

**THE ROLES OF PERSONAL, RELATIONAL, AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON WOMEN  
EMPOWERMENT IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS IN  
SAUDI ARABIA**

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AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON WOMEN  
EMPOWERMENT IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS  
IN SAUDI ARABIA**

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>xii</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>xiv</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b> .....	<b>xv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>xvii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Study.....	2
1.3 Problem Statement .....	9
1.4 Research Questions .....	17
1.5 Research Objectives .....	18
1.6 Significance of the Study .....	19
1.6.1 Theoretical Contribution .....	20
1.6.2 Practical Contribution .....	24
1.7 Scope of the Study .....	25
1.8 Definitions of the Key Terms.....	26
1.9 Organisation of the Thesis .....	27
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>28</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	28
2.2 Overview of Women Empowerment .....	31
2.2.1 Statistical Literature on Organisational Behavior .....	32
2.2.2 Statistics Literature on Women Empowerment .....	33

2.2.3	Statistical Literature on Organisational Behavior and Women Empowerment .....	33
2.2.4	Statistical Literature on Women Empowerment in Saudi Arabia.....	34
2.2.5	Statistical Literature on Organisational behavior and Saudi Women .....	34
2.2.6	Yearly Categorization of Articles on Women Empowerment .....	35
2.2.7	Affiliation of Articles on Women Empowerment .....	36
2.2.8	Countries/Territories published on Women Empowerment.....	37
2.2.9	Types of Articles on Women Empowerment .....	38
2.2.10	Subject Area of Articles on Women Empowerment.....	39
2.2.11	Authors published on Women Empowerment .....	40
2.2.12	Saudi Arabian Public Organisation .....	44
2.2.13	Role of Women Managers .....	46
2.3	Theory Review .....	48
2.3.1	Theory of Empowerment (TE).....	48
2.3.2	Gendered Organisational Theory (GOT) .....	50
2.3.2(a)	Feminist Critiques.....	55
2.3.2(b)	Gendered Organisations.....	57
2.3.2(c)	Scholars' Responsibility for Change .....	58
2.4	Women Empowerment.....	61
2.4.1	Women Empowerment in the MENA Region .....	63
2.4.2	Women Empowerment and Saudi Arabia.....	64
2.4.3	Health Factors and Women Empowerment .....	67
2.4.4	A Critical Case Study of Public Hospital Based on Women Empowerment .....	67
2.4.5	A Case study on Saudi Women Empowerment .....	69
2.4.6	Business Skills of Saudi Women .....	70
2.4.7	Literacy Rate of Saudi Women .....	71

2.4.8	Empowering Factors and Gender Discrimination.....	72
2.4.9	Empowerment Characteristics .....	73
2.4.10	Technical Skills of Saudi Women.....	76
2.5	Main Variables explanation .....	77
2.5.1	Women Empowerment.....	77
2.5.2	Training.....	78
2.5.3	Inter-Gender Communication .....	80
2.5.4	Organisational Policies .....	82
2.5.5	Governmental Support .....	84
2.5.6	Organisational Culture .....	86
2.6	Theoretical Framework .....	88
2.7	Hypothesis Development .....	90
2.7.1	Linkage between Training and Women Empowerment.....	90
2.7.2	Linkage between Inter-gender Communication and Women Empowerment .....	92
2.7.3	Linkage between Organisational Policies and Women Empowerment .....	93
2.7.4	Linkage between Training and Organisational Culture .....	94
2.7.5	Linkage between Inter-gender Communication and Organisational Culture .....	95
2.7.6	Linkage between Organisational Policies and Organisational Culture.....	96
2.7.7	Linkage between Organisational Culture and Women Empowerment .....	96
2.7.8	Organisational Culture Mediates among Training, Inter- Gender Communication and Organisational Policies .....	97
2.7.9	Governmental Support Moderates the Relationship between Organisational Culture and Women Empowerment .....	98
2.8	Summary of Hypothesis .....	99
2.9	Conclusion .....	100

<b>CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>102</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	102
3.2 Research Design.....	102
3.3 Study Area.....	104
3.4 Research Approach .....	106
3.5 Sampling Design.....	106
3.6 Population and Sample Size.....	107
3.7 Unit of Analysis .....	109
3.8 Data Collection and Procedure .....	109
3.9 Questionnaire Development.....	111
3.10 Items Generation .....	112
3.11 Variables .....	113
3.11.1 Dependent variable .....	114
3.11.2 Independent variables .....	115
3.11.2(a) Training.....	115
3.11.2(b) Inter-Gender Communication.....	116
3.11.2(c) Organisational Policies .....	117
3.11.3 Moderator.....	118
3.11.4 Mediator.....	119
3.12 Validity and Reliability.....	121
3.13 Research Instruments .....	122
3.14 Data Analysis .....	123
3.15 Data Error.....	123
3.15.1 Missing Values.....	124
3.15.2 Common Method Variance.....	125
3.15.3 Data Analysis Techniques.....	126
3.15.4 Approaches of Structural Equation Model.....	128

3.15.5	Descriptive statistics .....	131
3.15.6	Cross-tabulation .....	131
3.15.7	Pearson Chi-square .....	131
3.15.8	Binary Logistic Regression .....	131
3.15.9	Ordinal Logistic Regression.....	132
3.16	Ethical Consideration .....	132
3.17	Conclusion .....	132
<b>CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS .....</b>		<b>133</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	133
4.2	Survey Details .....	133
4.2.1	Response Rate .....	135
4.2.2	Data Preparation.....	135
4.2.3	Checking for Errors.....	136
4.2.4	Missing Values.....	136
4.2.5	Respondents Demographic Profile .....	136
4.3	Common Method Variance.....	140
4.3.1	Harmon’s Single Factor Test .....	140
4.4	Descriptive Analysis .....	141
4.5	Assessment of Measurement Model.....	142
4.5.1	Construct validity.....	143
4.5.1(a)	Convergent validity .....	143
4.5.2	Discriminant Validity.....	146
4.6	Structured Equation Model .....	148
4.6.1	Multicollinearity Analysis.....	149
4.6.2	Path Coefficients and Hypotheses Testing.....	151
4.6.3	Hypotheses Testing for Direct Relationships .....	152
4.6.4	Hypotheses Testing for Mediating Effects .....	154



