it is possible to find employees who are alienated and non-alienated at the same time. Thus, viewing the situation through the lens of alienation allows the identification of the exact source of the employee’s alienation; similarly, this process enables the researcher to identify the exact source of being non-alienated.

This research aims to explore the experiences of Saudi women working in academia and how their experiences could be explained in light of the alienation concept. To achieve this aim, the following research questions were addressed:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

To achieve the research aim and answer the research questions the thesis follows a structure, as explained in the next section.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

Following the introduction, a literature review is presented in Chapter 2. This chapter explores and critically discusses the concept of alienation and how it is addressed in the classic sociological works of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Taylor. Marx aimed to critique capitalism. He explained that human beings are different from objects and should not be treated as objects; rather, we have to consider their uniqueness. Marx identified four forms of alienation: alienation from production activity, alienation from the commodity that the worker produces, alienation from species-essence and alienation from the worker’s fellows (Marx, 1964; Ollman, 1971; Umney, 2018). Thus, Marx provided the basis of alienation theory. Durkheim contributed to the understanding of alienation by showing that alienation results from the loss of core social norms that facilitate individuals' coexistence with each other. He called this phenomenon 'anomie' (Durkheim, 1960); Seeman (1959) referred to it as 'normlessness'. Durkheim (1960) also addressed the concept of meaninglessness; this echoes Marx's alienations, in which the worker is not aware of the production activity and his work is insignificant. Weber also agreed with the concept of meaninglessness (Gerth and Mills, 2009). Finally, the chapter provides an overview of Fredrick Taylor's approach, known as Taylorism, and how it impacts professionals' autonomy (Taylor, 2012; Wise et al., 2017). This discussion of classical writings related to the concept of alienation provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of alienation and shows similarities between the views of classical writers. This is followed by a brief overview of the concept of work alienation in contemporary studies, including an explanation of each dimension in this study: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Next is a review of occupational gender segregation, starting with a definition of the concept of gender segregation and presenting the most relevant theory of gender segregation to this research, the patriarchy theory. This includes an overview of occupational gender segregation in western countries, followed by an explanation of Saudi culture and what gender segregation looks like in Saudi Arabia. The literature review concludes with a section on workplace technology and work-life boundaries in relation to workplace alienation.

After the literature review, Chapter 3 presents the selected research methodology; the chapter includes an explanation of the chosen methods and the justifications for their use. For this research, a qualitative approach was selected to enhance the ability of the researcher to explore, understand and describe the phenomenon of alienation. This approach meets the aims of the research.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are results chapters, followed by a discussion of the results. The concept of alienation provides deep insight into the situation of women in academia in Saudi Arabia. The results provide a clear explanation of why and how individuals are – or are not – affected by feelings of alienation. By including interpretation of the results, these chapters enrich our understanding of the dimension of alienation itself. The nature of the job and the cultural context play a significant role in determining what is considered alienation and non-alienation by employees. For example, control may be seen as legitimate or illegitimate, depending on the participants' point of view. Also, gender segregation is viewed differently in different cultures, and what is seen by employees in one context as gender segregation might not be seen in this way in another context. Also, finding a new source of meaning in one's work is important; this is known as imprint. The findings explore the significance of human interaction as it relates to the presence or absence of alienation and to feelings of meaninglessness and isolation. Also, the results demonstrate the importance of the physical design of the workplace, and how this can impact relationships between employees, either positively or negatively. Moreover, the results show that technology could both increase and decrease feelings of alienation; thus, the application of technology needs to be carried out carefully in order to increase its benefits and decrease any disadvantages arising from its use.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter. It discusses the significance of the results, and concludes the thesis, outlining the limitations of the current research and presenting some suggestions for further research.

1.3 Conclusion

To sum up, the aim of this chapter has been to introduce briefly the topic under investigation and to present the rationale for selecting the topic of work alienation for this research. Presented here are the aims, research questions and objectives of the study, followed by a brief overview of the remaining chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the literature related to the research aim and questions. The research aims to explore the experiences of Saudi women working in academia and how their experiences could be explained by the concept of alienation. This aim is achieved by answering the following research questions:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Based on the research aim, the main focus of the literature review is on work alienation. This will include an overview of how alienation is addressed in both classical writings and contemporary studies. There is a special focus on three dimensions of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Also, the chapter presents a specific focus on two topics related to alienation: gender segregation and the use of technology. Each section will include arguments related to the research aim. Finally, an overview of Saudi culture will be presented as the context of the study, as the importance of a cultural perspective in this qualitative research cannot be ignored. The current research will build on this literature review in answering the research questions.

2.2 Alienation in Classical Works of Sociology

This section will provide a brief review of how alienation is defined and addressed in some classical works of sociology. The section will outline and critique the writings of Marx (the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844); Durkheim (*The Division of Labour in Society*); Weber (*Essays in Sociology*) and Taylor (*Scientific Management*). These have made significant contributions as foundational texts in sociology and the social sciences generally, and many of their ideas have profoundly influenced the way we study contemporary social phenomena.

The focus will be on the works of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Taylor as they relate to the concept of alienation, either directly or indirectly. As stated earlier, alienation in this research is defined based on Seeman's (1959) interpretation, as a sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness and isolation. The works of Marx explicitly mention the concept of alienation as he developed the Theory of Alienation (Marx, 1964). Durkheim developed the concept of *anomie* which Seeman (1959) considered to be a dimension of alienation. Weber's contribution to defining the concept of alienation could be described as an effort to explain aspects of the theory of alienation put forward by Marx (Seeman, 1959). However, the work of Fredrick Taylor (2012), presented scientific management, seen later as a cause of alienation in terms of powerlessness, particularly for professionals (Wise et al., 2017). These discussions on Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Taylor will each be followed by a brief critique of their relation and significance to contemporary research on alienation.

Marx's explanation of the concept of alienation aims to critique capitalism. However, it is crucial to illustrating Marx's theory in starting writing about alienation. Marx is the first one who mentioned the concept. Marx explanation of the concept of alienation seems vague because it is an old written and based on the factory under capitalism context. However, studies such as Seeman (1959) reported a clear explanation of the concept's dimensions. Thus, Marx's theory of alienation will be a start point to understand and justify the contemporary research different aspects and uses of the alienation concept.

2.2.1 Karl Marx

The Industrial Revolution, which occurred during the 18^{th} and 19 centuries, was a period when a number of complex of regulations and forms of control were introduced. Many workers were obliged to leave their farms and their handicraft activities, and moved to work in factories to fulfil the new needs that emerged from the introduction of new products and to meet the upgraded level of living which require increased wages (Barker, 2017; Hudson, 1992; Wyatt, 2008).

Capitalism is one of the noteworthy terms that emerged during the Industrial Revolution, and is frequently discussed in writings to describe the economic and political situation during this period. One of the most significant writings on capitalism was written by Marx (1964), who particularly focused on the situation of workers under capitalism in his Theory of Alienation.

The theory of alienation was developed by Marx, who published it in his *German–French Yearbooks*. Marx, in his manuscripts, used these two concepts to refer to two states of alienation: first, when the workers abandon themselves in their commodified work life and the second is when this commodification becomes a force opposed to them.

The theory of alienation asserts that human beings are distinct from inanimate objects, such as machines. It is a core idea in Marx's theory of alienation that human beings are a combination of body and soul, a person has tangible and intangible needs, and the capitalist system is not appropriate for the nature of humans, and thus it is unreasonable to deal with humans like machines (Marx, 1964). Umney (2018, p.32) explains Marx's ideas by saying: "Marx believes that the main thing that distinguishes humans from animals is our ability to enter into a self-directed creative process. Humans have a purpose. They can decide and design their own work in order to fulfill their own individual objectives."

Marx (1964) concentrates his argument on workers and their interactions to explain the theory of alienation in light of four types of relations in capitalism. This research will briefly refer to these types to clarify the concept of alienation before moving to the meaning of alienation as it applies to this research. The first type is the alienation that comes from production activity. This kind of alienation refers to the individual working in the organisation as an alien kind of task. The person loses their time, energy and mental health in this work because it does not belong to them. Giddens (1971) points out that workers under capitalism become alienated because they are forced to produce a pre-determined commodity. Furthermore, Marx argues that in capitalism, there is a reverse correlation between the workers' efforts and their satisfaction. Thus, the more effort they exert, the unhappier they become (Marx, 1964). Blauner (1964) points out that the alienated worker is the one who has no control over their workplace and who cannot understand the whole picture to see how their work is contributing towards the organisation's outcome, making their involvement in their work process somehow unsustainable. According to Blauner (1964), work alienation may be explained in three ways: first, the worker has no control over the commodity; second, contributions made to the overall functioning of the organisation are meaninglessness or insignificant; and third, the individual cannot use their unique skills and creativity.

The second kind of alienation is alienation from the commodity that the worker produces. Marx (1964) assumed that under capitalism, products are manufactured through labourers' efforts and energy, which allows capitalists to achieve their aim of gaining profit by selling these products. Thus, labourers in this case exerts his efforts and energy for the capitalists to achieve their aims rather than directing these efforts to achieve their own aims as a human. Therefore, the worker might become alienated from the commodity that they produced because the worker's powers to make decisions about what to do are removed and given to the capitalist, and the commodity will become a power that supports capitalism. The word 'commodity' is used here rather than 'product' because this reflects the language used by Marx in his writing; 'commodity' is more appropriate in the context of factories and the Industrial Revolution. It is also used to refer to the basic tangible goods produced in the factory, while the word 'product' refers to both tangible and non-tangible items, such as services. Therefore, the use of 'commodity' is more appropriate in the literature related to Marx. Nevertheless, the word 'product' might also be used as an alternative to 'commodity' in this section.

According to Marx (1964), the worker has no control over the commodity, or rather, the control is indirect, because, for example, unless the worker decides to spend their own salary to buy the commodity, they cannot own it because it was produced for the capitalists; further, if they decided to buy this commodity, they would again be supporting capitalism. Therefore, Marx (1964) considers the commodity to be the main power of the capitalist. Giddens (1971) also provides an explanation of Marx's view about the two types of alienation which are related to production in a capitalist society. These two types have some shared characteristics as they both emerge as a result of class societies, which have an impact on the increase in specialisation, and therefore an increase in the division of labour. Thus, the worker has no control over the "labour process" output. However, Ollman (1971) argues that the alienation of the product is a result of the alienation from the product activity. Therefore, it seems that Ollman assumes the workers will be alienated from their product if they are alienated from the product activity.

The third type of alienation is alienation from the species-essence (Marx, 1964). According to Ollman (1971), this form of alienation is different from the previous types as it is intangible. The major issue here is that each person has power and needs. However, they now has no right to get what they wants directly from nature to produce the product that meets their needs. Rather, they were controlled by others' needs and thus their power is spent producing a product that meets others' needs to satisfy still others. Therefore, according to Marx, workers perform their work to be able to live, but they do not work because they are alive. Thus, Marx claims that capitalism will cause the estrangement of humans from their species (Ollman, 1971).

The fourth kind of alienation asserts that if the person is alienated from their product, their work and their species, they will then be alienated from their fellow humans (Marx, 1964). Marx (1964) points out that capitalism puts the worker in a competitive situation with their fellow humans which has a negative impact upon social relations. Furthermore, Ollman (1971) argues that the alienated human producing a product that belongs to another causes a self-estrangement of body and mind.

However, Marx himself was not quite precise in his explanation of the concept of alienation. It should also be noted at this point that the concept of alienation has been translated from German to English. Thus, the translation might have affected the accuracy of the intended meaning (Sechrest et al., 1972) and potential confusion could have emerged from the translation. According to Sayers (2011), the concept of alienation appears in Marx's philosophy and it seems to be a vague one. In German, the concept of alienation refers to two main ideas: the first one is *Entfremdung*, i.e., estrangement, and the second is *Veräußerung*, i.e., externalisation. According to Sayers (2011), English language speakers are more familiar with the concept of alienation than with the other two terms.

Ollman (1971) shows that the theory of alienation is a notion developed by Marx in order to present evidence of the negative impact of capitalism on social processes and individuals' mental and physical health. Marx focused on individuals and their interactions within organisations. These interactions between the worker, the work process, workplace elements and other workers are suggested by Marx as the conditions which apply within the theory of alienation.

Finally, Marx's concept of alienation focuses on work alienation. Although Marx developed this theory over a century ago, according to the circumstances of capitalism and labour as a process, it is still relevant as most contemporary studies have applied the concept in more contemporary contexts to discuss social phenomena in sociological research. For example, Shantza et al. (2014) conducted a study that builds a connection between Marx's theory of alienation and practices in the 21st century, which is helping to reduce the gap between theory and practice. Shantza et al. (2014) aim to examine work alienation in capitalism by shedding light on the three situations that are identified by Marx: first, when the worker becomes detached from their work; second, when there is no option to use their skills in their work; and third, when the work is meaningless for the worker. The results show that meaninglessness causes alienation at work. Shantza et al. (2014) state that the concept of alienation "should be a focal point for human resource management scholars in the twenty-first century".

Moreover, the concept of alienation offers a comprehensive explanation for workers' situations as it considers personal and workplace elements and provides an understanding of the worker's situation (McKinlay and Marceau, 2011). This view has been considered in this research as one of the research questions to explore: "To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?"

The approaches taken by Mészáros (2006), Padgett (2007) and Schacht (1971) to the relevance of Marx's views of alienation consider the division of the production task between workers in contemporary factories. They assert that workers are given a small task and remain unaware of the whole process, which is again related to Marx's idea of alienation from the product activity (Mészáros, 2006; Padgett, 2007; Schacht, 1971).

Furthermore, Bernstein (2011) points out that contemporary companies find themselves faced with competition from other companies. This competition will have a negative impact on the worker, who will be pushed by the employer to focus his effort to overcome this competition rather than build an emotional bond with their work. This results in work alienation from their fellows (Giddens and Held, 1982; Yuill, 2005). These contemporary researchers built on the work of Marx by focusing on the capitalist approach to work and how the system of capitalism has increased the drive of competition among modern companies. As competition intensifies, the worker becomes a mere tool for satisfying the capitalist instead of enjoying an emotional bond with their work efforts (Wendling, 2011).

Therefore, it can be argued that the theory of alienation, as outlined by Marx, plays a significant role in contemporary research; the differences in approach to this concept lie in the aspect of alienation focused on by various researchers. Alienation in Marx's writing appears as a wide and rich concept that refers to different dimensions, as discussed by

Seeman (1959). Thus, applying such a concept efficiently needs a focus on the aspect(s) or dimension(s) related to the research aim. For example, in this research, the most focus is in looking into three dimensions of alienation instead of looking at the whole concept. These dimensions, according to Seeman (1959), are powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Therefore, to avoid the complexity related to Marx's writing, this research will start by applying the most relevant dimensions of the concept as a tool to explain the social phenomena under discussion.

2.2.2 Emile Durkheim

Durkheim made significant contributions to the field of sociology, starting with his Ph.D. thesis *The Division of Labour in Society* (1960). Here, Durkheim elucidated the division of labour by explaining the difference between two types of solidarity: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. He argued that in the past, the source of solidarity in any given society was the similarity between people in terms of elements such as norms, behaviour and religion; he termed this "mechanical solidarity". However, in modern society and as a result of trends such as globalisation, which have caused the division of labour, the identification of greater differences between people became a necessity. These differences made them interdependent on each other with regards to their needs, creating solidarity in society ("organic society"). This organic solidarity is discussed by Durkheim in his discussion of "pathological forms" (1960). According to Durkheim (1960), there are three main pathological forms and their consequences, emerging as a result of the division of labour.

The first is called "the anomic division of labour". This occurs when the individual is isolated due to specialisation and loses the ability to integrate with his work, causing lack of awareness of acceptable morals and a feeling of meaninglessness for the task; this situation becomes more critical as the division of labour increases. The concept of "anomie" was developed by Durkheim in *The Division of Labour in Society* to refer to a situation in which the individual has no clear image of how to behave or act because of the lack of rules and social standards, which is later referred to as "normlessness" (Durkheim, 1960). To add more clarity to this concept, Morrison (2006, p.226) defines anomie as "the state that results from the weakening of the powers of society which regulate social equilibrium by setting the acceptable level of social restraint".

The second pathological form is called “the forced division of labour”. This emerges as a result of inequality, when the individuals’ skills and abilities do not fit with their jobs, as employment, in this case, is based on economic power rather than qualifications. According to Durkheim, this situation surfaces when rapid changes occur in a society (Durkheim, 1960).

The third pathological form is what Besnard (2005) calls “bureaucratic”. This occurs as a result of high levels of specialisation and poor coordination, wherein the production job becomes complicated and easy tasks trigger exhaustion.

Alexander and Smith (2005) suggested that the division of labour logically appears in four forms instead of three. If the three forms of division labour are “anomic”, “forced division of labour” and “bureaucratic”, the fourth form is “alienation”. Alienation in this context refers to the performance of an insignificant job, where the worker acts like a cog in a machine (Alexander and Smith, 2005). In other words, Durkheim highlights jobs that involve small unimportant tasks compared to other jobs and evaluates the contribution of these tasks to the organisation’s outcome; this is what Marx and Weber call “meaninglessness”.

The concept of meaninglessness is considered by Seeman (1959) to be one of the dimensions of alienation. Durkheim seems to agree with Marx in terms of meaninglessness, where alienation emerges in a situation where the worker feels his work is insignificant. However, this agreement between Marx and Durkheim is limited to the meaning of the concept of meaninglessness. For Marx, the cause of meaninglessness is capitalism, while for Durkheim, meaninglessness is a form of pathology that could be overcome by good management.

According to Gabel (2018), it is still possible to link the views of Durkheim to work alienation. As mentioned earlier, Durkheim saw what Marx referred to as alienation from one’s peers, or “self-estrangement”, as anomie or normlessness (Lukes, 1977). In contemporary times, this situation of anomie has been found to describe the working system, where people who are working in the same organisation and separate themselves informally in terms of religion, family, culture and political structures cause unnecessary divisions among workers (Krier and Worrell, 2016; Tittenbrun, 2016). For Durkheim, work alienation is not a result of the working structure, which includes class divisions and social classes. Rather, it occurs as a result of people losing the core social norms that should make it possible for them to coexist with each other regardless of the social class they belong to (Grills, 2017). Interestingly, Lodhi (2018), in contrast to Durkheim's point of view, suggests that anomie and normlessness are increasing by the day. Thus, while Durkheim claims that the phenomenon of anomie needs only time to overcome itself, Lodhi (2018) provides a very little indication of it coming to an end on its own. In other words, time is not enough to decrease anomie and normlessness; in contrast, Lodhi's (2018) point of view is that these will increase in time.

Contemporary research also provides analyses, comparisons and critiques of the writings of Marx and Durkheim. While Marx saw class division as a negative phenomenon, Durkheim underlined the positive impact of class division. In Durkheim's view, when there is class division, it makes way for interdependence to exist, given that all people cannot belong to the same class and that one class relies on the other to meet some of their basic social needs (Krier and Worrell, 2016). Thus, Tittenbrun (2016) argued that Durkheim would associate the cause of work alienation with the breakdown of social bonds existing between workers and their larger communities, rather than with relations between the worker and the workplace. Grills (2017) further opines that if people had a strong social identity, anomie would not exist. They would be able to connect with each other in a better way, regardless of the type of role they are assigned at work, or the social class they belong to.

Contemporary researchers perceive that the solution to work alienation might lie in the ability to control the anomie or normlessness which emerges from the fragmentation of social identity (Lodhi, 2018). Sharma (2018) states that work alienation will decrease when the ethical values of an organisation move closer to the ethical values of its employees. Thus, with a strong social identity, one would not see work relationships as different from any other social relationship, and so workers would gain closer relations with both their work and their peers.

2.2.3 Max Weber

Weber's work has received a large amount of attention from sociologists and has been translated into many languages. This includes his most significant contributions, such as his essays on sociology and his book titled *Economy and Society*. Marx, Durkheim and Weber all agreed that the new industrialising world places negative pressures on individuals, though they differed in their emphasis. For Weber the conclusion of industrialisation was “rationalisation”, where the individual is confined and restricted by institutions and bureaucracy to act only rationally and not according to needs and desires.

According to Gerth and Mills (2009), the main concept on which Weber focuses in his writings is rationalisation. Rationalisation refers to a system of rules and regulations developed to organise different processes inside modern society in order to achieve goals efficiently. Weber believed in the importance of rationalisation in the workplace. However, he argued that rationalisation regulations could be increased so much so as to become superfluous. In this case, as Weber explained, individuals’ values, emotions and motivations will no longer have a significant influence on their interactions because they become controlled by rationality. Thus, individuals will act like machines with no consideration for their unique nature, such as feelings, emotions and thoughts. Therefore, the very spirit of humanity will be impacted upon negatively as a result of rationalisation. Weber’s argument shows that rationalisation is associated with the division of labour and bureaucracy, which will constrict individuals, provoking feelings of alienation (Giddens, 1971).

Moreover, Weber shows that individuals are motivated by finding significance in their work; however, large organisations take over the most important activities in society, fulfilling basic needs, education and even personal care. This means that personal goals are replaced by organisational goals, causing alienation in the individual (Gerth and Mills, 2009). Weber’s work highlighted the potential for this to emerge in bureaucratic organisations as they tend to adopt a system of rules and regulations that might become restrictive as they grow rapidly with the expansion of such organisations (Gerth and Mills, 2009).

Although Weber’s point of view on alienation is explained by the concept of rationalisation, there is a correspondence between the ideas of Marx, Durkheim and Weber on alienation. Weber’s opinion about the worker who replaces his own goal with that of the organisation is compatible with Marx’s opinions on the alienation of productive activity, i.e. “controlledness”, as Weber shows that work alienation is caused by stripping the worker’s activity of any feelings, emotions and thinking – the fundamental characteristics that are considered to be core elements of human nature. Moreover, there could be a correspondence between Marx, Durkheim, and Weber’s ideas about alienation in terms of “meaninglessness” when working in insignificant jobs in the workplace. Additionally, Weber’s explanation seems to agree with Durkheim’s with regard to the negative effects of bureaucracy on the organisation, which Durkheim described as a form of social pathology. However, Weber adds a further explanation that bureaucracy causes alienation.

The bureaucracy which Weber discussed in his writings that could create alienation in the workplace is much discussed in the research literature on contemporary organisations, particularly public organisations (Bonjean and Grimes, 1970; DeHart-Davis and Pandey, 2005).

Weber argued that alienation is created as a result of the legal-rational authority that exists in the workplace (Low et al., 2016). This form of legal-rational authority aims to influence the way organisations are structured to form bureaucracies (Gerth and Mills, 2009). Weber viewed bureaucracy as the best form of authority, a view shared by many contemporary researchers (Beetham, 2018; Ross, 2017). Dolan and Rosenbloom (2016) explain that the relationship between bureaucracy and efficiency in authority is that it helps determine how structures should be formed, how information should flow within the structure, and how business operations should be delivered (Cockerham, 2015). However, Bennis (2017) confirms that the presence of strict bureaucracies creates room for work alienation.

The reason for the claim put forward by Bennis (2017) is that in any bureaucratic organisational structure, workers are confined to specific types of scope or realms of operation. While this confinement is not specifically what Marx referred to, it refers to parallels between Weberian and Marxian thought on how alienation can be caused by the division of labour. Workers exist in the workplace without crossing certain lines of authority and responsibility, which confine them (Turner and Factor, 2014). For example, in contemporary business organisations, employees have specific leaders or supervisors who they report to. This is mostly determined by the department or division the employee is working in. When this situation exists, it increases the chance of work alienation since the lines of workers and certain components of their work hardly cross, creating the kind of dissociation that Marx referred to (Compton and Meier, 2017). It is interesting to find that in most modern companies, specific workers are held accountable for specific outcomes from work, mainly because their mandated authorities and lines of operations do not associate them with certain work processes.

2.2.4 Fredrick Taylor

Taylorism is an approach invented by Fredrick Taylor and presents a scientific approach to management. It based on the scientific method and is used to figure out the most efficient way of product process in order to increase productivity. Taylorism stresses that managers must be the holders of knowledge, and all brainwork and problem solving should be taken away from the labourers. He also maintains that control of the task rests in the hands of management, and finally, every task is pre-planned by management (Taylor, 2012). Therefore, the aim is to achieve efficiency by determining specific steps in producing a product and to produce it in as little time as possible, thereby making as many products as possible and decreasing the cost of production (Taylor, 2012). Greenwood (2012) argued that jobs depend on the repetition of similar tasks without the need to think, which is typical in modern factories. The conception of scientific management brought about the erosion of the labour process, alienating and degrading human labour. According to Braverman (1998), Taylorism takes power away from the worker, who supposedly has knowledge and skills, and gives power to the owner of the organisation. The effects of scientific management on labourers are intellectual because this approach leads to a reduction of workers to cogs in machines (Caselli, 2017).

Indeed, Unguren et al. (2016) found that activity type was the most effective variable in identifying the organisational alienation levels of employees. Basically, the concept of work alienation was more concerned with workers undertaking low skills jobs, such as those working on an assembly line in a factory, than individuals working at high skills jobs such as professionals. Bartha (2013) argues that most low-skill, low-wage and low-prestige jobs are examples of the contemporary application of scientific management.

However, alienated individuals are not necessarily members of the proletariat class but could be professionals (Case, 2008; Mann, 2001; Nutbeam et al., 1993) or even students (Carlson, 1995; Dhondt et al., 2018). Therefore, alienation is not limited to factories and could affect any organization. Studies, such as Harvie (2000) and Yun et al. (2017), also demonstrate that work alienation is not limited to individuals holding low-skilled jobs and can occur among professionals, such as nurses, doctors, engineers and teachers, for example, the National Curriculum in schools, and professional standards for doctors.

There is an emerging orientation towards the application of Taylorism among professionals, thus, the scientific approach to management can be found to affect individuals in high-skills, high-wage and high prestige jobs. For example, professionals who are not always considered to be members of management but who work under the control of their managers, such as doctors and professors, can be given as examples of the application of scientific management (Oshagbemi, 1999). However, the nature of professional work cannot be subject to Taylorism. Mather and Seifert (2011) argued that Taylorism in education contrasts with teachers and lecturers' expectations regarding autonomy and self-regulation. Professionals need an amount of freedom in their work (Hamilton, 2007).

Taylorism was developed essentially to facilitate the management of business to make a profit. However, it has been extended to public organisations (Lynch, 2014). The nature of professionals' jobs is quite different from that of non-professionals' jobs, thus, it might be inappropriate to apply the principles of Taylorism to individuals in these professions. For example, in contrast to non-professionals' tasks, those carried out by professionals are not repetitive and the focus is on quality rather than quantity. Mirrlees and Alvi (2014, p.51) refer to "massive open online courses" (MOOCs) as an example of Taylorism of education in that the aim of these courses is to reduce costs and increase efficiency by making a limited number of professors teach a huge number of students. Allmer (2018) argues that this hugeness in universities is caused by a focus on quantity instead of quality. However, universities, hospitals and other institutions are required to be accountable for the quality of the services they provide. Thus, it seems inappropriate to apply a Taylorist approach to professional jobs.

Furthermore, there is evidence that Taylorism also affects the autonomy of professionals (Wise et al., 2017). This affection might reduce the performance of professionals and restrict their power. This might be the reason behind the deskilling of professionals. For instance, Ovetz (2015) points out that the phenomenon of deskilling among university professors is attributed by a number of writers to Taylorism within academia. The perception of a higher level of control of workers may create higher levels of stress and uncertainty regarding their roles and thus may also increase the sense of alienation by creating feelings of powerlessness, meaningless, isolation and self-estrangement (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2016; Mullins and Christy, 2016; Watson, 2004)

Yadav et al. (2012) found that there is a positive correlation between alienation and occupational stress.

In addition, changes in professional relationships at work can also be seen in the experience of social workers where the role has shifted from professional values and the identity of the worker to organisational and bureaucratic accountability and documentation (Burton and Van den Broek, 2008). These transformations from professional to organisational accountabilities create alienation between the worker and the organisation as they may create feelings of self-estrangement as the worker's personal identity as a social worker is eroded by the organisation's need for a higher level of control (Mullins and Christy, 2016).

Organisational changes are arguably a part of the contemporary organisational context, but they can create tensions in areas such as monitoring where the organisation has higher levels of control, which may lead to an increased sense of powerlessness by the worker; this may be higher in professional contexts than in non-professional ones (Burton and Van den Broek, 2008; Russell, 2012). In this term, Barrett (2004) suggested that the organisation needs to apply an appropriate control strategy that ensures the autonomy needed by the worker. Thus, the appropriate control strategy might differ depending on the situation, and what is suitable for one type of work might not be appropriate for another.

Reviewing the classical writings of alienation from the past to recent times provides a good starting point for the investigation of other relevant concepts in relation to work alienation. The next sections will capture how alienation is addressed in related to contemporary sociological research. Topics such as work alienation and workplace technology, and work alienation and gender will be discussed.

2.3 Use of the Alienation Concept in Sociological Research

Most contemporary writers discuss the topic of work alienation with reference, either direct or indirect, to the ideas of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Taylor, or by referring to the dimensions of alienation outlined by Seeman (1959). Despite the changing contexts between classic and contemporary ideas of alienation, it endures as a key concept for researchers to understand within contemporary organisations (Conway et al., 2018).

Seeman (1959, 1983) makes a great contribution in comprehensively and clearly defining and explaining the concepts alienation from a social perspective. Seeman's writings on alienation are seen as one significant link between classical writings and contemporary research. Seeman synthesised the state of alienation to a concept based on five dimensions: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. Three of these dimensions are the most relevant to this research in terms of research aim and research context. These dimensions are powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Thus, these dimensions will be explained later in more detail.

Several contributions in contemporary studies identify and explain the concept of alienation. For example, Pelit et al. (2015) define work alienation as the state of the worker's loss of control over the product they produce or the service they offer, resulting in the individual's psychological and/or physical withdrawal from the organisation. Mottaz (1981) proposed that alienation is a negative situation demonstrating the thwarted expectations of individuals by organisational structures, values, rules and relations. In the same vein, Nair and Vohra (2009) posit that alienation is a state of disconnection from one's work, the context or self, while Chen et al. (2012) posit that it evokes a feeling of being dissatisfied with one's job and the inability to realise one's identity within the organisation. Brannen and Peterson (2009) point out that work alienation could be a result of control over the pace and methods of work. Studies such as Nair and Vohra (2009) have tried to develop a system of measurement of work alienation in order to facilitate its detection in workers. These contributions have concentrated on one or a few dimensions of alienation. Seaman's contribution discussed earlier presents a more comprehensive definition of alienation.

This section illustrates how the concept of alienation in classical writing is engaged with other concepts in contemporary studies with the aim of using the lens of alienation to understand social phenomena in organisations. This section will discuss the most significant topics relevant to the aim of this research. These topics are work alienation in an academic context, work alienation as related to gender and finally, work alienation under the circumstances of the global Covid-19 pandemic, considering the impact of both academic context and gender.

Researchers have confirmed the importance of the concept of alienation in both older and contemporary studies. Indeed, the concept of alienation is deep and has contributed significantly to explaining social phenomena. O'Donohue and Nelson (2012) claim that although alienation is a significant concept in explaining employees' behaviour, it has become rare and "unfashionable" in new studies, and contemporary researchers prefer to focus on modern concepts, such as satisfaction. O'Donohue and Nelson (2014) continued their research on the concept of alienation by arguing that the use of the concept is appropriate as long as it is discovered at the external level (the organisation) and the internal level (the worker). Indeed, different work-related issues, such as absence, sicknesses and employee turnover, have been considered many times in the context of work alienation (Tummers and Den Dulk, 2013). Referring to the fundamental issue rather than focusing on symptoms is the first step to solve the problem as this allows researchers to get to the roots of the issue and increases the efficiency of the solutions. Thus, using a comprehensive concept such as work alienation as a lens to understand behaviour can provide a deeper understanding of the situation, identifying fundamental issues rather than focusing on symptoms and so making solutions more effective. Yuill (2011) confirms the importance of using the concept of alienation in modern times to explore and explain workers' emotions and social aspects. O'Donohue and Nelson (2014) found that the concept of alienation has contemporary relevance by applying it to two levels: external to the worker, such as organisation, and internal to the individual himself.

