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GENDER AND EQUALITY IN THE  
WORKPLACE – A STUDY OF  
QATARI WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP  
POSITIONS

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2016

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis, which I submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Durham, is my own work. This is not the same as any other work that has previously been submitted for a degree at any other institutions or universities.

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The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation or data from it should be published without her written consent. Any information derived from this thesis should be acknowledged.

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To the readers, I offer my appreciation for those who read it and my apologies for any misinterpretations the research may still contain.

### **Abstract**

The major aim of this study is to establish: how far the State of Qatar has achieved the equality of women in the workplace, since the initiation of new reform policies and agendas of modernisation in 1995. It is based on an examination, through the use of a qualitative method, of the real experiences among twenty-five Qatari women in leadership positions. This approach facilitates a critical analysis of the way in which public policy, formulated at the macro-level of society, interacts with participants' 'lived experience' of such changes at the micro-level.

Based on a comprehensive examination of the literature, a theoretical framework of a feminist sociological theory of '*Theorizing Patriarchy*' of Sylvia Walby (e.g. 1990) has been adopted to explore its relevance to the changes in Qatari women's positions pre- and post-1995, especially with regards to their employment and education. Through the testimony of participants, this study sheds new light on an evaluation of the lived experiences of Qatari women in senior management positions as means to explain whether their families, their society and government helped or hindered their progress. The main findings have indicated that:

The State of Qatar has widely sought to include women in public life, particularly in the process of decision-making, has implemented several policies in order to improve gender equality in the workforce and fair distribution of development benefits. The number of women participating in senior management roles, however, is still low in several career fields. Qatari women in leadership positions still face major challenges in relation to cultural limitations and organisational constraints; these areas need to be further developed to improve the degree of gender equality and close the wide gap between the two genders in terms of economic rights and equal opportunities.

The study provides insights to policymakers about the importance of introducing the necessary amendments to government policies, with respect to gender equality, in order to bring about the societal transformations required to remove constraints on working women.



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Aim of the Study**

This introductory chapter begins by presenting the aim of this research, the research questions and the thesis outline. It also discusses the historical and political background of the State of Qatar pre- and post-1995. The main aim is to establish the extent to which the State of Qatar has progressed in achieving the equality of women in the workplace over the last twenty years (post-1995) since the initiation of new reform policies and agendas of modernisation.

This thesis uses a qualitative method to examine the lived experiences of twenty-five Qatari women managers. It seeks to demonstrate the place of women in a social setting that is heavily guided by religion and a long history of patriarchal culture. In the grand scheme of things, the thesis provides a basis for understanding how cultural, social and economic growth affect gender and equality in the workplace in the State of Qatar's modern society.

The labour force in Qatar is predominantly non-Qatari. The ratio of Qatari to non-Qatari workers is 1:7. The Qatari government views this situation as threatening the state's long-term economic autonomy, and it has therefore taken some measures to increase the ratio of Qatari in the workforce (Berrebi, Martorell and Tanner, 2009; Williams, Bhanugopan and Fish, 2011). Among the number of Qataris who are employed, women are underrepresented at 29% compared to 68% of men in the workforce (Berrebi, Martorell and Tanner, 2009).

Furthermore, many women are still disadvantaged by Qatar's social norms, cultural perceptions and patriarchal beliefs, although there has been great

progress in improving women's working conditions. Because of these barriers, women do not have equal employment opportunities, do not always receive equal pay for equal work and lack access to job training and educational opportunities. Women might also be excluded from or marginalised in decision-making positions. These statistics raise questions regarding the degree of women's equality and empowerment in the workplace. The strategies used to address gender equality have not led to fundamental changes in the Qatari labour force perhaps because of the limited amount of literature that investigates the influences that Qatari women managers encounter during their career lives.

This thesis addresses both empirical and theoretical questions and relates to concerns of both sociology and social policy. The following research questions are posed:

- RQ1: To what extent does Sylvia Walby's theory of gender apply to the case of inequality in the workplace for women in Qatar?
- RQ2: To what extent has the State fostered gender equality in the workplace from the perspective of women in leadership positions?
- RQ3: What do women in leadership positions identify as the cultural, social and organisational challenges relating to gender equality in the workplace?

