

A Study to Determine the Influence of Higher Education Among Female Students in Saudi Arabia

**Dr. G Jayashree Hareesh¹, Manar Saud M Alnawmasi²,
Fatimah Saliman Alzawed³, Amal Saeed M Alatawi⁴**

¹Assistant Professor, Fahad Bin Sultan University, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

^{2,3,4}Student, FBSU, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

Women now have more options to pursue higher education in Saudi Arabia due to better access to higher education despite a number of restrictions. These options don't, however, fully address women's demands for higher education or provide equitable access for all citizens of the country. The purpose of this study is to review the literature that has been written about women's higher education in Saudi Arabia, with a particular emphasis on teaching methods, pedagogy, history, and barriers. Also the study focusses on understanding the women's interest to pursue higher education and her ambition. The major findings of the study are the Saudi women irrespective of their cultural barriers they are highly interested to get employed and earn their living. Hence the women aspire to get more education for better job opportunities. The Saudi Government also motivates their women to focus in more career opportunities and also provides more knowledge-based training for women interested in business. The study helps to understand the influence of Saudi women in higher education to avail the job opportunities in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Female students, higher education, female employment, Saudi government, tradition and culture

1. Introduction

According to Jamjoom (2010) and Kumar (2020), Islamic education perpetuates a moral tradition that is founded on well-established guidance for both religious and cultural practices. Students in Saudi Arabia are taught to uphold Islamic principles in every aspect of their lives. Start from the primary level to university level, every effort is ensured to adhere teaching and learning process (Ali et al., 2022). Saudi Arabia is known for its esteemed higher education institutions and is a popular study destination. In the Kingdom, students spend for six years in primary school, then three years in intermediate school, and finally three years in high school. Students have the option of continuing their education at a vocational school or attending a high school that offers courses in the arts, sciences, and commerce once they have completed elementary and intermediate school. As time has progressed, basic education opportunities for both boys and girls have improved greatly. Literacy and numeracy are among the most commonly acquired skills among Saudi Arabia's female population thanks to the country's emphasis on female

education (Kumar, 2021). To achieve its mission, the Ministry of Education is committed to providing women with equal access to education and leadership roles to those available to men. The Ministry of Education strives to ensure that all women, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to a high-quality education in order to produce citizens who will contribute to the country's future progress and prosperity. This is being done to aid in the progress of the country as a whole and to bring about the outcomes envisioned by the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

2. Reviews of Literature

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lacks research on the relationship between women's social roles and their level of education. This evaluation of the literature situates the research from the current study in the larger framework of educational perspectives by drawing on texts from the fields of education, sociology, and women's studies. Giving women the means to support themselves financially through self-employment is one way to empower women, according to Garikipati (2012). Kabeer (2001) states that women's empowerment has been linked to a variety of outcomes, both good and bad, such as an increase in their standard of living, a decrease in the violence against them, the capacity to obtain independent assets, and the incapacity to do so. From an institutional standpoint, empowerment is defined by Haile, Bock, and Folmer (2012) as engaging in social network usage, borrowing, spending, and having domestic disputes. The definition of empowerment, according to Pitt, Khandker, and Cartwright (2003), is gaining economic power. After achieving economic empowerment, women are more likely to make decisions about their careers, education, and other aspects of their future. Empowerment is sometimes understood to mean obtaining only financial power, as stated by Goetz and Sen Gupta (1994). Education was one of the first areas in which Saudi women achieved empowerment, claims Al-Mizar (2015). According to Al-Zahrani (2012), education is the most effective means of expanding women's responsibilities and giving them more personal agency. It makes women more conscious of social, political, and cultural issues. In order to achieve women's explicit empowerment, collaboration between the government and society is necessary. In an effort to promote Islamic-based community service, development, and politics, Saudi Arabia has attempted to provide women with possibilities for higher education (Al-Zahr, 2003).

Ministry of Higher Education (2010) emphasized that as a part of the Kingdom's development plans, women in Saudi Arabia are being urged to continue their education and enter the workforce. It has been established through the Kingdom Vision 2030 that Saudi Arabia is training capable women to take leadership roles in key economic sectors in preparation for the Kingdom Vision 2030. According to Aman, (2018), the Saudi economy would benefit from empowering Saudi women because it would result in the emergence of national models and trailblazing role models in a range of fields, both of which would be of service to Saudi women.