4.6.5	Hypotheses Testing for Moderating Effect .....	156
4.7	Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ).....	158
4.8	Effect Size ( $f^2$ ).....	159
4.9	Predictive Relevance of the Model .....	160
4.10	Model Fitness .....	161
<b>CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....</b>		<b>163</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	163
5.2	Recapitulation of Findings .....	164
5.3	Discussion .....	165
5.3.1	Linkage between Training and Women Empowerment.....	165
5.3.2	Linkage between Inter-Gender Communication and Women Empowerment .....	167
5.3.3	Linkage between Organisational Policies and Women Empowerment .....	169
5.3.4	Linkage between Training and Organisational Culture .....	170
5.3.5	Linkage between Inter-Gender Communication and Organisational Culture .....	172
5.3.6	Linkage between Organisational Policies and Organisational Culture.....	173
5.3.7	Linkage between Organisational culture and Women Empowerment .....	174
5.4	Discussion of Findings on Mediation .....	176
5.4.1	The Mediating Effect of Organisational Culture on the relationship between Training (personal factor) and Women Empowerment .....	177
5.4.2	The Mediating Effect of Organisational Culture on the relationship between Inter-Gender Communication (relational factor) and Women Empowerment .....	178
5.4.3	The Mediating Effect of Organisational Culture on the Relationship between Organisational Policies (environmental factor) and Women Empowerment .....	179
5.5	Discussion of Findings on Moderation .....	180

5.5.1	Government Support strengthen the Relationship between Organisational culture and Women Empowerment .....	181
5.6	Contribution .....	183
5.6.1	Theoretical Implication .....	183
5.6.2	Practical Implication .....	186
5.7	Limitations and Future Direction of the Study .....	188
5.8	Conclusion .....	190
	<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>192</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	
	<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	

## LIST OF TABLES

		<b>Page</b>
Table 1.1	Definitions of Key Terms .....	26
Table 2.1	Statistical Literature on Problem (Accessed on:6 April 2019) .....	35
Table 2.2	Characteristics of Empowerment.....	74
Table 3.1	Dimensions of Research Design .....	103
Table 3.2	List of Saudi Public Organisations .....	108
Table 3.3	Development and Structure of Survey Questionnaire .....	113
Table 3.4	Measurement for dependent variable “Women Empowerment at Saudi Public Organisations” .....	114
Table 3.5	Measurement for first independent variable “Training” .....	116
Table 3.6	Measurement for second independent variable “Inter-Gender Communication” .....	117
Table 3.7	Measurement for third independent variable “Organisational Policies” .....	118
Table 3.8	Measurement for moderator “Governmental Support” .....	119
Table 3.9	Measurement for mediator “Organisational Culture” .....	120
Table 4.1	Response Rate.....	138
Table 4.2	Respondents Demographic Profile .....	139
Table 4.3	Results of Descriptive Statistics .....	142
Table 4.4	Retained Indicator AVE and Composite Reliability.....	144
Table 4.5	Discriminant Validity of Measurement Model- Heterotrait- Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).....	148
Table 4.6	Steps for Structural Model Assessment .....	149
Table 4.7	Collinearity Statistics.....	150
Table 4.8	Direct Effect .....	153
Table 4.9	Mediation Indirect .....	155
Table 4.10	Moderation Analysis.....	157

Table 4.11	Results of $R^2$ .....	158
Table 4.12	Assessment of effect sizes ( $f^2$ ).....	159
Table 4.13	Results of Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ ) .....	161
Table 4.14	Average Values of AVE and $R^2$ .....	162

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1.1	Women Empowering Index Framework ..... 4
Figure 2.1	Categorization of articles in term of year on Women Empowerment..... 36
Figure 2.2	Categorization of articles in term of affiliation on Women Empowerment..... 37
Figure 2.3	Categorization of articles in term of country or territory on Women Empowerment ..... 38
Figure 2.4	Categorization of articles in term of type on Women Empowerment..... 39
Figure 2.5	Categorization of articles in term of subject area on Women Empowerment..... 40
Figure 2.6	Categorization of articles in term of author on Women Empowerment..... 41
Figure 2.7	Gendered Organisation Theory (GOT) Source: (Acker, 1990)..... 51
Figure 2.8	Female Communication Experiences: Woman Manager’s Perspective (Gaur, 2006) ..... 82
Figure 2.9	Theoretical Framework of Women Empowerment in Public Organisations at Managerial Role ..... 89
Figure 3.1	Saudi Arabian Female Manger’s Organisational Model: Vision 2030..... 106
Figure 4.1	Confirmatory Factor Analysis ..... 148
Figure 4.2	Structured Equation Model 1. Direct Relation ..... 153
Figure 4.3	Structured Equation Model of Mediation ..... 156
Figure 4.4	Structured Equation Model for Moderation..... 157

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
SEM	Structured Equation Model
MDG	Millennium Development Goals

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A	Total Variance Explained
Appendix B	Survey
Appendix C	Adopt Process of Construct/Variables

**PERANAN FAKTOR PERIBADI, PERHUBUNGAN DAN PERSEKITARAN  
TERHADAP PEMERKASAAN WANITA DALAM ORGANISASI AWAM DI  
ARAB SAUDI**