These research questions were formulated based on the following: RQ1 is based on the relevance of a sociological theory set out in Sylvia Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy* (e.g. 1990) for the case of gender inequality in the workplace in Qatar. This will be determined through exploring Qatari women's 'lived experiences', their personal values and their assumptions of gender inequality in the workplace.

The answer to RQ2 will be based on the testimonies of the participants, which will be analysed to determine whether the state's policies, which have sought to provide more career opportunities in leadership positions for Qatari women, have proven successful. In addition, the analysis will show whether women's 'lived experiences' in the workplace bear out or contradict the extant literature. Although remarkable advances have been made, social and cultural constraints remain.

In addressing RQ3, the analysis will determine the extent to which these women have encountered challenges or various cultural, social or organisational constraints during their development. Based on the answers to RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3, this study will make social recommendations for policy makers in order to reduce injustice and discrimination against women in the workplace and further improve their equality in Qatari society.

In addressing these research questions, the study will employ a qualitative method, which mainly includes semi-structured interviews with Qatari women in leadership positions in state and civil society organisations. This topic worthy of research for the following reasons: 1) it facilitates a critical analysis of the way in which public policy has been formulated at the macro-level of society; and 2) it suggests an approach to gender equality based on the cultural context of Qatar society, which could be applied effectively to Qatar's labour force. This approach shows how far the State of Qatar is committed to achieving equality for women in the workplace and to providing insights into how women can be further empowered to take active and managerial roles in their workplaces through initiating further policies.

## **1.2 Thesis Outline**

The rest of this thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 provides a review of the previously published literature that emerged in relation to gender

relations in the workplace, as well as the cultural and traditional values of Qatari society. It provides an overview of the fields that have been used as tools to enhance the women's participation in leadership positions in relation to their educational and qualification status. This chapter also presents an analysis of governmental policy documents, including legal and statutory instruments, in relation to the gendered labour force. In addition, the literature review identifies the challenges that influence the status of employed Qatari women, which are patriarchal beliefs, cultural traditions, tribal influences and organisational challenges.

Chapter 3, 'Theoretical Framework', provides an overview of the theoretical framework. The discussion focuses on the intersection of sociology and feminism in order to understand the interaction of Qatari women's development and equality in the workplace based on the significant theory developed in *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Walby, 1990). This section discusses the relevance of this theoretical framework to the findings of the study and considers the role of 'theory' in research, including the way in which it interacts with empirical inquiry.

Chapter 4, 'Methodological Approach and Ethical Considerations', outlines the practicalities of the research design, the research methods and the ethical considerations of the study. It addresses the purpose of the qualitative research approach, which was adopted to answer the research questions. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with Qatari women who work in managerial positions. This chapter also addresses the ethical considerations of the qualitative interviews, illustrates the challenges in conducting such research and describes the insider-outsider role of the researcher.

Chapter 5 describes the process of interviewing, transcription and analysing the data with the assistance of NVivo software. It addresses RQ2 and RQ3



by analysing the everyday lived experiences of the interviewees. It also describes the author's experience during the data collection, which may enable the reader to understand the motivations for carrying out the research. Furthermore, it allows the author to situate herself reflexively into the narrative of the thesis.

Chapter 6, 'Critical Discussion', presents a further analysis in which the interview data is engaged with the theoretical framework. Thus, it addresses RQ1 by showing the extent to which Walby's sociological gender theory can be applied to the case of gender inequality in Qatari workplaces.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by providing a discussion of the study's findings and presenting further gaps in Walby's theoretical framework that have not been discussed in relation to gender inequality in the workplace in Qatar. Moreover, it describes urgent strategic plans in the form of 'social policy recommendations' that need to be implemented in the national policy agenda in order to move gender equality forward in significant respects. The recommendations made in this study could lead to achieving further gender equality in the workplace in relation to professional opportunities for Qatari women.

### **1.3 Setting the Scene**

#### **1.3.1 Geography, economy and demographics**

Qatar is located on the Qatar Peninsular in the southwest of Asia. It is located north of the United Arab Emirates and covers part of the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It borders Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to the south and the Gulf of Bahrain to the east. It occupies an area of 11,437 square kilometres that are mostly barren, hot, dry and characterized by sandy deserts, as are its neighbours on the Gulf (Campbell, 2005, p. 227).