Researchers have claimed that the concept of alienation has an ambiguous and unclear meaning (Aberbach, 1969; Fischer, 1976; Kon, 1967). In addition, researchers such as Kanungo (1982) and Nair and Vohra (2012) have exerted efforts to bring clarity to the meaning of work alienation. However, this unclear meaning causes researchers to avoid any discussion of alienation in their research. This leads to the disregarding of a rich, valuable and deep concept. Thus, clear guidance is required to overcome the ambiguity and complexity that surrounds the concept. The need for clarity has arisen largely because the concept of alienation has been used differently by writers and philosophers in different contexts and for different aims. The concept of alienation as expressed by Marx focused on its meaning in the economic and political context, where each of these aspects has indirect relations with behaviour and a sense of alienation. Durkheim focused on anomie as connected to the social integration debate, while Weber used the concept of alienation to consider the controlling effects of bureaucracy and institutions. The dimensions of alienation developed by Seeman (1959) are now used in large-scale sociological studies and are agreed to be a well-demonstrated definition of the alienation concept in both quantitative and qualitative research (Dar, 2023; Dar and Jan, 2022; Unesi et al., 2023;

Korumaz et al., 2020; Agalday, 2022). However, there remains uncertainty over how these dimensions can explain individual workplace behaviour. For example, the exact elements that cause a sense of powerlessness remain unclear, and research is limited in determining what constitutes powerlessness in any specific context.

Alienation is a useful concept to inform research methodology and the analysis of work life in society. The concept lends itself well to the key issues in this research, namely, the nature of work in an academic context, gender and the effects on work of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the aim of this research is to use the three dimensions of alienation – powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation – to explore the nature of academic work, gender in academia and work in Covid-19 pandemic, particularly, the adoption of distance learning. This research will adopt Seeman's (1959) dimensions of work alienation as a comprehensive and clear guide. As stated, three of these dimensions have been selected as most relevant to the research aim and context: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. In addition, powerlessness and meaningless have corresponding aspects in the work of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Taylor. Moreover, these three dimensions are common and more related to discussions of alienation in the workplace.

One of the significant elements of this research is the implications of Saudi Vision 2030 and its impact on the workplace in terms of workplace alienation. Two specific changes resulting from Saudi Vision 2030 merit attention in this research, as it is important to determine their impact on employees. The first is the increase in women's participation in the workforce; included here is the empowerment of women in high leadership positions that have never been occupied by females. This aspect will be discussed with reference to gender segregation to provide more context for the situation and to facilitate its exploration according to the alienation dimension. Gender segregation appears in other studies related to concepts like power and powerlessness, which are relevant to alienation (Acker, 1990; Heilman, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2013). However, the foundational texts about alienation do not discuss gender segregation. Several interesting questions can be raised about the nature of alienation and, specifically, whether alienation is gendered. For example, do women experience alienation more than men? Or do women experience different forms of alienation?

The second impact of Saudi Vision 2030 is the rapid transformation of, and increasing dependency on, technology; one example is the use of remote working applications since the Covid-19 pandemic. Changes in technology, specifically remote working, are relevant to concepts such as power, powerlessness and isolation (Bates, 2000); thus, this aspect will be discussed under the concept of technology to provide a clear picture of the role of technology in the research context.

The illustration of the three dimensions of alienation is followed by an explanation of two relevant aspects of the context: gender segregation and technology.

2.3.1 Powerlessness

Powerlessness is one of the most dimensions most frequently discussed in the literature review in relation to occupational segregation. Power, powerlessness and empowerment are examples of concepts used in the discussion of the powerlessness dimension. Power, the opposite of powerlessness, can be defined as the ability or the perception of ability that enables individuals to influence others (Fiol et al., 2001). In contrast, powerlessness, according to Ashforth (1989), occurs when an employee experiences the inability to participate and loses autonomy in the organisation, while empowerment, according to Rappaport (1981, p.15) refers to “the process of enhancing the possibilities for people to control their own lives.”

In organisational settings, this can be conceptualised in several different ways (Gelfand et al., 2007). Geisler (2005) states that it is the organisation’s responsibility to create an environment that encourage employees’ self-worth, self-confidence and opportunity, and that allows employees to grow and develop their unique abilities with fewer organisational barriers.

The typology put forward by French and Raven (1959) is useful here. In work relationships there are six categories of social power that can be developed by individuals, namely, legitimate, reward, coercive, referent, expert and information. In organisations, individuals can have influence based on their position (legitimate power); their power to punish or reward (coercive or reward power); because they are sought by others for approval (referent power); because they control information that is needed for achieving goals (information power); or because they are skilled and competent (expert power) (Ragins and Winkel, 2011).

However, Feinberg et al. (2015) argue that position and power are not the same. A position is the status that the employee occupies, which provides prestige; power is the ability to take decisions and assume control, which is not necessarily reached by being in a high position.

There is a three-stage process in experiencing powerlessness through psychological adjustment. The first stage is reactance; here, there is an attempt by the individual to obtain the initially desired or expected control. Reactance can be seen in ways in which individuals react to the frustrations they perceive (Brehm and Brehm, 1981). In organisational settings, where the control systems are rigorous, they are less likely to succeed. The second stage is helplessness; here, individuals learn that the attempts they make are not effective and hence halt those attempts. Helplessness is seen as a state where the perception of the individual is that their behaviour determines their outcomes (Miller and Seligman, 1975). The third stage is work alienation; here, there is no desire from the individual to obtain anything more than the current status quo. This step is where the individual cognitively separates themselves from the workplace and the work, which results in them not being involved in the job. This has an impact on organisational identification (Kanungo, 1979). Finally, in researching a broad concept such as power, it is important to consider two aspects: the employee's autonomy and their control over other employees.

2.3.2 Meaninglessness

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the classical writings on alienation show that meaninglessness is one aspect of alienation. The review defines meaninglessness in the context of the workplace as referring to insignificant work tasks. This section will provide insight into the concept of meaninglessness and its opposite, meaningfulness, at work in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept. This will facilitate the achievement of the research aims and facilitate the recognition of academicians' sense of meaninglessness and/or meaningfulness in their work.

Seeman (1959) defined meaninglessness in two ways: first, the employee's sense of unawareness of the work, and second, the employee's lack of understanding that their behaviour results from their work. This definition will be added to the definition from the classical works, where meaninglessness is equated to insignificant work. In general, there are gaps in the current literature with regard to the meaningfulness concept. Studies have found that quantitative research is insufficient in defining it, and there is a call for qualitative studies to define meaningfulness within the context of different jobs (Bailey and

Madden, 2016; Bailey et al., 2018; Hufnagel and Spraul, 2022). Thus, using meaninglessness as a lens in this research will both enhance the definition of meaninglessness in the workplace context and enrich the definition of meaninglessness as presented in the literature.

Some interesting research has shown how meaninglessness is addressed in current academic work. For example, Blustein et al. (2023) define work using two dimensions: meaningfulness and decent work. They found that faculty members achieved the highest level in both meaningfulness and decent work. The reason is that their work has a direct effect on their students, and they enjoy both autonomy and good living conditions. Also, van Wingerden and Poell (2019) found that for teachers, work engagement and autonomy in the workplace enhance their sense of meaningfulness and therefore support their resilience. Bowie (1998) adopts the Kantian theory of meaningful work as a focal point in defining meaningful work in six aspects: “freely entered into, autonomy enables the worker to develop her rational capacities, provides a wage sufficient for physical welfare, supports the moral development of employees, is not paternalistic in the sense of interfering with the worker’s conception of how she wishes to obtain happiness” (p.1084). The studies above show that autonomy increases not only the employee’s sense of power but also their sense of meaning. This is partly in agreement with Artela et al.’s (2021) and Baumeister’s (1991) point of view that autonomy at work leads to a sense of being meaningful. Artela et al. (2021) also added the element of beneficence as increasing meaningfulness at work. In addition, as long as there is a good reason to do the work and this work is seen as valuable by others, the work will be considered meaningful (Baumeister, 1991; Veltman, 2016; Yssedal, 2023). This valuable work reflects the element of beneficence put forward earlier by Artela et al. (2021). Moreover, Lavy (2022) found that meaningfulness in work enhances work engagement because teachers know their work is valuable. Conversely, in the example above, van Wingerden and Poell (2019) state that engagement in work enhances the employee’s sense of meaningfulness.

This is interesting because if the engagement enhances a sense of meaningfulness, this means we will consider engagement to be a cause of meaningfulness. This viewpoint is supported by scholars who consider engagement in work to be the opposite of a sense of alienation, such as O’Donohue and Nelson (2012). Conversely, Ward (2023) argues that employees cannot achieve meaningfulness from their workplace if they exert their efforts to meet the organisation's goals rather than their own personal goals. This is exactly one of the dimensions in Marx's definition of alienation discussed earlier in this chapter. Ward (2023) adds that employees work for money, and not for a sense of engagement. However, it seems that there is no discrepancy between working for both money and a sense of engagement, and further discussion of this matter is needed.

Studies such as Steger et al. (2012) and Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) have tried to develop a means of measuring meaningful work. For example, Steger et al. (2012) developed a measurement of meaningful work presented in three circles. However, a few years later, Steger (2016) criticised the previous study, arguing that the issue is not the measurement of meaningful work itself but how we can best define the indexes of measurement. In this term, we can argue that identifying meaningful work starts from the employees themselves. A logical way to define the index of meaninglessness is, as mentioned earlier, through the use of a qualitative study. In addition, Bowie (1998) believes that it is more logical to define meaningful work according to the employees' point of view rather than that of the manager. Therefore, the concept of significant work differs from one context to another; for example, what constitutes meaningful work for a professional might not be the same as the way the term is defined by a non-professional worker. In this term, for each context there will be a definition of meaningful work factors. Hence, it is difficult to determine the specific factors that cause this sense unless employees are studied within a specific context.

2.3.3 Isolation

Isolation in the workplace is a significant issue that requires attention as it is related to one of the dimensions of alienation identified by Marx (1969). There are still gaps in the literature review with regard to loneliness in the workplace (Wright, 2009). According to Wright and Silard (2021), organisations should pay attention to the issue of loneliness, how it develops and its impact on employees and the organisation.

Isolation in the workplace is defined as the inability to have relationships with other employees. This includes experiencing difficulties in accessing information or asking for support. Isolation may have various causes, such as gender or ethnicity, virtual working as was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic, or the nature of the work (Dean, 1961; Marshall et al., 2007; Taha and Caldwell, 1993). These different reasons lead to the categorisation of workplace isolation into different types depending on their cause. The most frequent types of isolation discussed in the literature are: physical isolation related to the location of the work, virtual isolation, and professional isolation related to the nature of professional work (Bartel et al., 2012; Orhan et al., 2016; Sahai et al., 2020). Indeed, gender is also discussed as a reason for being isolated at work according to Holgate et al. (2011), and females are the most negatively affected by it (Olsen et al., 1995; Smith and Calasanti, 2005). This is interesting because this research involves physical isolation because of gender, which makes the situation more complicated. Another example of isolation at work is that of doctors who work in isolation wards during pandemics such as H1N1 (Wong et al., 2012).

Sahai et al. (2020, p. 2748) have identified multiple dimensions of isolation at work: "the lack of social support, lack of social interaction, lack of learning opportunity, lack of developmental opportunities and presence of physical isolation." In the literature, there are multiple opinions on what causes isolation at work. Most studies blame organisations for employees' isolation and they recommend creating an environment that protects employees from a sense of isolation (D'Oliveira and Persico, 2023; Erdil and Ertosun, 2011; Mohapatra et al., 2023). A few studies, notably Sahai et al. (2020), argue that isolation among employees is not only an organisational issue but may also be related to an employee's personality and their tendency towards being lonely, or to other factors such as the nature of the work.

Sense of isolation is one of the dimensions of alienation identified by Marx. Organisations need to pay attention to the causes of isolation in the workplace and create an environment that will prevent this among their staff. In doing so, organisations will reduce the chances of employees being alienated because of isolation and will thereby increase employees' wellbeing.

This section has illustrated how the concept of alienation is addressed in both classical and contemporary research. The argument show the depth of the concept and the complexity related to this deepness. Also, it shows correspond between classical writings in the dimensions of alienation. To overcome this complicity related to the concept, and to benefit from the rich concept of alienation, the research will be based on Seeman (1959)'s alienation dimensions. Finally, the focus in this research will be on three dimensions: powerlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation. The next section will discuss the two significant topics related to alienation: gender segregation and technology. This explanation will provide the context and will show how it is relevant to the dimension of alienation. As noted earlier, there is an interest in studying whether or not alienation is gendered, and the research setting of this study provides a chance to understand this connection between alienation and gender segregation.

2.4 Gender Segregation

Powerlessness as a dimension of alienation appears in the research significantly in relation to the topic of gender segregation. Charles and Bradley (2002) and Blackburn et al. (2002) define gender segregation as the domination of one gender over another based on the natural tendency and ability of males and females that determine job compatibility for each gender. This domination causes powerlessness for the other gender. Gender segregation is also a significant topic in the context of this research. Thus, this review will start with a definition of the concept of gender segregation. This will be followed by a discussion of the theories of gender segregation most relevant to this research. Then, a review of both gender segregation in western countries and gender segregation in Saudi Arabia is needed. This review argues that examining how gender segregation differs among cultures is an issue that should be considered in conducting research. Nevertheless, it should be clarified that the concept of gender segregation is broad, and the concept of occupational gender segregation in this research is mostly used with reference to gender segregation at work. Both concepts – general gender segregation and occupational gender segregation – arose in this research. Although general gender segregation is used to explain multiple instances of segregation, in this research, there is a specific focus on the context of work. For this reason, discussion of segregation will refer primarily to occupational gender segregation. Thus, starting with general gender segregation, it is more appropriate to introduce the concept of gender, as it is the main concept, and gender segregation theories, then we look at look at occupational gender segregation, which is a subsection of it.

2.4.1 The Concept of Gender Segregation in the Workplace

Occupational gender segregation can be defined as the extent to which men and women work in various occupational fields. The dissimilarity index D is regarded as a standard tool for determining the aggregate level of segregation (Duncan and Duncan, 1955). The index allows quantification of the percentage of workers who may need to change to another occupational group for the sake of adjusting each occupation's gender ratio to align with that of the overall gender ratio in the labour market.

A majority of women work in occupations that typically include predominantly female workers while most men work in occupations with predominantly male workers. This work allocation based on gender seems to be present from the earliest human societies and continues to dominate in the modern labour force as well; while divisions of labour based on gender tend to endure, the division of labour varies in forms and degree. For example, in hunting and gathering societies, men were primarily involved in big hunting activities while women gathered wild plants; both would hunt small animals. In contemporary market societies, women and men have been segregated in various occupations, based on workplace and sector (Preston, 1999).

Edward Gross (1968), in his article 'Plus ça Change: The Sexual Structure of Occupations over Time' was the first to introduce the concept of occupational gender segregation to social scientists. He showed the way of quantifying the degree of occupational segregation based on gender and how this could be outlined and traced over time by employing a dissimilarity index (a statistical method introduced in 1955 by Duncan and Duncan for different purposes), which enables the measurement of the percentage of men or women who may have to switch jobs to equalise the distribution for both.

By employing this method, Gross (1968) identified that the index did not change and remained virtually the same for the period from 1900 to 1960 at around 67%. This key finding set the stage for more research (Jacobs, 1989). Since the phenomenon is regarded to be so pervasive, distinctions have multiplied to enable analysis: vertical versus hierarchical, horizontal versus vertical, and occupational versus sectoral segregation.

In the initial debate, vertical segregation was defined as under (over) representation pertaining to a group of workers that were clearly identifiable based on their occupations or sectors at the top of an ordering by applying 'desirable' attributes – prestige, income, job stability, and so on. Horizontal segregation was defined as under (over) representation pertaining to that particular group in sectors or occupations that were not ordered based on any criterion, and this was also often signified as segregation *tout court*. Underrepresentation with regards to the top of occupation-specific ladders was generally included under the ‘vertical segregation’ heading, which is now more popularly referred as ‘hierarchical segregation’ (Mairhuber et al., 2009).

According to Watts (2001), occupational gender segregation refers to a situation where there is an obvious distributed gender bias across occupations as opposed to what would be consistent merely due to gender population and their overall shares of employment and regardless of the nature of job assignment. For example, according to Careersmart (2022), 97.78% of nursery nurses and assistances jobs in the UK are occupied by females, while 99.19% of vehicle technicians, mechanics and electricians are males. Thus, gender segregation can also refer to the jobs that are only dominated by men or only dominated by women (Guy and Newman, 2004; Kmec, 2005; Schultz, 2018). Gender segregation is often related to stereotypes, such as the notion that nursing is women’s work and engineering is men’s work. The stereotype in this context refers to a situation where a job is culturally gendered; its classification is based on the supposed characteristics of each gender, such as women being good communicators and carers, and men being creative (Evans, 2002; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2015; Ruble et al., 1984).

In general, the definitions above discuss how segregation is a cultural construction without referring to regulations that control gender segregation practice. Thus, it has a default informal source as social and cultural, as most, if not all, segregating laws and regulations have been dismantled in western countries. However, in other regions such as the Middle East, gender segregation is more rigid and formal because it is mandated by both culture and regulations. Given these differences, this study seeks to shed light on the terminological confusion in the concept of gender segregation. To more accurately conceptualise the multi-faceted gender segregation in Saudi Arabia, the thesis addresses both the western ideas of domination of occupations and the more formalised religious-legal restrictions on women’s participation in society generally and work specifically. To this end, the theory of patriarchy has been selected as the most relevant gender theory to underlie this research aim. It will be used to develop an argument that explains gender segregation in western and Middle Eastern countries. The following section will explore the extent to which patriarchy theory could explain gender segregation in these two contexts, and what the differences between them are.

2.4.2 Theories of Gender Segregation

Researchers adopt a number of theories in discussing the topic of occupational segregation. One such theory is human capital theory, which places humans as a central resource of the economy and the greatest capital asset in society (Sweetland, 1996; Wuttaphan, 2017). Based upon this idea, there is an emphasis on improving the education and training of employees, managers and employers, as well as on their health and wellbeing as a route to greater productivity and efficiency. Human capital theorists may assume that women have a low attachment to the labour force due to family obligations (Mincer and Polachek, 1974). Thus, it is less likely that women will invest in training and so tend to look for employment in occupations that have relatively low entry/exit barriers, less emphasis on firm-specific training, and low penalties for discontinuous work histories (Grybaite, 2006). Even though such occupations pay lower wages, they may provide other "compensating differentials" like pleasant working conditions, flexible scheduling and fewer responsibilities (Cotter et al., 2003; Ward, 2001). The theory views such decision making as a form of "rational choice" where experience, skills and qualifications are forms of capital which individuals will decide to invest in or not for economic return (Polacheck, 1981).

However, such rational economic choice relies on the fact that men generally receive higher pay than women, whatever the reason for the pay difference. Such a situation is self-reproducing; since men can earn higher than their partners, investment in men's human capital and their employment is prioritised, and so men continue to be valued more and have higher earning power (Cotter et al., 2003). This concept of human capital attempts to explain low wages for female workers, suggesting valid reasons for a lesser value of women's qualifications, leading to pay differences. This premise is not valid as it does not legitimately explain gender-based differences (Browne, 2000). Indeed, Becker (2009) found it an embarrassment that human capital theory consistently failed to explain women's earnings.

Pay levels typically indicate experience and qualifications, hence the use of "human capital" as a single phrase that encompasses skills, experience and education; however, it is conceptually inaccurate and counter-productive when it concerns gender differences. Umbach (2007) considers the issue of inequity increase as women receive less pay than men to be an issue of human capital theory. However, this inequity according to Probert

(2005) does not result from discrimination against women (for example, being promoted to a professorial position), but from demographic changes, such as high rates of divorce.

Thus, it is somewhat unclear what insight human capital theory can offer on the issue of gender segregation, and the theory offers little account of occupational segregation. These limitations encourage further investigation of theoretical perspectives on the reality of occupational segregation. Human capital theory is popular in a discussion of sex segregation, but it is more relative to the economic perspective. In addition, researchers, as mentioned earlier, question its ability to explain occupational segregation in depth, particularly in terms of social research (Herrera et al., 2019). Thus, human capital theory will be eliminated from this research because it is incompatible with the research aim. The next section will illustrate the patriarchy theory and will discuss how it may help in exploring and understanding occupational segregation.

Patriarchy theory is the most relevant gender theory to the research aim. It is based on the idea that gender division can be understood better using a social phenomenon called patriarchy (Gu, 2019). According to Walby (1989, p. 227), "Patriarchy is the systematic subordination of women to men. This subordination has structural and cultural facets. The structural facet is evident in organizational patterns that enforce female subordination. The cultural facet is manifest in values that legitimize female subordination." The central concept of organised subordination supports the validity of using this theory to understand gender segregation (Beechey, 1979).

Patriarchal subordination involves male dominance; power; the restriction of women from attaining the best roles in work; the maintenance of women's dependency on men, including economic dependence through limited female earning power; and typically, the exploitation of women in public and private life. Women are generally excluded from economic power in the family by systematic means such as gender-restricted inheritance, as well as by public limits on their rights to property ownership (Strid and Hearn, 2022). Patriarchy has validity historically as men have long occupied powerful positions. Whilst there has been much change in recent history, women still lack equal access to power worldwide (Gu, 2019).

Grasmick et al. (1996) found that a patriarchal family discourages their female children from risky behaviour which affect their future job choices, for example, avoiding police work or authority positions. Similarly, exercising power in the workplace for those females will be less likely. In terms of gender segregation in academia, Bagilhole and Goode (2001), based on data collected prior to 1992 at a UK university, found that although promotion in academia is supposed to depend on one's own merits and efforts, patriarchy in academia does affect the prospect of promotion, making it easier for males than females. Raymond and Canham (2022) conducted a study on 30 academic females from three southern African universities. The study found that women in general experience gender segregation because of patriarchy that obstructs their academic progress. Moreover, because of patriarchy, women cannot achieve the promotions that they deserve. The number of male professors is higher than that of female professors. In addition, men show insulting behaviour to women inside universities, such as ignoring them and insulting their importance to the workplace (Raymond and Canham, 2022).

These multiple systems and the practice of differential treatment and regulation within patriarchy, including in the workplace, indicate a clear link with occupational segregation according to gender, which warrants more in-depth consideration. One insight into the link between patriarchy and occupational segregation is the work of Romero-Hall et al. (2018). Romero-Hall et al. (2018) explain gender segregation in terms of patriarchy by using the concept of work–life boundaries. Work–life boundaries are blurring for academic women for two reasons: the amount of academic work and the norms of patriarchy as women bear the primary responsibility for children. This issue was exacerbated with the Covid-19 pandemic response and is considered within this study.

Therefore, patriarchy theory offers two significant ways to understand gender segregation: first, the basic meaning of patriarchy of women's subordination to men in the workplace, and second, the way in which patriarchy places the responsibilities of caring for children and domestic work on females. The theory of patriarchy is important to understand behaviour in general. However, there is a need to understand the individual lived experience of women. This individual experience will grant a deep understanding of occupational segregation from the perspective of the employees themselves. To this end, I will take advantage of a rich concept that could capture the individual experience from different dimensions (in this study, power, meaning and not being isolated). This concept is alienation. In this research, the concept of alienation will be used to enhance the understanding of gender segregation by allowing the further examination and analysis of the effects of gender segregation. The next section seeks to classify the application of occupational segregation, particularly in terms of culture. Western culture and Saudi culture are the two cultures that will be explored.

2.4.3 Occupational Gender Segregation in Western Countries

The issue of gender segregation in western countries such as the UK and the US has attracted the attention of researchers in both old and recent studies. Studies such as Kanter (1987) and Greene and Kirton (2016) clarify that women do not hold equal power in the workplace, which has an impact on their success in the workplace. In other words, while gender segregation significantly exists, there is no evidential basis for its justification. Heilman (2012) states that although the organisation exerts efforts to overcome bias against women in the workplace, it is still significant. Wright (2015) points out that even by empowering women and supporting them to take on “men's” jobs, underlying social and cultural norms informally reduce the impact of such measures and can significantly stigmatise women who choose to take on new roles. A study conducted by Abendroth et al. (2017) of a large sample of 5022 employees in 94 organisations around Germany showed that empowering women and giving them the same positions as men will not directly reduce gender segregation because gender segregation is also affected by organisational context. This suggests that the context, such as workplace culture and stereotypes, has a stronger impact than regulations.

According to Heilman (2012) and Fitzgerald (2013), gender stereotypes impact workers' expectations of women's abilities in the workplace, which causes discrimination and bias against women. Acker (1990, p.140) described the stereotype which assumes that males are better than females as a “ubiquitous human invention”. In general, two sources play an essential role in enhancing gender segregation: culture and state intervention (Blackburn et al., 2002). In the examples above, the source of gender segregation is culture. However, the issue of segregation becomes more complicated when it is enhanced by both culture and state intervention. This makes the practice of segregation supported by the law more formal. This is the case in Saudi Arabia, although this has started to change since the introduction of Saudi Vision 2030. In contrast, in western culture, occupational gender segregation now has a predominantly informal source. It is notionally voluntary, related to norms and not imposed by state law and regulations. It also refers to occupations with skewed participation.

2.4.4 The Case of Saudi Arabia

In contrast to western countries, gender segregation in Saudi Arabia has both formal (legally enforced) and informal (based on norms) sources, and both sources experience religious enforcement in some cases. It is a relatively uncommon research topic, and understandably, there is more limited research literature upon which to draw to investigate it. Culture is seen to be a significant aspect that must be considered when discussing gender segregation. According to Hakiem (2022a), although the literature is rich with gender segregation research, most of these studies have been conducted in western contexts, and gender segregation in Saudi Arabia is rather different in meaning and features of segregation.

This section will start with an overview of the cultural background to provide a basis for a discussion of gender segregation in Saudi Arabia. Then, a description of Saudi Vision 2030 will be given. After that, an overview of gender segregation in Saudi Arabia will be presented.

2.4.4.1 Saudi Culture

It is important for a researcher to take into account the culture of the community under investigation. For example, according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (2003), the culture of Saudi Arabia is a significant element in explaining employee behaviour. According to Siltanen (2021) and Fitzgerald (2013), gender segregation should be discussed within the context and circumstances of the employees because gender segregation stereotypes are different between cultures; thus, it is better to understand the implications of these stereotypes on employees within a particular culture. Another reason that supports the importance of considering culture in gender studies is that differences between communities are natural, and these differences must not be judged as right or wrong by other societies; for instance, considering gender segregation as evidence of inequality is not always correct (Barone, 2011; Cohen, 2013).

Therefore, it is important to understand gender segregation in context. Where one society does not consider a form of behaviour to be discrimination, another society may or may not see it as discrimination regardless of the lived experience of the women and men in that specific context. That means there is a difference in how groups are treated, depending on whether or not this treatment is considered to be discrimination based on their social and cultural norms. Indeed, Abalkhail (2017) and Winkel and Strachan (2020) state clearly in their study that Saudi culture is significant when conducting gender studies, that Saudi culture is relatively uncommon, and that individuals generally have some difficulties understanding behaviours outside of their own cultural context.

Saudi Arabia is a religious country. The law of Saudi Arabia is mostly based on the Shar'ia: Qur'an (the Holy Book of Islam) and Sunnah (the Prophet Mohammed's words and actions). Three aspects of Saudi culture significantly affect work practice and the workplace in Saudi Arabia. It is helpful to clarify these to begin a comprehensive understanding of the context.

First, according to the dominant interpretation of Islam in Saudi Arabia, women must wear a hijab in front of men, except their husband, father, brothers and sons, and in other special cases as mentioned in the Qur'an (An-Noor 24:31). Therefore, to make work comfortable for men and women under the Islamic tradition, the government has physically separated males and females in most organisations' buildings. This allows more privacy and flexibility to employees, particularly women who, once physically separated, are free to dress up and wear makeup without wearing the hijab inside their workplace.

The question can be raised of whether there is an advantage to women to be in a female-only workplace. For example, they may feel more comfortable, and they will be given privacy in accordance with their culture. This study addresses how being in a female-only workplace impact on females. Thus, as mentioned earlier, increasing job satisfaction will reduce feelings of work alienation (Daly and Dee, 2006). Moreover, this harmony among the members of an organisation might create united norms, and these will reduce feelings of anomie according to Durkheim (1960).

The majority of Saudi women prefer working in the public sector, particularly in educational institutions. One reason is that public organisations are stricter in applying separation between men and women, which is more compatible with their culture. According to the World Bank Group (2022), about 76% of Saudi women are working in public organisations, while 24% are working in private companies or are self-employed. Saudi Arabia is witnessing significant changes that bring a chance of clashes with society's norms which cause differences between what employees believe and what the workplace requires, such as mixing genders in the workplace. However, the World Bank Group points out that, as a result of changing rules and regulations and in line with application of Saudi Vision 2030, the new generation is more accepting of working in mixed workplaces. This is supported by Alhazmi (2022) in his qualitative research on 70 Saudi academics; he found that both males and females of the new generation are more flexible and show “less fear” in dealing with the other gender, and the issue of dealing with the other gender will fade in the future. This is compatible with Durkheim. Time, according to Durkheim, is a way of overcoming anomie.

Another significant aspect of Saudi culture is that it is the legal responsibility of the man to provide the family’s entire living expenses for his wife and children, a legal interpretation of the Qur’an in Saudi Arabia (An-Nisa 4:34). Then, women according to custom are responsible for the household, including childcare, cooking and cleaning. This fundamentally reflects many “traditional” societies, including those in western culture, as identified in patriarchy theory. Moghadam (2002) stated that there is a patriarchal gender contract, which can be seen as the basis for Saudi Arabia as a Middle Eastern country, which positions the woman as the homemaker who is dependent on the male earner. Such fixed roles provide challenges for all individuals; males have more power in the workplace and have the priority of being in charge as a result of being the provider for their family. Critically, Saudi women wishing to become financially independent or assist in financially supporting the family face significant resistance, while custom still puts the all the responsibility for household work on them.

2.4.4.2 Saudi Vision 2030

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a huge GDP of 1.756 trillion USD and a population that exceeds 28 million (CIA, 2017). There are huge gaps in terms of gender, not just in work environments but at the larger societal level. Based on the gender gap score, according to a recent report on the global gender gap, Saudi Arabia has a position of 141 out of the total 149 countries assessed, while it is placed in 93rd position in terms of educational attainment for women and 143rd in terms of participation of women in the labour force (Zahidi et al., 2018). The report postulates that this is especially true for women in managerial positions.

Several initiatives have recently been provided in line with Saudi Vision 2030, announced by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on 25 April 2016. The economic perspective of this vision is to ensure that Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil is reduced and that its economy is developed and diversified in other industry sectors like education, health, renewable energy, transportation and tourism. The development plan to achieve this vision includes the use of local talent in the workforce, which included women. Consequently, there has been a steady increase in the participation of women over 15 years of age in the labour force, rising to 22% in 2017 compared to a mere 14% in 1990. Despite this, the numbers are still low, especially given how many women currently enter higher education (Global Gender Gap Report, 2018). While 60% of graduates in 2016 were women, only 20% of those entered the job market (Young, 2016).

The application of Saudi Vision 2030, which includes empowering women in the workplace, conflicts with previous and probably current practices, where men have power in the workplace. Saudi Vision 2030 has already made significant changes in terms of empowering women as mentioned earlier, with evidence provided in the Methodology chapter. According to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi law will continue to be based on the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*; however, he has promised that customs and traditions will be changed, and that work will be based only on the original texts of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, which are believed to be flexible and adaptable to any time and place (AlArabiya, 2021). One example is the misunderstanding of the context of An-Nisa 4:34, as some people take these words out of context and interpret them as saying that males have authority over females; in fact, the meaning here is that males are responsible for females, which is compatible with other Islamic traditions. According to the Ministry of Justice in Saudi Arabia, this meaning of An-Nisa 4:34 must be declared: Work is the responsibility of males and the honour of females (Almuqren, 2006). Thus, if males in the workplace used to have greater power than females due to culture, there is now a significant movement toward restructuring the distribution of power in workplaces. A good example of empowering women in the education sector of Saudi Arabia is that in 2020, the Saudi government appointed three Saudi women as cultural attachés for the first time. One of them is Dr Amal Fatani, who was appointed as the Saudi cultural attaché of the United Kingdom in London (Alarabiya, 2020).