**ABSTRAK**

Wanita adalah kuasa utama untuk pertumbuhan ekonomi, dan ia juga merupakan sumber penting untuk kehidupan yang sihat dan bahagia kerana lebih daripada lebih daripada separuh penghuni dunia adalah wanita. Tambahan pula, kewujudan pekerja wanita adalah penting untuk pertumbuhan ekonomi yang stabil. Oleh itu, kajian INI cuba menilai pemeraksanaan wanita melalui BEBERAPA faktor seperti latihan, komunikasi antara jantina, dan dasar organisasi pengurusan tertinggi dalam SESEBUAH organisasi awam di Arab Saudi. Model yang dicadangkan dalam KAJIAN INI disokong oleh TEORI Pemeraksanaan dan Teori Organisasi Mengikut Jantina. Untuk mendapatkan cerapan yang bermanfaat, data dikumpulkan daripada para pegawai wanita yang memegang jawatan pengurusan tertinggi yang beroperasi dalam sektor berbeza seperti kesihatan, komunikasi, pendidikan dan perbankan di Arab Saudi. Untuk pengumpulan data, soal selidik berstruktur telah digunakan; sebanyak 600 borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada para pegawai wanita yang memegang jawatan pengurusan tertinggi dan telah mendapat 257 maklumbalas dengan kadar maklum balas sebanyak 42.8 peratus. Manakala, untuk menguji hipotesis akhir, SPSS. 26 digunakan untuk statistik deskriptif, dan Smart PLS digunakan untuk menjalankan analisis faktor pengesahan (CFA) dan model persamaan berstruktur (SEM) digunakan untuk ujian hipotesis. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa budaya organisasi secara signifikan menerangkan mekanisme perhubungan yang menghubungkan hubungan antara latihan, komunikasi antara



jantina, serta dasar organisasi dengan pemerksaan wanita. Selain itu, hubungan antara budaya organisasi dan pemerksaan wanita di Arab Saudi telah menjadi kukuh disebabkan dasar dan sokongan inisiatif kerajaan. Oleh itu, berdasarkan keputusan, kajian ini mencadangkan beberapa cadangan kepada penggubal dasar, kerajaan dan agensi swasta lain bahawa sokongan kerajaan (kewangan dan bukan kewangan) boleh meningkatkan pemerksaan wanita di Arab Saudi kerana wanita adalah tonggak utama pertumbuhan ekonomi Saudi. Selain itu, penggubal dasar perlu mengatur sesi latihan dan bengkel untuk membawa kesedaran dan komunikasi antara jantina secara terbuka kepada organisasi dalaman dan luaran. Tambahan pula, majikan perlu mewujudkan budaya organisasi yang selamat dan terjamin untuk wanita, yang menyumbang dengan ketara kepada pemerksaan wanita.

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**ABSTRACT**

Women are the main power for economic growth, and it is also a vital source of a healthy and happy life because more than half are women in the whole world. Furthermore, female workers' existence is essential to stable economic growth. Therefore, the current study is trying to evaluate women's empowerment through different factors such as training, inter-gender communication, and organisational policies of top management of public organisations of Saudi Arabia. The current proposed model is underpinned by empowerment and gendered organisational theories. For fruitful insights, the data was collected from top female management operating in different sectors such as Health, Communication, Education, and Banking of Saudi Arabia. For data collection, structured questionnaires were used; a total of 600 questionnaires was distributed among the top female management and received 257 responses with a response rate of 42.8 percent. While, for testing the final hypotheses, SPSS. 26 was used for descriptive statistics, and Smart PLS was used to run confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structured equation model (SEM) for hypothesis testing. The results indicate that organisational culture significantly explains the mechanism to connect the relationship between (training, inter-gender communication, organisational policies) and women empowerment. Additionally, the relationship between organisational culture and Saudi women's empowerment has been strong due to governmental initiative policies and support. Hence, based on the results, the current study recommends several suggestions to policymakers,

governmental, and other private agencies that governmental (financial and non-financial) support can bring up women empowerment in Saudi Arabia because women are the central pillar of Saudi economic growth. Additionally, the policymakers need to arrange training and workshop sessions to bring awareness and openly inter-gender communication to the indoor and outdoor organisation. Furthermore, employers need to make safe and secure organisational culture for women, which significantly contributes to women's empowerment.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The topic of women empowerment in Saudi Arabia has fascinated global attention in recent times. There are numerous complications that women are facing at various managerial positions despite the noteworthy increase in females' involvement as active members of the community within the complex communal context of the region at an organisational level (Kwauk, 2011). Moreover, recently Kingdom of Saudi Arabia granted permission for women work and driving specifically under Royaldecree in 26 Sept 2017, which is a great move towards women empowerment and facilitator for Saudi working women under Vision 2030 (Rijal & Khoirina, 2019).

Women, state, and ideology examine the underlying ideologies that make female subordination a universal experience. This concept analyses government policies directed at women in African and Asian countries. It argues, too, that ideologies that oppress women are removed only by prolonged struggle and then only after fundamental political and social changes have been made (Afsar 1997, 1998). Agarwal (1998, 1994) wrote the first major study of gender and property in South Asia. In a pioneering and comprehensive analysis, Agarwal argued that the single most important economic factor affecting women's situation is the gender gap in command over property. In rural South Asia, the most significant form of property is arable land, a critical determinant of economic well-being, social status, and empowerment. The author's work makes significant and original contributions to theory and policy at various organisational levels. Ahmed (1992) added a new perspective to the current debate about women and Islam by exploring its historical roots, tracing the

developments in Islamic discourses on women and gender from the ancient world to the present.

Women's empowerment and economic development are highly correlated. Development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women. Empowering women may benefit development at a managerial role at various organisations. The empowerment development and the interrelationships are probably too weak to be self-sustaining. A continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women. Al-Asfour et al. (2017) explored the work challenges and career barriers faced by women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Drawing on institutional theory, the purpose of their work was to explore the experiences of employed Saudi women through in-depth interviews.