Qatar's current population is estimated at 1.9 million with a very large non-native population of immigrants who were attracted by the potential for employment. The official language is Arabic, and the main religion is Islam. The country is currently under the leadership of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, who took the reins of leadership from his father in 2013 in a peaceful exchange of power.

In the span of slightly more than two decades, because of its political organisation and rich oil and gas reserves, Qatar has transformed into one of the richest nations in the Arabian Peninsula. It has been determined that Qatar, a microstate (see Read, 2002), is experiencing rapid economic growth and modernisation because of its richness in natural minerals, especially natural gas (Berrebi, Martorell and Tanner, 2009; Al-Muhannadi, 2011). The revenues generated through oil and gas production have placed Qatar among the most prosperous nations in the world, and it is well on the way to becoming one of the fastest growing economies of the world.

### **1.3.2 Historical background pre-1995**

In considering the significance of the political and economic background of Qatar, it is best to start with its political journey under the British Empire and continue to its independence through the period of oil discovery, as well as conflict between influential families. This historical background includes the time during which Zubarah began to lose its economic dominance near the end of the seventeenth century onwards through independence and the post-independence re-organisation to 1995 (Campbell 2005, p. 227).

Initially, after the Al Khalifa diverted their trade connections away from the region in the eighteenth century, Qatar remained a backwater that was marked by a peculiar lack of clear political rule and a state of decline. Insecurity crept in, and rivalry between families intensified, which was

characterized by the construction of high walls and forts that separated towns and the tribes living inside them. According to Campbell and Despard (1980, p. 432), this was one of the lowest points in Qatar's political and economic history because it was the turning point in a sequence of events that would lead to its eventual fate. As the region fell into disarray and trade suffered due to the diversion of trade routes, Qatar faced an uncertain future without the direction of a leadership at the apex of the political structure.

As the eighteenth century began, several forces fought for political control in the region. The Al Khalifa, which held part of the peninsula and controlled most of the trade, still had an interest in the region. However, the Al Jalahima, the Omanis, the Ottomans and the Wahabis all desired to take control of the region (Campbell and Despard, 1980, p. 432). At the same time, following its new interest in India, the British Empire established itself in the region. Principally, the British power in the region was guided by the need to secure a safe passage for ships belonging to the East India Company. The need for a safe sea route through the Gulf meant that Britain could only assure safety by imposing its order throughout the region.

By 1820, various trade agreements were in place between the British and the sheikhs who controlled the coast, thus ensuring the safe passage of British ships. Among the established treaties was the General Treaty of Peace, which among other guarantees, ensured the recognition of British power in the Gulf. On its part, the British maintained peace and order in the sea by dealing with piracy and fighting the kidnapping of slaves. Because Bahrain agreed to the treaties with the British Empire, the dependent territory of Qatar was also subject to obeying them.

However, the years following the adoption of the treaties saw intensifying unstable relations between Bahrain and Qatar, which affected trade and

hindered peaceful coexistence between the two neighbouring territories. These tensions culminated to the 1867 farce in which Bahrain attacked Qatar, prompting a British inquest, the result of which was the recognition of Qatar as a separate entity. At this point, Qatar began its own political and economic journey. With its separation from Bahrain, Qatar embarked on establishing its own trade, which was dominated by fishing, pearl harvesting, the cultivation of palms and trading other commodities with its offshore neighbours (Clarke, 2011, p. 1219).

Over the years, with the recognition that these activities were insufficient to develop and expand their territories, it remained possible for Bahrain to reassert its power and recapture its trading routes in Qatar (Coleman, 2001, p. 24). Until the second decade of the twentieth century, the two territories continued to struggle for the control of the peninsula. The Ottoman Empire was victorious before eventually renouncing its control in 1916. At this point, Qatar was officially under British power.