Saudi Vision 2030 is based on the fact that Saudi Arabia has advantages that should be used. First, the location of Saudi Arabia gives the nation links to three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. Also, Saudi Arabia plays a significant leading role among Muslims and in the Arab world. Finally, Saudi Arabia has multiple resources that should be invested in in order to create a sustainable economy.

Saudi Vision 2030 has been developed based on three themes, which encapsulate the nation's advantages. These themes are: 'a vibrant society', 'a thriving economy' and 'an ambitious nation' (Saudi Vision 2030, 2023). Thus, these three themes are the main goals that Saudi Arabia aims to achieve by 2030. Saudi Vision 2030 provides a detailed explanation of each theme, together with its goals. This is called the Saudi Vision 2030 realisation programs. These programs outline the steps to be taken towards meeting the goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

In order to track the progress and achievements of Saudi Vision 2030, the program's website provides open sources, known as the 'achievement booklet'; these show the progress Saudi Vision 2030 made from its inception in 2016 to 2021. The numbers are promising and show that goals are being achieved. Indeed, in an interview, Prince Mohammed bin Salman agreed that the achievements of Saudi Vision 2030 have taken place more quickly than expected.

The themes most closely related to this research are those of 'thriving economy' and 'ambitious nation'. The published reports provide examples of the significant progress made from the time before Saudi Vision 2030 (before April 2016) to 2020. This research will shed light on the aspects most related to the research topic. For example, non-oil revenues increased from 166 SAR before 2016 to 369 SAR in 2020. Also, the participation of women in the workforce increased from 19.4% before 2016 to 33.2% in 2020 (Saudi Vision 2030, 2023). Saudi Arabia established organisations related to technology, such as the Saudi Company for Artificial Intelligence (SCAI) and the Saudi Authority for Data and Artificial Intelligence (SDAIA) (Saudi Vision 2030, 2023). Moreover, in terms of ranking, Saudi Arabia has achieved significant progress; for example, it is now in third place among G20 countries in having and applying advanced technology. It has also jumped globally in terms of internet speed from 135th place in 2017 to fifth place in 2020. Also, Saudi Arabia has increased its electronic government services from 60% before Saudi Vision 2030 to 80% after the implementation of the plan (Saudi Vision 2030, 2023) (see Appendix 4).

2.4.4.3 Occupational Gender Segregation in Saudi Arabia

This section starts with a general and theoretical overview of gender segregation in Saudi Arabia. It provides descriptions and examples of gender segregation in western contexts that have similarities with gender segregation in Saudi Arabia. Then the section will concentrate on occupational gender segregation in Saudi Arabia.

In work relationships, women are not perceived to have social power compared to men (Carli, 2001). Gender stereotypes determine power perceptions (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989), and women in most cases are not seen as being competent (Broverman et al., 1972), with implications in the work environment. Women perceive a lack of control over problems and feel they cannot solve the root cause of these issues, thereby feeling powerless. This has an impact on their beliefs, how they perceive that the causes and solutions to their issues are not within their control, and how society as a whole experiences oppression. This also leads to women not having access to resources that might empower them, and consequently, there is a strong sense of disempowerment due to negative emotions (Thomas and Gonzales-Prendes, 2008). Powerlessness that is not desired or expected results in work alienation, in reactance as well as helplessness.

Cohen (2013) points out that gender segregation can be found *within* occupations, not only *between* them. This definition represents the meaning of gender segregation in this research. In addition, gender roles are particularly embedded in cultural practices, and along with structural barriers, opportunities for women are further limited. Saudi Arabia is one of the countries governed by patriarchal structures, as explained earlier, which impact work, gender and social relations (Haghighat-Sordellini, 2010; Moghadam, 2003; Offenhauer 2005; World Bank, 2003). Dominant masculinities are thus prevalent within higher-value job roles (Acker, 1992). In the academic context under study, this means that there are two single-sex university campuses. Women academics are on a separate campus with female students, in accordance with regulations over separation in public life, with equal pay for female academics and their own female hierarchy within the female campus. The two single-sex campuses interact in a dominant/subservient way with actual management, and academic curriculum decisions are made by the main (male) campus for both campuses. Thus, the male sphere maintains the higher-value roles and the position of the university manager has to date never been occupied by a female (more about King Saud University is provided in the Methodology chapter).

In general, society defines the role of a woman as a mother and homemaker, and the man is the one who protects and supports his wife and family. Even if a woman decides to contribute to the family's income, it is her choice, not her responsibility. Supporting the household remains the man's responsibility as he is the head of the household. The recognition that women receive is thus limited, and they are seen to be dependent on men from legal, financial and social perspectives (World Bank, 2003). The culture and regulations, therefore, result in workspaces that are gender-segregated and in organisational structures and practices that create gendered work relations and occupations (Metcalfe, 2008).

In Saudi Arabia "the law prevents any discrimination in wages between male and female: men and women in the same workplace must be given equal pay for equal work" (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, Saudi Arabia, 2022). Indeed, King Saud University has applied this regulation so that both male and female faculty members earn the same for the same work.

There are two aspects to gender segregation in Saudi Arabia. The first is informal segregation that is enhanced by culture and norms, for example, skewed participation within occupations as with the cases described in the UK and the US. The second is formal segregation, created by law, for example, physical segregation: females and males are physically separated in the workplace. In terms of physical gender segregation, there are few studies in English, so any non-English-language studies from the regions where such physical segregation is in place are especially valuable. The focus on the literature review will be as much as possible upon Saudi educational institutions as this study takes place in a Saudi university.

Saudi educational institutions, including King Saud University, are governed by a law that creates gender segregation, manifested as the physical separation of all males from all females on the university's campuses. The Education Policy document of the Saudi Kingdom (edu.moe.gov.sa, 2022), number 155 clearly states: "Mixing between boys and girls is prohibited at all levels of education, except in nurseries and kindergartens." Thus, the physical separation between males and females in the workplace in Saudi Arabia has a formal state source.

Such separation in the workplace actually creates the opportunity for females to work in jobs that used to be occupied by men, such as management positions. Thus, physical gender segregation could decrease the impact of general occupational segregation (i.e., between low-value and high-value work). The reason is that, much in the same way that single-sex religious or secular schools were formed in western cultures, the female university campus is considered an independent establishment and has its own leadership hierarchy, all female. This can provide multiple benefits for women by giving them confidence in terms of leadership opportunities and being part of a female-dominated work environment (Alomair, 2015; Khuzwayo, 2016).

Regarding these possible identified benefits of this kind of single-sex workplace segregation, Abalkhail (2017), for example, expresses a need for studies to understand the serious difficulties that academic female leaders face working in higher education in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, males and females have the same job titles and job descriptions, but there is an expectation that the power held by females is less than the power held by males, a clear work culture context of patriarchy as explored earlier. This is, therefore, an important area to understand, and the lived experiences of female academics highlight intersecting issues of formal policy and informal culture within the theoretical perspectives of this current research, which will explore the situation of academic females in leadership positions in higher education in Saudi universities.

In Saudi Arabia, recent studies confirm that the Saudi government is making efforts to overcome the issues related to gender segregation. The new Saudi Vision 2030 is a movement toward empowering Saudi women (Barry, 2021; Omair et al., 2020). However, a significant force against empowering women is culture. Galloway (2020) shows how culture in this case becomes a force against regulations. For example, Alsubaihi (2016) conducted a quantitative study of 78 female academic members in three universities in Riyadh, which aimed to capture the challenges facing academic women in leadership positions. The study found that the greatest challenge facing academic women is culture; this includes, for example, gender stereotypes that women have lower leadership skills than men. Similar results were found by Aldawsari (2016), who conducted a qualitative study of 15 academic women in a public university in Saudi Arabia. The results stated that the toughest challenge that academic women face in the workplace is their lack of authority and their ‘marginalisation’. Almutairi (2016) also confirms that the issue of academic women’s progression in Saudi universities is not related to the women themselves being unwilling or unqualified to take up leadership positions, but rather, the problem is the lack of authority and obstructions in attaining promotion.

In terms of empowering women, according to Almandeel (2020, p.8–9), “Saudi female participation in the overall labour force has increased from 15% in 2017 to 30.51% in 2020.” In fact, Hakiem (2022a) found that there is also a recent increase in empowering women in Saudi higher education. However, while participation is increasing, the situation of discrimination and gender stereotypes is still alive. Another recent study conducted by Hakiem (2022b) of 10 Saudi academic women in higher education confirmed that the continued discrimination is a result of patriarchal culture. However, Alhazmi (2022) in his study within Saudi higher education found it promising that Saudi Vision 2030 is playing a significant role in decreasing gender segregation. (a description of King Saud University are found in the section on the research setting in the Methodology chapter.)

In fact, the educational institutions in Saudi Arabia are significant examples of formal physical segregation, and there are a range of consequences of separating men and women in the workplace, particularly when the main authority is owned by one section, which is the male section. As a result, women are dominated by an absent force, the separate male establishment. It is important to understand the possible experiences of isolation, powerlessness and being uninformed and ignorant of the decisions and processes operating upon their workplaces. It generates stronger perceptions of meaninglessness.

The section above has provided an overview of Saudi culture, and how patriarchy could partly explain Saudi occupational segregation. The next section will discuss the impact of Saudi culture on work–life balance for Saudi women. In doing so, the work alienation dimensions will be applied side-by-side with patriarchy theory in explaining women’s situation.

The International Equal Pay Day is an event that takes place in September, aimed at discussing suggestions and solutions to reduce the gender pay gap. According to the International Equal Pay Day in 2022, there is a significant global gap in that men are paid 20% more than women; this cannot be explained objectively (such as differences in the level of education or working hours); it can only be accounted for by gender discrimination.

Saudi Arabia is one of 95 countries around the world that apply the regulation of equal paid for the same work between men and women (World Bank, 2022). However, the

World Economic Forum reports, developed to measure inequality between men and women by focusing on health, education, economy and politics, show that in 2009, Saudi Arabia ranked 130 out of 134 countries in gender inequality. Specifically, Saudi Arabia ranked zero in the category of political empowerment as shown in the World Economic Forum Report (2009). According to the World Economic Forum (2023), Saudi Arabia has now attained the rank of 127 in the report out of 134. Although Saudi Arabia is making progress in closing the gap, it has only achieved a slight improvement over 2009. The rank still does not accurately reflect the overall gender pay gap when a country such as Saudi Arabia has massive differences in indexes, such as a high rank in equal wages and zero in political empowerment. Moreover, global measurements such as the World Economic Forum reports are designed for economic use or to assist in the making of economic decisions. Thus, cultural dimensions and their effect cannot be reflected in each index. It is a little rigid, and it deals with rigid indexes without considering the effect on communities or individuals' choices but only by considering the country's policies and regulations.

In sociological research, we see gender segregation as a multi-faceted, an interconnection of social, cultural, religious, political, economic and juridical forces. For example, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it has been strongly affected by a particular political and cultural interpretation of religious doctrine. In such a community, culture must be considered in contextual research to help in interpreting the data.

There is a lack of effective research on gender segregation and its forms, as Gauci et al. (2021) found; they call for qualitative research exploring forms of gender discrimination in the workplace. There is a need to discover an effective measurement of gender segregation that reveals employees' feelings and wellbeing. For example, when an organisation claims that it has increased women's empowerment, it must mean more than the fact that they have decreased gender segregation. In contrast, according to Blackburn et al. (2002), there is a positive relationship between empowering women and gender segregation. Gender segregation needs to be explored in more depth, and explicit and general indexes are not enough to measure it.

Previous research has shed light on the issue of measuring gender segregation in an efficient way by developing a new method of measurement or by criticising a current method. Studies such as James and Taeuber (1985), Bielby and Baron (1986) and Fossett (2017) have developed specific methods to measure specific types of segregation. On the other hand, Blackburn et al. (2002) claim that theories such as human capital and patriarchy have failed in explaining gender segregation. However, it is better to say that one theory, for example, may have failed to explain specific areas, but that it is efficient in explaining an aspect of gender segregation. Interestingly, Kattan et al. (2016) criticise their own research about Saudi women in leadership positions by clearly pointing out in the limitations of the study that there are significant differences between the studies cited in the literature review, which were conducted in western contexts, and the unique context of Saudi Arabia, and that this could affect the accuracy of the results.

These are examples of research that explore the effects of gender segregation in indirect but effective way because they focus on specific dimensions within the same context. For instance, Alhumaidhi (2015) used a comparative method to measure job satisfaction in two Saudi universities. The first university is a female-only university (Princess Noura University) and the second is a gender-segregated university (King Saud University). Regardless of the results at this stage, using the same context, as both are public universities in Riyadh, contributed to enhancing the accuracy of the results.

In this study, I tried to benefit from previous attempts to explore gender segregation. The first step was to avoid generalisations and be more specific in determining the context of the research. Thus, any differences that were seen in other contexts in the literature were noted in order to avoid misleading results. Also, this research used the concept of work alienation as a lens to gain insight into gender segregation because it provides an opportunity to explore critical dimensions such as power, meaning and isolation. These are intangible factors compared to elements such as the wage gap, which is considered a tangible element. Using dimensions of the theory of alienation provided the research with a focus on intangible aspects of organisational behaviour, such as power and meaning. Thus, the research provides qualitative rather than quantitative data, as qualitative data is more helpful in exploring in depth and providing a better description of social phenomena. Power also is a significant aspect when exploring gender segregation. This will be explored through the lens of powerlessness, which is one of the main dimensions of the work alienation concept.

During the early 19th century, industrialisation established new occupations in the workforce with different pay structures and male or female associations. For example, the first textile factories in Lowell, Massachusetts, had men occupying every available supervisory role and other select jobs, whilst machine operation, which was the most prevalent, lower paid and arduous role in the factory, was entirely the domain of women (Dublin, 1979). Nevertheless, over time, women slowly breached some of the weaker barriers and began to occupy exclusively male roles, such as teaching and clerical positions, which became overwhelmingly female occupations by the end of the century in the USA and in many other more developed western countries (Davies, 1982; Preston 1993).

There are some parallels between these historical examples from western literature and the current study in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in terms of economic development and gender differences in work opportunities. In addition, in KSA we witness physical gender segregation at a societal level, with an almost complete legal ban on gender mixing in some public places, supporting and supported by cultural norms. In the context of encouraging women into employment with Saudi Vision 2030, these social structures have led to the rapid development of single-sex workplaces. In this study of a Saudi educational institution, not only the workers but also female students (the service users or customers) are physically separated from male students in a single-sex campus space, but they receive education from both female and male academics via networks (more details about King Saud University are provided in the Methodology chapter). Therefore, we review the literature to assist in a case study of a situation of absolute physical segregation by gender, including occupations. In this study we encounter a segregation which is legislated, codified in the national law and in the rules and policies of institutions, as well as in cultural and social norms. It is therefore necessary to clearly conceptualise and differentiate between such gender segregations.

Thus, a key aim of this literature review has been to determine the meaning of gender segregation in the context of this study and to discuss how it differs from the usual meaning of occupational segregation in a western context. This section started with a general overview of gender segregation definitions and the most relevant theory; then, an overview of occupational gender segregation from a western view was provided. That was followed by some background information on how gender segregation exists in Saudi Arabia, including an overview of gender segregation culturally in society as a whole and the lack of space or role for women in public, and the significant impact of these on occupational gender segregation. The next section will present a literature review of technology as it relates to workplace alienation.

2.5 Workplace Technology and Workplace Alienation

This section of the literature review addresses the last question of this research: “How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?” Having examined the concept of occupational segregation, I will now turn to how these dynamics are affected by technological change. As mentioned earlier, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is witnessing significant changes in different fields, particularly since the introduction of Saudi Vision 2030. King Saud University has been affected by this improvement and has applied new regulations and new working systems that depend on technology, such as distance learning. However, the increased use of digital communications and remote working has interacted in important ways with gendered inequalities, and the theoretical lens of alienation is a good way to understand this. Most of the previous research has discussed the negative impact of new technology on workplace alienation. However, this research goes further in that it aims to determine the impact of new technology in both ways: negatively (increasing feelings of alienation) and positively (decreasing such feelings). Interestingly, the Covid-19 pandemic has presented a good opportunity to explore the nature of technology and alienation.

The concept of alienation was explored in terms of its relationship with technology by Blauner (1964).According to Form (1965), Blauner developed his argument based on the theoretical background of alienation by Seeman and others; moreover, Blauner aimed to understand the situation of workers through the complicated factors that form industrial work conditions such as “technology, division of labour, social organizations, and economic structure” (Blauner, 1964, p.423). Blauner (1964) identified and justified the level of alienation that workers feel within four types of industries. The first is printing (craft) where alienation is at a low level as the nature of this work gives the worker freedom and self-expression, and it allows a high level of control over the work. The second type of work is textiles (machine tending) where, in contrast with printing, the worker feels alienation presented by meaninglessness and isolation because of the rationalisation mentioned previously in Weber’s writings. The highest level of alienation is found in the third type of work which is automobiles (assembly lines). A worker in this type of job is working under pressure with a repetitive task, which gives him a great feeling of meaninglessness, insecurity, and lack of control. Finally, the fourth type of workers who experience the lowest level of alienation are those who work in the chemical industry. This kind of work has significant features; for example, it enables a great power of control over the work and it is secure.

Blauner (1964) identified four components of alienation in industrial work (Buchanan and Huczynski 2016; Mullins and Christy 2016; Watson 2004). The first is powerlessness, which refers to the lack of opportunity for control over conditions of work, work processes, pace and methods. The second is meaningless, which means the lack of opportunity to feel a sense of purpose by linking one's job to the overall production process, thereby producing a loss of significance of work activities. The third is isolation, which reflects the inability to relate to others at work or a loss of sense of community membership. The final component is self-estrangement, which is the lack of opportunity to achieve self-involvement or loss of personal identity, loss of a sense of work as a central life interest.

In Blauner's research (1964), technology was represented by machines. However, in recent times, workplace technology has been represented by programs and smartphone applications as well as machines. The scope of this technology has increased due to the prevalence of mobile devices and changes in the workplace context, such as being able to work remotely (Bailey and Kurland, 2002). Here, Blauner's work demonstrates that technology is considered to be one of the significant factors that cause alienation. Blauner's argument is still considered relevant to technology, even in recent times. There are aspects of technology that might produce a level of alienation among workers and that should be considered in this argument, such as the decision to apply new technology, and changes in work intensification and work boundaries (Blauner, 1964).

The application of technology needs to be handled with care. Inaccuracy in the application or content of this technology might lead to alienation (Bates and Poole, 2003). One example is situations in which the organisation does not pay attention to employees' opinions of the technology needed to carry out their work. This might occur, for instance, in cases where managers adopt new technology as teaching tools without considering teachers' opinions in decision making or giving them a chance to discuss their needs with regard to the new technology. That will lead to alienation as a result of powerlessness (Bates, 2000).

Another example is what Lam (2000) calls the “technophilic institution”. The technophilic institution aims to apply technology as an aim rather than a facility to achieve the organisation’s aims. Thus, these organisations do not consider workers’ opinions about the technology that they need in their work. Therefore, this technology could be seen by workers as a barrier that prevents them from working efficiently. Lam (2000) argues that the worker is usually blamed in this situation and is described as a technophobic worker, rather than blaming the institution which is technophilic in reality. In fact, the technophilic institution might put pressure on workers by requiring them to use technology that does not fit with their jobs. Thus, alienation could emerge as a result of powerlessness. Convery (2009), Conlon (2000) and Waycott et al. (2010) suggest that organisations must identify employees’ opinions about their technology needs and support policymakers in their decisions about the chosen technology in a specific institution. Additionally, there is a struggle when employees are not aware of the technology, which Macnaghten et al. (2015) call “kept in the dark”; this refers to any situation in which employees are left without any information or expectation about the forthcoming technology. This lack of awareness causes feelings of alienation by increasing the employees’ sense of powerlessness. Moreover, there is a significant issue in dealing with new technology: its breakdown is usually not predictable. This unexpected breakdown leads to a sense of pressure and insecurity. McAfee (2018) points out that feeling disconnected and insecure will result in feelings of shame, which ultimately lead to feelings of alienation.

In terms of work intensification and work boundaries, technology has evolved to have a far greater impact at both work and home. This has increased employees’ levels of connectivity through mobile devices with greater use of digital technology to increase the quantity and quality of work and the controlling of it (Chesley, 2014; Spencer 2017). Using mobile technology for work purposes has increased employees’ work hours as it enabled them to work at any time and place (Mullan and Wajcman, 2017). For example, smartphones with an internet connection enable employees to download work-related applications, such as Blackboard for interaction between faculty members and students in universities, or Outlook for checking work emails. In general, devices with an internet connection are found to have an impact on work–life balance. Sehrawat (2016) found that higher work–life balance is achieved when the worker has lower work alienation. There is evidence that smartphones support work–life balance, but actually, they do not (Sowon et al., 2018). Indeed, a study conducted by Li and Lin (2019) points that dependency on smartphones for work might cause employees to develop “smartphone addiction”, which causes anxiety and an inability to control the use of smartphones. This behaviour increases alienation levels in terms of powerlessness rather responding to work emails immediately as a sign of engagement.

Additionally, the concept of gamification has been suggested as a part of the social context, to be applied to non-game domains, that is, work contexts (Woodcock and Johnson, 2018). The process of gamification is problematic as it increases the blurring of the boundaries between work and private life as it places play and leisure within the remit and control of the neoliberal business environment (Woodcock and Johnson 2018). Moreover, gamification in work contexts does not reflect enjoyment, motivation and imagination as known; rather, it refers to routine and duties (deWinter et al., 2014).

Spencer (2018) raises some issues related to automation. He explains that the problem is not about technology but about the employer who applies this technology in a way that limits employee benefits of the new technology; for example, the use of technology could add extra work for employees instead of reducing work hours. Thus, the expectation of less work time and a freer personal life after the application of new technology turns into a stuation where the worker is exploited. Chesley (2014, p.589) confirms that information and communication technology has created changes in work conditions which produce pressure and stress among workers as a result of “faster-paced work, a greater level of interruptions and multitasking.” For example, the databases that the internet provides put pressure on researchers as they are expected to increase the amount of research they conduct in a short time. This impact on work extension may have an influence on levels of employee stress, which are also impacted by the pace of work becoming more intense due to the need to multitask (such as looking up account details during a phone call with a customer) (Chesley, 2014; Russell, 2012). It could be argued that an overreliance on technology may create tension and higher levels of alienation between workers and technology due to higher levels of work intensification (Lindsay et al., 2014).

Furthermore, workplace technology has a great impact on work practices, specifically of professionals. The increased use of technology in the workplace is portrayed as a threat to professional workers such as teachers, IT workers and journalists (Butler, 2016; Cohen, 2015; Liu, 2006; Trusson and Woods, 2017). Professional journalists, for example, face alienation from technology as the increased workload and the higher level of managerial control over journalists has led to higher levels of de-skilling (Cohen, 2015; Liu, 2006). This process has also enabled management to replace more experienced journalists with inexperienced workers to reduce salary costs, thus reinforcing the link for management between the increased use of technology and the ability to reduce costs (Cohen, 2015; Liu, 2006).

According to Skoumpopoulou et al. (2018) university staff have a tendency to use new technology in their work. Research into smartphone applications as an example of new technology assumed to help working mothers to achieve work–life balance, however, show different results. Result show that these applications, in contrast, increase stress, make the achievement of work–life balance more challenging and cause anxiety because of addiction to the use of the smartphone (Demerouti et al., 2014; Dora et al.,2019; Li and Lin, 2019; MacCormick et al. 2012).

In terms of using social media applications such as Facebook or WhatsApp, these have been found to have a positive impact on workers. For example, they are found to enhance communication between individuals; this has been found by other researchers to be an issue that affects work–life balance (Rathbone et al., 2019). A study conducted by Hanna et al. (2017) encourages the interaction between co-workers via social media software as they found this interaction enhances job satisfaction. Moreover, Akçayır (2017) shows that participants from universities in Turkey agree with the use of a social network for educational purposes; they explain that social media enhances communication between them and their students. Their concern is only about teachers' privacy.

Smartphone applications such as WhatsApp are sometimes preferred over emails because they are more readily accessible (Calpa, 2018). However, this unstoppable connection between work and employees, according to Sowon et al. (2018), challenges mothers in their work–life balance, which results in "technoference". Technoference is a new phenomenon refers to the negative impact of new technology on the family and on couples' relations because of frequent interruptions to the interaction between parents and their children or between couples (McDaniel and Coyne, 2016). This issue has become more significant since the Covid-19 pandemic, as will be discussed in due course. Indeed, a study shows that WhatsApp is identified as one of the most frequently used platforms by professors, while email is in second place (Calpa, 2018). WhatsApp has also been identifed as an application that blurs the boundaries between work and life (Rathbone et al., 2019).

Also, one characteristic afforded by WhatsApp is the use of emojis. The idea put forward by Riordan (2017) in the context of the sociological theory of emotions at work is that using emojis will bring joy and enhance the relationship between employees within the organisation. However, emojis might have different meanings in different cultures, which can lead to misunderstandings. They might also appear differently in different systems, for example, Android or Apple (Miller et al., 2016). Thus, employees should pay attention to misunderstandings that might be caused by the use of emojis.

2.6 Work–Life Boundaries

Generally, the issue of work–life boundaries is more pronounced in patriarchal societies. For example, married and pregnant women and those with childcare responsibilities will be more stressed as a result of role conflict between her home and her work. The woman may experience depression, resulting from a feeling that she does not provide enough for her home (Gonäs and Karlsson, 2005; Rangarajan, 2014; Thriveni and Rama, 2018). Thus, females in patriarchal societies would be the most negatively affected by their circumstances in having to work and carry out domestic responsibilities at the same time. This varies according to differences between cultures, which should be considered (Hochschild and Machung, 2012). Women in this case might choose less stressful and/or part-time jobs because they are expected to be the primary caregivers in patriarchal societies, according to Booth and Van Ours (2013); doing so might lead to greater satisfaction. In this case, women will be satisfied with a job that gives them flexibility to address other personal family duties. Therefore, females tend to have part-time jobs, and/or flexible working hours.

Indeed, Chauhan (2022) stated that women have no freedom in deciding where to work as they have to consider the time and place of work. That is in accordance with the cultural conditions present in Saudi Arabia. Women are less likely to work in the private sector, such as in banking (Fakeeh, 2009), because private-sector jobs often demand long hours and and a less strict physical separation between men and women – if it even exists. Thus, the cultural aspect would decrease the desire of Saudi women in working in private sectors according to Achoui (2009). Moreover, for Saudi women, the family is a priority (Al-Harthi, 2000).

Working in academia, for example, as a lecturer or a researcher, is considered a flexible choice for females, who have both domestic responsibilities and opportunities to be promoted and make progress. Panel members at the 2019 Women in Academia Conference, Dr Muna Abdi, Dr Nadena Doherty, Professor Anna Lawson and Dr Martina McGuinness (2019) confirm that working in academia is better for females as they have to take care of children, and that is provided by the flexibility of working at home and spending fewer work hours on campus. This research aims to explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women. According to Smith et al. (2020), women are one of the groups that have been most negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of their mental health. Alon et al. (2020) found that women have been impacted more than men in terms of increased childcare responsibilities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, these negative aspects of increased levels of technology, according to Chesley (2014), can also be balanced against the positive gains, which give workers a higher level of control over their work role due to the greater level of information available. Moreover, Grugulis (2007) argued that this new technology revolution in the workplace facilitates the connection between workers and between workers and their employers. This connection might enhance relationships between workers and reduce alienation in terms of isolation. Furthermore, the use of technologies has also enabled workers to undertake acts of resistance to additional control at work (Woodcock and Johnson, 2018).

Technology increases the opportunity to reinforce the panoptic control system by enabling organisations to both gather information on their worker's mobile technology use and to monitor their activities (Leclercq-Vandelanno et al., 2014; Moore et al., 2018). This monitoring may also enable workers to report their responses to their working roles to assist in improving practices in areas such as stress management (Moore et al., 2018). This feedback may provide a learning experience for both the organisation and the worker as to the benefits of mobile technologies to address issues such as the level of alienation which a worker may feel (Moore et al., 2018). In this context, technology can both increase and decrease alienation, depending on how it is used and who has control of it.

Moreover, according to Koslowski et al. (2019), working from home could be a way to achieve work–life balance and increase employee satisfaction. However, two elements should be considered: the time of work and the place of work. Activities such as working in bed or staying awake at night will cause isolation and a blurring of the boundaries between work and personal life. Moreover, Siegert and Löwstedt (2019) recommend that organisations create policies that organise using social media for work purposes to protect employees' privacy and maintain boundaries between work and personal life. Dora et al. (2019) agree that the tendency towards smartphone use needs a response. It is important to understand the impact of social media on workers' behaviour and to create regulations around this activity.

This review has shed light on the effects of technology on the organisation in terms of work alienation. It provides a further dimension of technology related to work alienation that needs study and research. It is that technology might reduce feelings of work alienation and not only be a cause of work alienation.

2.7 Conclusion

This section has outlined the literature related to the research aim and research questions. The first section provided an overview of classical writers: Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Taylor. This was followed by an overview of how the concept of alienation is addressed in contemporary research. This research has a focus on three dimensions of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. The second section of this literature review is related to the topic of gender segregation. It shows how the definition of gender segregation has different meanings among cultures. Also it shows the differences between occupational gender segregation in western countries and in Saudi Arabia. The third section in this literature review focuses on workplace technology and how it could increase or decrease the sense of work alienation. It is also discusses the case of the Covid-19 pandemic as an example of overdependence on technology at work. The next chapter will develop the most appropriate methodology for the research aim and research questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will start with a brief overview of the research, followed by two sections. First, the philosophical basis of the methodology will be explored. This will be followed by an outline of some practical considerations. Various aspects of the selected research methodology will be clarified, such as justification of the selected methodology, data collection and the data analysis process. Finally, the ethical issues and the limitations related to the research methodology will be presented.

3.2 Overview of the Research

The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of Saudi women working in academia and how their experiences could be explained by the alienation concept. This aim has been achieved by answering the following research questions:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

This study focused on female faculty members within a specific geographic location at the female students' campus of King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The literature review chapter provided an overview of the concept of alienation with specific concentration on work alienation. The chapter also provided a historical overview of the concept of alienation, and it addressed how contemporary studies have discussed alienation. In addition, the literature review has shown that the concept of alienation plays a significant role in writers' discussions of workplace experiences. There is a rich background of research on this concept, which cannot be covered in this thesis. However, a review of the literature shows the depth of the concept and brings forward the idea of using this concept as a tool to discover social phenomena. The massive amount of literature on the concept also leads to a focus on the most relevant dimensions of alienation as the aim of this thesis. Three dimensions are discussed in this thesis, together with their opposite meaning, based on the context. Thus, powerlessness (or powerfulness), meaninglessness (or meaningfulness) and isolation (or interaction with others) are the most relevant three identified dimensions that will be explored in this thesis.

3.2.1 Research Philosophies

This section will present the methodology selected as the most appropriate means of achieving the aims of the research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), any research undertaking must be premised on a clear paradigm that guides the chosen approach. Thus, a brief overview of the philosophy beyond the chosen methodology is needed to clarify the context of the chosen method and to justify its selection.

Choosing an appropriate methodology is considered a significant step in conducting research. However, according to Remenyi et al. (2002), the choice of an appropriate method for a study depends on the research inquiry, and what the researcher wants to achieve. Questions such as “how many” and “how much” are better answered using a positivist approach as it aims to measure a predetermined issue (Holliday, 2007). On the other hand, questions such as “what”, “why”, and “how” are better answered using an interpretivist approach as, according to Darlington and Scott (2002), this approach provides methods that help to explore the issue in depth and gain an understanding of it. One example is the qualitative interview. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), a qualitative interview is a data collection tool whereby the interviewer asks the interviewees about their feelings and opinions in order to gain a deeper understanding of a situation. Collis and Hussey (2014) argue that the researcher should prepare a guide for questions, which will help to direct the conversation towards the aim of the research, and which will cover important perspectives of the research inquiry.