This thesis discusses the impact of various factors on women empowerment in Saudi Arabia concerning relational, environmental, and inter-personal factors in which Saudi working women are considered as the main factor of economic growth and it contributes to economic development in the world (Kinninmont, 2016). Over the past few years, Saudi Arabia has launched a broad range of intensive and creative initiatives for women empowerment. This will promote a business climate and support competitiveness and inspire the new generation of the business builder. The magnificent changes in the business industry will help Saudi Arabia to flourish the economy and contribute to achieving the vision of 2030 (Kinninmont, 2016).

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Empowerment became a buzz word, and it is the most important component of recent management trends in both the public and private sectors organisations (Forster,

2017). According to the organisational behavior concepts, empowerment is considered a strong feature of management. The result-oriented government usually focuses on developing women empowerment strategies at all levels. Emphasis on women empowerment has been reached beyond research specific to general management and global theory. Several studies have been examined for women's empowerment (Ahmed et al., 2019).

According to Alghofaily (2019) the vision of Saudi Arabia 2030 focuses on expanding the economy and work strongly on women empowerment. This will change the economy and eradicate the factor of gender-based discrimination. This will increase the rate of employment level for women at different level. The program works on introducing positive laws for women and by taking initiatives on improving access to financial matters which could empower women indirectly. Currently, the women empowerment projects and opportunities are not major contributors to the GDP of Saudi Arabia as compared to developed or advanced economies. When the 2030 vision was announced, the government started planning to increase projects on women empowerment which had a contribution to Saudi Arabia GDP by 20% to 35%. This plan was done through the development of human resources and offering support programs. Furthermore, the government has shown increasing interest in pursuing women's empowerment through more job facilitations to women. Recent studies showed when King Abdullah came to power in 2005, he implemented overseas scholarship programs for the first time which include women too for getting a higher education. The number of female students was increased who wished to move abroad for getting higher education and to change the perceptions of western culture about Saudi Arabia. Thus, it pressurized the meaningful change in women empowerment at a higher level in the Kingdom (Doumato, 1999).

A set of indicators of women's empowerment and a composite index for measuring is developed. Various materials, from journals, books, and reports, were reviewed. Eleven indicators of women's empowerment in the Bangladesh setting were identified (Biswas & Tapash, 2004). These indicators particularly are mobility, decision-making power, autonomy, ownership of household assets, freedom from domination, awareness, participation in public protests and political campaigns, contribution to family income, reproductive rights, exposure to information, and participation in development programs. Under each of these indicators, several sub-indicators were considered. Composite empowerment indices were developed to measure the overall level of empowerment of women in Bangladesh. The uniqueness of this empowerment index is that it considers a wide range of empowerment indicators with appropriate weights. Composite empowerment indices have also been developed for different categories of indicators (Biswas & Tapash, 2004).



*Figure 1.1.* Women Empowering Index Framework

Source: (Simone, Kimberly & Rosa, 2017)

Figure 1.1. illustrate the basic indicators of framework showing women empowerment index. Authors proposed key framework that is base for our proposed framework. Moreover, Figure 1.1 depicts three important factors related to women empowerment i.e. (i) personal (ii) relational and (iii) environmental. It provides graphical representations of change that is green arrows shows interaction between three levels of change. For example, improvement in self-esteem and confidence (personal factor) can influence the way the women take the decisions within the community (relational factor). If a multitude of women are gaining more confidence (personal factor) and establishing better power relation within their immediate surrounding (relational factor). This process generates changing in the broader environment, influencing social norms and possibly effecting changes in the organisational space (environmental change). This process can also happen in other direction with changes in organisational behavior and in broader society (environmental factor). This effects how women interact with others (relational factor) and how these women see an perceive themselves with in organisation (personal factor).

A study conducted by Al-Halawani (2002) concludes that women in many sectors of government are operating under the umbrella of men, which impacts negatively on the performance of women sections, and that the constant intervention by men restricts their freedom to make decisions. The study further concludes that lack of authority and centralization of authority in headquarters run by men limit women's ability to lead effectively and to make decisions, even those that concern their own departments (Al-Halawani, 2002).



Research studies suggest that women's sectors in Saudi Arabia face several organisational shortcomings including the lack of clarity in the organisational relationship between women's and men's departments, poor coordination and the subordination of women's sections on the organisational chart and in some cases not including women sections in the organisational chart all together, as well as a lack of control over financial and material resources (Almenkash et al. 2007). Almenkash et al. (2007) indicates that poor communication and inadequate information system contribute to the widening gap between women sections and top managers, as well as the isolation of women's sections from the course of events that take place at the corporate headquarters, and the lack of participation in strategic planning and academic decision-making and membership in academic and administrative committees.

Lack of empowerment can be another challenge facing women managers, which is reflected in their inability to influence the decision-making process and achieve organisational goals due to the lack of tools or methods of empowerment (Metcalf, 2008). Empowerment can be achieved through access to knowledge, the granting of higher authority and access to information, as well as through self-development, reward and encouragement, participation in setting goals and policymaking and identifying means and methods (Kubaisi, 2004). Thus, any deficiency in any of these aspects will result in a lack of empowerment and, consequently, ineffective managership. According to Effendi (2003), empowerment enhances the moral and physical sense of belonging and affiliation with the institution, leaving a positive effect on the psyche of the individual, and enhances feelings of appreciation and importance to the institution.