3. Research Methodology

This research investigates the influence of female population in pursuing their higher education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Both a quantitative and a qualitative approach were used in this study. The quantitative approach uses primary data to generate statistics about the demographics of female students, influence of female students in higher education. However, the qualitative approach gives survey respondents a chance to voice their opinions and collects data through a review of the literature that yields descriptive findings about the causes and reasons for female students to acquire higher education.

4. Data Analysis

Table 4.1 : Family Support for Saudi Female higher education

		Do your parents support you for higher education or it is your choice?			Total
		My parents support		No family support	
Are your working?	Yes	No.	17	9	26
		%	65.4%	34.6%	100.0%
	No	No.	20	4	24
		%	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
Total		No.	37	13	50
		%	74.0%	26.0%	100.0%

Table 4.1a : Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	2.09	1	.148	Ns

Critical value: 3.841

Ns- Not significant.

Inference : Table 4.1a shows “there is no association between the variables parents support for higher education based on employed/unemployed women.

Table 4.2 : Employment Opportunities for Female students in the Kingdom

		Do you think you have more job opportunities in Saudi Arabia after you finish your studies?				Total
		Yes		No	May be	
Are your working?	Yes	No.	19	2	5	26
		%	73.1%	7.7%	19.2%	100.0%
	No	No.	13	2	9	24
		%	54.2%	8.3%	37.5%	100.0%
Total		No.	32	4	14	50
		%	64.0%	8.0%	28.0%	100.0%

Table 4.2a : Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	2.19	2	.334	Ns

Critical value: 5.991

Inference : Table 4.1a shows “there is no association between the variables employed/unemployed women and job opportunities for Saudi women.”

Table 4.3 : Salary Expectation based on Education Level

		What is your expected salary in job?			Total	
		Less than 5000SAR	5000-1000 SAR	> 10000 SAR		
Are your working?	Yes	No.	8	8	10	26
		%	30.8%	30.8%	38.5%	100.0%
	No	No.	3	8	13	24
		%	12.5%	33.3%	54.2%	100.0%
Total		No.	11	16	23	50
		%	22.0%	32.0%	46.0%	100.0%

Table 4.3a : Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	2.59	2	.274	Ns

Critical value: 5.991

Inference : Table 4.1a shows “there is no association between the variables working women and their expected salary level”.

Table 4.4a: Ambition in Future and Parents support in higher education

		Do your parents support you for higher education or it is your choice?		Total	
		My parents support	No family support		
What is your aim?	No interest to work	No.	3	2	5
		%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	To become employed	No.	19	6	25
		%	76.0%	24.0%	100.0%
	To start Business	No.	14	5	19
		%	73.7%	26.3%	100.0%
Total		No.	36	13	49
		%	73.5%	26.5%	100.0%

Table 4.4b : Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	.55	2	.760	Ns

Critical value: 5.991

Inference : Table 4.1a shows “there is no association between the variables Family support and future ambition.”

Table 4.5 : Job Opportunities and future ambition

		Do you think you have more job opportunities in Saudi Arabia after you finish your studies?				Total
		Yes	No	May be		
What is your aim?	No interest to work	No.	2	1	2	5
		%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	To become employed	No.	16	1	8	25
		%	64.0%	4.0%	32.0%	100.0%
	To start Business	No.	13	2	4	19
		%	68.4%	10.5%	21.1%	100.0%
Total		No.	31	4	14	49
		%	63.3%	8.2%	28.6%	100.0%

Table 4.5a : Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	2.74	4	.603	Ns

Critical value: 9.488

Inference : Table 4.1a shows “there is no association between the variables Job opportunities and future aim”.

Table 4.6 : Expected Salary and Future ambition

		What is your expected salary in job?				Total
			Less than 5000SAR	5000-1000 SAR	> 10000 SAR	
What is your aim?	No interest to work	No.	3	2	0	5
		%	60.0%	40.0%	.0%	100.0%
	To become employed	No.	3	7	15	25
		%	12.0%	28.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	To start Business	No.	5	6	8	19
		%	26.3%	31.6%	42.1%	100.0%
Total		No.	11	15	23	49
		%	22.4%	30.6%	46.9%	100.0%

Table 4.6a : Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	8.04	4	.090	Ns

Critical value: 9.488

Inference : Table 4.1a shows “there is no association between the variables expected salary and aim of Saudi women in Saudi Arabia”.