According to Opdenakker (2006), face-to-face interviews are distinguished by synchronous communication; this gives this type of interview an added advantage over other interview types. First, body language and voice tone can provide additional information, as confirmed by Creswell (2013). Seale et al. (2004) suggest that recording of the interview after obtaining the interviewee’s permission will enhance the interviewer’s attention to the interviewee’s body language and facial expressions. Another advantage mentioned by Opdenakker (2006) and Guest et al. (2013) is that during the interview, both the interviewer and the interviewee have a chance to respond directly to questions or answers, which helps the interviewer in different ways.

This inquiry is guided by the interpretivist approach, which assumes that some knowledge cannot be achieved by sense experience. Interpretivism is based on rationalism, and the core of social science research from the interpretivist perspective is to explore the meaning of the world. From the interpretivist perspective, the first step is to investigate and understand the participant to understand the meaning of the world from their point of view. Later, the overall knowledge will be presented by both participants and researcher about meanings of the world. Moreover, the view of reality is affected by the researcher (Willis et al., 2007). Thus, a qualitative method based on interpretivism is selected for the research because it is a more appropriate approach to achieve the aims of the research and to answer the research questions formulated earlier.

According to Guest et al. (2013), a qualitative research method is generally more appropriate for three types of research objectives. The first is “exploring” as it tends to be more inductive. The second is “describing” the depth of the particular situation. The third is “explaining” the individual’s behaviour. These objectives are compatible with Darlington and Scott’s (2002) suggestion that questions asking “what”, “how” and “why” are better answered using a qualitative method. Silverman (2017), likewise, suggests that qualitative research is helpful in gaining an understanding of people’s perceptions of the world and how they react towards situations.

Moreover, according to Partington (2001), conducting qualitative research is supported by understanding the culture of the workplace, which is achieved by working in the organisation. Furthermore, Willis et al. (2007) claim that the members of the group are the best at understanding the meaning as the members have constructed this meaning by using the same “language” with other tools and “sharing” it within the group’s membership. It is obvious that it is necessary for qualitative researchers to understand the environment in which they will conduct their research, as they are considered to be fundamental parts of the research. Therefore, I conducted my study at King Saud University in order to take advantage of my experience within that environment and culture, as will be explained in detail later. In addition, the selection of only women in this research also enhances one aim of the research: looking for the implications of gender segregation and alienation, particularly after the introduction of Saudi Vision 2030.

3.2.2 Sampling, Data Collection and Data Analysis

Sampling using a qualitative methodology means using a non-probability sample. There are different types of non-probability sampling, such as theoretical sampling and purposive sampling (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). This research applied purposive sampling, which increases the chance of information-rich informants. It also allows the researcher to select participants based on chosen characteristics, in this case, age ranks and fields, in order to generate data that enriches the results (Palinkas et al., 2015). I went to different colleges to ensure that I selected participants from different subject areas. I also tried to select participants at different ranks and with different amounts of work experience by checking each faculty member's page or asking them before starting the interview.

Gillham (2000) recommends keeping the sample small as long as it is adequate. In this context, "adequate" means that it should represent different points of view, which enhances the credibility of the research according to Rubin and Rubin (2005). In general, there is no agreement on a specific number of participants required for a qualitative sample (Trotter II, 2012); however, according to Guest et al. (2006), writers on qualitative methods repeatedly use the term 'saturation' in discussing the adequate sample size in qualitative research. This refers to the point at which new data stop emerging.

According to Sandelowski (1995), determining the appropriate sample size depends on the method selected and on the researcher's experience and ability to determine whether the quality of information they receive has answered the research question. Hennink and Kaiser (2022) argue that a small sample size will achieve saturation in qualitative research as long as there are strong similarities between the participants in the study and the study objectives are narrow. In general, the sample should not be too large to maintain depth and not too small to answer the research questions. This point of view is partly in agreement with Boddy (2016), who argued that sample size depends on the research paradigm; he suggested that 12 interviewees would be enough. Therefore, in this research, since depth is a requirement, the sample should be as small as possible, particularly since the participants form a relatively homogeneous population.

Malterud et al. (2016) proposed the 'information power' model to guide a qualitative researcher in determining the acceptable sample. It based on the idea that the sample will be small if the interviewees hold rich information; also taken into consideration are other aspects, such as the aim of the study and the quality of the interviews.

The sample size of this research depended on the awareness of the researcher, while considering previous studies' recommendations in terms of saturation point. I will evaluate how I adequately perceived the interviewees' responses in terms of answering the research questions, and how I maintained the quality of dialogue during the interviews by focusing on gaining answers to the research questions. This approach helped to keep the sample as small as possible. It is also worth noting that, based on previous studies of sample size, the sample size in this study is expected to be low because the study takes place in one community: academic females in KSU, which has a highly homogeneous population.

Thus, to collect and analyse data efficiently, and to investigate subjects deeply, it is also necessary for researchers to learn some interview management techniques. According to Johnson et al. (2002), researchers have to think carefully about how to start the interview to get the responses that they need.

This study applies thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (2006, p.77).

3.2.3 Practical Research Considerations

I was keen to generate opinions and feelings that differ from one person to another. The research questions require the ability to understand the perceptions of individual participants. I also wanted to explore the depth of the concept of alienation. My first question is: "To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?" This question includes the word "what", which refers to the ability to discover, explore and explain in depth the concept of alienation as a lens through which to explain social phenomena. The second and the third questions are "How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?" and "How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?" These questions include the word "how"; they suggest a need to explore, describe and explain. This can be achieved by understanding participants' perceptions and feelings.

I have been working at King Saud University for eight years as a teaching assistant. My hope was that this experience would improve my understanding of the meaning expressed by participants, which would serve to enhance the quality of the research. My own background would give me an adequate understanding and awareness of the environment, which would enable me to conduct an effective qualitative study in it.

In this research, the main aim is an exploration and interpretation of the experience of Saudi women working in academia and how this could be explained by the concept of alienation. I have tried to gain an insight into each individual participant's attitude toward her work life. As a result, two significant aspects of academic work inductively emerged from analysing the results: the nature of the participant's job and her gender in terms of work alienation.

Thus, the first step in choosing an appropriate method is to gain a careful understanding of the research inquiry and how this inquiry will best be answered. The research questions address the concept of alienation and how it relates to academic work and gender segregation. Given the emphasis on "how" questions, the issue requires a depth of exploration and understanding. Moreover, the main focus of the research includes an exploration of what sense of alienation females faculty members refer to. It also aims to explain why female faculty members feel, or do not feel, alienated. In addition, it provides a more detailed description of their situation.

In general, this research aims to explore the experiences of female faculty members through the lens of alienation, a concept which cannot be measured but which can be described. In this sense, there is a need to select a method that will help to gain insight into the issue to understand and maybe to find new and/or unexpected results. Therefore, this research will use an interpretivist approach because exploring, describing and explaining are the aspects that most match the aims of the research questions.

3.2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The first step in choosing the most appropriate method is to consider the aim of the research and to analyse how the selected method can support the researcher in reaching this aim. In this research, I intend to gain an understanding of the participants' point of view about their academic lives, their workplace relationships and their perception of work-related technology. Edwards and Holland (2013) point out that qualitative interviews provide more in-depth details. Therefore, interviews were selected as the main research tool, as they seem to support the achievement of the research objectives.

Interviews, specifically face-to-face semi-structured interviews, are the selected data collection tool for this study. Indeed, I developed a number of questions to help me during the interview to gain the appropriate data for the research. For example, in some interviews the interviewee dwells on a topic related to their field, and looking back at the list of interview questions helped me to stay on the right track (see Appendix 1).

After developing my questions, I obtained permission for data collection by obtaining a letter of identification from the University of Leeds with information about my pursuit of a Ph.D. Also, I obtained approval from the departments involved to implement a community field study at King Saud University. Being a faculty member at King Saud University facilitated my access to the university community. I recruited my potential participants through formal and informal means. First, I sent a formal email via the Dean of E-Transaction and Communication to all faculty members at King Saud University after completing formal procedures. The email included information about me and my research as well as an invitation to participate in my research by highlighting the benefits of the research. Second, I sent informal WhatsApp messages to my colleagues in different colleges describing my study and the desired participant characteristics, and asking them if they or their friends were interested in participating in my research. Also, I walked through buildings knocking on faculty members' doors and asked them if they might be interested in participating. The selected respondents represent different ages and different academic rankings, namely, language teachers, teaching assistants, lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and one professor. I also considered their work experience.

At the beginning, I anticipated that the number of participants would be between 25 and 30. A typical sample size in qualitative studies is 25; this number is needed in order for the researcher to gain meaningful answers to the research questions. This number would also ensure that my sample would initially comprise two to four participants from each college on the female campus. However, the final number has to be revised for 'saturation'. In fact, I reached saturation after interviewing 33 participants (see Table 1). There are 15 colleges, classified into three fields as follows: seven humanities colleges, five medical colleges and three science colleges, in addition to the community college, which has a variety of these fields. The participants were as follows: eight from the medical colleges, seven from the science colleges, ten from the humanities colleges and eight from the community college.

Table 1

Research Participants

Rank	Sample	Total number of women
Language Teacher	2	(not available)
Teaching Assistant	1	602
Lecturer	21	268
Assistant Professor	5	918
Associate Professor	3	215
Professor	1	100
Total	33 participants	

To carry out my study, I started by introducing myself and the aim of study to make the interviewee more comfortable. However, according to Seale et al. (2004), the researcher must be careful not to give too much detail about their study, as this could make the interviewee feel fearful and cause them to withdraw. I agree with Seale et al. (2004) in not giving too much description of the study – not because the interviewees might withdraw, but because I did not want the participants to stick to what I said. I wanted them to be open in answering the questions. Introducing myself as a fellow faculty member in the same university gave me an advantage as I was welcomed by the participants. Moreover, I noticed that my colleagues were more open to talking and seemed more comfortable with me. This relationship in qualitative research creates a sense of confidence and trust. However, there was a concern that they would not be honest and that this relationship might make them follow my own point of view. I did not want them to be impacted by my opinions, so I tried to adopt a neutral stance to give them the freedom to express their thoughts.

Also, the recording of the interviews should be efficient; however, permission for recording must be obtained from the participants at the beginning of the interviews. I was aware that some respondents may not be entirely honest as their answers would be recorded (Ambrose et al., 2005), and I addressed this issue by asking each participant to feel free to tell me if she wanted me to stop recording before sharing some information (Seale et al., 2004). Indeed, I paid attention to body language, facial expressions and emotions to enhance the richness of the data. For example, voice tone and body language provide additional information when an interviewee is referring to her feelings. During the interviews, two participants asked me to stop the recording at some points, and I happily did so to make them feel comfortable and honest.

In order to gain as much data as possible, Johnson et al. (2002) suggest that the use of "how" and "what" questions during the interviews can be helpful to gain adequate data. So, I avoided using closed questions that lead to "yes" or "no" answers. Also, I carefully listened to the participants' answers and always asked for clarification if needed (Roulston et al., 2003).

It should be noted that the interviewer has the full responsibility to guide the interview. Cooper and Schindler (2008) state that in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer should previously prepare the questions to be used, to allow them to direct the interview in the way they need to, and to ensure achievement of their research aims. One way to manage the interview efficiently, as suggested by Cooper and Schindler (2008), is to start with general questions and move on to more specific questions later. This method relaxes respondents and helps make them comfortable, which is necessary to get good responses to questions.

Moreover, paying attention to the interviewees' responses gave me interesting aspects and ideas. Thus, several times I depended on a respondent's answer to generate a new question. Also, I always asked the respondent for more clarity or details if needed. Therefore, I tried to benefit from each moment and to be aware of the information that the interviewee provided. This is because this might create a new interesting stream of inquiry during the interview. Moreover, I asked participants for their permission to contact them after the interviews if any inquiries emerged during data analysis. This permission helped me to obtain more details and clarification to some answers.

It is important to improve the process of data collection, and to enhance my ability to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews. I did that by applying the guidelines developed by Kallio et al. (2016) so that my research generated plausible results. The guidelines of Kallio et al. (2016) involve five steps. The first step is to start by ensuring that the semi-structured interview is an appropriate method for the research question, which was previously confirmed at the beginning of this chapter. The second step is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues by studying the background research. This was completed by the literature review as presented in the previous chapter. I believe this step is an ongoing process, and it is necessary to keep up-to-date with the literature until the submission of this thesis.

The third step is to use the knowledge gained in the previous step and the research aim, to compile questions for an outline of the interview, which will help in controlling the direction of the interview towards the research aim. These questions should be flexible and should generate rich data from participants. Thus, the interview questions were formulated by considering two aspects: the aim of the study and the significant points in the literature review. The interview questions in my research focused on the dimensions of alienation: meaninglessness, powerlessness and isolation. In addition, the questions examined any feelings of work alienation related to the nature of academic work or gender segregation. I developed a list of the main points (which could be questions) based on the research inquiry, which I expected to cover all the aspects of the research inquiry, and I used it for guidance during the interviews to remain focused on my aim. My list included questions such as the following:

- Do you enjoy being an academic? Why or why not? Provide an example.
- If you could step back, do you wish that you were in another job? Why or why not?
- What things do you like about your job? Provide an example.
- What things do you not like about your job? Provide an example.
- To what extent do you like the move to technology?
- What is one smartphone application that you use in your job? (e.g. email, Blackboard, E-services)
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of being an academic? Provide an example.
- How does the separation of males and females impact your work positively and negatively?
- As male and female departments are physically in separate buildings, do you think men and women have the same work context, such as job titles, authorities, regulations,

flexibility and power? (See the Research Setting section for more information about KSU.)

- How would you describe your job in terms of freedom?

For a complete list of questions, see Appendix 1.

The fourth step in collecting data according to Kallio et al. (2016) is to test the interview questions and evaluate their efficiency before applying them, and to make any required changes. Internal consistency comes first, which helped me to explore any ambiguous questions, research bias, and ethical issues. More clarification of this step will be provided later in the section on ethical issues and limitations. In this process, to test my interview questions, I carried out field testing; this is a very beneficial process involving a test interview with a potential participant to make sure that the answers fit with the research questions and to estimate the average time that the interview will take. I conducted these interviews with three of my colleagues to uncover any issues related to the questions. I considered their suggestions and improved my interview skills. I was able to manage the interviews with consideration of the differences between each interviewee and to keep focus on the aim of the research.

Kallio et al. (2016) point out that the final step of the interview process is to present the complete semi-structured interview guide to illustrate the reasonable process of data collection. However, it could be better to consider that the data collection and analysis process in qualitative research are not necessarily finished in the final step; the process is not based on particular steps, but rather it is more flexible and it continues as long as the researcher is finding, learning and gaining data during this process.

Also, I became aware that there was no reason to ask the same questions in every interview. Questions are flexible as long as they based on the main aim of the research. For example, Seale et al. (2004) point out that questions might be different from one interview to another due to an individual interviewee's characteristics, such as work experience, or they might be different because the interviewer needs to cover some aspect of the research questions. In addition, Seale et al. (2004) recommend reviewing previous respondents' answers in order to identify frequently mentioned key words that might interest the researcher and may encourage the development of more questions around these themes. These steps helped me to ensure that I collected suitable and complete data, and they saved me time and effort.

I followed the suggested practical guide by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.77–101) to apply the thematic analysis process efficiently. This guide involves seven steps. First, after collecting the data, I read it several times in order to become familiar with it. I also listened to the recordings several times with the same aim in mind. Then, I started to develop an initial image from the data of the codes and labels that were relevant to my inquiry. After that, I determined and constructed themes by using the coded data in the previous step. Then, I make sure that the themes reflected the data. I also merged two or more themes or split one theme into a number of themes. I defined and analysed each theme. These steps took several months to achieve the finale themes that best present the results in light of the research questions. Finally, I built a story about the data and how it is relevant to the literature review.

It should be noted that I conducted all the interviews in Arabic, as this is the mother tongue in Saudi Arabia. Speaking in the informants' native language improved their ability to accurately express their feelings, which is the core of the qualitative approach. Also, as a native speaker of Arabic, I did my initial thematic analysis in Arabic before translating it to enhance my analysis. I did that in a Word document by using different colours of highlighting to code words or phrases for each possible theme.

I highlighted all the words referring to alienation either implicitly or explicitly, specifically, the terms related to the dimensions of work alienation dimensions that were explained earlier in the literature review chapter. The focus was on powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation, as well as the opposite of these concepts: the sense of power and control over work tasks, the significance of work tasks and feelings of non-isolation.

After that, I translated the interviews and discussed the translation with a certified translator to avoid any mistakes or misunderstandings. Then, I applied my initial thematic analysis and built on it. I illustrated my first themes in a table that includes the theme, the code and the related transcripts. Table 2 shows a part of this initial table.

Table 2

Initial Themes and Codes

Primary Theme	Secondary Themes/Codes
Job Satisfaction	Enjoyment and Achievement, Professional Development, Appreciation and Motivation, Meaninglessness, Freedom and Autonomy in One's Work, Power and Control
Relationships	Isolation, Desire for Positive Relationships, Mistreatment/Neglect, Formality, Responsibility and Facilitation of Relationships
Technological Developments	Efficiency (or Inefficiency/Work Intensification), Acceptance, Lack of Knowledge and Awareness, Training, Compatibility vs. Incompatibility, Blurring of Boundaries, Limitations (e.g., difficult to use/access workplace technology, practical/technical limitations, lack of trust, etc.).

Table 2 shows that first main themes were job satisfaction, relationships and technological developments. Under each main theme there were codes.

The previous step was helpful in allowing me to concentrate more on significant data. I spent one and a half years trying to find the best answers to my research questions. Sometimes I reread the original Arabic transcripts to enhance my ability to understand and analyse the data. I developed different versions of themes until I reached the best version for the research aims as shown in the results chapters.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Silverman (2017) points out that ethical issues become more significant in qualitative research for two reasons. First, in qualitative research, the researcher is usually very close to the participants, which requires an assurance of each participant's security and privacy. Second, some qualitative research involves sensitive issues, and thus the researcher needs to gain the participants' trust. In addition, the researcher has to avoid forcing participants to answer questions, or make them feel that they are under pressure, as stated by Collis and Hussey (2014) and Remenyi et al. (2002).

According to Keats (2000), different ethical standards between different cultures should be considered, and there may even be differences between individuals of the same culture. However, in order to avoid ethical issues in this research as far as possible, I adopted five guidelines presented by Silverman (2017) as follows. First, at the beginning of each interview, I confirmed that participation in the research was optional and that the participant could withdraw from the study at any time. Second, I clarified the potential consequences and benefits for the participants. I believe that academic environment made this easier. For example, academics understand the value of research aims and benefits, and thus, they agreed that the research results could contribute to improving work conditions by helping decision makers in the university to understand the situation. Third, the privacy of the participants must respected and participants should not be deceived. To do so, I followed Keats' (2000) recommendation to anonymise the names of the participants and their interview responses by giving each participant a number, and by keeping a separate list with their names and numbers in a secure place. To this end, I saved the list of participants' names in a secure place in a Pdf file locked by a password known only to myself. I also named each participant with letter P(n). P is an abbreviation of "participant" and n is the number assigned to each participant, such as P1, P2 and so on, up to P33. Fourth, informed consent must be obtained from the participants (see Appendix 3).

. Finally, the safety of the participants should be ensured; in other words, the location of the interview must be safe, and the participants must be assured that their responses will not affect their positions or work relations. All the face-to-face interviews took place at the university in the interviewees' own offices to ensure comfort and privacy. Interviews carried out during Covid-19 took place online via the Zoom application.

The ethics form for this research required by the University of Leeds was completed and approved. The form covered most of the ethical issues mentioned above, and other issues. It also confirmed that the research process was ethically sound.

3.4 Limitations of the Method and Researcher Biases

The first limitation emerges from the participants. It is human nature that people may not be accurate or perfectly honest in answering interview questions. Gillham (2000) points out that people's behaviour in specific situations may not reflect their true actions. Gillham (2000, p.94) argues that "the relationship between beliefs, opinions, knowledge and actual behaviour is not a straightforward one". This might require extra effort on the part of the researcher to make sure that the collected data is as accurate as possible. Some techniques that support accuracy include paying attention to body language, facial expressions and tone of voice, as mentioned earlier, with the aim of accomplishing internal consistency.

The second limitation emerges from me as I conducted my research in my own workplace. My awareness of the culture and environment of the workplace was an advantage, as mentioned earlier. However, there was a risk that it could negatively affect my work relations or the research results in terms of bias or a combination of factors.

In terms of my relationship with my peers, I tried to clarify the aim of my research and to guarantee the privacy of the information they shared with me. Finally, attending conferences and workshops related to the topic during the interview period might reveal my views on other aspects or enhance my ability to view the situation (Seale et al., 2004).

3.4.1 Personal Clarification

As the author, I should clarify my connection to King Saud University. I studied at King Saud University for my bachelor's degree (2004–2007) and my master's degree (2009–2014). In addition, I have been working at King Saud University for eight years as a teaching assistant.

I expected the data collection process to take from three to six months during the 2018–2019 academic year. However, the data collection process was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, I took advantage of the opportunity to collect data during and after the pandemic in order to gain insights into some aspects of the research, particularly in terms of distance learning and the use of technology.

Data collection during the Covid-19 pandemic was based on the same approach. However, instead of face-to-face interviews, I used Zoom (a videoconferencing platform). I conducted voice-only meetings with the camera off for cultural reasons. Scheduling a virtual interview was easier than attempting to do it in a physical environment; however, I lost the advantage of noticing body language. I contacted my previous interviewees and I asked them if they would be willing to have a quick interview. 10 out of 33 accepted, and I arranged appointments and conducted ten interviews. I clarified that these interviews had been extended from the last one because of a need for more information. Thus, the same consent forms were applied (see Appendix 3). Moreover, I added four new questions based on the impact of the pandemic on their work and on the area that I wanted to understand in more detail (see Appendix 1).

I conducted the study with female faculty members from different colleges at the female campus. In the selection of colleges, a number of principles were applied. First, I considered choosing participants from different fields (science, health, humanities and the community college) in order to create a sample comprised of diverse participants. Second, I paid attention to differences between fields as these might affect participants' responses. For example, the computer and information sciences college provides faculty members with high skills in computer-related technologies, and this may enhance their ability to understand and work with technology with less technostress (Okebaram, 2013). In such a case, the answers of the participants from that faculty might impact the accuracy of results of this study.

Another major issue that needs to be clarified here is why the study was conducted only with female academics and excluded their male counterparts. As mentioned earlier, the male campus is physically separated from the female campus, thus the environments for each section are dissimilar and each has a unique culture (Schein, 1990). This may affect the accuracy of the study as I am not aware of cultural differences in male campus which are required in conducting a qualitative study. Thus, focusing on female campus guarantees unity in terms of culture and the environment. This, according to Holliday (2007), is necessary in conducting qualitative research that is based on gaining insights into the culture of specific people in a determined environment, in order that 'meaningful' and 'interconnected' data will be collected.

On the other side, I am aware of how my relationship with the research community might affect the results negatively; for example, the participants may be afraid that I would using the data against them, so they would not give honest answers. To overcome that concern, I showed them the ethics forms and confirmed that their participation would help me in conducting the research. Also, conducting the research with academic members who already understand the research process and who realise the importance of accurate results might be helpful.

Finally, I interviewed participants from different colleges, most of whom I had never met before. There were only six participants out of 33 who I had previously known; I met the other 27 participants for the first time. Six of 33 is 18% of the total: less than the half.

3.5 The Research Setting

This research took place at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. King Saud University is a public university, and it is considered to be the first and the largest university in Saudi Arabia (King Saud University, 2018). It has 22 colleges in science, health and humanities, and a community college (King Saud University, 2018). The female campus is physically separated from the male campus; however, the female campus is managed by the male section. Female and male employees are connected to each other by an internal network, screens and sensors. The following paragraphs will provide more details about of King Saud University.

During the 2014–2015 academic year, the female division of King Saud University moved to a modern campus that includes 15 colleges (and a building for each one), as well as administration buildings, Deanships buildings, clinics, shops, cafes, restaurants, gyms and accommodation. The new campus includes all the humanities, sciences and medical colleges; the exception is the community college, which moved to the old campus in another area of Riyadh. Thus, the new campus has all colleges in one place, and it is close to the male campus. Previously, each college was located in a different area of Riyadh and far away from the male campus. The new campus consists of 1,232,000 square meters with space for 30,000 students. The total number of academic staff at the university is 7,518 members – 4,707 males (63%) and 2,812 females (37%) – according to KSU open sources (King Saud University, 2020).

The campus design incorporates aspects of Saudi Arabian culture, such as privacy. Privacy in this sense means that males are not allowed to enter the female campus. Thus, all the staff, students and visitors at the female campus are female. Therefore, according to religious and cultural concerns, as long as the place is 100% female, women do not have to wear a hijab. The segregation of men and women is common in Saudi Arabia, for example, on occasions such as weddings (King Saud University, 2020; Shanghai Ranking, 2020; Winkel and Strachan, 2020). The design of the buildings also takes the climate into consideration. The weather in Riyadh is dry, hot in summer and cold in winter, with regular dust storms (Weather and Climate, 2020). Previously, there was less awareness of environmental issues than today; therefore, in the new buildings, the buildings' designers have followed strategies for reducing the consumption of energy and controlling the temperatures inside the buildings compared to old buildings; see photos in Appendix B (Al-Qahtani and Elgizawi, 2020; Alwetaishi, 2018). For example, the old building in the photo has a massive number of windows, while the new building has fewer and smaller windows. According to Wahl (2017), reducing the window surface area in Riyadh's buildings can help contain cool air inside the buildings and thus reduce the use of energy. Although this design is based on environmental concerns, it might generate a sense of isolation for employees. (See Appendix B).

In terms of workplace technology, King Saud University is pursuing the KSU (2030) strategic plan. In this process, the institution is focusing its efforts on three objectives: "institutional reputation, teaching effectiveness, and research effectiveness" (Alqahtani, 2016 p.10). In this process, King Saud University is making a great effort to improve the university's technology. For example, the Dean of Electronic and E-learning equipped the campus with modern facilities such as smart classes to support teaching and training (Alqahtani, 2015).

Moreover, both old and new campuses have considered the new trend of adopting interactive teaching rather than traditional teaching. However, the ability to apply technology on the modern campus is better because it is more compatible with the infrastructure and modern atmosphere. The old campus is divided into old and new buildings, so educational technology has been introduced here in a limited fashion. Infrastructure and facilities that support e-learning and interactive learning enhance the connection between male and female campuses (not only for meetings but to support females teaching male students and vice versa). King Saud University provides a wide choice of new technology to assist and enhance teaching practices. These include smartboards (where teachers can write and draw things on the computer in a total of 610 smart classes); Blackboard (the e-learning system, which includes blogs, courses, tools for virtual classes, and lists of students that are automatically uploaded to the faculty members' page) which is presented by 160 distance learning halls; SMS (where teachers can send text messages to students via the university website, therefore maintaining the privacy of the faculty members' personal numbers); email; a website page (with a link to enable each faculty member to create their own personal page, with a CV, syllabus, and any professional information they wish to include); the e-gate (to enable faculty members to check their timetable, students lists, and insert students' grades, absences, etc.); the e-service (where faculty members can apply for promotions, new roles, training, retirement and other employment issues); and various other services that enable them to download useful computer programmes such as Windows and Endnote (King Saud University, 2022).

Generally, King Saud University has also developed its distanced-learning capabilities since it became one of the university's primary initiatives for the academic year 2007. The university encourages technology in teaching to ensure the university is in line with digital society (King Saud University, 2022). Thus, the university promotes online teaching/learning and provides courses for lecturers who wish to improve their technical skills so that they can use technology more effectively in their teaching. In 2018, the university asked all faculties to use online learning for at least 20% of all courses and provided facilities and encouragement to apply online teaching. However, the application of technology in teaching, including online courses, was given to faculty members' choice of whether to apply technology to their teaching methods or to use traditional methods.

The ranks of faculty members at Saudi universities are classified from higher to lower as follows: Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor. Then come Lecturers, Teaching Assistants, and Language Teachers (Table 3).

Table 3

Ranks of Faculty Members at Saudi Universities from Lower to Higher and Requirements for Each Rank

Rank	Requirements
Language Teacher	Bachelor’s degree
Teaching Assistant	Master’s degree
Lecturer	Master’s degree
Assistant Professor	Doctoral degree
Associate Professor	Four published (or accepted for publication) research papers, together with work experience
Professor	Six published (or accepted for publication) research papers, together with work experience

Table 3 shows the different ranks of faculty members at Saudi universities and how these are based on degrees, research and work experience. In general, these ranks vary between colleges depending on the field and the need. For example, language teachers are only found in the College of Linguistics. The aim of the table is to provide more context about the research setting due to differences between universities’ ranking terminology around the world. For example, in the United Kingdom, lecturers usually have a doctoral degree. In contrast, in Saudi universities, including the sample in this study, lecturers commonly have a master’s degree; this is similar to the USA.

Faculty members at King Saud University are required to complete 35 to 40 hours of work per week. These hours include teaching, academic advising, holding office hours, conducting research, attending commitments, and any other tasks required by the faculty. The higher the ranking a faculty member has, such as professor, the fewer teaching hours they are required to do (in general, academic members teach for six to 18 hours per week). For example, professors have a maximum of ten hours per week, which gives them more time to undertake and complete research. In contrast, teaching assistants and lecturers have from two hours up to 16 hours per week. However, when completing their master’s or doctoral degree at the university, teaching assistants and lecturers will have a maximum of six hours of teaching. Faculty members are expected to complete two to four office hours and about two to four hours of meetings per week, such as commitments and faculty council meetings. In terms of the attendance of academic members, it is their own responsibility; however, they are required to be available during office hours and lecture times, which are controlled by the Dean of Development and Quality. The Dean of Development and Quality is responsible for improving the university's internal process and output. Controlling faculty members' attendance to their lectures is one of the Dean's tools to complete a report of faculty members' performance, which enhances the process of improvement and decision making and achieving the Dean's goals.

Faculty members at King Saud University are expected to publish research and/or books, especially if they wish to be promoted to Associate Professor or Professor, and they are also evaluated on how regularly they publish works (usually each year depending on the faculty's strategy). More importantly, teaching assistants and lecturers are required to complete their master's and doctoral degrees, which are funded by the university. Neglecting work tasks – particularly attendance at lectures and/or failure to complete academic degrees (master's and doctoral) – will be cause for a demotion to a non-academic job (with lower prestige and lower pay) or for dismissal from the university (King Saud University, 2022).

As shown earlier, there are two divisions (campuses): male and female. Academic members in each campus have leadership positions, which are called "academic positions" and which can only be occupied by academic members. They may choose to nominate themselves for these positions; however, some of very high position, such as the Manager of the university and the Dean of each college, are only occupied by males. On the other side, lately, and according to Saudi Vision 2030, King Saud University now is responsible for empowering women to obtain higher leadership positions in the university.

In term of financing, according to the International Exhibitions and Conference on Higher Education (2019), there is a new university system based on Saudi Vision 2030, which allows some universities to be more independent financially, academically and administratively, and King Saud University was announced as one of them (Alruwaili, 2020). The implications of the new decision are not yet clear. However, that means the university will have fewer bureaucratic procedures and more focus on efficiency and effectiveness (Basaeed, 2020).

Finally, in terms of organisational culture, empathy and responsibility to others are part of Saudi Arabian culture. For example, faculty members in Saudi universities are expected to show care, responsibility and good morals (Zaky, 2012; Alsalem, 2017).

3.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to develop the methodology of the research undertaken in this study. Thus, the chapter explained aspects of methodology, such as research philosophies, and justified the choices made. The chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research process, the preferred research methods and research instrument, the sample and the method of analysis determined according to the chosen research methods. As well as these, the chapter provides a discussion of the ethical issues and possible limitations, along with possible strategies to overcome these problems.