Although the first half of the century was relatively peaceful, Qatar's growth and development were affected by its lack of autonomy in trade with Britain, which adopted a carrot-and-stick approach to its relations. With the discovery of oil in 1939, Qatar became one of the most hotly contested territories in the region (Clarke, 2011, p. 1219). Bahrain and the United States joined Britain in the fight to secure oil, which was recognised as an important source of power for industrialisation. Britain supported Qatar in most of its claims to oil-rich territories, including islands that were bitterly claimed by Bahrain. Even though Bahrain imposed trade restrictions and embargos on Qatar, its rich supply of oil, especially after World War II, coupled by its connections with Britain ensured that the country survived difficulties and moved towards its independence later in the century (Harb, 2015, p. 225).

Economic hardship, which began in the depression of 1930s, continued with the collapse of the pearl trade. Not until 1950 did Qatar officially begin to benefit from its oil resources with the establishment of offshore rights and the exportation of oil. With the new revenue from oil, Qatar began its upward trajectory, but its state of relations with Bahrain and other countries became even more fragile. The 1960s ushered in immense developments that contributed to the British renouncement and declaration of Qatar's independence in 1971. Qatar continued to reap heavy profits from its oil production, reaching a peak in 1991 with the completion of the North Field gas development. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Qatar enjoyed a significant increase in economic growth as it was increasingly interacting with nations of the eastern and western world.

### **1.3.3 Economic, social and political background post-1995**

The post-1995 socio-economic and political background in Qatar began with a bloodless coup when Deputy Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa deposed his father Khalifa (Harb, 2015, p. 231). A counter coup was staged the following year in 1996, but it failed. The Emir focused on moving Qatar towards democracy and an open and participatory political system for both Qatari women and men (Rathmell and Schulze, 2000). He not only announced this intention but also fulfilled this promise by liberalising the press and allowing municipal elections. These measures were forerunners to expanding the parliamentary elections. In June 2013, His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani became the Emir of Qatar, following in his father's footsteps (Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani).

Lambert (2012) proposed that the reign of Sheikh Hamad was characterized by an unprecedented step in the region. His leadership intended to 'generate international attention for 'democratic' and 'modern' reforms' that had not

been witnessed in the region before. A series of political reforms based on economic necessity was initiated. These reforms benefitted and empowered the nation to participate actively in the functions of government. The move may be an important milestone in securing the equality and empowerment of women.

Modernising political reforms were carried out, as declared by Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. Parliamentary elections were held, in which both genders were given the right to participate as electors or voters. Giving women the eligibility to vote and stand for elected office was seen as a step forward in women's empowerment in Qatar. In 1997, the Emir secured women's participation in national politics, voting and elections. In the following year (1998), 47% of the candidates in municipal elections were women. In Qatar, women have been empowered to participate in the political sphere to ensure that they play active roles in the executive and legislative functions of the government.

In 2003, a new constitution was approved through a public referendum, which came into effect in 2005. The Al-Shoura Council (the Advisory Council) is the fundamental legislative body that assumes legislative authority in the State of Qatar. It has the power to approve the government's proposed budget, draft legislation and pass it with a two-thirds majority (although the Emir's approval is required for a bill to become law). This Council consists of forty-five male members.

The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar does not discriminate between women and men in terms of their participation in elections as a member of the Council or in voting for candidates; it also does not differentiate between them concerning their rights and duties. On the contrary, although women take part in elections as both candidates and

voters, it remains striking that there is a gender imbalance between candidates, as women are not represented in the Advisory Council. Only men are appointed as members of the council, so none of the candidates' women was elected.

The Municipal Council is composed of twenty-nine members. Both women and men can participate as voters and candidates in the elections of this council. However, there is little representation by Qatari women; currently, it is only 3.4%. Although five women ran as candidates in the 2015 elections, only two were successful. One was a famous political Qatari female, who put herself forward as a candidate, and she was elected to the Municipal Council.