Evidence suggests a number of factors contributing to the lack of empowerment of women managers. These include lack of administrative efficiency, limited training opportunities, lack of professional exchange opportunities and cooperation with other institutions to gain diverse experiences, the exclusion of women from some policies and regulations and from participating in decision-making (Almenkash et al., 2007) and lack of access to information (Sultan, 1994). Evidence also shows that the amount and quality of leadership training available to women is not adequate to meet the demands of their role as managers; women often undertake training based on self-initiative, which does not follow a strategic plan for leadership development in the organisation (Al-Ahmadi, 2005).

Some scholars assert that women are subjected to socialization, educational and social pressures that may prevent the formation of values and attitudes appropriate to managerial roles, thus limiting the effectiveness of some women in managerial positions (Shahine, 1997). Studies show that working women face role conflict as a result of the difficulty of balancing professional and social or family obligations in the absence of structural support (Al-Halawani, 2002). Ibrahim (1997) indicates that feelings of frustration and suffering among women increase because of this dual role and the accumulation of the sense of marginalization, inferiority and lack of self-confidence. In the study by Alajmi (2001), the highest ranked personal traits identified by respondents as impacting women in leadership positions in Saudi Arabia are energy, self-confidence and independence; they do not rank very highly in initiative, taking risks or relationships.

In a review of women in management, Berthoin and Izraeli (1993) states that ‘probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialized countries is the persistent stereotype that associated management with being male’.

Based on the review of the literature, it is concluded that women managers face many challenges that limit their effectiveness and prevent them from achieving their leadership potential. These include organisational structure, policies, and practices, as well as individual factors such as personal skills, capabilities, confidence, support, ability to achieve balance and a sense of empowerment. This is similar to many western regions, but the Middle East region faces additional concerns relating to greater importance of family ties and the significance of religion in governing all work and social relationships, which both men and women support (Metcalf, 2008). Although several studies have been conducted on this subject, the current study comes at a time that is critical in Saudi Arabia, where important social reforms for women are taking place. The advancement of women in the public sphere is an important goal for the region, given the implementation of the eighth development plan, and the millennium development goals (MDG), that strongly emphasize the need for women empowerment.

The background study of this research mainly focuses on training, inter-gender communication, organisational policies, governmental support, organisational culture in term of women empowerment (Morley, 1993), (Brody, DeMarco & Lovrich, 2002), (Morcos, 2018), (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009), (Mohindra & Azhar, 2012), (Jacobson & Eaton, 2018).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Today, the important goal of Saudi Arabia is to transform its image in the western world through women's empowerment. Hence, Saudi Arabia has recently introduced women empowerment to promote the culture of the opening of new business entities for women. This will support the competitiveness among both genders and inspire the new generation. (Rajeshwari, 2015).

Governments and private sector institutions are proceeding to empowerment phenomena to create more jobs for women of Saudi Arabia to improve economic conditions. This also decreased gender discrimination in the whole country. The number of women working in the public and private sectors in Saudi Arabia increased by 282.5% by the end of the first quarter year 2018. According to statistics published by Al-Eqtisadiyah the number of women working in the kingdom reached 596,700, up from 156,000 in the corresponding period in 2018.

Women empowerment is powered by technologies including social media, autonomy, online learning process, and online opportunities to work from home, low-cost transport, and microloans. These technologies have become important for women to drive the next stage of growth and gain a competitive advantage in the country. Many obstacles embracing women empowerment in Saudi Arabia, such as lack of independence to women in society, security threats from culture, values, and regulatory systems are important factors. As such, there is an emergent need to develop the concept of women empowerment and its impact on the success in the economic development of Saudi Arabia. These factors affect organisational at grass root level especially public sector organisations. The government of Saudi Arabia has focused on women's education which is an important factor in personal women empowerment

at the organisational level. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has recently started various initiatives to boost up the women empowering activities at various public and private sector organisations. In this connection, the gap created by expatriate's expulsion in various job sectors has been successfully filled by Saudi women (Mohd, 2019).

The percentage of women annually earning degrees and attending universities is significantly higher than that of men. Statistics indicate that 31% male students and 69% female are enrolled under the ministry of higher education, Saudi Arabia (2013). Despite this large number of female scholar's women comprise no more than 6.1 percent in administration and leading position in comparison to male administrators and leaders in the educational sector according to Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning (2010). The low percentage of women administration in leading positions is because various reasons according to literature which specially includes of lack of skills, gaps in inter-gender communications, training in career enhancement.

The advent of Vision 2030 is a great opportunity and challenge for Saudi Women. It brings various opportunities for Saudi women by pro-Saudi policies along with various challenges of personal training, inter-gender communications issues, religious and political factors at the organisational level. Vision 2030 states about women empowerment as "Together we will continue building a better country, fulfilling our dream of prosperity and unlocking the talent, potential, and dedication of our young men and women". It is further states that Saudi Arabia will continue investing in education and training which is a dimension of personal factors so that Saudi Arabian young men and women are equipped for the jobs of the future. Saudi women are yet another great asset. Over 50% of Saudi Arabian university graduates are female. Saudi Arabia is determined to develop its factors of empowerment i.e. talents, invest in its production capabilities. This will enable them to strengthen their

future and contribute to the development of their society and economy. According to Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is determined to increase its women's participation in the workforce from 22% to 30% shortly (Kinninmont, 2016). According to the general authority of statistics of Saudi Arabia Q1 end 2020 market statistics Saudi male work force is 64.5% and Saudi female work force is 35.5% while non-Saudi male workforce is 87.2% while non-Saudi female workforce is 12.8% which is still very low (Kinninmont, 2016).

Research showed that women played an important role in the upholding of nations. Women in Saudi Arabia are struggling to get success in society at the organisational level (Rajeshwari, 2015). Saudi women are still facing problems and challenges in the workplace and in their communities, which is the main hindrance in their empowerment. The government of Saudi Arabia has taken various measures to empower Saudi women with dignity and respect through Vision 2030 and various educational and vocational policies as they are playing an important role in the contribution of family and nation-building. Research also showed that women face different problems and the different situations at their workplace at various public. It can be in the form of gender discrimination at the workplace, it can be in decision making at the managerial level or even grass root level. It can be in wages, termination, promotion, hiring process, leaves, and benefits, etc. (Natalie & Katie, 2013).