Chapter 4: Women in Academia

4.1 Introduction

There are two results chapters in the thesis. Results chapters presents the key findings from the implementation of the research design detailed in the previous chapter. Applying thematic analysis to the interview transcripts, clusters of similar codes were generated, which contributed to sub-themes grouped under broader primary themes. These themes can then be used, with supporting examples from the transcripts, to address the research questions outlined in the first chapter and restated here. The main aim is to explore the experience of Saudi women working in academia and how this could be explained by the concept of alienation. Research questions are as follows:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

This is the first results chapter in this thesis. Three themes emerged from the process of analysing and coding the data in an inductive way, and they answer the research questions. Each theme reflects one dimensions of alienation and its opposite. The three main themes are: powerfulness/powerlessness, meaningfulness/meaninglessness, and interaction/isolation.

1. Powerfulness/Powerlessness

This part will illustrate the first main theme of this research. Powerlessness as a dimension of alienation and its opposite powerfulness will be the lens to look through the data in this part. Autonomy in the workplace, gender segregation, and leadership roles are the three subthemes that will be discussed under the main theme: powerfulness/powerlessness.

A. Autonomy in the Workplace

As shown in the literature review, Marx's theory of alienation is based on the idea that a sense of freedom and the ability to be creative is a significant part of being human (Marx, 1964; Ollman, 1971; Umney, 2018). That means a high level of autonomy in one's work will reduce the chances of work alienation. This section illustrates the level of control over one's work from the participants' point of view. Control in this context is defined as the level of freedom in one's work that meets professional workers' needs and expectations. Thus, the research results include how academic members see the level of control they have over their work tasks, how this level of control meets their expectations and needs, and how that in turn affects the participants' feelings. There is a particular focus on the sense of being alienated as a significant issue related to constraints on autonomy in employees' work.

Academic members reported having a sense of control over their work tasks. Indeed, being an academic was generally perceived by participants to facilitate individuality, creativity and freedom. Respondents stated, for example:

> In academia, you can show your personality and be creative. I mean, academic members have freedom, you can make your own research, impact your students positively, create chances for others and generate positive improvements and everything… I like being an academic because of the interaction with students and the chance to be creative, but I do not like repetition and the difference in ability levels among students… I have freedom, as the university does not butt in on our work, and I enjoy the research that I create. The research makes me happy. (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 6 years of experience)

> I like being in academia… the freedom that we have and the chance to be creative; I believe that the more creative I am, the happier I am. (P19, Lecturer, Accounting, 12 years of experience)

> The worst thing in non-academic work is the level of control others have over you, which is more intense. By contrast, as an academic, you may only be given the outline and off you go, which gives you a chance to be creative. (P10, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 10 years of experience)

Participants considered autonomy in their work to be a necessity and something expected as professionals with a need to be creative. Joy and happiness were feelings associated with the ability to be creative: “I enjoy the research that I create” and “the more creative I am, the happier I am”.

At the same time, faculty members were aware that there were certain limits to their autonomy. Interviewees identified experiencing control over their attendance, not only in their classrooms during lectures but also in their office hours by the Deanship of Development and Quality in the university. A second key source of control was over course content. College administration establishes a description of each course that determines the content, including recommended readings and quality requirements as approved by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment as a guarantee that all students receive equal course content. Also, the final exams for a course are provided by more than one lecturer, so they must be unified and take place on the same day and at the same time for all groups. Determining course content is, therefore, focused on the needs of students and the assessment needs of the university. The same module is presented to multiple groups, usually more than four, by different tutors.

The Dean of Development and Quality in the university is responsible for monitoring the attendance of academic members and students at lectures, which is then reported as a university quality standard. Lecturers’ commitment to attend their lectures is one key performance indicator set by this Quality Division at King Saud University (King Saud University, 2021). Attendance of lecturers is systematically recorded by knocking on the door during every lecture or office hours to check the lecturers are in attendance by asking them to sign in an evidence. Although this method of control may sound intrusive, interviewees had a different point of view:

Previously, I was annoyed by being controlled about attending my lectures, but after being a leader, I realised the reason beyond this control! Not everyone attended the lectures, not everyone committed to their lecture time, so this control is for everyone's benefit. So, yes, I agree with it! (P25, Lecturer, departmental lead-Economics, Business, 10 years of experience)

I do not care about control from the 'Quality Division' or whoever, because I am diligent, and if there is a benefit from this control, like reducing negligence, why not? Negative control over how you complete your tasks, such as your activities at work… I haven't experienced that. (P17, Lecturer, Arts, 8 years of experience)

To these participants such checks and control may have seemed beneficial to reduce neglect of duty by the unauthorised absence of academic staff. Acceptance of intrusive control to reduce neglect was expressed by 21 of 33 participants as long as the reason for control was clear and legitimate, indirectly related to the work task. For example, P25 and P17 expressed their acceptance of the control as long as it was related directly to their work tasks. Also, this control has a clear justification in that it reduces neglect. For example, P25 was initially angry about the control over her attendance but changed her mind and now encourages this control as she realised it has the aim of reducing neglect by enhancing negative motivation. She further mentioned that "everyone benefits", possibly in relation to fairness between lecturers as well in organisational benefits.

P3 also accepted the control on attendance but for a different reason:

Balance is perfect; the university gives us freedom and flexibility, so they [the administrator] have the right to control our attendance and it is not a shame, I do not mind it at all. (P3, Associate Professor, Arts, 2 years of experience)

P3 here referred to flexibility in the time of coming to the campus as they are given the freedom to choose the appropriate time for their timetable. Thus, P3 stated that control is one of the university's rights as the university grants academic members freedom and control over their work tasks.

In terms of control over course content, 25 of the 33 interviewees also showed acceptance of this. For example:

I agree with the determination of references by the administration because it is approved by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment, that will ensure a high standard of content and it is helpful for new or

> even any lecturers to know the outline of the course, to provide reasonable efforts that meet the requirements of this course… but of course faculties still maintain their freedom and flexibility, because each one has a vision… And if I found a better material? Of course, I will use it, as long as I comply with the course specifications in our college. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, background in computing and six years of experience)

> I agree with determining the references, so the syllabus for each course is unified, for example, if there is a course that be taught by more than two members it would be better than all members are used the same references that guarantee appropriate material with the course aims, equal efforts and equal learning chance for students. (P25, Lecturer, departmental lead-Economics, Business, 10 years of experience)

> I have time in some lessons to do extra work without any control from the management… It is a fact that faculty members have the ability during the term time to make changes as long as it doesn't conflict with requirements; for example, if there is a specific book I have to teach, there are no restrictions on using other references. Thus, we do have flexibility, we have to do what is required but if we want to do extra, nobody will say no to you. (P1, Associate Professor and Department Head, Science, more than 10 years of experience)

The syllabus is set by the university and sources are determined by departments, which implies less autonomy. The acceptance of such control over course content is based on trust in the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment, which as mentioned earlier, makes efforts to increase the university's performance and efficiency with the aim of increasing the university's standing based on international standards (King Saud University, 2021). Also, this acceptance is related to culture (Erss, 2018) and how faculty members define such control as either negative interference or as positive support in their teaching process by the administration (Schnedler and Vadovic, 2007). Here, control over course content was not only accepted but also welcomed by participants. Informants showed trust in the content determined by the college administrator as it had been approved by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment. The determinations of the course outlines provided participants with the appropriate amount of content and ensure fairness. Fairness reduces the sense of powerlessness (Ceylan and

Seyfettin, 2011; Howard and Cordes, 2010). Participants believed that the power they had in the way they presented this knowledge and the flexibility to add more content was what really mattered. Overall the majority of informants referred to control on the course content as legitimate, while 7 participants out of 33 did not make reference to legitimacy and control.

Whilst this type of control was generally viewed as legitimate, some forms of control were perceived as illegitimate. P18 and P10 discussed control over work tasks, such as teaching methods, perceiving these forms of control as illegitimate. We now look further into participants' views on the autonomy they had in their work as lecturers. The results differentiate between two levels of control: control at a general level and control at a specific level, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Levels of Control

Control Type	Level of Control	Results	Example
Legitimate control	General level: • Control over things that indirectly relate to the teaching process / not direct control over their academic work. • From a high authority level. • Has justification.	• Sense of fairness with less chance of being alienated. Fairness in this context refers to ensuring equality between hard workers and negligent workers. • Reduces alienation in terms of powerlessness.	• Attendance (if the reason is known). • Course contents.

Illegitimate control	Specific level: • Control over things directly related to the teaching process.	• Sense of alienation in terms of powerlessness. • Sadness/opposite to the results of autonomy.	• Teaching methods. • Restrictions on creativity in research.

Table 4 shows that based on the research results, participants perceived there to be two kinds of control. The first is legitimate control over work indirectly related to academics, such as attendance and course content (the extent to which it is considered direct or indirect differs among communities). Indirect control is usually more general and is set by a higher authority, such as the Dean of Development and Quality at King Saud University. The second kind of control is illegitimate and includes work that relates directly to academic tasks, such as research and teaching methods.

Control over general aspects of work, like attendance, is different from control over specific tasks, such as teaching methods, being more acceptable at the general level but not when it comes to one's specific work tasks. Control over specific work tasks can limit faculty members' freedom and ability to be creative and can deny an individual the autonomy to decide on the appropriate method for her work. This dichotomy between freedom and control bestowed on employees by management is interesting, particularly in light of the case of Covid-19, as will be demonstrated later. The need to have more control over work tasks is expected and desired by professional staff such as academics, as determined by Wise et al. (2017). Greater independence creates a feeling of confidence and power and the ability to express one's unique personal characteristics and identity at work.

In general, participants pointed out the sense of freedom and autonomy that they experienced in their academic career, which generated greater overall positive feelings. These stemmed from two elements. First, informants felt satisfied with the level of autonomy they have, and this level of autonomy met their expectations. Second, participants believed that the sense of ownership, creativity or ability to control their work tasks was a key reason for their happiness, and this happiness was delivered by a sense of power, as mentioned earlier by P18, P19 and P10. Thus, participants believed that they had autonomy over their work tasks and this autonomy increased their happiness.

The results also show that participants differentiated between two kinds of control. The first is control implemented with the goal of improving work and avoiding negligence. As P17 said, "I am diligent" and any control would not affect her. Hence, the level of control exerted by the university on faculty members was not perceived as negative by P17 in every instance. The second kind of control here is control over work tasks, which the interviewees clearly stated that they had not experienced.

In general, participants were asked about control in the workplace through this question: "What kinds of controls are there over your work?" with 19 out of 33 informants directly referring to control over their attendance. These responses suggest that faculty members received insignificant control over their work tasks (specific level) as they did not refer to any, and they only raised the issue of control over their attendance (general level) by a specific authority. Thus, interviewees appeared satisfied with the level of control exerted on them in carrying out their work tasks. They accepted control over their attendance as long as they knew the reason was to prevent neglect. Also, it provided them with desirable benefits in terms of feelings of equity or fairness, that their diligence was noted, and others' negligence was checked. P25 stated she accepted control over attendance because it would reduce the neglect of other members who did not attend their lectures. However, such acceptance was conditional on understanding the reason for the control.

The materials deemed appropriate by the colleges for teaching subjects were also accepted and respected by the majority of interviewees (18 out of 33). Thus, this acceptance of control depends on the employees' point of view of what they perceive as legitimate or illegitimate control (Schnedler and Vadovic, 2007). In this case, the personal benefit gained from being under legitimate control was fairness between diligent and neglectful members (see Table 4). Fairness, as mentioned in the literature review, is also connected to work alienation as it decreases the sense of being alienated (Ceylan and Seyfettin, 2011; Howard and Cordes, 2010).

In general, a review of the literature reveals a supposition that professionals expect a high level of autonomy. However, different academic groups understand the concepts of worker autonomy and control over workers in different ways. In this study, the participants defined their level of autonomy as reasonable and high. Also, control over participants is acceptable and at some point desirable. Thus, participants are not alienated in terms of powerlessness at this point. Therefore, Table 4 provides a tool that helps researchers to avoid generalisation, stereotypes and judgment when studying worker autonomy and the control workers have over their work task. It helps to define this autonomy and control from employees' point of view with less bias and more explanation and justification of what is going on and how it is understood by the group.

Overall, the faculty members acknowledged a high level of autonomy in their work tasks. Participants agreed that this autonomy enhanced their creativity in their work tasks and that meant happiness. There was no internal control on the teaching methods or style of faculty members (traditional or modern). Informants enjoyed the freedom of creativity and the power they had over their work. On the other hand, there were controls by the Dean of Development and Quality for quality aims. Faculty members viewed the control over attendance and course contents to be reasonable (and sometimes desirable), as long as it was on a general level and not specific. Interviewees understood that this control was not something personal but had a general aim in terms of overall university performance.

Therefore, exploring powerlessness and autonomy through organisations would provide insight into the situation if the researcher sees the employees' point of view regarding what they consider as legitimate or illegitimate control. This will give the researcher the opportunity to receive a comprehensive picture of the sense of powerlessness or autonomy among employees. Also, the researcher will be open to identifying both senses, depending on the elements that give this sense. Interestingly, in terms of power, there is a significant element that emerged from analysing the data that clashes with the sense of powerfulness and autonomy that academic women have in academic work. This powerlessness is related to gender segregation, as will be discussed in the next section.

B. Gender Segregation

Powerlessness in this section is represented by the element of gender segregation. Although there are efforts to empower women, such as the new regulations driven by Saudi Vision 2030, there is still a significant sense of powerlessness among women in academia.

Participants clearly pointed out the power that males hold in the university. Participants explained the difficulties they go through because of this relative powerlessness. Taking on a leadership position is supposed to include significant opportunities for achievement and development. However, for academic females, holding a leadership position is more likely to harm their experience of work due to this disabling powerlessness. Thus, females tend to avoid taking on leadership positions, even if this contradicts their career aspirations.

Whilst interviewees expressed optimism regarding the state initiative Saudi Vision 2030 for empowering women in the workplace, currently men are very much still in control. Ultimately, there is concern about how new regulations related to Saudi Vision 2030 may conflict with the current social culture in terms of employees feeling alienated as a result of disengagement with the workplace.

This section will illustrate the views of female lecturers on the level of power they held in terms of their gender and compared to male academics in the same university and in equivalent positions. First, the results suggest that academic female members at King Saud University felt powerless due to males' control over females. For example, participants said:

> At the female division [the female-only building], we have to wait for approval from the male division. In my previous work experience, it depended on the division; some male divisions shared decisions with us, but others imposed their decision on us. (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service, 6 years of experience)

> Decision making is limited to insignificant decisions [in the female department], while other important decisions, such as the approval of a change in programs or course plans, are taken by men. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, background in computing and six years of experience)

> I have some office tasks, I cannot take any action without authority from male departments. My job is like a secretary or coordinator and all decisions are received from male department… Ladies' departments always follow the rules and the process more than male departments… men always have flexibility but maybe because we do not have the authority. (P25, Lecturer, departmental lead-Economics, Business, 10 years of experience)

The comments above demonstrate strong agreement by participants that the male division has more power than the female division, with feelings of powerlessness and a lack of authority being explicitly mentioned by participants. For example, key statements include “important decisions… are taken by men” and “decision making” in the female department “is limited to insignificant decisions”. Significantly, P25 described her leadership position as that of a “secretary”, indicating a high level of powerlessness. This sense of powerlessness limiting the career advancement of female academic leaders is explored in detail later in this chapter under the topic of leadership roles.

The problem of segregation is seen at its worst in the physical separation of female and male campuses, as described in the previous chapter. The physical and regulatory “barriers” between men and women at the university not only made it hard for them to form positive working relationships, but most importantly, manifested and enhanced the sense of powerlessness of female employees. P25 and P9 said:

> Segregation puts barriers between us, and sometimes we discover [that] we have different forms and have to do twice the work. Also, we do not have a good relationship with them [the male departments]. (P25, Lecturer, departmental lead-Economics, Business, 10 years of experience)

> Sometimes, the male department makes decisions contrary to ours, which is an inconvenience because they do not know the situation. For example, when a female student wants to register in a course and we refuse it because it has exceeded the maximum number of students, she goes to the male campus. They do not hesitate to add her to the course offered at the female campus, which makes groups exceed the expected numbers, and this is infuriating as males add the female student to course groups that are taught at the female campus and not male campus, with no consideration of the female campus’ capacity or ability or plans. (P9, Assistant Professor, Education, 15 years of experience)

Both P25 and P9 provided examples of this situation of powerlessness. Men exercise power over women whilst being in completely separate locations, which increases the chance of alienation on more than one level. The men’s failure to cede control to women in terms of work leads to arbitrary and poor decision making. This distance of gender and space generates uncertainty with regard to what could be decided by men on the male campus, which directly impacts the working lives of the women on the female campus and tends to augment feelings of meaninglessness for the women in their roles. As P9 stated, “the male department makes decisions contrary to ours… with no consideration of female capacity or ability, or plans … this is infuriating.” P25 stated, “sometimes we discover [that] we have different forms and have to do twice the work." Her use of "discover" referred to decisions being made without involvement or even consultation; female staff just found out after the decision had been implemented.

The powerlessness that females experience in the workplace also affects their work-related transactions, for example, promotion seeking. Thus, female academic members in these circumstances ignore the hierarchical levels to the centre of power and authority in the workplace when it is related to their transaction. P8 said:

> What I am sure about is that when I face a problem, I directly contact the male division, as it would be solved faster. (P8, Associate Professor and the leader of Community Health Science at the College of Applied Medical Sciences, 4 years of experience)

However, exceeding the hierarchy in this way is limited to females in academic leadership positions or informally to those who have a connection with the male division or who could send their father, brother or husband to the male division, which increases the sense of powerlessness for those who do not have men they can ask for help. P5 reported:

> Yes, sometimes you need to send a man to the male campus to ease your transactions. Indeed, it is hard to find a man who is free to go there. Thank God for me it is ok, but some colleagues have no males to go for them. (P5, Associate Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Economics, 5 years of experience)

This quote shows how academic female members felt a sense of powerlessness isolated on a female campus under female supervision whose power has been removed. They finish their transaction directly by going to the male campus for cultural reasons, administration instructions and/or when they do not have a relative man to help. P5 expressed that she was fortunate to have a man to help her reduce her powerlessness, but this clearly represents yet another form of gender power, reflecting and reinforcing the power of males within the family into the world of work.

It should be noted that since 2018, in some colleges, while still subject to strict separation between males and females, for the first time, a female has been nominated to be the overall head of department (the Dean of the College who holds power and authority generally occupied only by males). This indicates that there is an increase in gender parity in terms of power and leadership, which again can depend on the college or department. This situation of sudden change in society and culture was captured by P16, who said:

> Before working in academia, I was working in a hospital, where it is a mixed gender environment and I like it there, but I decided to move to academia, which is more appropriate for our culture, you know those days when it was difficult. (P16, Assistant Professor and department leader, Business, 10 years of experience)

P16 was asked about working in the university, and whether it was hard because of the separation between females and male campuses. She responded:

> Sort of, but nowadays its absolutely better, the separation has become easier, now as leaders we meet males face-to-face in the male campus, when I enter the male campus no one looks at me wondering what I am doing there. I did not try to enter before because I was expecting this look, the first time I went there I thought all eyes were on me but no it is very normal!... I expect soon there will be something, something like we all be in the same campus [males and females]. (P16, Assistant Professor and department leader, Business, 10 years of experience)

Over the last five years females have started to be allowed to enter the male campus; however, it is still completely prohibited for men to enter the female campus except for emergencies, for example, firefighters or medical colleagues. Moreover, some classes designed for a master's or doctoral viva have two doors, one inside the campus and the other one via the car park to allow male supervisors and examiners (in case there are any males attending the viva) to enter the class without passing through the female campus.

In saying "you know those days when it was difficult", P16 was referring to the time before Saudi Vision 2030, where the rules regarding separation between males and females were stricter. This had a strong impact on employees' workplace culture and, therefore, on their choices in the workplace. For example, although she had liked her job in the hospital, P16 left to find a job that suited her expectations of community culture. There has been a massive change in the rules, and some rules are related directly to community culture. Here, we see that P16 was happy and welcomed the movement toward easing the barriers between males and females. There is a concern that not all employees agree with this, particularly as it may be seen as challenging religion and traditional customs. Indeed, participants in this study did not complain about separation itself, but their main issue was that they wanted to have more independence on their own campus. Some participants showed a preference for working in a female-only workplace, for example:

> I think working as a lecturer or in education in general is more suitable for our culture, something that we are raised in; it makes me more comfortable and less anxious to be in a female-only workplace and the relations between us is less formal. (P17, Lecturer, Arts, 8 years of experience)

> I was working in a mixed gender workplace, I feel they were separate groups, and did not feel engagement in the workplace, but here in the university, I feel serenity, I feel all colleagues are like my sisters. (P14, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Computing, 7 years of experience)

Separation was expressed as desirable by 21 out of 33 participants, as it provides benefits for females. It provides them with a private environment that suits their culture from one side. This was explained by P27 and P30:

> One reason for choosing an academic career is the separation between males and females. I feel more comfortable and freer to dress and wear makeup. Yes, maybe it is something that we grow up with, like separating at special occasions, and in education. (P30, Lecturer, Education, 9 years of experience)

> Being surrounded by females makes me more comfortable, I feel like we understand each other more and we support each other. Me and my colleagues also celebrate our special occasions such as getting married or having a baby. (P27, Lecturer, Arts, 10 years of experience)

Employees need to work in a place that suits their customs and traditions. The word ‘comfortable’ in regard to being in a female-only workplace was frequently used by 12 participants to describe the workplace in terms of culture. There were two sources of this comfort: it suited their culture, and it brought about a supportive kind of atmosphere from the females’ point of view.

Separation was not seen by participants as an issue of female powerlessness. In contrast, removing physical barriers between males and females could have a negative effect as it would remove the sense of comfort of being in a female-only work place as explained by informants. This would cause disengagement from the work community and create anxiety as a result of conflict between employee and work environment. As P17 described, it is “more suitable to our culture”. Moreover, P14 said, “I feel all colleagues are like my sisters.” “Sisters” in this context refers to the gender similarity and the sense of comfort that comes with being in a female-only workplace rather than referring to strong relationship bonds. This interpretation is more compatible with the context and with what has been mentioned earlier, that the relations between lecturers are less strong than those between lecturers and their students (their “daughters”). Also, relations between lecturers are based on the need to avoid issues and misunderstanding. Thus, females provide each other with a feeling of comfort because of gender similarity, not strong relations.

C. Leadership Roles

Studies such as Hodges (2017) provide insight into the situation of female workers in Saudi Arabia. Hodges (2017) captured the difficulties facing professional women in Saudi Arabia in terms of the culture, the society and the organisation. This was also discussed earlier in the gender theories topic in Chapter 2. That Saudi society is fundamentally a patriarchal society. Women working in a patriarchal society, according to the explanation of patriarchy theory in Chapter 2, are struggling to obtain a high position in the workplace in a culture that is based on the assumption that men have more advantages and authority in the workplace (Beechey, 1979; Romero-Hall et al., 2018). This situation demonstrates a need to learn more about academic women in Saudi Arabia as professionals who are expected to occupy leadership positions.

Interestingly, in terms of empowering female academic members among the university, at the College of Business, a female was nominated for a leadership position over both male and female sections for the first time, which is a significant step forward in empowering women in the university:

> Yesterday [17 September 2019], the Dean of the college sent a letter saying that a female has been nominated for the position [head of the department], to oversee the male and female divisions… lately, the control of the male division over us is decreasing significantly, and we have started to become independent. Indeed, the male division now wants us to take on more authority and make decisions without referring to them. (P20, Assistant Professor and leader of marketing, Business, 4 years of experience)

> We now have a female Dean in the pharmacy college [2018]. Let us say there is now a culture of accepting females in a leadership position, which used to be the male domain. Furthermore, this new vision has an impact on ministries that have a female division. (P21, Lecturer, departmental lead-Management, Business, 14 years of experience)

P20 and P21 confirmed that the empowering of women at the university is still in its early stages. P20 referred to men's actions in terms of empowering women rather than what is happening in the females' department, for example, "the control of the male division over us is decreasing significantly"; "the male division now wants…" and "without referring to them". This focus on men's actions highlights how females believe that the power remains with men even if the men have given a few high positions to the women. Interestingly, P21 related the situation to culture when she considered to what extent it would be culturally acceptable if it became a regulation. Also, participants suggested that some employees did not yet accept the new decision, which raises concerns about the result of this conflict between employees' culture and stereotypes and the new regulations regarding women in leadership.

The vision P21 is referring to is Saudi Vision 2030, a key part of which is to encourage the empowerment of women. This vision was also mentioned by another participant:

> It is true that we have more authority now, but be aware that it is still informal, so it hasn't really changed any of the rules and regulations yet, as the men still have all the power… However, I remember a time when we did not have a head of a certain department for a long time, and it was recommended that we employ a female, but back then, they [the men] refused the idea. Indeed, Vision 2030 is a great movement towards empowering women because it is from the government… also, all the ministries now have a division called Vision 2030 to ensure their commitment. (P22, Lecturer and departmental lead-Statistics, Business, 11 years of experience)

Participants were optimistic about the new vision of Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 2). Saudi Vision 2030 has promised to restructure the power that traditionally belongs to men and to redistribute it to whomever is more qualified; it should make no difference whether that person is a man or a woman. As a result of Saudi Vision 2030, the participation of women in senior management positions has increased to 30% in 2020 (Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, Saudi Arabia, 2022). Interviewees believed that as a result of Saudi Vision 2030, there has been some transformation towards greater equality between the male and female divisions, although men still have more authority over women within university departments. Participants expressed optimism and enthusiasm for the new vision as it is backed by the power of the government. However, participants did not talk about the impact on them of a woman becoming the Dean of a college, whether they would have more power or control as a result. It is yet to be seen if a female would be able to exercise the power of her office after being appointed, or whether it would be, as P25 described her current division leader role, as “like a secretary”. This issue will be examined later in more detail.

Unsurprisingly, there is a negative image, low confidence and limited trust in the ability of female leaders to hold a leadership position. Other females had stereotypical ideas based on current and previous practices of only allowing low levels of power to females, for example:

> Some tasks are getting complicated in the females’ section, but they are more flexible in the male section. (P16, Assistant Professor and department leader, Business, 10 years of experience)
>
> Women always follow the rules and regulations, so they are usually accurate with procedures that delay work. (P27, Lecturer, Arts, 10 years of experience)
>
> When I deal with people in the male division, they are less complicated and more flexible! (P12, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service- Accounting, 16 years of experience)

Female leaders were blamed by their colleagues for being inefficient in their leadership positions, that they are “complicated”, they “delay the work” and they are “less flexible” in their leadership. There were suggestions that they behave this way as a result of powerlessness. P25 explained that female leaders are inflexible because they do “not have authority” (to carry out their leadership tasks). It is likely that female academic leaders experience expectations from other colleagues as additional pressure yet feel powerless to meet these expectations. Hence, some participants indicated their lack of desire for work progression to a leadership position. They were aware of the powerlessness that their colleagues feel as female leaders. As a result, it is not uncommon for women to refuse the idea of taking a leadership position even if that means they will lose a chance of job development in their academic career. For instance, one Associate Professor said:

> I have no desire to take up a leadership position… waste of time, and you have huge responsibilities, and you have no authority. Also, the academic leader here is responsible for academic and non-academic issues; this is so complicated and difficult. I have never been in a leadership position. I feel that there is no motivation to do so; I might give it a go for as short a period as possible because I feel it might provide me with something for the future. I want to appreciate the value of time as a faculty member without being in an administrator position. When you finish your administrator task and return to your job, which is only academic, you say, "Oh my God! Why have I wasted my time, where is my research? Why haven't I completed it!" So, in these moments of conscience, I feel this is the benefit that might push me. For example, if I stay a year as a leader, I can then focus on my other interests, but I think there is no motivation for me to do that because there are many tasks and all of them are routine tasks that have no benefits for me and won't help me improve anyway. (P5, Associate Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Economics, 5 years of experience)

A similar perspective was given by P26:

> Some positions at university are a waste of time because I worked as a coordinator and I found it was just an additional task that wasted my time without any benefits. (P26, Lecturer, Science, 7 years of experience)

Both P5 and P26 indicated that professional development in terms of being a leader was not something they aspired to, or at least not for very long, given the difficulties and responsibilities this role entails. In contrast, P1(Associate Professor and Department Head, Science, more than 10 years of experience) asserted: "I like anything about job development." For P5 the only benefit of a leadership position was that it would make her appreciate her purely academic role more without the responsibilities and duties attached to a leadership position. Interestingly, she felt that being a leader would negatively impact on her research and being a leader simply "wastes time", indicating that it reduces the time available to complete personal research. Interestingly, P25 and P26 described academic leadership positions for women in powerless terms, as being a "secretary" and "coordinator".

This situation is clearly obstructing academic females from experiencing a leadership position as an opportunity, greatly narrowing professional development choices for female academics. It can also make females feel that they are not effective enough to hold equal power because of gender segregation, leading to discrimination. Furthermore, if a female chooses to be in a leadership position, it can actually increase their sense of powerlessness. Female academics experience powerlessness when they are in a leadership position without the requisite level of power. Although there are other advantages of being an academic leader, such as higher bonuses and prestige, the comments show that the lack of real power is a significant obstacle.

Our interest here is not in discussing leadership itself as a quality, but rather being a female academic at King Saud University and how it is related to experiences of work alienation. Powerlessness is clearly being exacerbated. Promotion to an academic leadership role is an important professional development opportunity at King Saud University in terms of power, prestige, experience and salary. Yet, in the case of women, we see a reinforcing effect of powerlessness and alienation that such opportunities highlight, and women commonly seek to avoid promotion opportunities.

Although there is an awareness that females are moving into more positions of power in recent years, a majority of the interviewees (29 out of 33) showed a continuing preference for men in positions of power, expressed in terms of the culture or stereotypes rather than rules or regulations:

> Although I am excited that women can become department heads now, and we see examples of women who can bring significant positive changes to the university, I am afraid these examples are only of the kind of women who are not suited to this position [head of a department]. (P26, Lecturer, Science, 7 years of experience)

> Male control over female departments makes me feel comfortable and secure. I can deal with them quickly, but if it is 100% administrated by a female, the situation would be worst. Dealing with females is more complicated. If I want something, I go to the male division directly, and they are so helpful. (P6, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 16 years of experience)

P26’s reference to the unsuitable “kind of women” is interesting as it suggests that whilst all men may be suitable for leadership positions, some or most women are not, demonstrating a concern about females as leaders without any specific evidence from than the actual situation of leadership. P6 developed this concern regarding her uncertainty of the ability of women to be leaders when she stated she felt “secure” under male control. In this initial period of empowering women, it might be expected for stereotypes to be raised, such as describing female leaders as less flexible or sticking to the rules due to their previous situation of powerlessness. Much attention is on new female leaders in this current period, and negative expectations act as a control. Female leaders will need to be careful; indeed, a level of powerlessness will be expected to remain because of imaginary limitations on women’s ability to be leaders coming from both males and females.

As the government moves forward with its policy of empowering women, the male departments have adjusted, even though only a few years ago, men completely rejected the idea of women being department heads, as mentioned earlier by P22. For example:

> Indeed, significant decisions are taken by men, and we in the female department take the insignificant internal decisions; to be honest, but this is not as strict as it looks. It is a consulting process; we gather in a formal meeting, discuss issues and find solutions together, and this is excellent. (P4, Associate Professor, Arts, 9 years of experience)

> Now, this has changed. Men now encourage us to make decisions without consulting them; they give us more authority to take action. (P20, Assistant Professor and departmental lead-Marketing, Business, 4 years of experience)

Both P4 and P20 confirmed that although the male division holds the power and control, there is now a tendency by men to delegate authority or at least be flexible in sharing decision making. There is a notable difference between the quotes above, where some agreed that men are not sharing decisions to the agreement that men were not only happy to share decisions but encouraged women to take decisions by themselves without waiting for men’s approval. The massive changes in the workplace over a short time from totally refusing the idea of women in academic leadership (P22) to empowering women within the university (P20) to achieve Saudi Vision 2030 is expected to push improvements, but also to create resistance as a result of the conflict between the culture and policies of empowering women.