Nevertheless, equality has been major topic discussing why and how people of different sexes, race and religion should be treated equally in the society. Gender equality of both men and women is still an issue in the society where their gender denies women political, economic and social rights. Traditional believes are the biggest inhibitor to the rights given to women, and women brought up in those beliefs adopt the same practices and have in their lifestyle to avoid doing this believed to responsibilities of men. However, much progress has been made with women equality with the belief that no gender is superior to the other and therefore more women are seen taking up responsibilities previously believed to be manly. It is important to let equal opportunities to every individual with little regard to their sex (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

Therefore, the discovery oil as well as government policies, created a sequence of events that has affected the role of women in the society. Before oil, women rarely left the house. The only cause for them to exit the house was to go to the market to gather food supplies to last the family for numerous weeks. Until the next market run, a woman would not leave the

house (Ross, 2008). The contribution of women has always come second after men. The workforce has been dominated by men, just like how the first schools in Qatar were for boys, and girls' schools followed later. Fortunately, such trends are being neglected, and more women have the ability to join the workforce. As more women got an education, they now had unique skills but were still not able to practice the knowledge learned. Eventually, some women immersed themselves into the job industry, and their contribution was found to be important. Now, more educated women are advocated to have more influence into the workforce. This is to increase the small number of women to an equal ratio when compared to men.

Yet, social norms and gender roles within households have significantly hindered progress among Qatari women. According to the World Bank (2004), there are several traditional gender paradigm which terminate to a large extent women's access to and interaction with the state and public spheres in MENA. This paradigm is based on the recognition (a) that men and women differ biologically and that these biological differences determine their social function, (b) that men and women carry different and complementary responsibilities within the family, and (c) that they have different but equitable rights associated with those responsibilities (p. 94).

Cases of educated women with the knowledge to take on some responsibilities shy away altogether with the notion that it is not traditionally correct. Research studies show Qatar to have more educated women with university degrees when compared to men, but women a huge number of having and education is not reflected in the work industry. The biggest percentage of the countries workforce is comprised of male gender and this is not a case exclusive to Qatar, but it is also to its neighboring Gulf countries which share similar tradition beliefs on the roles and responsibilities of women (Fenton, 2012).



The Middle Eastern countries have experienced pressure in terms of democratic change, social justice, trade development, the empowerment of women and the Arab Spring (Moghissi, 2013; Metcalfe, 2008). Qatar has contributed immensely to the revolutionary wave of demonstrations in the Arab world, which have involved protests and civil wars. This was witnessed during the Libyan civil war in 2011 when hundreds of ground troops were sent to support the National Transitional Council (Elwér and Harryson, 2013, p. 23). This was not Qatar's only contribution. Its extensive media network Al Jazeera has been extensively involved in mobilising Arab support and shaping the narratives of protests.

With regard to demographic changes, Qatar has undergone several developments that have led to drastic and major changes to demographic trends. In the first place, the Qatari population has increased through the large-scale migration of migrant workers and their accompanying family members. Oil and gas discovery in 1940s, as well as the emergence of industries and related services post-1995 has led to the employment of large numbers of migrant workers in the business market (Permanent Population Committee, 2009; Elwér & Harryson, 2013). There is very minimal dependency ration and very low unemployment rate, which majorly attributes to the ever-increasing employment opportunities in the country (Clarke, 2011, p.1222).

An important factor that has contributed to the influx of migrant workers is related to the Qatari government's implementation of large-scale socio-economic development in the fields of infrastructure, industry, housing and a wide range of social services, which require a large labour force. The country's strong economic performance has led to massive urban development, large-scale investment projects and rising government expenditures. Consequently, numerous job vacancies and opportunities in

both public and private sectors were generated, which led to the huge influx of migrant workers, most of whom are men who work in the service and contracting sectors while others work in skilled jobs. These factors have led to a great increase in the ratio of expatriates to locals in the labour force and a particularly sharp and unanticipated rise in the immigration of unskilled workers.

Because Qatar is a microstate, it requires a vast amount of infrastructure. Workers voluntarily migrate to Qatar as low-skilled labourers to work on such projects. Many work as domestic servants. Semi-skilled and non-skilled male employees make up around 75% of migrant workers, and around 11% of the total non-Qatari workforce is composed of domestic workers (Toumi, 2011). Fewer workers are required to operate a gas plant, power station, refinery or desalination plant than are needed to build these structures. Moreover, it is expected that Qatar will need an increasing number of semi-skilled migrant workers over the next decade.

The nation has taken major steps towards the realisation of gender parity, which is evident in the increase in the number of females in the labour force. The next chapter presents a review of literature on women's position in Qatar since 1995, especially with regard to their education and employment.