According to UN Women established in (2011), gender inequalities in time use are still large and persistent in all countries. When paid and unpaid work is combined, women in developing countries work more than men. This also includes less time for education, leisure, political participation, and self-care. Despite some improvements over the last 50 years, in virtually every country, men spend more time on leisure each day while women spend more time doing unpaid housework. The world organisation

for women also agreed that more women than men work in vulnerable, low-paid, or undervalued jobs. As of the year 2013 statistics, about 49.1% of the world's working women were in vulnerable employment, often unprotected by labor legislation, compared to 46.9% of men. Besides, women are also dissatisfied with the way of their employer treating men worker and women worker particularly when comes to promotion. Most of the time, men get promoted even though women staff are more suitable for that position with reason men are good at handling problems compare to women. The view on promotion can be supported by Ashok, Manjulika and Rajindar (1998) where they stated that women are under-represented at all management rank due to women being discriminated against for promotion to higher ranks despite their continued high performance. Opportunities for carrier advancement are being ignored after recruitment by top management. This is the reason that women are lopsided at senior level ranks. Apart from that, studies found that about 49.9 percent of women employees agreed that women, in general, must work harder and longer to prove their credibility and ability to achieve the same level as men (Phool, Singh, Khanpur, Kalan & Priya, 2020).

According to Narayanan and Selvanathan (2017), employees in selected organisations claimed that they had been working for almost 10 years in the current firm and promotion was given to a newly joined male staff. According to the situation, this will bring to the gender earning gap and dissatisfaction among women employees when they started to realized men are easy to get promoted even if they don't deserve the promotion. The manufacturing industry also mentioned that challenges for women empowerment are many and it is also dependent on the background, history, and working culture of the organisation. Work-life imbalance among women particularly married women is the biggest challenge in women empowerment. Women tend to mix

up work commitments with personal priorities. Due to this, women afraid to take any responsibility, and most of the time it had been excused for not giving women the responsibility. Women are being discriminated via various aspects especially at workplace. One of the main discriminations gathered through their results were gender equality whereby female staffs tend to face greater discrimination especially in the aspect of promotion and allocation of task, women graduates are being stereotyped when it comes to job application and face discrimination in the aspect of pay scale, reward and compensation.

Women staff in multiple organisations had been the victim of voluptuous harassment at their workplace, yet no report was made against the men staff as mainly due to embarrassment. Some are even scared to act as they might lose their job or even being a victim after working hours as their safety is not assured by the management. This is one of the heart-wrenching challenges that most women face in a working environment. This is the fact that women in power have a greater potential of getting involved in this type of gender discrimination. Many men have the thought that a working woman is compromising in nature which is the foundation for such vicious deeds. Therefore, women are just supposed to keep mum if such a situation occurs as they choose to be on par with men. It is indeed true that women must face a lot of challenges before they get empowered (Narayanan & Selvanathan, 2017)

For women who are driven by emotion and instinct, it is the toughest challenge in office politics, and it can be said that power play can hurt women's inner soul and disturb mental peace. Men, when it comes to organisational politics can strive compared to women. A lot of organisational political tricks are involved in workplace and this has caused high turnover among the female staff. (Narayanan, 2016). Besides this, women dis-empowerment has negative implications on broader economic



development and based on the World Health Organisation (WHO), gender inequality has a direct and indirect cost to the nation (Narayanan & Selvanathan, 2017).

According to Alghofaily (2019), Saudi government has recently introduced many reforms under the 2030 vision which are expected to have a direct impact on women empowerment. This research is one of the very few researches conducted into the impact of the 2030 vision on women leadership in Saudi Arabia. Alghofaily conducted thematic qualitative research on Saudi women working in Saudi higher education institutions and results indicated that Saudi women have faced a number of barriers in rising to leadership positions, but the 2030 vision is expected to lower many of these barriers.

According to Alahmadi (2011), result of increasing enrolment of women in all levels of education and various fields of employment in Saudi Arabia, the last 10 years witnessed a growing participation of women in senior management positions and in the decision-making process in public and private sectors. In spite of the considerable role of women in Saudi society, evidence suggests that women at high level of managerial positions are facing a different reality from their male counterparts due to organisational, personal and cultural challenges that impede their effectiveness as managers of public organisation. Alahmadi (2011) also found that that the main challenges are (i) structural challenges, (ii) lack of usage of resources and (iii) lack of empowerment, while (iv) cultural and (v) personal challenges ranked last.

The roles and skills of women managers have received increased attention by researchers and practitioners in business and public organisations all over the world (Omair ; Stead and Elliot, 2009 ). Due to globalization forces, Saudi Arabia has witnessed major changes during the past few decades, with women taking more

responsibility in public spheres and occupying higher positions in organisations (Alchoui, 2009). Despite the considerable expansion in the role of women in Saudi society, evidence indicates that women in upper management positions are facing a bitter reality from their male counterparts due to various structural and cultural factors that impede their effectiveness as managers (Almenkash, Abdulaziz, Shaman, Haijan & Dagsh, 2007) . These factors have been found to impede women in management in other Gulf countries. As reported by Al-Lamki (1999), the main obstacles for women managers were limited opportunities to discriminatory appointment and promotion practices, traditional attitudes of male bosses towards working women, male-dominated sectors, male resistance to women in management, absence of policies and legislation to ensure participation of women in management positions, a lack of professional networking, a lack of female role models, a lack of professional management development programs.