A sense of powerlessness exists among female academics as a result of gender segregation in two ways, as an academic and as a leader. It appears that there is still some way to go before the participants feel as though they, as females, have a similar level of power and authority as men and, in the interim, it appears many still defer to the male divisions (where most power and control still lies) to gain a quicker response and be granted permission for various tasks, and to gain greater flexibility (instead of only abiding by the rules/protocols). Also, there is a cultural aspect, and how both males and females will embrace and/or resist the rapid changes of the new vision of Saudi Arabia. The stereotypes that a preference for male leadership have a negative effect, clashing with the empowering of women and reinforcing a sense of powerlessness.

The data has shown that the physical separation of males and females is not the main problem from the participants' point of view. Indeed, the main issue is the exercise of power and authority by males over females in circumstances of poor coordination between males and females. The female campus has its own Dean and a director for each college and field who cannot act independently of male authority; this ineffective (failing) organisational structure is a direct result of the overwhelming power that men have over women in the university. Also, the fact that the head of the university is a man and has never been a woman is a significant source of power, both real and symbolic, for men in the university. The idea that men are entitled to hold power in the university remains.

Physical separation from power and power holders increases the workload for female employees, who are forced to operate under different procedures in male and female divisions. Also, the sense of powerlessness in the female department when confronted with the improvised and distant decisions men take are related to affairs in the female campus. Females do not have the right to refuse or object to these male decisions, which explains the poor relationship between male and female divisions. Participants referred to the ambiguity of what is happening, and the physical separation case increases the level of uncertainty and enhances the sense of powerlessness, men's decisions about them will be "discovered later" at great "inconvenience".

The main issue that women face in their work as a result of gender segregation is powerlessness. Women are under the control of men although they are on separate campuses. There is a sense of optimism with regard to Saudi Vision 2030 in terms of empowering women. However, men still practise their power over women. Moreover, due to stereotypes and previous practices, women become less trusting of their women colleagues in leadership positions. Thus, women tend to avoid leadership position even if they lose opportunities for being promoted in their job because they want to avoid the sense of powerlessness. Finally, a sense of isolation also appears in women as a result of having power in another location.

The next section will illustrate the second result of this study by using another dimension of alienation as a lens to examine the data. The second theme of the results is represented by the meaninglessness dimension and its contrast, meaningfulness, as this was shown by analysing the research results.

2. Meaningfulness/Meaninglessness

A. Imprinting

The literature is limited in its definition and explanation of the concept of imprinting as used in this research. Most imprinting research to date has been on topics such as genomics, lithography and animals (Bajrami and Spiroski, 2016; Chou et al., 1996; Hess, 1959), and the most relevant research to the organisational context is organisational imprinting (Lyle et al., 2023). A review of this literature shows different meanings of imprinting from that suggested by this research.

Specifically, for the purposes of this research, imprinting is defined as the positive effect of faculty members on their students, which faculty members become aware of either during or after teaching and through interactions with students. The idea of imprinting on others in this research refers to the human desire to make positive changes that can be seen and recognised by others, and that give the person a sense of meaningfulness. The concept of personal imprint that emerged inductively through the data analysis is seen as a feature of meaningful work. Meaningful work, as noted earlier in the literature review in Chapter 2, reduces the sense of work alienation in terms of meaninglessness. A sense of meaningfulness is enhanced when employees recognise the results of their actions and realise that they are doing significant work, which has an impact on others. The desire to cause an imprint on people may, therefore, indicate a high level of engagement in their role, not just to fulfil a task, but to provide a deeper level of motivation and meaning to one's work; this leads to a sense of achievement and subsequent self-estimation, the antithesis of alienation (Alexander and Smith, 2005; Blauner, 1964; Shantza et al., 2014). From my results, imprint arose as a feature of academic work from the participants' point of view.

Participants showed how imprint was a significant element that enhanced their love for and engagement in their work.

In general, participants talked about their love and engagement with their work, specifically the work related to teaching and interaction with students. Participants said that they were happier doing more than just delivering information to students; this is imprint. More than half of the participants (27 out of 33) responded, “I like teaching” or “I love teaching” when asked a general question: “What do you think about academic work?” The participants expressed positive feelings towards teaching. P2, an Arts lecturer with six years of experience, called it “the best thing about being an academic”, while P29, a lecturer in Languages and Translation with ten years of experience, explained her enjoyment by saying that students were “excited to learn”; she enjoyed the impression that faculty members were able to have on students. P2 commented that she enjoyed seeing “fascination in [the students’] eyes”, while P3, an associate professor in Arts with two years of experience, commented, “When I see [the students] understand, I feel glad!” Interacting with students appears to have been highly important for many participants, given the responses and reactions that they often gained from them. For example, P5 explained:

> Academia inculcates positive feelings. I like the positive impact I can have on people because knowledge is maybe the only thing that always has an imprint. Your imprint on anyone will never be lost. Even if she forgets your name, if you provide her with advice, maybe you will positively change her behaviour or attitude. (P5, Associate Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Economics, 5 years of experience)

This idea of imprinting on students was also mentioned by others, such as P17, who said:

> Interacting with students motivates me to give them more interesting information; my aim is not only to deliver the course but to also have a positive effect or imprint on them. (P17, Lecturer, Arts, 8 years of experience)

A sense of imprint can be gained by receiving appreciation from students. P22 also stated:

> To be honest, the only thing that makes me love my work are my daughters [my students]. For example, during the graduation ceremony or after having graduated, I receive gratitude face-to-face or via emails from them [students]. I feel glad when they say we always remember your words and advice; this appreciation makes me

> feel relieved and recharges me after a tiring term. (P22, Lecturer and departmental lead-Statistics, Business, 11 years of experience)

In this quote, P22 explicitly mentioned that her students were the reason for her being a faculty member. Then, she directly related this love to the appreciation that she received after her students graduated. Here, "after" pertains to the impact of a faculty member's efforts on the student's pathway, which is related to the clear and positive imprint that she had left on her students. Interestingly, "my daughters" is a typical phrase that professors use to express their parental feelings and the strong relationship/bond that academics build with students. This unique relationship between lecturers and their students will be discussed in the section on interaction with others in the workplace.

Technology also had a role in improving the feeling of appreciation amongst participants. P2 noted that she had received appreciation over Twitter:

> I follow my previous students on Twitter, so I know where they are employed or have volunteered or have gone on to train; I can see the outcome of my teaching. Also, I remembered once I was mentioned in a tweet from a previous student that said, "I am really thankful for P2 who taught me how to do various things." You cannot imagine how happy I was when I read that tweet. I think about it all the time, so this is a strong motivation to use social media; if I wasn't on social media, I would not have known about it. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, background in computing and six years of experience)

P27 also commented on enjoying receiving positive emails from students:

> I receive positive feedback and emails at the end of each term from students, so I feel happy, and this is a strong motivation to work harder, just like when managers send me certificates after tasks or workshops. (P27, Lecturer, Arts, 10 years of experience)

This appreciation from students is something that many participants stated made them feel that their work tasks were meaningful. Similarly, appreciation from other colleagues boosted motivation for some. P14 said:

> When I became the leader of the Quality Division, I turned all files into cloud storage, and the lecturers were very happy and welcomed this idea. Because it made their lives easier, I received appreciation and gratitude, which motivated me

> in my job. (P14, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Computing, 7 years of experience)

This feeling of being valued by colleagues or students appears to have been a significant intrinsic motivator for participants and made coming to work more rewarding. Thus, the important discussion here is not motivation itself, but the positive feelings that cause this motivation.

More than half of the participants (19 out of 33) discussed feelings about achieving personal goals, as with the goal of imprinting confirmed by feedback from students. P2, a lecturer at the College of Arts with a background in computing and six years of experience, “felt that [she had] achieved [her] aim”. P8 discussed this at length:

> Academic work is considered a task you do which gives you a sense of accomplishment. It is indeed a feeling of achievement that you have met your aims which you set at the beginning of the term or academic year related to your academic work; thank God, I always achieve my academic goals related to teaching and the outcome is excellent… In teaching, there is that feeling of, let’s say, a kind of gratitude from students towards their teacher; [it] is a great feeling and reflects my accomplishment and this gives me satisfaction—a deep sense of satisfaction. (P8, Associate Professor and the leader of Community Health Science at the College of Applied Medical Sciences, 4 years of experience)

Although P8 also had a non-academic task as leader of a faculty, she was very specific in referring to her academic achievements.

Participants also discussed the enjoyment they gained from knowledge development; for example, P1 (Associate Professor and Department Head, Science, more than 10 years of experience) said that interacting with students “widens your horizons. Hearing students’ ideas and opinions, and also as an academic, you research and investigate knowledge”. P2 said:

> I like reading. I have no problem investigating the newest research in my field if I am bored. For example, I can find out the impact of X on Y, or any question in my mind, and find out how people answer it in their research. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, background in computing and six years of experience)

Passing this knowledge on was also enjoyable for some, such as P12, who said:

> I really get the benefit of being in an administrator position. I know a lot of information. I can answer my students' enquiries about their academic situation or guide them. (P12, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service- Accounting, 16 years of experience)

Interviewees such as P1 also suggested that teaching is a mutually beneficial process between themselves and their students. P30 (Lecturer, Education, 9 years of experience) explained: "As an academic, one does not only teach but also learns from the students." P22 and P21 added:

> Nowadays, I feel we are the students, we learn from our students much more than before, I believe this generation is smarter; besides, they have great access to information. They [the students] always amaze me with their knowledge. (P22, Lecturer and departmental lead-Statistics, Business, 11 years of experience)

> I spend more time preparing my lecture than before. I try to bring something new and creative to meet their level and amaze them. (P21, Lecturer, departmental lead-Management, Business, 14 years of experience)

During class discussions, information and ideas can be gained from the group's knowledge and perspectives. Thus, teaching is a bi-directional process; participants believe that they gain more than simply a salary for teaching students. Moreover, P21 confirmed the need to "amaze" her students; this is connected to the idea of imprint mentioned earlier. That "amaze" element is not a work requirement of the faculty member. Indeed, it increases work intensification by increasing the time and effort needed to find the "amaze" element to be delivered in the lecture. This is self-motivated by lecturers to reach the sense of imprint mentioned earlier. "Amaze" is an interesting word that was repeated by two participants, who felt that it that could be achieved by developing their knowledge to have the ability to amaze their students with new, deep and creative knowledge. Also, the ability to determine their own standards with regard to the quality of their work points to a high level of autonomy.

Participants, therefore, appeared to believe in the importance of seeing an impact on others. Thus, the positive effect that lecturers had on their students' behaviour as a result of connecting with them not only as students or within the limits of a specific course but also as individuals could help them improve not only in their education but in their life in general. This imprint would make lecturers feel positive and increase their sense of the meaningfulness of their work. Thus, it appears that the contribution of faculty members is often perceived as obvious and direct, evident in students' grades and in general responses to teaching. Also, it appears that student achievement and understanding was seen by some participants as a personal accomplishment, which impacted positively on their feelings.

Interestingly, most participants discussed their academic role positively and as stemming from intangible elements, for example, doing significant work that enhanced the meaning of one's work. Only one participant (P29, Lecturer of English at the College of Languages and Translation with 10 years of experience) referred to her wages as something that "makes me like my job". This indicates how intangible aspects of academic work significantly contributed to wellbeing gained from work roles, such as making an imprint on students rather than tangible aspects like wages.

The next section is the third theme of the result. It shed the light on alienation that caused by the sense of isolation and its contrast interaction.

3. Isolation/Interaction with Others in the Workplace

Lecturers build different relationships among students and colleagues. Interestingly, the relationship between lecturers and their students was seen to be stronger than the relationship between lecturer and their colleagues. Moreover, the relationship between lecturers and their colleagues was found to be affected by the office or building design. This section will present the informants' points of view on their relationships within the university and how it impacted their feelings, both positively and negatively.

Faculty members who moved to the new main campus attributed their isolation to the new office design and buildings. The new offices have fewer windows, a less open-plan design, more bricks-and-mortar (less glass), and reduced green spaces. This office design reduces proximity to other employees. Some participants claimed that offices in the new campus were designed to isolate individuals from other employees and the whole environment. Moreover, ten participants asserted that the massive size of the new buildings reduced the friendly interactions that they had enjoyed in the older, smaller building. For example, P8 and P4 said:

> When we were in the old building, there was a feeling of loyalty, and employee relationships were stronger than what we have in the new building! It might [be] because the building was compact, offices were adjacent and made from glass so you can see who is present inside... In contrast, here in the new building, I am in an office with no windows, and when I close the door to work and avoid noise, nobody knows that I am inside! I feel isolated. (P8, Associate Professor and the leader of Community Health Science at the College of Applied Medical Sciences, 4 years of experience)

> Can you imagine? I have no windows in my main office! Who came up with this design believing that a faculty member does not need windows? It is unhealthy. Also, why is there no green space? I feel like I am in the middle of the desert. (P4, Associate Professor, Arts, 9 years of experience)

Interestingly, the physical, tangible aspects of the workplace could enhance feelings of employee alienation, specifically isolation. Despite performing the same role and working with many past colleagues from the old campus, some participants felt their relationships with each other had changed and become more formal because of the loss of the warm atmosphere afforded by the building they had previously worked in.

The physical environment discussed previously is believed to be integral for promoting and establishing positive relationships and was found to be an important factor throughout the research. Participants said:

> Coming to the university makes me feel great; for example, today is my first day after the summer holiday. Although I did not get enough sleep, I felt delighted when I entered the university. I am excited to meet my colleagues and students. I miss them, and I miss the whole environment; it is an essential part of my work, where I meet students and colleagues. This is my second home. (P7, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Finance, 10 years of experience)

> Definitely not online teaching, I would choose to come to a physical place; this is the best thing about our job, to go in the morning, meet your colleagues and students, and build good relationships by the end of the term. (P19, Lecturer, Accounting, 12 years of experience; from an interview before the pandemic lockdowns)

If, as for P7, the university environment was a “second home”, colleagues seemed like family members. This participant did indeed “miss” the people from college as though they were family members; this view is in line with the literature review.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, most interviewees referred to their positive feelings when they attended the campus, which generated a sense of camaraderie and encouragement, and which motivated employees. Some of these quotations were also mentioned earlier in the relationships section:

> When I come to the college, a physical place, I feel bored by the routine and feel a sense of pressure, but when I meet my colleagues and each one has their lectures and tasks, we walk together to our 8 a.m. lectures, all of us doing office hours and others are waiting for you to have breakfast together, which is motivating. (P15, Lecturer, Business, 10 years of experience)

> Coming to the university makes me feel great; for example, today is my first day after the summer holiday, and although I did not get enough sleep, I felt delighted when I entered the university. I am excited to meet [my] colleagues and students. I miss them, I miss the whole environment; it is an essential part of my work, to meet students and colleagues. This is my second home. (P7, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Finance, 10 years of experience; quote cited earlier)

> Definitely not online teaching, I would choose to come to a physical place; this is the best thing about our job, to go in the morning, meet your colleagues and students, and build good relationships by the end of the term. (P19, Lecturer, Accounting, 12 years of experience; quote cited earlier)

These comments show the positive effect of coming to the physical workplace and socialising with other employees and students, and how this social interaction contributed positively to employees’ wellbeing by reducing feelings of isolation. Coming onto campus seems to have improved the wellbeing of these employees by providing a sense of routine, camaraderie and interaction with others, which by comparison, P19 did not seem to think could be achieved through online teaching.

It has been noted that lecturers called their students “my daughters”. For example, P22 stated, “To be honest, the only thing that makes me love my work are my daughters [my students].” The fact that most interviewees referred to their students as “my daughters” reflects the kinship ties within the university. The phrase “my daughters”, as mentioned earlier, expresses the unique relationship between female lecturers and their students. This kinship relationship might enhance emotional engagement and attachment to the workplace, explicitly concerning academics in Saudi Arabia. This feeling is contrary to alienation in being attached to the community and the workplace: a strong sense of belongingness, like the home and family structure.

Moreover, in Saudi culture, referring to students as daughters is a common way to express the relationship between a female academic member and her students, as though she performs the role of a mother in terms of the love, responsibility and care she feels for her students (conversely, male students are referred to as “my sons”). Indeed, students meet with their professors for two to three hours a week, for 16 weeks, which is the length of a term. Previous regulations in King Saud University allowed 60–80 students in the classroom, but five years ago a new rule reduced that capacity to a maximum of 40 students. Thus, reducing the number of students might enhance this good relationship between professors and students.

However, as a result of the strong relationship between faculty members and their students, participants highlighted negative feelings of responsibility and empathy for their students. The following feelings were expressed by P3:

> Teaching is a huge responsibility; thus, presenting wrong information, explaining the information that is not suitable for students’ understanding level or concentration – these are my fears. On the other hand, I feel proud. I feel that God has given me this class, this number of students, all entrusted to me by God to provide something here. It is a good feeling; it motivates you to give more and makes you feel trustworthy and able to pass knowledge to others and help change society. I like student interactions; this absolutely makes my day. I feel like, thank God, I have completed my class, but when I finish, and they follow me and say, “We do not understand”, I feel ashamed. I admit that I can only do my best, and God will support me in doing it. However, sometimes, I cannot deliver information, which makes me sad and afraid. Then, as I said, when I see they understand, I feel glad! (P3, Associate Professor, Arts, 2 years of experience)

P3 felt emotionally attached to her students’ education, their outcomes and levels of understanding. However, academic work does include tasks like evaluating students and submitting grades. The majority of participants asserted that submitting grades was the hardest part of their job. Moreover, marking work was seen to be physically arduous and psychologically challenging by a majority of informants (26 out of 33), especially when faculty members felt that their students had not achieved good grades or they themselves had not achieved the objective of helping students understand the content. For example, P3 continued by saying:

> Submitting grades is a painful part of my job. I feel sad and anxious when any of my students get fewer marks; though it is her fault, I can imagine how sad she will be. I cannot help these feelings, and I can do nothing. (P3, Associate Professor, Arts, 2 years of experience)

P26 argued:

> The problem is not only about the effort you physically exert when submitting the grades; it is also the psychological pain and sad feeling because students will feel sad. (P26, Lecturer, Science, 7 years of experience)

A similar perspective was given by P30:

> I feel anxious when I update student results. After submitting students' grades, I know that some students with low grades would send me an email and explain their circumstances. These make me feel sad and sympathetic. I can do nothing but ignore them. (P30, Lecturer, Education, 9 years of experience)

This sadness when her students got low grades is also an example of how faculty members genuinely engaged with their work. Therefore, exploring this feeling through the lens of alienation avoided mistaking the symptom of "sadness", which refers to job non-satisfaction, for the real issue that causes sadness, which is lack of job engagement. Job engagement is the opposite of job alienation, and according to Daly and Dee (2006), job alienation decreases as job satisfaction increases.

In terms of relationships with other colleagues, numerous participants indicated a desire for positive relationships at work. Maintaining positive relationships with colleagues was deemed necessary, as evidenced by the following statements:

> I need to build a good relationship with others… sometimes, when I write a request to my colleagues via WhatsApp, I use expressive symbols [emojis] to avoid any negative effect. (P25, Lecturer, departmental lead-Economics, Business, 10 years of experience)

> Sometimes I try to show my colleagues a positive facial reaction to maintain a good relationship with them. (P27, Lecturer, Arts, 10 years of experience)
>
> I welcome emails regarding colleagues' news. For example, if someone has a sad occasion we could gather together and offer our condolences. (P15, Lecturer, Business, 10 years of experience)
>
> The number of emails doesn't annoy me; sometimes you find out about other people's events, so you do your social duty such as congrats and condolences. (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 6 years of experience)

These statements include codes such as good, relations and condolences, which indicate a desire to build connections with colleagues through formal and informal interactions. In some instances (such as WhatsApp responses, in-person interaction, and using symbols in work-related texts such as smiley faces and flowers), this was done deliberately to avoid negative relationships. Learning about what other colleagues were up to and hearing their news was welcomed, as it enabled better personal connections and social gatherings.

Moreover, the nature of an academic job usually necessitates working outside the office, such as being in classes for lectures or attending conferences and workshops. Some participants claimed that academic work led to feelings of isolation as a result of a lack of interaction and socialisation:

> As an academic member, most of my time is spent without my colleagues. On average, I spend less than an hour each day in my office… we do not meet our colleagues frequently, we keep formal relationships, which prevent problems. (P14, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Computing, 7 years of experience)
>
> I admit [that] there is a gap between faculty members; the reason is that we are too busy, we do not have time to socialise… we are trying to do our work. (P23, Lecturer, Languages and Translation, 12 years of experience)

Relationships between faculty members at King Saud University were good but not as strong as their relationships with students. Moreover, the relationships between faculty members and their students seemed to develop naturally or spontaneously. These relationships contrasted with relationship among colleagues, which were more deliberate and required effort. This suggests that faculty members' relationships with their students were more honest and emotionally guided. It is interesting to note that positive relationships with colleagues lacked the emotional intensity of relationships with the students.

The relationships between faculty members were also slightly different from their relationship with students. Participants aimed to form relationships with other colleagues, not for the sake of the relationship but more critically, to avoid problems in the workplace. The nature of academic work as "too busy" or the fact that most work is done by academic members themselves, such as lectures, preparing modules, writing research, and correcting assignments, was also found to be a reason for less interaction. Thus, the office design mentioned earlier and the nature of academic work resulted in less interaction between members, leading to isolation. Such engagement with their work tasks reduced the probability of alienation. Relationships with students already fulfilled the need to interact with others. It reduced the sense of being isolated, and the participants' interaction with colleagues was intended only to stay on good terms. Moreover, feeling isolated due to building or office design (physical aspects) is an interesting aspect concerning work alienation; it enhances the consideration given to tangible aspects.

However, in this situation described above, isolation, which is a dimension of alienation, was caused by engagement with one's work. Thus, one dimension of alienation was caused by consequences of being non-alienated in another aspect. Using the alienation dimensions as a lens helped to explore the situation accurately. Also, it confirmed the necessity of defining the precise element that caused alienation in the specific context from participants' perspectives. This avoided confusing symptoms and real problem, as mentioned earlier.

Moreover, the personal response to the workplace through such engagement with their students and work tasks can reduce feelings of alienation, as found in the studies of O'Donohue and Nelson (2012). Interestingly, although faculty members expressed negative feelings due to their sympathy toward their students, this is evidence of how faculty members were engaged in their work tasks to the level that their engagement reduced feelings of alienation.

This section has shown the confusion that might arise by mixing the problem and its symptoms, and how viewing the situation through the lens of alienation avoids this issue and gives an accurate image of the situation. The results also confirm the importance of researching alienation in a specific context, as it shows how deep engagement in the work tasks refers to non-alienation but at the same time causes alienation in terms of being isolated from the colleagues.

The first result chapter considers three dimensions of alienation as lenses to look through the situation of academic women in Saudi Arabia. The next chapter will shed the light into two main themes that affected the situation of academic women in Saudi Arabia in terms of work alienation. These themes are: technology and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter 5: The Covid-19 Pandemic

5.1 Introduction

This is the second and results chapter in the thesis. This section generated themes by using thematic analyses as mentioned earlier. The results of this chapter will continue provide answers for the research's questions. The main aim is to explore the experience of Saudi women working in academia and how this could be explained by the concept of alienation. Research questions are as follows:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

A further two themes emerged from the process of analysing and coding the data in an inductive way, and they provide answers to the research questions. The fourth theme is technology in relation to alienation's dimensions and the fifth and final theme is the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Technology in Relation to Alienation's Dimensions

The extent to which technology plays a role in alienation in academics has revealed technology to be a "double-edged sword" since it has the power to both increase and decrease feelings of alienation in the workplace for these participants. This emerged as a prominent theme, given that some participants perceived technology to play an overwhelmingly positive role in enabling them to work at any time and in any place, whereas others perceived technology to have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing. It was claimed by participants that technology unexpectedly increased the time and effort needed for completing tasks, and that it facilitated breaches in boundaries between work and personal life. In the literature review (Chapter 2), it was shown that technology enables working at any time and any place in a way that causes work intensification and work alienation. Also, one of King Saud University's strategic plans is KSU 2030, based on Saudi Vision 2030. Its aim is to apply new technology in the university, such as smart boards, blackboards and distance learning (Alqahtani, 2015). Furthermore, dependence on technology in the university teaching context increased after the Covid-19 pandemic, and this has brought new effects that attract the attention of researchers. This section will develop the argument based on the data related to technology applications and technology usage.

An example of academic members' autonomy in their work is the power they have to choose the teaching methods they deem appropriate. For instance, faculty members have the power to decide if they want to employ technical applications, such as Blackboard and Smartboards. Such technology was optional at King Saud University prior to Covid-19, reflecting the freedom and control that academic members felt they used to have over their work. For example, referring to pre-pandemic times, P15 (Lecturer, Business, 10 years of experience) stated, "We were asked to give online courses, but everyone refused." Participants, on the whole, asserted that they were free to choose from a range of technologies that they believed to be compatible with their course including the right to choose a traditional way of teaching. For example:

> For grammar courses, I prefer not to use PowerPoint [Smartboard]; I would instead use a traditional board and pen. (P17, Lecturer, Arts, 8 years of experience)

> I use both the traditional way of teaching and the new way of techniques via technologies… sometimes, technology does not support some subjects, so we can say it depends on the module. (P27, Lecturer, Arts, 10 years of experience)

> We are free to use the tool that is most appropriate for us and our module; for example, I use the MY UNI application, as I found it easier to use than the Blackboard provided by the university. (P6, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 16 years of experience)

P17, P27 and P6 chose to use or not use a certain technology depending on the nature of their course and their personal teaching preferences. However, this freedom to refuse to teach online was eliminated with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, as will be illustrated later.

Two particular participants, who both taught mathematics, appeared to find both Smartboard and Blackboard incompatible for teaching their courses:

> To be honest [laughing and feeling shy for telling this] I do not use [Blackboard] except for sending emails and SMSs to students because it is not appropriate for my field [Mathematics], but I have used other programmes that are compatible with my course. (P1, Associate Professor and Department Head, Science, more than 10 years of experience)

> The department asked me to use Smartboard in the class, but economics modules do not work with this technology very well and cause inaccuracies. In economics, I need to write graphs and mathematical equations. For mathematical equations, I used a traditional board to write it out, step by step and to gain feedback from students, but unfortunately all the traditional boards in the new campus have been removed!… I need an empty board so I can write what I want to write… I am wondering is this my problem? The university should solve this issue or at least bring back the traditional board… (P25, Lecturer, departmental lead-Economics, Business, 10 years of experience)

These participants seemed to require the drawing of symbols and equations, which is not something that the technology software provided by the university enables as easily as more traditional methods. Therefore, academics who teach specific subjects, such as mathematics, would be alienated by the use of certain programmes or technologies, as they have been designed without consultation with or consideration for the needs of these particular teachers as mentioned earlier in the literature review. Participants showed their shyness and a sense of guilt for not applying new technology in their modules, despite the fact that these new methods were not combatable with their needs. The situation of not considering the appropriate teaching method for each module, and instead, of generalising the new method as a must-apply method, creates a sense of powerlessness. There was also a sense of being isolated as their needs had been ignored, and there was a sense of being excluded from the majority who were using Smartboards and Blackboard in their teaching.

Many participants indicated that technology could both enhance their control over work and increase work intensification, which sometimes meant they became more pressured and stressed as a result rather than feeling power and control over their work.

On the other hand, technology was useful for automating various tasks, which saved time and made “work easier” (P28) and more efficient for some participants, as shown in the examples below:

> Yes, definitely, instead of doing [a task] manually, new technology enables you to do it automatically to save time. For example, when you insert the grades, the programme will double check your counting and highlight if there are any mistakes… Some tasks must still be completed manually and that takes a lot of time. However, the IT department is working to move the traditional way to electronic. For example, asking for a holiday is still completed manually for academic and non-academic staff, so there is room for improvement to make this electronic instead of manual, as it takes time to sign it, so it would be better if it could be completed via the e-service. (P1, Associate Professor and Department Head, Science, more than 10 years of experience)

> I am satisfied with the e-gate, it is easy and quick in downloading student lists and to insert students' grades; it makes the process easier than before. (P17, Lecturer, Arts, 8 years of experience)

> As I've worked in two different periods, before and after technology, I admit that now [that] we have the technology, we don't make as much personal effort as before. (P9, Assistant Professor, Education, 15 years of experience)

> The e-services support me to know where my formal proceedings [such as promotion application] are at any given moment by selecting the proceeding number, so I can ask about it much more effectively than if it was lost [through only existing on paper]. (P5, Associate Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Economics, 5 years of experience)

Technology, therefore, was perceived in many ways to reduce the effort and time required to complete certain tasks. It also provided useful ways to "attract the attention of students" (P27, a lecturer at the College of Arts with 10 years of experience), especially Smartboards and Blackboard, which can support lecturers in teaching and reduce the pressure of delivering information if it is more readily understood and retained by students.

Although managing work tasks provided by technology contributes to better overall wellbeing (especially if it means employees have more free time to spend pursuing personal interests), the rapid growth in and dependence on technology can also have a negative impact on employees' mental health. For example, research engines are expected to reduce pressure on researchers by decreasing time and effort; however, participants' comments show an opposite perspective. For instance, P18, P22 and P21 claimed that after the introduction of the research engine, they spent more time filtering through information found on the internet, which led to them feeling disappointed with the actual work they had accomplished. This was highlighted by P18:

> Although the internet makes it easy to find research, it is also distracting; you find yourself with so many resources that you must spend more time examining these references and their credibility. You sit down in front of your screen and think it will take an hour and you find yourself there four hours later. (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 6 years of experience)

Other participants echoed similar views:

> Although now we have great access to research, there is feeling of fear and doubt as you are not sure which are trustable and reliable [and] which are not. (P22, Lecturer and departmental lead-Statistics, Business, 11 years of experience)

> We have so many resources, so we have to spend a long time finding something creative and unique. (P21, Lecturer and departmental lead-Management, Business, 14 years of experience)

Also, research engines seemed to put pressure on faculty members to work since data is readily available. This pressure is exerted not by the university, but by the participants themselves, who may have felt compelled to complete research despite limited time or difficult personal circumstances:

> I have just had a new baby, but I feel I have to do research. I wonder why I am so lazy? I have to increase my effort. I have the internet, so I have no excuse. (P5, Associate Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Economics, 5 years of experience)

Such feelings of guilt or pressure to complete work may contribute to stress, exhaustion, burnout, or other mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, if left to escalate.

Other participants felt as though they had no control over the technology used to communicate with students, given the management's decision to ban the use of SMS outside the campus (SMS is a service that allowed academic staff to send messages via the university website to the students' numbers previously entered into the system; it was a simple way to contact students with the privacy of a faculty member number):

> It is really, really annoying that the university banned using SMS outside the university; for example, last week I was ill and I couldn't inform students that the lecture would be cancelled. So now, I have asked them to create a WhatsApp group for the course, and I keep in touch with the leader who informs the group of any message from me. (P17, Lecturer, Arts, 8 years of experience)

> I am really angry that they stopped the SMS system unless it is sent from university computers, as now we don't have the ability to send SMSs to students at any time. (P15, Lecturer, Business, 10 years of experience)

This seems to have had a negative impact on these participants in a practical way, as they were not technically "allowed" to choose how to contact students, and the use of the university website appeared to be an inconvenience for these participants. This was encapsulated by P2, who outlined a scenario where she felt that the introduction of a particular software (e-files) was pointless:

> I love and encourage introducing new technology, although getting to grips with new things means being extra tired… On the other hand, there are things that are not related to teaching, for example, I remember a programme called e-files that was developed by the university, but then for some reason they completely forgot about it. The idea of the e-file was to upload everything, such as certificates and courses, in one place and they determined a due date to complete it, so we worked hard to scan all the documents into it and suffered a lot; it is like an archive. However, now, four years later, it is not live, nobody talks about it and I don't even know where it is now. Some systems, when it emerges, you and your colleagues think that there is an aim beyond it, but in real life it obviously only brings tiredness for no benefit and nothing happened—it's only an archive. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, background in computing and six years of experience)

P13 discussed the difficulties that arose when others were not aware of new technology:

> SAMAR is a new system that allows students to manage their timetable online without the need to come to their academic tutor when they have a problem, such as with the e-gate... The problem is that students have no idea about the system [laughs]. Imagine that, one student came and asked me, "Where is Samar? I will go and talk to her"…there is a need for greater awareness from both lecturers and students; for example, there is the chance that the technology might be lost if people are unaware of it. (P13, Lecturer, Business, 10 years of experience)

Technology is only useful for those that are aware of its existence (and are trained in how to use it, which is discussed imminently). However, the idea of a lack of awareness also points to a much wider issue, that some participants and students may feel that they lack clarity on the systems available or, worse, that they have been excluded from this knowledge, which could leave them feeling distanced from the university as a workplace. On the other hand, employees who have learned or been trained on how to use the new technology will find it frustrating when dealing with others who are not aware of it. This can cause a sense of powerlessness as an employee cannot accomplish her tasks because of others' lack of awareness.