## **Chapter 2: Contextual Chapter**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented Qatar's historical, economic and demographic backgrounds pre-and post-1995. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the research study by drawing on a body of literature that provides a broad context of laws and policies regarding the Qatar labour force in terms of the promotion of education, economic rights and equal opportunity for women since 1995. Significant statistical trends in the gender gap in the Qatar labour force are analysed (e.g. the types of occupations chosen by Qatar men and women, the difference in average incomes of men and women, and the percentage of Qatar women at the top levels of leadership in public and private sectors compared to men). Also highlighted is the influence of interconnected factors, such as patriarchy and religion, on Qatar society's treatment of the advancement of women.

### **2.2 Socio-Economic Position of Qatar Women Post-1995**

This small but wealthy and strategically vital country is a captivating example of modernisation in the Middle East. Its rapid growth in terms of modernisation and industrialisation is exceptional, and the plans for the future demonstrate substantial socio-cultural reforms. In 2014, Qatar was ranked thirty-second in the UN Human Development Index, which placed the country in the very category of high human development category, ranking it among 188 countries and territories (UNDP, 2015). Moreover, recent results from UNWomen (2015) show the gender gap index of Qatar ranked at 116 out of 146 countries with an average score of 0.640 where 1 indicate equality and 0 inequality. Women economic participation is ranked at 101 scoring 0.620; political empowerment ranked 140 scoring 0.013, and educational attainment is ranked 94 with the near perfect score of 0.976.

Development is recognised as having a broad connotation that includes the expansion of economic and social amenities, as well as the improved equal distribution of opportunities to all citizens. For instance, educational and health services are undergoing extensive reforms, and they are provided free of charge for Qatar's citizens. Qatar is considered an important political player although the government of Qatar focuses mainly on becoming a regional leader in education, employment, technical research and tourism.

With major restructurings commenced as early as 1995, the government leaders aimed to improve the conditions of Qatar family, especially women, to go in line with the global commitment to stimulate their equal rights. Previous studies have demonstrated that gender equality is essential for the development and enhancement of a nation (Coleman, 2004; Grown, Gupta and Khan, 2003), and it remains pivotal in implementing economic and cultural transformations within a social context (Embassy of the State of Qatar in Washington, DC, 2010; Bahry and Marr, 2005; Ball, 1990). A change in women's status worldwide has come about through a combination of long-term macro-level processes (industrialisation, urbanisation, proletarianisation, education and employment) and collective actions (social movement activism and revolutions). The upsurge in demonstrations in countries such as Tunisia, Iran and Egypt (e.g., the Arab Spring), has made Arab governments realise that its citizens are capable of revolting against poor governance and oppressive traditions (Pappe, 2005).

In the context of Qatar, the highest political leadership is conducted by His Highness, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who plays an encouraging role in endorsing women's attainment of equal rights, as well as enhancing and improving women's reputations and contributions in society. The mother of the Emir (Prince), Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, has been actively involved in endorsing women rights and is keen to be perceived as

an advocator of Qatari women (Walker, 2016). She stressed the role that women could play in society and in their public lives.

This means that the government realizes that ‘there is much more that women can contribute to society apart from their role in the home’ (NDS 2011-2016, p.175). In participial, women are equal partners in national development and are valuable form of investment; and policies of empowerment is directly linked with sustaining high economic performance as well as increased ranking in national league performance metrics. The next section discusses several laws and legislations which have been made to encourage gender equality and remove the cultural and social constraints that discriminate against women (Fenton, 2012).

### **2.2.1 Legal Rights**

According to the Permanent Population Committee (2012), ‘Qatar has sought to construct an integrated legal system that govern and control all life sides of Qatari society. This legal system regulates also the relations among segments of society through identifying duties, rights and responsibilities of any individual living in the country.’ (p.19) For instance, the approval of a new constitution, which is referred to as the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar of 2004, is a positive indication that gender equality will be attained both in law and in practice. However, to achieve this objective, existing regulations must be brought into agreement with the non-discrimination article in the constitution, and women need to be informed about their new rights.

For instance, Articles (25), (30) and (49) of Qatar’s Constitution give the right of free and compulsory education to all its citizens and ensures equal employment opportunities. The main aim of the ‘equal opportunity’ policy is to achieve a system in which everyone is treated equally in terms of

education and employment opportunities, as well as guardianship of individual incomes, land and property. It also prohibits any form of gender-based discrimination in the country. These articles were necessary in light of the issues faced by women because of social and cultural discrimination, which is discussed in the following sections.