Research on women in top management positions in three Arab Gulf countries (UAE, Oman and Bahrain) found that the challenges faced by those women included discrimination at work, cultural taboos, negative attitudes towards working women and lack of confidence and trust in women managers (Wilkinson, 1996). Research identified several inhibiting factors for women that include organisational factors, such as personnel systems/traditional career paths, male employee attitudes and women's own attitudes (Cooke, 2007).

Structural factors can present an important challenge to women managers due to managerial and organisational practices, women managers around the world are often found in lower management positions that give them little access to power and few meaningful challenges (Omar and Davidson). Evidence similarly indicates that women managers in Saudi Arabia face a number of structural challenges, including

limited authority, which is disproportionate to the size of their responsibility (Al-Halawani, 2002), (Almenkash, Abdulaziz, Shaman, Haijan, & Dagsh, 2007), (Abdullah, 2008).

This problem statement provides new understandings of women's empowerment progress and challenges in Saudi Arabia in public organisations at managerial level. This problem statement focusses on women empowerment in various government sectors in Saudi Arabia to identify challenges and suggests human resources solutions to assist women's empowerment. Findings and recommendations should prove useful in raising awareness among policymakers regarding the experiences of women empowerment in Saudi Arabia and the challenges they face and in identifying factors that may facilitate their role. The study argues that commitment to women's empowerment development is an important aspect of broader social and organisational sector change in Saudi Arabia.

Keeping these above-mentioned issues, women empowerment in Saudi Arabian public sector organisation carries similar or even additive challenges and barriers in working cultural, governmental support level and public sector's organisational policies. Personal, relational and environmental factors for Saudi women empowerment will be focused on this study to explore and assess the factors. These will be the factors that hinder Saudi women's empowerment under the Vision 2030 underling Theory of Empowerment (TE) (ii) Gendered Organisational Theory (GOT) which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 in Theoretical Framework. Moreover, we will also discuss the relationship between training, inter-gendered communication, organisational policies, organisational culture as mediator and governmental support as moderator in relevance with women empowerment in Saudi public organisations which is a very important dimension assessing women

empowerment in Saudi organisations. Apart from this the effect of the mediator role of organisational culture will also be brought into consideration to assess working women empowerment status at managerial level in Saudi Arabia.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Women's empowerment is a powerful source of job creation, innovation, and economic growth for the country. In this study, we are investigating factors that affect women's empowerment in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Certain pertinent questions need to be answered to help facilitate the obstacles that may be faced by the women of upcoming generations. The proposed study will be implemented to find out the answers of the following research questions based on the research objectives of the study.

- What is the relationship between training and women empowerment?
- What is the relationship between inter-gender communication and women empowerment?
- What is the relationship between organisational policies and women empowerment?
- What does the effect of the organisational culture as mediator on the relationship between training, inter-gender communication and organisational policies with women empowerment?
- Does governmental support moderate the relationship between training, inter-gender communication, and organisational policies with women empowerment?

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

In the last recent years, the involvement of women has been rapidly growing in all fields of life and they started working in all sectors of the country to increase the growth rate of the economy. The fast progress in the changes in culture, beliefs, values, attitude, and tradition offered huge chances in addition to threats. To take advantage of the benefit of using the global women's empowerment network platforms, government, society, and individuals must understand the threats and benefits of women empowerment. This study seeks to achieve certain objectives. The general objective of the study is to measure the significant impact of women empowerment among the women of Saudi Arabia. The proposed study is supposed to achieve following objectives.

- To examine the relationship between training and women empowerment.
- To investigate the relationship between inter-gender communication and women empowerment.
- To examine the relationship between organisational policies and women empowerment.
- To examine the mediating effect of organisational culture informing in the relationship between training, inter-gender communication, and organisational policies with women empowerment.
- To examine the moderating effect of governmental support in the relationship between training, inter-gender communication, and organisational policies with women empowerment.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The proposed study will fill the gap in the body of knowledge concerning the working women empowerment at managerial level in public organisations in Saudi Arabia. This study is significant for working women in Saudi Arabia by assessing the impact of women's empowerment on women's level at various organisations with various roles.

Firstly, the study provides insights into how training, inter-gender communication and organisational policies can create a positive influence towards women empowerment in public organisations. Secondly, it explores the impact of governmental support on women empowerment Saudi Arabian public organisations. This will help women managers to create new ideas, new strategy, and new protocols in Saudi public sectors. Thirdly, this study will investigate the organisational culture as a mediator between training, inter-gender communication and organisational policies in Saudi public organisations. The study will guide a better future for Saudi managers that are working in public sectors specifically.

Moreover, this study will also enable various women to solve a real-world problem of women working at different organisations across the country. Furthermore, government and policymakers will also be benefited from this study to facilitate the entity of women empowerment in public organisations. Moreover, the thesis will contribute towards understanding of the work challenges, complications and barriers of Saudi women in the workforce. It will also provide a fresh insight into the issues surrounding women in Saudi Arabia and the need to address them to provide support for their career advancement at managerial positions. The study will help to verify and test the factors influencing the women empowerment paradigms. The Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia is keen to empower Saudi women so that they could contribute to the economy of Saudi Arabia equally as men. Moreover, the study will explore the perceived competencies of women in management; the attitudes of men towards women managers, and organisational initiatives to reduce the gender gap. The study will also provide an approved guideline and suggestion to concerned ministries of Saudi Arabia and policies implementing agencies to achieve Saudi women empowerment under Vision 2030 (Kinninmont, 2016). Moreover, it will also find out the organisational cultural factors that are explaining the real implementation of Saudi women empowerment policies. It will also help high-level managers to create a balance among employees irrespective of gender at managerial levels and as well as grass-root level. The study might indicate the collective capacity of Saudi Arabia's organisations to produce prospective female managers whose managerial skills, values, and practices are congruent with (i) theory of empowerment and (ii) gendered organisational theory (GOT). The findings might help Saudi officials to identify aspects of the nation's human resource development system that require reform, particularly in female managers. The ability to create appropriate female managerial training programs might lead to empowered Saudi women supporting public sectors more confidently and efficiently (Akademia, et al., , 2016).