Finally, P27 and P14 discussed what happened when technology did not function correctly or took time, which also led to an increased feeling of powerlessness:

> When I have a one-hour lecture, I feel under pressure because if Blackboard or the projector does not work, although it rarely happens like zero to one time per term, but I will waste time calling the help desk for support and wait to fix the issue. (P27, Lecturer, Arts, 10 years of experience)

> When my lecture starts at 8am, and the Smartboard system is supposed to be working; however, sometimes I have had to spend 10 to 20 minutes making sure that the projector and the board are working. This makes me nervous even before going into the class; it is also embarrassing to have to tell your students, "Sorry, I'm going to be late." (P14, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service/Computing, 7 years of experience)

Therefore, technology appears to have both positive and negative effects in improving or limiting the efficiency, and perhaps more critically, the wellbeing of academics. This may have an impact on how far these employees feel alienated. This is especially true if, like P2, they blame the university for imposing new technology on them that only serves to waste their time, or feel they receive countless unnecessary emails and communication from others that take up a lot of their time to both read and respond to, which create a sense of powerlessness.

Faculty members have the power and control to decide if they want to apply any technical applications to their academic work. This control enhances their power, which reduces the sense of powerlessness and increases the sense of control over their work tasks. On the other hand, there were participants in this research who believed that they preferred not to use technology in their teaching – not necessarily because they decided not to apply it, but because the available technology did not support their needs, such as drawing maths symbols and equations. In contrast to the case above, this would enhance their sense of powerlessness as their needs were not being considered by the university.

The second issue that attracts attention is the extent to which the application or rejection of specific types of technology enhances the power of faculty members by increasing control over work tasks and decreasing the time and effort to do work tasks. Related to this is the extent to which the application of technology supports or limits the wellbeing of employees, or whether technology overwhelms faculty members and affects their mental health.

Technology has contributed to a culture where individuals can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on both professional and personal devices. The fact that social media, text messages, email and WhatsApp messaging applications can all be accessed from smart phones is indicative of the pervasive nature of technology in the 21st century. This availability of technology means that workplace boundaries become blurred, with working hours merging into the personal and home lives of employees, and personal devices and contact details being used for communication for work purposes. Some participants appeared to enjoy the power and freedom this brings in allowing them to work at any time and place, giving them greater control over their work. Participants frequently referred to technology, such as smartphones, social media, and email, as "the easy way to contact people", including communicating with students (P1, Associate Professor and Department Head, Science, more than 10 years of experience). As P2 noted:

> With our students, I send SMS via the King Saud University website, and I really like this method, particularly in urgent situations such as the changing of rooms, cancellation of lectures, or changing of [the] exam date. I want to make sure that everyone has received it, you know, not everybody checks their email all the time, but they're always checking their mobiles; they will definitely read the SMS. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, 6 years of experience and a background in computing)

Other participants noted:

> Technology is helping people to work any time from any place… Sometimes the work needs you to respond immediately, so I have become used to that. Some staff members do not respond quickly to emails, so I use alternative technology

> such as WhatsApp to contact them. (P26, Lecturer, Science, 7 years of work experience)

> Technology, in general, makes work easier; it can be used by both lecturers and students, and it can be used in and outside the campus and after work hours. (P28, Lecturer and departmental lead-Humanities, Applied Studies and Community Service, 11 years of experience)

These comments reveal that these participants found using technology "helps" them to work, to gain quick responses from people they needed to communicate with, and enabled them to work when and where they chose. This control over their working lives may arguably make these participants feel more comfortable and productive, providing a flexibility that they may not otherwise experience.

On the other hand, other participants indicated the opposite point of view; they saw the ability to be connected to work anytime in any location from technology as a distinct disadvantage. Participants described the negative impact in two ways: firstly, the increase in work hours could impact their wellbeing, leading to exhaustion and possible burnout, as well as low moods and negative emotions; and secondly, the need to respond quickly to messages and emails and so on, or the ability to take work home with them, could affect the quality of family and personal relationships. For example, in terms of generating a sense of exhaustion, pressure to respond and negative emotion, the following participants commented:

> Being an academic is exhausting, you must work at home, but for non-academic employees, you have finished your work by the end of the day, and you can enjoy your personal life. (P10, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 10 years of experience)

> Some students often contact me via email and my Twitter [personal account] out of work hours, which makes me feel that I need to answer them ASAP. (P1, Associate Professor and Department Head, Science, more than 10 years of experience)

> I am often given tasks unrelated to teaching, instead related to department tasks, and these tasks require a quick response, so I need to respond to these emails out of work hours and that takes time and effort. (P25, Lecturer, departmental lead-Economics, Business, 10 years of experience)

> From management, we usually receive SMSs to remind us about and confirm work meetings, they want to ensure that faculty members read it as they suppose that emails are not seen until tomorrow morning. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, with background in computing and 6 years of experience)

> I always receive lots of emails and WhatsApp messages from students and staff after work hours, and I usually respond to those messages maybe at midnight, and this takes time. I have had many problems and arguments with my husband and kids because of this. I admit, I have tried to find a balance between work and home, but I cannot. (P27, Lecturer, Arts, 10 years of experience)

Interestingly, P9 added that this issue had something to do with the culture, as she believed the following:

> … in our culture we do not respect an employee’s time, and the case became even worse when we all started working online. Indeed, sometimes I feel like the management thinks that they own the employee. For example, when my colleague asks the administrator to respect her time and if she would mind not sending tasks to do at midnight, the administrator responded, “Well, what are you busy with? You are just at home, not doing anything”, ignoring all the other responsibilities that she has! I think that we should maintain office hours, like in a real workplace. That way, I can have a life away from work. I tweeted a thought on Twitter about the blurring of the boundaries between personal life and work, and I got various people agreeing with me, describing this working from home as “functional combustion” and saying they also felt a lot of tension and stress. (P9, Assistant Professor, Education, 15 years of experience)

The many comments shown above relating to the blurring of work and personal boundaries due to technology will contribute to a sense of alienation if employees feel as though they are on a “hamster wheel”, constantly working all day with no end point (unlike employees who are able to leave their work behind at the end of the working day). The nature of academic work involves carrying out research or teaching courses and depends less on others in most of the product-producing considered to be significant work, as mentioned earlier. Moreover, the level of engagement between academic staff and their work is shown by their commitment to working at any time and in any place. However, the nature of academic work combined with the new technology that increases accessibility to work time and place also enhances work alienation due to work intensification, pressure and the blurring of work and personal life boundaries.

Technology in general can lead to too much communication and contact from others, which results in employees feeling time pressure and a sense of work intensification. Interestingly, the high level of engagement that makes academic women respond at any time is connected to a lower sense of being alienated. On the other hand, again, this engagement contrasts with job satisfaction as a result of pressure and work intensification. Thus, non-satisfaction here is caused by a high level of engagement and a feeling of not being alienated.

The constant barrage of contact from students, colleagues and management may be one of the primary reasons that some participants commented on their home lives being affected negatively by technology. In terms of the number of emails that faculty members received daily and how it affected their wellbeing, interviewees reported that if the content of the email was related to colleagues' news or occasions, it was welcomed; however, the massive number of emails they received took time and effort to organise. Some participants asserted that most of the emails were news that could be found on the university website, or they presented news related to another faculty's activities. P2 suggested that a way could be applied to classify emails based on faculty members' interests to reduce the time it took to categorise emails:

> It is good to know people's news, but it is annoying, like I receive a million emails, and trying to categorise them takes hours, I suggest that email could be improved to be more organised and have classifications that make it easy to check out, for example, make sections for students' emails, sections for our faculty emails and so on. (P2, Lecturer, Arts, background in computing and six years of experience)

Other participants made the following comments:

> Receiving lots of emails unrelated to my job is absolutely an inconvenience; some information people want is on the website, some emails are about other colleagues, occasions, and activities. I usually read the subject and decide whether to read it or delete it. However, I welcome emails with news from my colleagues… for example, so we could gather together and give condolences when someone has died. (P15, Lecturer, Business, 10 years of experience)

> The number of emails I receive does not annoy me. Sometimes they are about others' occasions, so you do your social duty such as giving congratulations and condolences… What annoys me is when students email me after their results, whether that's to complain or express gratitude; I think, "You know what you have done, so why do you bother me?" (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 6 years of experience)

> Of course, receiving like 50 emails every day is annoying; however, I would not change it, it is a core part of public relations and besides, it plays a role in motivating employees. (P8, Associate Professor and leader of Community Health Science, Applied Medical Sciences, 4 years of experience)

The experience of receiving multiple emails every day, therefore, appears mixed; participants enjoyed reading news from others, especially if it was related to social occasions and colleague announcements. This confirms the desire to build good relationships with others, as discussed earlier. However, they all appeared to find the volume of emails "annoying". This work intensification was due in part to the amount of time expended by participants on insignificant things.

5. The Covid-19 Pandemic

According to the World Health Organisation, the first case of Covid-19 in Saudi Arabia was discovered on the 2nd of March, 2020. On the 8th of March, the Saudi government closed public and private organisations, except for the health sector, supermarkets and pharmacies. Universities and the education sector moved quickly onto online learning. On the 23rd of March, the government imposed a curfew between 7 pm and 6 am. Also, the two Islamic holy sites, the mosques at Makkah and Al Madinah, were temporarily closed. In June, stores, organisations, and other sectors were allowed to reopen with safety procedures in place. However, educational institutions were asked to continue online learning beyond September 2020 and the start of the new academic year.

Saudi Arabia introduced a website in five different languages to raise awareness in society of Covid-19 symptoms and to encourage testing. Smartphone applications such as Tawakklna and Tabaud were developed to ensure safety. Health protocols for different sectors such as trains, buses, cinemas, gyms, mosques, businesses and educational institutions were put in place. The transfer online was sudden and unexpected, and much of society was unprepared for it (Ministry of Health, 2020; Naar, 2020).

The following discussion of the results looks at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the positive aspects that informants like about their job and are deeply important to academics in order to avoid alienating work such as autonomy, imprint and interaction. The sense of powerlessness became more pronounced after the pandemic. Participants explained their exhaustion from overwhelming responsibilities and how that had affected their work–life balance. A sense of isolation and meaninglessness has been captured, which will also be discussed in the light of alienation. However, this section will focus attention on the importance of the isolation dimension in terms of technology. It will look at how interaction plays a significant role in affecting all three dimensions of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation.

A. Powerlessness vs. a Sense of Achievement

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government of Saudi Arabia closed all public (and private) organisations (except essential shops) on the 8th of March, 2020. The transfer to online teaching occurred at the beginning of the pandemic and as shown earlier, both staff and students were unprepared for this (Alarabiya.net, 2020). The transfer to online teaching was rapid and compulsory, following instructions from the Ministry of Education. Within days of the lockdown starting, lecturers at King Saud University were asked to resume their lectures online. According to P14, a lecturer at the Applied Studies and Community Service in Computing with 7 years of experience, “After this announcement, some members were in a situation of shock.” P5 added:

> Some lecturers did not attend their lectures and the university received complaints from some students as they did not hear from some of their lecturers. (P5, Associate Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Economics, 5 years of experience)

Such “shock” causing them to stop attending their lectures is evidence that faculty members were not experiencing a situation of direct control over their work tasks; specifically, the teaching methods and the reduced level of control over their work tasks were sometimes met with shock and refusal. The autonomy to choose the teaching methods, which academic staff spoke of valuing so highly, was suddenly lost.

However, many staff did become more accepting of this new technology and even enjoyed using it. Despite the fact that they struggled with work–life balance issues, they gained satisfaction and happiness through a sense of achievement and personal development; for example, P10 commented:

> I initially refused the idea of online teaching [before Covid-19 pandemic]; however, after we had to use it due to Covid-19, I found it a very good experience. Now that term is over, I feel satisfied, I feel like I have gained something and feel a sense of achievement. (P10, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 10 years of experience)

Also, P32 stated:

> Transferring to online teaching due to Covid-19 was an awesome experience, it was like a challenge for me to apply distance learning applications, and challenge the new responsibilities toward my students, and I nailed it. I wanted to support the university in its efforts to overcome any problem. (P32, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Education, 16 years of experience)

The transfer to online teaching forced by the Covid-19 pandemic was also an opportunity to learn how to use different technologies and methods to facilitate online teaching. Some participants expressed a sense of achievement in their personal and professional development in this area. Interestingly, the lack of control as a result of the sudden transfer to online teaching competed with a sense of achievement of facing a challenge and learning new things. Also, participants were given the autonomy to choose any online platform (not only the one provided by the university) for their lectures, which granted a level of autonomy. The acceptance is also indicative of the participants understanding of the circumstances of a global health emergency and not simply a new university policy, which imposed control over them.

B. Remote Learning

This section presents attitudes to online teaching both before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional interviews were conducted after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to discover the reality of online teaching and the impact it was having on lectures and teaching. Prior to the pandemic, all participants valued face-to-face interaction, and negative effects noted after transferring online included a loss of meaning and a sense of ambiguity.

Online Teaching and Interaction before Covid-19

The importance of imprinting their knowledge on students was highlighted earlier as a key reason for loving academic work, with participants deriving a sense of meaning and achievement from interaction between the faculty member and students. Faculty members noted particulars of physical interaction, such as body language and facial expressions. Before Covid-19 some participants expressed fear or dislike of the idea of online classes. P18 indicated strongly that she "disagreed" with "the idea of online courses" due to the limitations on interaction:

> [online learning] is not appropriate for graduate students; thus, it would not work for undergraduates. It is not about applying new technology; it is about efficient teaching, which is reached by interaction. (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 6 years of experience)

This was also explored by P15, who, as well as saying that coming into a physical building motivated her to work harder, pointed to other reasons she and her colleagues found virtual classes undesirable:

> Recently [before Covid-19], we were asked to teach students online, but everyone refused. I think the reason was that people were afraid of trying new things, particularly when it involved online technology, because you might not know what to do… Also, in a real class, I know their reactions to my teaching, so I have developed skills in how to change my voice to attract their attention… (P15, Lecturer, Business, 10 years of experience)

P18 said:

> One of the main issues of online teaching is that we are not in the same place, I need to interact with others to understand what is happening. (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 6 years of experience)

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, 27 out of 33 interviewees referred to the interaction between themselves and their students as one of the key reasons why they loved their jobs as lecturers; seeing the reactions and responses from students motivated them and gave them a sense of meaning and understanding of the situation which Seeman (1959, p.786) defined as "the individual's sense of understanding the events in which he is engaged". Many found the interaction experienced in face-to-face teaching (including facial expressions, body language, and vocal tone) an essential contributor to enthusiasm for their jobs. It provided them with feedback that increased the sense of meaning and value they extracted from their jobs and decreased alienation in terms of meaninglessness.

C. Online Teaching and Interaction after Covid-19

The majority of participants agreed that the main issue with online classes was the loss of interaction in the class, an essential part of teaching enabling a greater understanding of the situation and providing a level of calm. The fact that the lecturers had to use online teaching due to a health emergency exacerbated the level of powerlessness amidst social isolation and fear. In Saudi Arabia, virtual classes were on a voice-only basis for female students and teachers, as women are not expected to wear a hijab at home, so were not asked to turn on their cameras, as this would be an invasion of privacy. These were gender-specific cultural reasons, unrelated to any institutional regulations, with males being expected to use the camera more than females due to cultural norms.

Some participants indicated that there was a fundamental lack of interaction. For example, P6 said:

> Online teaching was a good experience except for the loss of interaction. I feel I am talking to myself, particularly when the video is off! I do not like this part of online teaching. (P6, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 16 years of experience)

P18, who before Covid-19, did not wish to conduct any online teaching, stated:

> I agree with giving online courses… but the problem is the lack of interaction, it is good to know students' reactions, as that reaction motivates me. Also, we continually come up against technical issues or internet connection problems. But anyway, technology is an improvement, and we must keep up with this development. (P18, Assistant Professor, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 6 years of experience)

Teaching online was an alienating experience for the interviewees. There was some positive reaction to their first experience of it, but this was within a context of Covid-19 lockdowns, making online teaching a "better than nothing" alternative.

The audio-only nature of online teaching for participants meant missing even the virtual visual expressions and body language of their students. Interviewees experienced physical and interactional isolation, using words such as "ambiguous" and "confusing" to describe their uncertainty about what was happening on the other side of the screen. This was combined with media articles and social media jokes on distance learning, such as recordings of snoring during lectures or video or audio recordings, with poor internet connections that brought doubt and negative expectations to what was happening on the other side. Recognising imprint from students' facial expressions and body language was also completely lost. Imprint, as mentioned earlier, was a significant feature of being a lecturer from the participants' point of view, which made them love and feel attached to their work.

After the summer holiday, the 2020/2021 academic year started with the same circumstances as the previous term, with the presence of Covid-19, meaning that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia asked educational institutions to continue with distance learning. Collecting data for the third time, I found that whilst some interviewees mentioned feeling as though they had begun to get used to online teaching and were more comfortable with it, the issue of losing interaction and feeling isolated from both their students and the organisation, in general, was repeated. Any excitement experienced as a result of this new way of teaching that some had indicated they felt at the beginning of the pandemic appeared to have faded. Moreover, the desire to return to a real, tangible working environment, to feel a sense of attachment to the university and to people, had intensified. For example, P6 stated in her third interview:

> I am getting really bored. I really do not like distance learning; it feels like a burden that I must do it. I need eye contact. I need to see people; it is like talking to an inanimate object. Physically I am comfortable, but psychologically I feel empty. I need interaction. (P6, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 16 years of experience)

Feeling "empty" is a deep expression that refers to the need for interaction with others. The issue of losing interaction has been identified in all of the three phases: as an expectation before the pandemic, as a fact during the pandemic, and the psychological impact of losing interaction after teaching online for a while.

D. Effects of Remote Working on the Dynamics of Gender Segregation

Saudi Arabia presents academic women with overwhelming responsibility. As mentioned previously, in Saudi culture, women are responsible for everything in the home, including childcare. Full-time nurseries and after-school clubs are rare and overpriced in Saudi Arabia, with the nursery at the female campus having a long waiting list for a small number of places. Working women struggle to find a work–life balance, and this was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The issue of boundaries between work and personal life became more pronounced for some participants, especially women with childcare responsibilities. Due to school closures during the pandemic, children stayed at home with online classes, making the situation more complicated for participants with school-age children. For example, P10, a lecturer with two children, agreed that before Covid-19, she was able to finish her duties within office hours and manage her time well, but she now felt that the boundaries between work and personal/family life had become increasingly blurred:

> I admit that I find balancing work and home life a struggle after the pandemic, which also affects my health both mentally and physically; I do not have time for fun or time for me, even my children have become more stressed and angry. (P10, Lecturer, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 10 years of experience)

This was echoed by P9, a newly married teaching assistant, who initially said, “I thought it would be a great chance to start a new life far away from work by working online”; however, as the Covid-19 pandemic progressed, this participant said that she had begun to experience:

> [a] problem with my husband, who complains because I constantly stay awake completing my endless work tasks and I feel ashamed because I have begun to neglect my household responsibilities. It is a very annoying experience. (P9, Assistant Professor, College of Education, 15 years of experience)

Moreover, P5, a teaching assistant with two children (one of them a newborn), said. “My life is miserable and as my husband still leaves the house for work, I have to do everything.”

It appears that, working from home using online classes as a result of Covid-19, many women felt that the burden of childcare and housekeeping, alongside work, was too much. P5 even hinted at the unfair division of labour, saying that she was doing “everything”; this suggests her husband did little or nothing in terms of childcare and schooling now that the children were at home too. P6 summarised her feelings on the subject:

> In the beginning, I was glad that we could work from home, but now I cannot handle it. It is bringing a lot of stress, and I want to go outside to meet people. I cannot focus. I have to check that my children are doing their schoolwork and not just sleeping, for example, and I have to do my work at the same time. I want the schools to reopen, as educating them myself is a great responsibility. (P6, Applied Studies and Community Service-Management, 16 years of experience)

Thus, the work situation due to Covid-19 significantly affected the work–life balance for many participants, especially those with children, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life. It appears that there was little assistance available for these women, who felt highly pressured given that school closures had also made it necessary for some participants to engage with homeschooling, on top of their workload. The overload of responsibilities increased the sense of powerlessness. Interestingly, academic members did not express any resentful feelings towards their employer for the stress and pressure that they experienced working from home (on top of children’s school closures). They did not feel alienated from the university, and they did not feel that management did not care about them. The overload and imbalance between work and personal life were also due to participants’ high work engagement. For example, responding to emails in the middle of the night was not a university requirement and the participants did not blame management.

This section has shown the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to the three aspects that academic members most like about their work: autonomy, imprint and interaction with others. The pandemic significantly affected these three positive aspects, causing a sense of powerlessness as a result of overwhelming responsibilities and limited choice in teaching methods. Also, the pandemic prevented interaction and imprint between participants and their students and colleagues, causing a high sense of meaninglessness and isolation. However, from another perspective, the pandemic offered a new sense of achievement as lecturers tried new things they had previously avoided. It was also another opportunity to show the high level of engagement that faculty members had with their work.

5.2 Conclusion

The result chapters started with a quick reminder of the aims of the thesis and the research questions addressed. Then the chapter presented the data using thematic analysis. Coding and theming processes were conducted in consideration of the aims of this study. The main themes that emerged from coding the data were as follows: powerfulness/powerlessness, meaningfulness/meaninglessness, and isolation/ interaction. These three themes were illustrated in the first chapter of the result. The second chapter illustrated the rest two themes of this study: technology in relation to alienation's dimensions and Covid-19 pandemic.

In the first theme, interviewees refer to the autonomy that faculty members have in their job, which is opposite to the powerlessness they sometimes experience. For example, the ability to choose the way they do their work is guaranteed and expected for academic faculty members.

However, as a result of gender segregation powerlessness sense were significantly captured. Since 2018, attempts have been made to empower women in the workplace because of Saudi Vision 2030, but in reality, men still have more power as a result of culture and stereotypes. The physical separation of the men's and women's campus had enhanced the participants' sense of powerlessness. However, physical separation was also seen as desirable by participants as it is more appropriate for their culture, and it increased their comfort levels.

The second theme refers to the sense of meaningfulness that interviewees had in their job. Teaching gave them a feeling of impact and achievement, particularly after completing a specific task, which contributed to their sense of meaning and decreased the sense of meaninglessness mentioned earlier in the literature review. Imprint was identified as a significant element that provided faculty members with a sense of meaningfulness.

The third theme refers to interaction, which is opposite to alienation in the sense of isolation. Physical aspects such as building design, combined with the nature of academic work, were shown to affect relationships between colleagues. Also, the faculty members had a strong relationship with their students. Interestingly, symptoms of sadness must not be understood as conveying a sense of alienation. In contrast, the interviewees showed that they felt sad for their students when they got low grades; this was a result of a high level of engagement in their work.

The fourth theme that emerged from coding the data is technology in relation to the dimensions of alienation. The results show that workplace technology could bring about relief from a sense of alienation. Faculty members showed that they have the power to apply – or not apply – work-related technology such as Blackboard; faculty members found that making these choices reduced their sense of powerlessness in terms of work tasks. However, for those academics who did not find the technology compatible with their specific needs, they felt alienated as a result of not having a choice in whether or not to choose a specific tool; they felt that the university did not consider their needs. Using workplace technology impacted work in two ways: either by giving the employees more control and power over their work tasks, or by negatively leading to feelings of exhaustion instead of saving time and effort.

Finally, the fifth theme illustrated the case of remote working during the Covid-19 pandemic. This theme has shown that interaction is a significant element that faculty members reported provided them with meaning and engagement in their work. This chapter has also shown how the boundaries between work and personal life faded, causing tiredness and struggle for faculty members. On the other hand, the participants acknowledged that the pandemic pushed them to learn something new, which provided a sense of achievement. Moreover, faculty members, as a result of engagement in their work, have a responsibility to work at any time. Interestingly, engagement is opposite to alienation, but at the same time, it caused tiredness stress, and exhaustion. Thus, again there is evidence that symptoms such as sadness or stress should not be assumed to be a sign of alienation. This result is in contrast with Yadav et al. (2012), who found a positive correlation between stress and work alienation. The next chapter will discuss themes more deeply in order to answer the research questions.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This is the final part of this research, where the research questions will be answered. First, the chapter presents a quick reminder of the research aim and questions. That will be followed by the answers to these questions if possible.

The main aim of this research was to explore the experiences of Saudi women working in academia by using alienation concept as a lens. This main aim was achieved by answering these questions:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

The following section will highlight the most significant results in this research that support findings and answering research questions.

In this research, I have used the dimensions of alienation as a lens to explore the experience of Saudi women working in academia. Three dimensions were the focus in this research: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation.

This study has provided theoretical contributions to the concept of alienation in several ways. First, it has enhanced the efficiency of using the concept of alienation in exploring social phenomena by clarifying this process. This process is using each dimension of alienation as a lens through which to explore the situation. Second, it has enriched the concept of alienation itself by providing greater explanation of its dimensions and by adding further meaning to them. For instance, the study has shed light onto the importance of considering the context in exploring work alienation. The research found culture to be a significant element of the context, playing a role in identifying what is considered powerlessness and meaninglessness, or vice versa.

In addition, this study contributes to understanding several aspects of women in academia in the light of work alienation. The study considers the nature of academic work and identifies the high level of autonomy that meets academics' expectations. It classifies legitimate and illegitimate control from the participants' point of view to understand the sources of powerlessness. It considers the different meanings of gender segregation and how it might cause powerlessness depending on the context. The study also proposed a tool (see Table 4) to help the researcher to look at the level of control from employees' point view in a way that considers both powerfulness and powerlessness with justification for each choice. The study inductively found imprint to be a new source of meaning in participants' work. Imprint in this study referred to an employee's ability to know and recognise the effects of their actions on others. In addition, the study addresses the need for efficiency in using technology by balancing the advantages and disadvantages of technology. Moreover, the study sheds light onto issues related to female academics in a Saudi university; this addresses the lack of English literature resources related to the situations of academic women in a Middle Eastern context.

6.2 Dimensions of Alienation

This section will start with answering the first research question:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

The answer to this question is divided into two parts. First, there will be a discussion of the use of dimensions of alienation as a lens through which to explore the nature of academic work for women in Saudi Arabia. The second part is results that emerged from using dimensions as a lens. Each of the three dimensions – powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation – explored in this research will explained separately.

6.2.1 Using Dimensions of the Alienation Concept as a Lens in Research

The concept of alienation has been described as ambiguous, complicated and "unfashionable" (Aberbach, 1969; Fischer, 1976; Kon, 1967; O'Donohue and Nelson, 2012). One reason why it is considered to be complicated is that the concept of alienation has a rich background and different meanings according to different theorists. However, the concept of alienation affords a highly valuable and deep view in explaining employees' behaviour. Thus, this research overcomes the complexity related to the concept by adopting a clear way of using the concept, mainly by using Seeman's (1959) explanation of work alienation dimensions.

The concept of alienation has multiple dimensions according to Seeman (1959). Researchers can use one or more of these dimensions as a lens through which to explore employees' experience or a specific part of their experience. In this research, I have used three dimensions that are most closely related to the research interest: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Each dimension is used as a lens for each issue, to avoid complexity. I have used each lens to explore employees' work experience as academics and as women. This focused process has provided interesting data and has added more profundity to these dimensions. This focused process enhances the accuracy of locating the exact source of alienation. There is a possibility of being alienated from one aspect and being non-alienated from another aspect in the same situation. The detailed results of this study help to identify the exact source of alienation. For example, I have developed the levels of control as shown in Table 4, which facilitates insight into control levels based on participants' points of view and how they identify legitimate and illegitimate control. Thus, this research not only benefits from the alienation dimensions as lenses through which to explain employees' behaviour, but it also provides these dimensions with new aspects and clarity.

The dimensions of work alienation concept should be used as lenses separately. This method will yield accurate results in relation to work alienation phenomenon, and will avoid a rush to a conclusion or judgment. For example, studies such as Chen et al. (2012), Schacht (1971) and Daly and Dee (2006) argued that there is an inverse relationship between job satisfaction and work alienation. However, satisfaction does not necessarily indicate a situation of alienation. In contrast, this research has demonstrated that negative feelings can result from a high level of engagement; for example, lecturers feel sad for their students when they get low grades. Thus, it cannot be assumed that there is a relationship between job satisfaction and work alienation in general.

To give another example, employees continue to do their work and respond to emails, even in non-work hours, because they have a great sense of engagement in their work; this might cause stress and dissatisfaction among participants. This engagement is supported by Helker et al.'s (2018) study, which found that university teachers have a sense of responsibility toward their teaching and relations with their students. This sense of responsibility is related to a high level of engagement according to Matteucci et al. (2017). However, it is important to clarify the reason for the sadness or negative feeling. For example, sadness in the sense of powerlessness is indicative of alienation. On the other hand, sadness as a result of students' grades or of intensification work as a result of high level of engagement will, in contrast, be a sign of non-alienation according to O'Donohue and Nelson (2012). It is also an evidence of finding meaningfulness at work (Lavy, 2022; van Wingerden and Poell, 2019). This shows how exploring the situation through the lens of alienation provides more reliable results. Thus, it is important to understand the reason for being sad or happy and how this reason is understood in the light of the lens of alienation. Data is more critically analysed, providing a comprehensive and deep understanding of the situation. Thus, measuring alienation needs a carful studying to get an accurate and correct results (Travis,1986; Dean,1969).

6.2.2 The Context of the Research

The context in which this research was carried out is significant, and the choice of qualitative methodology supports this concern. I believe in the importance of exploring alienation in context. Different elements related to context, such as the culture and the employees' jobs, are shown to have contributed to the employees' overall experience. Therefore, what is considered to be powerlessness from an employee's point of view in Context A would not necessarily considered as powerlessness from an employee's point of view in Context B.

To give a more specific example, according to the literature review, employees need a level of autonomy in their work, and this is particularly true of professionals; for example, professors expect a high level of autonomy in their work (Barrett, 2004; Buchanan and Huczynski, 2016; Mullins and Christy, 2016; Watson, 2004). However, it is important to ask how an organisation would identify the level of autonomy expected by employees. The definition of autonomy as given by one group in one culture might differ from how another group in another culture would define it. Thus, it is important to consider employees' opinions as to whether or not they feel autonomy, rather than applying a predetermined definition of autonomy. In addition, the definition of autonomy may differ within the same group depending on the time or the circumstances. This is in accordance with Gelfand et al.'s (2007) argument that each organisational setting has its own definition of autonomy. Therefore, researching autonomy in context is essential to determine the autonomy level that employees expect.

Moreover, exploring each dimension of alienation in this research has provided the ability to identify accurately the source of being alienated or not alienated. For example, the exact source of feeling meaninglessness or meaningfulness is defined and shows how an employee can have a sense of both meaningfulness and meaninglessness at the same time. This provides a comprehensive and honest image of an employee's situation rather than focusing on one sense and ignoring the others. The next section will show each dimension of alienation in this study and how the significant data is seen through the lens of each dimension.

6.2.3 Powerlessness/Powerfulness

This dimension has two aspects. The first is related to the level of autonomy that employees have in doing their work (powerfulness) (Fiol et al., 2001). The second is the employer's control over employees (powerlessness) (Ashforth,1989). The worker's point of view, based on the nature of the job and cultural considerations, is the best index of the level of autonomy they have. The worker will have an expectation regarding an acceptable level of autonomy and will compare it to reality; they will then define their level of autonomy. The appropriate level of autonomy will lead to a reduction in the employee's sense of powerlessness (Geisler, 2005; Gelfand et al., 2007).