5. Findings

- The study found that majority of Saudi women get parents support for their higher education and they feel independent to work.
- The study reveals that 73% of Saudi working women feel that there are more job opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia. So, they are highly interested to educate themselves with the help of the family support.
- From the Research it is highly understood that majority of Saudi women expects a salary not less than 10000 Saudi Riyal. The female workforce in Saudi Arabia is increasing year by year and their expectations to get higher salary is also increasing. Hence they get more interested to do higher education for better employment opportunities with high salary.
- The Study also shows that Saudi women are more interested to get employed rather than starting their own business. Majority of women are interested to work and also claim they get better family support for the same.
- The research also found that the female students pursue higher education as they feel that they have good opportunities for job in Saudi Arabia. Hence the Female students are highly interested to pursue their higher education for better employment opportunities.
- It was also found that the women get higher education for better salary in their career. They are very career-oriented and hence the role of higher education plays a vital role in the minds of majority of Saudi female population.

6. Conclusion

The Study can be concluded saying that women's higher education opportunities have increased with the improvement of female higher education provision but the opportunities are still not able to provide the level of education needed to meet the demand of women or to provide equality of access across the country. However the Research helps to understand that due to the high demand for female education the Government may set-up more educational institutions to cater the needs of the student community in Saudi Arabia.

Bibliography

1. Al Shemary, A. (2007) *the King Abdullah Project for the Development of Public Education*. Asharq Alawsat Newspaper, 18th April.
2. Al Shubaily, S.A., (2008). *Autonomous Learning in Teaching Translation: A Comparative Study between Conventional Teaching and Autonomous Learning*, MA Dissertation, King Saud University.
3. Alaugab, A., (2007), *Benefits, barriers, and attitudes of Saudi female faculty and students toward online learning in higher education*, PhD Thesis, Lawrence: University of Kansas
4. Alebaikan, R., (2010), *Perceptions of Blended Learning in Saudi Universities*, PhD Thesis, University of Exeter
5. Al-Harthi, A., (2005), Distance Higher Education Experiences of Arab, *the International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning Journal*, 6 (3): pp. 1-14.
6. Al-Kahtani, N.K.M., Ryan, J.J.C.H. & Jefferson, T.I., (2006), How Saudi female faculty perceive internet technology usage and potential. *Information Knowledge Systems Management*, 5: pp. 227-243.

7. Al-Khalifa, H. S., (2009), *The State of Distance Education in Saudi Arabia*, *eLearn Magazine* [online], available at: , [Accessed: 01/11 2014].
8. Al-Khalifa, H. S., (2010c), elearning in Saudi Arabia. In: Demiray, U., et al., (2010). *E-Learning Practices, Cases on Challenges Facing E-Learning and National Development: Institutional Studies and Practices*, Volume II, Anadolu University, pp. 745-772.
9. Al-Mengash, S. A. (2006), an Analysis Study of the Saudi Education Policy and Recommendation for its Development. *King Saud University Journal of Islamic Studies and Educational Science*, 19(1), 381-440.
10. AlMunajjed, M., (1997), *Women in Saudi Arabia Today*, London: Macmillan.
11. AlMunajjed, M., (2009), *Women's Education in Saudi Arabia: The Way Forward*, New York: Booz & Company Inc.
12. Alzouman, A., (2014), highlighted the achievements of Saudi women in the era of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz [online], althamena program report, mbc.net, available at: <https://www.mbc.net/ar/programs/althamena/articles/>, [Accessed: 12/11/2014].
13. Baki, R., (2004). Gender-segregated education in Saudi Arabia: Its impact on social norms and the Saudi labor market. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 12 (28): p. 1-12.
14. Deaver, S., (1980), The contemporary Saudi women. In: Bourguignon E, ed. *A world of women: anthropological studies of women in the societies of the World*. New York: Praeger.
15. Doumato, E., (2000), *Getting God's Ear: Women, Islam, and Healing in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf*. New York: Columbia University Press.
16. Hamdan, A., (2005), Women and education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and achievements. *International Education Journal*, 6 (1), 42-64.
17. Human Rights Watch, (2008), *Report on Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia* April 19, 2008, Human Rights Watch the United State of America.