### **1.6.1 Theoretical Contribution**

The theoretical framework of the study is derived from the (i) Theory of Empowerment (TE) (ii) Gendered Organisations Theory (GOT).

Theory of Empowerment was proposed by Wilkinson (1998). He describes empowerment theory that it examines the construct of empowerment at the individual, organisational, and community levels of analysis. A discussion of the parameters of

empowerment, a brief review of relevant research, and suggestions for future research at each level of analysis are also included Chapter 2. In recent years, the term empowerment has become part of everyday management language. It has also been associated with popular management movements of the times such as human resource management (HRM) and total quality management (TQM). Empowerment is both a value orientation for working in the community and a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequences of efforts to exert control and influence over decisions that affect one's life, organisational functioning, and the quality of community life (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Second, the study will investigate the engagement of women managers in public organisation based on gendered organisations theory (GOT). Acker (1990) proposed the theory of gendered organisations for the first time and got high acceptability with respect to common theories of organisations. In spite of feminist recognition that hierarchical organisations are an important location of male dominance, most feminists writing about organisations assume that organisational structure is gender neutral. He further argued that organisational structure is not gender neutral; on the contrary, assumptions about gender underlie the documents and contracts used to construct organisations and to provide the commonsense ground for theorizing about them. Their gendered nature is partly covered through confusing the embodied nature of work. Abstract jobs and hierarchies, common concepts in organisational thinking, assume disembodies and universal worker. The worker is actually a man; men's bodies, sexuality, and relationships to procreation and paid work are included in the image of the worker. Images of men's bodies and masculinity infuse organisational processes, marginalizing women and contributing to the maintenance of gender segregation in organisations. The positing of gender-neutral and



disembodied organisational structures and work relations is part of the larger strategy of control in industrial capitalist societies, which, at least partly, are built upon a deeply embedded substructure of gender difference.

According to Bendle and Koall (2007) numerous organisational scholars have ceased observing organisations and organisational theorizing as gender neutral, and have abandoned hypotheses, which suggest that gender and organisational research are unconnected. Bendle and Koall (2007) further have described that the development of gendered organisations as a field of study, placing this ‘new field of gendered organisation’ as separate and distinct from both Organisation Studies and Gender Studies. Disciplinary fragmentation and distinction, gender composition and practices, geographical distances associated with cultural differences in theoretical approaches and applied methods, as well as institutionalized academic professional practices and social networks, encourage a divergence rather than an integration of Organisation Studies and Gender Studies. This new field of ‘gendered organisation’ might include national, gender, and disciplinary inclusiveness, theoretical and methodical innovation, and an extensive stance on content, methods, theory, and approaches. From an epistemological perspective, this inclusiveness would collaborate not only across disciplinary boundaries and commit to national, gender, and disciplinary divides but would also be open to unorthodox, creative, and non-conventional work, both theoretically and methodologically, as well as being free of mainstream methodological and methodical constraints. This more inclusive organisational research suggests criteria such as clarity, provocativeness, innovativeness, utility and insight, but not uniformity and consensus, as standards for ‘good’ gender-oriented work.

Moreover, this theory selects survey of literature on gender equality in organisations. The initial segment is at the grand theory level and addresses paradigms model that Burrell and Morgan first published in 1979 (2001). Feminist critique is examined and areas for further inquiry are identified in order that scholars may move to a more gendered organisation theory mode. This theory focuses on the topic of equality in organisations. It will lay some groundwork for future research direction and provide some basis for prescription and remedy at the organisation level. The above statement could easily be interpreted as being related to racial and ethnic issues or related to gender issues. While there are many crosses over problems and remedies on dealing with both of these issues, the theory is devoted to research on gender equity in organisations. It selects several pieces of seminal literature that are important to this topic, and that raise a number of major issues.

Finally, the study contributes to the theoretical body of knowledge on the working women empowerment of public organisations at organisational level based on empowerment theory, and gendered organisations theory. The direct and indirect effects of the study variables will be materialized by integrating the theories in a single research model. Therefore, future research should be based on integrated models and should be more complex to examine interactions among different variables. To provide a further understanding of the interaction, this study expands on the knowledge of manager's empowerment level at organisation, modern management techniques at gender level and social role variances.

### **1.6.2 Practical Contribution**

As for its practical contribution, the study is expected to provide better knowledge of the women empowerment of public sector organisations in Saudi Arabia to improve women empowerment level at managerial role. The results of the study will help public sectors organisations and government in Saudi Arabia to better understand the women empowerment process by providing insights into training, inter-gender communication, organisational policies, organisational culture and governmental support that contribute to working women empowerment. The better understanding of these factors will guide public organisations of Saudi Arabia to apply the factors on a better and creative way to improve the women empowerment at organisational level that will ultimately improve the overall performance and economy of the Kingdom. The results of the study will also help public organisations of Saudi Arabia to consider and use the guidelines provided by the thesis in the newly emerging modern public organisations in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030.

Furthermore, the results of the study will provide useful information to the government of Saudi Arabia to develop policies that will provide assistance and guidance to the public organisations to flourish the women empowerment level and continuously provide services to the top management hierarchy. Government policies can include providing guidance in modern management and acquiring new policies, governmental employee training, and organisational policies.

The findings of the study will provide insights to the policymakers of Saudi Arabian ministries especially Ministry of Human Resource Development to understand the functioning and problems related to public organisations and corrective measures that can enhance their performance by achieving important factor of women