Academic as professionals have higher expectations of autonomy with regard to their work than non-professionals. Mottaz (1981) stated that alienation would occur when an organisation does not meet its employees' expectations. Thus, an analysis of the data has taken into consideration that participants have high expectations of autonomy that are compatible with their work. In this study, participants showed satisfaction with their level of autonomy. However, this level of satisfaction might not be acceptable by other academic groups from different cultures. That is also in accordance with the importance of carrying out social research within a specific context (Ragins and Winkel, 2011). In this study, the data has shown that informants not only accepted control over some aspects but also that they agreed with it. For example, control over course contents is seen to give them a sense of trust from a trustworthy institution, and control over their attendance provides participants with a sense of fairness. In this case, control provides benefits for employees that outweigh the negative image of these types of control.

The ability to be creative is appropriate given the nature of professional jobs, and it is expected by professionals. The results show that participants had an acceptable level of autonomy and this autonomy gave them the ability to be creative. Moreover, being creative created a sense of happiness for the participants. The need to have more control over work tasks is more expected and desired by professional staff such as academics, as mentioned by Wise et al. (2017). Greater independence creates a feeling of confidence and power and the ability to express one's unique personal characteristics and identity at work, which is a human need according to Marx (1969). Marx (1969) argued that we should consider that human beings have both a body and a soul, and they have both tangible and intangible needs. Therefore, in terms of doing their work tasks, participants were not alienated in terms of powerlessness. It could be argued that alienation in terms of powerlessness could cause sadness in professionals as it is in contrast to happiness caused by autonomy. This demographic image in the results is one of the benefits of using alienation as a lens as it gives an insight into the situation. Also, this lens gives a more concentrated view of the situation, which gives clear insight into the feelings of employees. The researcher can know what the employee is feeling, such as happiness or sadness, and why. In other words, lenses presented by the dimensions of alienation convey rich meaning, which allows access to the participants' core feelings.

The second aspect is employer control over employees. Table 4 in Chapter 4 shows that there are two kinds of control: legitimate and illegitimate control. Participants defined legitimate control as control at the general level of the job, which means it was not related directly to their work tasks. It was also carried out by people in authority, and it had clear justifications, such as guaranteeing fairness. Participants accepted this control as long as they considered it legitimate. On the other hand, control over specific aspects of work, such as control over teaching methods, was seen as unacceptable and caused alienation by enhancing the participants' sense of powerlessness. Thus, acceptance of control depends on the employees' point of view of what they perceive as legitimate control or illegitimate control (Schnedler and Vadovic, 2007). In this case, the personal benefits gained from being under legitimate control is fairness between diligent and neglectful members; see Table 4. Interestingly, control, which can be seen as a cause of alienation, actually reduced feelings of alienation in this case, as it increased the participants' sense of fairness. Fairness reduced the sense of alienation in terms of powerlessness and isolation (Ceylan and Seyfettin, 2011; Howard and Cordes, 2010).

Therefore, to explore the sense of powerlessness, it is better to consider the type of control experienced in terms of legitimacy and illegitimacy. This can be achieved by exploring employees' points of view with regard to what they see as legitimate and illegitimate control; this varies according to the context. This method helps to gain insight into the effect of control on employees, which then helps to determine the extent to which this control causes a sense of powerlessness, or a sense of fairness. This is helpful in gaining accurate results regarding the impact of control and its connection to powerlessness.

This section has discussed the first dimension of alienation: powerlessness. It has shown that it is necessary to not rush to conclusions in terms of alienation or non-alienation; rather, it is better to have a comprehensive view by studying the context and the employees' point of view. This approach takes into consideration the employees' expectations with regard to level of power and their identification of legitimate and illegitimate control.

6.2.4 Meaninglessness/Meaningfulness

The literature review identifies a gap in the research on meaninglessness. There is more than one definition of meaninglessness. Marx, Durkheim and Weber all agreed that meaninglessness refers to insignificant jobs or tasks. (Durkheim,1960; Gerth and Mills, 2009; Marx, 1964; Seeman, 1959). Seeman (1959) added another definition of meaninglessness, saying that meaninglessness occurs when employees are unaware of what is going on and feel ambiguity with regard to the results of their behaviour.

The first definition is the more common; however, there is a gap in the literature related to the sources of significant work and the ways in which it can be recognised. Exploring employees' points of view regarding the features of their job that give them a sense of meaningfulness enables the identification of indications of meaningful work. This is supported by other researchers, who have called for more qualitative rather than quantitative research to understand meaninglessness (Bailey and Madden, 2016; Bailey et al., 2018; Hufnagel and Spraul, 2022).

This research has found that employees find their own source of meaning and awareness of the results of their behaviour. For example, imprint is one source of meaning that inductively emerged from an analysis of the data. Imprint refers to employees' desire to see the positive impact they have on others. The sense of imprinting is identified as a source of meaningfulness in one's work. Once workers have seen their own imprint, their sense of how meaningful their work is will be enhanced. In the literature review, meaningful indexes are hard to recognise, and there is a call for qualitative research that helps to identify meaningfulness from the point of view of individuals (Bowie, 1998; Steger, 2016). This research provides one significant index that would help in researching meaningfulness in the workplace.

In this research, participants experienced meaningfulness as a result of imprinting. This imprint was seen through direct interactions, such as facial expressions and body language; it could also be received as a complement. In this research, it was always defined as intangible. This contribution not only found that imprint is a new way to look to meaningfulness, but it also encourages the importance of discovering meaningfulness for a specific worker within a specific job, and of recognising that meaningfulness changes from time to time and from culture to culture.

This high engagement decreases alienation in term of meaninglessness as, according to the literature review, engagement in work is caused by a sense of meaningfulness (Lavy, 2022; van Wingerden and Poell, 2019). However, this high level of engagement sometimes caused sadness because the participants felt a parental sense of responsibility toward their “daughters” if they did not get good grades. Therefore, in this case, sadness was not a symptom of alienation; rather, it was related to a high level of engagement, which is the opposite of alienation. This result is contrast to studies such as Khan et al. (2019) and Shantza et al. (2014), who found that workers can become emotionally exhausted and have no motivation as result of being alienated. Indeed, work alienation is a negative phenomenon, but there is not enough evidence to confirm that the alienated worker necessarily feels sadness.

Interestingly, the research results show that there is a strong connection between autonomy and meaningfulness at work. Research such as Blustein et al. (2023), van Wingerden and Poell (2019), Bowie (1998), Artela et al. (2021) and Baumeister (1991) have agreed that a sense of autonomy at work is a source of meaningfulness. This is evidence that there is a connection between the alienation dimensions, and that these should be considered in researching work alienation.

This section has discussed the research contribution to the dimension of meaninglessness. Imprint has been identified as a source of meaningfulness for the participants in this study. Moreover, the study found that sadness caused by a high level of engagement is a negative feeling but one with less sense of being alienated. This is a new way of looking at the concept of meaninglessness. I encourage more qualitative research to identify more sources of meaningfulness because it is best identified according to the employees' point of view rather than in terms of generalisations. This view of meaningfulness work agreed with the one of the meaningful work paradoxes by (Bailey et al., 2019) that the employees themselves who estimate what meaningful work is.

6.2.5 Isolation/Interaction with Others

Interaction with others refers to relationships with others; it is the opposite of isolation, which is a dimension of alienation (Seeman, 1959). As seen in the literature review, isolation is the inability to form relationships and/or to have access to information (Dean, 1961; Marshall et al., 2007; Taha and Caldwell, 1993). It is also interesting that the element of interaction appeared as significant in both dimensions: meaninglessness and isolation. This is further evidence that dimensions of alienation are interrelated; this underscores the need to study the phenomenon as a unified picture in a specific context.

The result show that participants experienced three kinds of isolation: physical isolation, virtual isolation and professional isolation (Bartel et al., 2012; Orhan et al., 2016; Sahai et al., 2020). First, participants showed that they were too busy to form relationships; this is a form of professional isolation as a result of the nature of professional work. Also, participants had no desire to form relationships with other colleagues. Secondly, participants experienced virtual isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thirdly, female participants were already on a separate campus from their male counterparts, and so experienced physical isolation.

One contribution of this research is that organisations should pay attention to the physical design of their buildings, as this could affect relations between employees. For example, offices with clear windows contribute to creating friendly, informal relations. In contrast, offices with no windows isolate employees. Also, small convergent spaces were seen to create a more friendly atmosphere, and as the building gets bigger, the relations between members becomes more formal. Moreover, participants expressed feeling at home on the campus. This is evidence of their comfort and deep sense of belonging to the workplace. On the other hand, Holgate et al. (2011) argue that females are most strongly affected by isolation in the workplace. In this case, an all-female workplace creates a comfortable atmosphere, leading to the sense of feeling at home. Moreover, coming to a physical place reduces employees' sense of isolation and thus their feelings of alienation. Walking through the campus provides positive feelings, which were missed during the Covid-19 pandemic, as will be shown later.

Participants had a unique relationship with their students, considering them their daughters. This indicates a high level of engagement in their work: the campus as home and the students as daughters. This unique relationship was enhanced by two things: the nature of academic work and the female-only campus. Moreover, strong relations between participants and their students relieved the isolation that results from being professionals. This could also be a reason why participants had no desire to form relationships with other colleagues; they already had sufficient relationships with their students. Thus, exploring the situation through the lens of alienation provides a detailed and interpreted explanation of the situation. Through the isolation lens, we understand that relationships for academic members refers to not only their relations with colleagues but also their relations with their student. Strong relationships with their students overcome the sense of isolation that may emerge from poor relationships with their colleagues. This shows how exploring through the lens of isolation enhance the accuracy of results by providing a comprehensive view of the situation and avoiding a rush to judgment. This approach helps to explore any relations and the reason behind this relation with greater accuracy.

This section has answered the first research question: To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? Dimensions of alienation are confirmed to be a good lens to discover the experience of academic workers. Dimensions of alienation provide insight into employees' views of their occupation in terms of powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Each lens has the ability to discover insight into a core of human sense. The results show that academic workers enjoy autonomy, meaningfulness and interaction with others; which are opposite to the three dimensions of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. Moreover, the results are combined with an explanation and interpretation of why and how these workers were not alienated. The results confirm the necessity of studying alienation in context.

6.3 Gender Segregation

The second part of this chapter will show how the positive features of being an academic clashed with the realities of gender segregation. This section will answer the second question:

- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?

As the first part of this chapter showed, the interviewees felt that their academic careers provided them with a satisfactory level of autonomy and an acceptable level of control over their work. However, as women in academic careers, the participants expressed a sense of powerlessness as a result of gender segregation. Powerlessness in the workplace starts before the actual work begins. It starts from the point that a person decides to apply for a job. The person has to choose from specific jobs that are compatible with their gender according to the stereotypes outlined earlier. Thus, general stereotypes such as "nurse is a female job and engineer is a male job" have a significant impact on the chosen job.

Earlier practice in the workplace has created stereotypes in Saudi society, where males have more advantages and more power than females in general. There are also a variety of practices in the workplace that have religious sources and that have become customs and stereotypes. These customs and gender stereotypes, which are based on a patriarchal culture, assume that males have more advantages and authority in the workplace (Beechey, 1979; Romero-Hall et al., 2018). Women in the university have fewer advantages and less authority because Saudi females are expected to handle the entire responsibility of home and childcare, which complicates their work–life balance. Although there are new regulations, such as Saudi Vision 2030, that are empowering Saudi women, stereotypes and practices are hard to overcome easily by simply applying the recent regulations and movements because this is a community culture.

Now in Saudi universities, women according to new regulations have equal power to men, but patriarchal practices are still significant. Hence, empowering female academic members in the workplace such as giving women the ability to decide on their academic work tasks and affairs, and appointing them to leadership roles, is a source of conflict given these stereotypes. Therefore, the culture of Saudi Arabia has created a critical situation for females in two ways: firstly, men still have power over women in the workplace and that still negatively affects female workers; and secondly, the responsibility for managing the house and childcare creates more pressure for female workers. Thus, even if women acquire power in the workplace, the patriarchy would continue to put pressure on women in terms of domestic responsibilities, which removes the boundaries between work and personal life. This dilemma raises a call for Saudi men to become more cooperative with their partner in regard to domestic work and a call for Saudi women to participate in the financial affairs of the household, which creates a balance between men's and women's responsibilities.

However, men and women as members of a patriarchal community will expect to be affected by female empowerment. Gender segregation in this case would increase the feelings of alienation for both males and females, particularly in terms of being unattached and unengaged in new practices in the workplace that conflict with their beliefs. For example, while women struggle with powerlessness in an occupation called "leader" but which is in reality "secretary" under men's control, it sends a message to other colleagues, who understand that women are unqualified to be leaders; this gives more trust and confidence to men, thereby enhancing patriarchal beliefs. Therefore, empowering women is expected to decrease a sense of powerlessness, but this is in contrast with societal norms. Employees as a part of society will feel a sense of isolation as a result of "anomie" or "normlessness" (Durkheim, 1960). This anomie is considered a dimension of alienation. This aspect will be considered alongside the other dimensions: powerlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation. Anomie needs only time to vanish according to Durkheim (1960). Thus, studying phenomena through the lens of alienation enables prediction of the situation in the future. This would help in taking decisions and being patient in waiting for results.

In addition, the physical separation between the male and female campuses contributes to powerlessness and meaninglessness. Participants expressed a high level of powerlessness in terms of being on a female campus physically separated from the control holder, the male campus. Also, academic women missed out on opportunities to progress in their careers. This result shows similarities with the results of Bagilhole and Goode (2001) and Raymond and Canham (2022). However, this separation decreases the sense of isolation because it is a female-only campus. As mentioned earlier in the first part of the chapter, there is an advantage for women to be in a women-only workplace. There is a family atmosphere, a higher level of comfort and more support for each other; this is confirmed by Alvesson and Billing (2009) and enhanced by Saudi culture, where physical separation between men and women in different places is common.

Therefore, the separation between genders is not the main issue; thus, mixing between genders is not the solution. In contrast, mixing in such cultures is expected to cause isolation because, as shown in the results, gender similarity gave participants a sense of comfort (Holgate et al., 2011). The solution is giving women equal power to men by regulation. It is also necessary to encourage men to participate in domestic chores and to encourage women to participate in the household’s finances. This is coming along with Saudi Vision 2030, but men still exercise their power and the situation needs time, as mentioned earlier.

Generally, it is necessary to consider the impact of culture in each community to understand the affection of gender segregation. Gender segregation in some organisations in religious countries such as Saudi Arabia is related to norms and religion. Employees might see this segregation as a form of respect for their culture. Based on Durkheim’s view (1960), workers are less alienated in terms of anomie when they are in a workplace that matches their norms. Nominally, there is no discrimination in wages for each gender and equal chances to move into leadership jobs. However, gender segregation and its implications must be examined deeply from the workers’ point of view to understand how it might impact their feelings of alienation.

6.4 The Effect of New Ways of Working

This is the final section and it will answer the final research question:

- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

In general, research shows that technology has both positive and negative effects. Technology is expected to save time and effort, but in contrast, sometimes it causes wasting of time, exhaustion and frustration. Technology also causes work intensification because it allows employees to work at any time and in any place, which causes a blurring of the boundaries between work and personal life. Also, technology is indicated as a reason for isolation; employees need to come to a real world where they interact from the moment they get inside – not necessarily talking, but co-existing in a physical place is enough.

It is interesting that the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to our understanding of online learning and its difficulties. The participants' experiences of the pandemic started with a sense of powerlessness; then, they felt a sense of satisfaction as a result of being able to overcome the challenges that they had experienced. For example, before the Covid-19 pandemic, lecturers admitted that choosing a teaching method was one of the aspects of autonomy. However, during the pandemic, lecturers were required to use the Blackboard system, online learning. In this term, participants at the beginning suffered from powerlessness (required to teach online). During the pandemic, participants suffered from meaninglessness and isolation as a result of losing interaction with others. Interaction appeared as a significant element in this study as a reason for not being alienated. First, it appeared as a reason for meaningfulness in terms of imprint. Also, interaction with others is the opposite to isolation.

Covid-19 was a global pandemic, and the measures taken during the pandemic were not a decision imposed by an organisation without justification. They were an order from a bigger authority (a government) for a known reason. Again, as shown in Table 4, having a known reason for a control measure serves to legitimise the control from the participants' point of view. Thus, faculty members felt shocked for a few days, but then they accepted the situation and started teaching online.

Furthermore, participants suffered from a blurring of boundaries between work and personal life, and in a patriarchal society, the problem becomes more critical. This issue has also been discussed by other studies on the Covid-19 pandemic, such as Alon et al. (2020) and Smith et al. (2020). However, in this study, blurring boundaries between work and personal life was caused by the participants themselves. It is not required by the university to respond to emails or WhatsApp messages out of work hours. However, according to participants' high levels of engagement to their work, they worked at any time and in any place. This high level of engagement caused exhaustion and a lack of satisfaction. As mentioned earlier in discussions of the relationship between faculty members and students, negative feelings were not a sign of alienation; rather, negative feelings such as sadness and exhaustion were caused by a high level of engagement, which is the opposite of alienation.

Researchers such as Leclercq-Vandelanno et al. (2014), Moore et al. (2018), Koslowski et al. (2019), Siegert and Löwstedt (2019) and Dora et al. (2019) have suggested techniques to relieve the negative impact of using technology in the workplace, such as increasing privacy and manging the times when employees use their devices. However, there is still a need for more efficient ways of using technology that increase their benefits, such as saving time and effort and minimising negativities like addiction to technology.

This part has illustrated the most significant results of this research. In general, the results show that academic women are both alienated and not alienated. That means that viewing dimensions separately within the specific context provides us with an analytical view. Academic women in terms of the nature of their jobs are not alienated because they have autonomy. Moreover, they have a sense of meaning, receiving it from imprint. Additionally, academic women have great relations with their students that compensate for their weak relations with their colleagues by filling the need for interaction.

On the other hand, academic women are alienated in terms of gender. That affected academic women in this study because of being controlled by men, in addition to men being in another location. This caused powerlessness and meaninglessness. In terms of technology, it has both positive and negative effects. Thus, there is a call for more studies on how to manage workplace technology efficiently.

Finally, it is interesting that although work alienation is a negative situation, that does not mean it causes negative feelings. In contrast, a high level of engagement (the opposite of being alienated) in this research could possibly cause negative feelings such as sadness and exhaustion.

In the next section, the limitations of this research will be illustrated, followed by recommendations for further research.

6.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

There are two major limitations in this research that could be addressed in future studies. The first limitation is that the study was carried out only with academic women. I was not able to include academic men for several reasons. First, I have never entered the men's campus, and I am not aware of the workplace environment and culture, which is essential in carrying out qualitative research (Holliday, 2007). Second, the time limits reduced the ability to collect data from two campuses. Third, as mentioned, the concept of alienation must be studied within a specific context, thus, data from academic men should be treated separately from data from women to maintain the accuracy of the results.

The second limitation is that the study presents a new way of developing dimensions of alienation. Alienation is a deep concept, and further studies are needed to enhance the meaning of each dimension. Although it is hard to generalise qualitative results, these future studies will enrich the concept and open new horizons in the meaning of alienation in the workplace.

Moreover, the study is also affected by time constraints in terms of how the new Saudi Vision 2030 will affect the workplace in terms of alienation. This study took place at the very beginnings of applying the new regulations related to empowering women. Time is needed to explore the impact of the new Vision.

Therefore, there is room for further research to study male academics in King Saud University using the alienation concept as a lens. There is potential for a comprehensive research study that compares the results from men with those from women. Moreover, alienation is a deep and valuable concept; thus, there are interesting meanings of each dimension of alienation that are waiting to be explored. A study on how empowering women affects work alienation over a period of time will be interesting, particularly in terms of normlessness, and further studies can look at ways to overcome alienation, as mentioned by Durkheim (1960).

6.6 Conclusion

This research started with a belief in the importance of the concept of work alienation. However, the ambiguity surrounding the concept and the multiple dimensions it encompasses makes researchers less interested in researching this concept. The concept of alienation needs more attention, so that benefits can be gained from explorations in this area. This study presents a comprehensive explanation of the reasons beyond phenomena. It has the ability to identify the issue rather than its symptoms.

The use of Seeman's (1959) research into the dimensions of the alienation concept adds more clarity to the concept of alienation and contributes to an identification of the issue from different aspects. Powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation are the three dimensions of alienation that were selected as a lens through which to explore academic women in the Saudi university context. The work of Seeman(1959) consider as a bridge between classical writing on alienation and contemporary studies. Seeman understanding of the concept of alienation allowed him to develop a comprehensive and clear research that transferred the vague meaning of alienation into specific dimensions. Seeman selected concepts from classical works such as Marx and Durkheim and classified these concepts as dimensions of the main conapt of alienation. These dimensions added clarification to the concept of alienation. These dimensions are: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness and isolation. Thus, Seeman (1959) outlined and identified the dimensions of alienation in away that gives the light for other researchers to use the concept of alienation by avoiding complicity and ambiguity that surrounded the concept.

For example, Marx(1964) refers to the concept of alienation explicitly. However, Marx was not very clear of explaining this concept. Another example, Durkheim (1960) in his writing defined pathological forms. One of these forms is alienation that Durkheim defined as a meaninglessness which is insignificant job task. The second pathological form called anomie which referred to normlessness. While Seeman considered both meaninglessness and normlessness as dimensions of alienation. In addition, Weber referred to rationalisation in explaining how worker feels powerlessness and meaninglessness (Gerth and Mills, 2009). While in Taylor the contemporary studies refers to tolerisation as a cause of powerlessness, meaningless, isolation and self-estrangement (Braverman 1998;Buchanan and Huczynski, 2016; Mullins and Christy, 2016; Watson, 2004; Wise et al., 2017)

In this research, I build a link between powerlessness as a dimension of alienation and the aspect of gender segregation. Seeman dose not directly referred to gender segregation but rather based on the definition of powerlessness by Seeman (1959) researchers could build links between alienation dimensions and other concepts. Also, Seeman did not discuss technology in related to alienation directly, but rather contemporary studies with regards to Seeman dimension of alienation found the link between alienation dimensions such as powerlessness and isolation and the technology.

The aim of this research has been to explore the experience of Saudi women working in academia and how their feelings can be explained through the concept of alienation. This has been explored through the following research questions:

- To what extent, and in what ways, are dimensions of alienation relevant in understanding the situation of women in academia in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- How do women working in academia in Saudi Arabia experience gender segregation?
- How are these dynamics affected by the new ways of working (notably, Saudi Vision 2030) and the technological innovations introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?

The introductory chapter was followed by a literature review on the topics most relevant to the research questions in order to build on the findings of previous works to fill the gaps and contribute to the literature. The research answered the research questions by using a qualitative methodology, which allowed me to explore, understand and describe the situation. In total, 33 academic women in King Saud University were selected for the interview. Some interviews were conducted at three different times: before the Covid-19 pandemic, during the Covid-19 pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The research shows the value of using the concept of alienation as a lens to view the social phenomenon. This research found that participants experience a sense of powerlessness in terms of gender segregation. However, the same group experience, on the other hand, experience the opposite sense which is powerfulness in terms of being in academic career.

The research also found that participants feel a sense meaninglessness because of gender segregation. On contrast, the same participants feel meaningfulness as a result of imprint as an element that enhance the sense of being meaningfulness in their academic career. Imprint is a concept that developed inductively by analysing the data of this research. It is a significant contribution to the dimension of meaninglessness as imprint reduced the sense of meaninglessness according to the research results. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, meaninglessness dimension needs more clarification and definition by researchers and writers.

Moreover, the research found a strong relationship between academic members and their students. On the other side, the data show weak and formal relationship between academic members and university staff. Thus, the participants do not feel sense of isolation because they fulfill their need of relationship with their students. Also, participants refer to other reasons that makes their relations with their colleagues weak. For example, the building design and tendency of avoiding problems. Building design is an interesting result that should organisation pay attention to when their employees experience weak relations.

Also, this research added more explanation to the dimensions of alienation. For example, the study found that imprint is a significant source of meaningfulness for academic Saudi women. Also, the research confirms the importance of researching alienation in context. It shows how elements such as culture and the nature of the work affect what is considered alienation or non-alienation from employees' point of view. Moreover, the research found the importance of interaction in reducing alienation in terms of isolation and in terms of meaninglessness.

In terms of the main aim of the research, which was to explore the experiences of Saudi women working in academia, the study shows interesting and detailed results. For example, it confirms that women in academia gain benefits from the nature of their jobs, such as their autonomy, the extent to which they experience imprinting on others, and their overall interaction and engagement with their students and their work. These characteristics enhance women's sense of powerfulness, meaningfulness and relationships. On the other hand, in terms of gender segregation, women experience powerlessness in that they are under the control of men. The opposite senses of powerful and powerless both appeared as a result of accurate and detailed research. One of the aims of the study was to gain insight into the situation, and the way to do that was to identify what is considered legitimate and illegitimate control based on participants' points of view. Control seen as legitimate will not cause a sense of powerlessness. In contrast, control seen as illegitimate will cause a sense of powerlessness. Interestingly, legitimate control might create a sense of fairness and therefore, might decrease the sense of alienation. Thus, it is important not to rush to a hasty conclusion in alienation research; detailed results are needed to identify the reasons beyond feeling or not feeling alienated.

Moreover, the nature of academic work gives participants the ability carry out actions that make positive changes, which are clear and recognised by others. This is what we refer to as 'imprinting' in this research. Imprinting is one of the research results found to be significant and related to the sense of meaningfulness. In this research, participants did receiving a sense of meaningfulness because of their positive imprinting on others. The issue here is how to find the method that provides feedback for one's actions. For those participants, there are different interaction methods, such as facial expressions, social media, and emails.

In addition, participants showed that they had good relations with their students, which is an obvious sign of not being alienated in terms of isolation. However, participants explained their sadness because they were emotionally attached to their student. Sadness in the literature review is seen as a symptoms of being alienated; however, in contrast here, sadness suggests a high level of engagement, which is the opposite of alienation. Thus, depth of analysis is required in studying alienation.

Moreover, in a superficial way, the participants sounded as if they were alienated in terms of isolation. They showed how the physical nature of their work prevented them from forming relationships with other staff members. However, the fact that they built strong relationships with their student overcomes the lack of relationship with their colleagues.

Finally, there is a need for further studies to find out more about the effects of the new way of working, particularly the implications of Saudi Vision 2030. Employees in Saudi Arabia are witnessing a rapid transformation on different levels, such as the application of advanced technology in their work. Moreover, Saudi Vision 2030 is empowering women and leading to the removal of physical separations between men and women. Researchers need to pay attention to this and to record how these changes are having an impact on employees' well-being, both positively and negatively.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Job title ________________

Your tasks ________________

Years of experience ________________

Field ________________

- Do you enjoy being an academic? Why or why not? Provide an example.
- If you go step back, do you wish that you were in another job? Why or why not?
- Is this job similar to how you had imagined it before you were employed?
- What things do you like about your job? Provide an example.
- What things do you not like about your job? Provide an example.
- What technology do you use in your teaching?
- What is one smartphone application that you use in your job? (e.g. email, Blackboard, E-services)
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of being an academic? Provide an example.
- How could you describe your job in terms of freedom?
- Describe the Blackboard system/the result submitted system.
- Describe your feelings about transferring to technology in work.
- Describe others feeling towards using technology
- What technology tools do you hope you get in your work?
- Why might you use other technology methods but not those provided by the university?
- How does the E-service support you
- Describe the E-service and your job-related transactions.
- How could job-related apps be more useful? How would you improve them?
- Describe technology in relation to time.
- Describe technology in relation to your control over your tasks.
- If you had a chance to describe your dream technology-related job, what function could it do?
- Talk about your relationships within the university.

- How might technology improve the relationships between members within the university?
- Describe the nature of your job.
- Describe your feelings when you do job duties? Provide an example.
- How would you describe the contribution of your job to the whole teaching process?
- Describe your feelings during lectures? Provide an example.
- Describe your feelings towards Smartboard.
- (For those who have more than 15 years of experience) Describe your feelings before and after Smartboards/E-services.
- How might technology add inspiration and excitement to your work?
- How might technology bring anxiety and pressure in your work?
- Describe your feelings in using new technology in your job.
- How do you feel when you tell other people that you are an academic?
- What things encourage you to work?
- How does the separation of males and females impact your work positively and negatively?
- As male and female departments are physically in separate buildings, do you think men and women have the same work context, such as job titles, authorities, regulations, flexibility and power?
- How does technology impact communication between male and female departments?

Describe the feelings of control over your work (to what extent)?

Questions after the Covid-19 pandemic:

- What you get from your job and your domestic responsibilities?
- We previously (before the Covid-19 pandemic) discussed distance learning. Now, after applying distance learning, can you talk about your experience?
- Can you talk about using technology in your work?
- Would you like to add anything in relation to your experience during the pandemic?

Appendix 2: Photos

Photos of King Saud University Female Campuses (New and Old)

The new female campus © King Saud University, 2021

Inside the new female campus © King Saud University, 2021

Inside the old female campus. Source: ricomuha.wordpress.com (2010), copyright unknown

Appendix 3: Consent Form

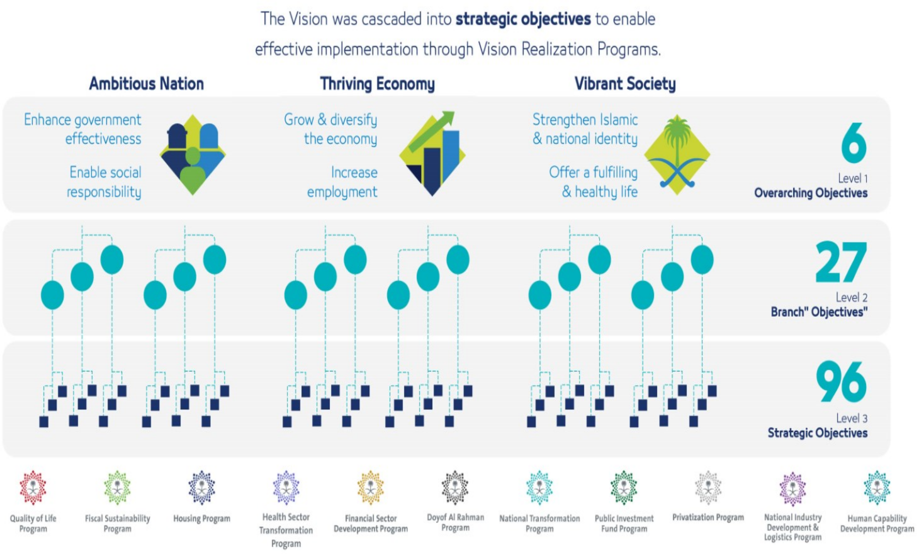
Interview Consent Form Research Project Title: **Using the Concept of Work Alienation as a Lens to Explore Academic Females' Experiences at King Saud University**	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated on 16-06-2019 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary. During the interview, if I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline, and I can stop the interview at any time. In addition, I have the right to withdraw my contributed data at any time up until the submission of the researcher's PhD thesis or the publication of a journal paper, without giving a reason and without there being any negative consequences. If you wish to withdraw your contributed data, please contact the researcher, Dunya Alothaim, by calling/texting: **(+44) 7824846302** or emailing: ml15dmaa@leeds.ac.uk.	
I understand that the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced, and I understand that the audio recording will be deleted securely after anonymous transcription, that is two months after the interview date.	
I understand that I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview within two months of the interview date and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality.	
I give permission for the researcher to analyse the transcript of the interview. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in any reports or reports that result from the research. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential.	
I agree that all or part of the content of my contributed data may be used in the researcher's doctoral thesis, journal publications and conference presentations. I agree to be quoted directly only if all the identifying information is anonymised.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymised form.	
I understand that other genuine researchers, with the authorization from the researcher, will have access to my anonymised responses only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	

I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of the researcher	Dunya Alothaim
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix 4: Saudi Vision 2030



Saudi vision 2030 infographic. Source: https://www.my.gov.sa/wps/portal/snp/content/saudivision/?lang=en.

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Saudi vision 2030 application infographic. Source: https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2016/04/26/Full-text-of-Saudi-Arabia-s-Vision-2030

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