Qatar family is seen as a fundamental unit in the society and the primary targets of policymaking in Qatar. Women's sense of security, satisfaction with freedoms and capability to make independent decisions were enhanced with the development family policies in Qatar. The first official family policies were introduced in the 1960s, which revolved around the implementation of social security laws to provide monetary and housing assistance to the most vulnerable in society, including low-income families, widows, divorcees, and orphans (Center for International and Regional Studies, 2015). Traditionally, legal issues related to personal status—such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance—were decided by judges based on their interpretations of Islamic (Sharia) Law, and the procedure was often subjective and unfavourable to women's rights.

In the 1990s, some grassroots institutions have been established to address the issues or interests of both local citizens and non-Qatari women and enhance the perception of their roles in Qatari culture (Walker, 2016). Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser played a major role in the social development of Qatar as President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA) and the founder of a number of private organizations including the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children; the Family Consulting Centre; the Motherhood and Childhood Cultural Centre; the Orphans Care Centre; and the Qatar Society for Senior Citizens Care. Other organizations include the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) and the Qatari Business Women's Forum.

Qatar through women empowerment associations is on the surge of reducing cultural barriers that prevent women from becoming professional in their field of study, for instance. Qatar women are supported at a high level by these organisations that aimed to collaborate with them to demand their rights and stimulate gender equality. For instance, the Qatari Business Women's Forum plays the role of breaking the phobia of involvement of women in a countries workforce. Qatar International Business Women Association works with private organizations that are potential employers of women. The role of the association is to show the private organization the benefits women can bring to their organizations. The organization also tries to sway employers from looking at women through their traditional eyes that obstruct the value women. They advocate for employers to view learned women as individuals who have value to add to the organization. The value of a person should influence the decision of their employment more than their gender. Therefore, Qatari Business Women's Forum influence is visible in panels' sessions of a corporate organization where previously only male representatives were present.

The approval of the country's first well-systematized family law took place in 2006 (Felder and Vuollo, 2008). A strong commitment from the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA), which is a government organisation responsible for preserving and supporting family affairs, has influenced the government to introduce this new family legislation. Although the new legislation has introduced some enhancements, women continue to be treated unequally (Kovessy, 2015). The current family law is considered a significant improvement of the old legal system; women remain underprivileged in comparison with men. The SCFA officially acknowledged that domestic violence is a key issue and started a social discussion on this formally offensive (taboo) subject (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010). Guaranteeing preservation from gender-based

violence, among other harmful practices, enhances the wellbeing of families and the fiscal prosperity of entire societies. Although the State of Qatar has acknowledged that violence against women is a key issue, it has not yet explicitly banned domestic violence despite the extended legal frameworks.

As the national vision is being initiated, which referred to as Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030, new characteristics are being introduced and traditional societal and cultural values are being renegotiated (Felder and Vuollo, 2008). QNV 2030 is based on four pillars of development: human, social, economic and environmental. The question here is what are the strategies that the state will implement to integrate these pillars into the national system? and how this might be beneficial for Qatar women?

First, integrating these pillars into government and private sectors will be through conducting developmental programmes, detailed in the National Development Strategy (NDS), which are based on extensive analysis of Qatar women status and engagement of various stakeholders (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). Second, all four pillars directly benefit employed women through enhancing their capabilities to participate fully in the economic and political spheres, especially in promoting them to participate in decision-making roles (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008).

This vision provides a framework for formulation of the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2011-2016, commenced in March 2011, based on which Qatar has embarked on various reforms that are aimed to enhance the conditions and opportunities of the country and its citizens, through governmental changes, policy restructuring and diverse programmes that will bring fiscal prosperity and encourage societal development (Walker, 2016). This strategy has women among its targets. For instance, the reports look at



the work industry and determine what perks are missing to encourage the involvement of women. Regulations relating to women matters like provision of maternity leave for expectant women, retirement benefits to help women after leaving office and protection from sexual assaults by employer or colleagues. This is to create an enabling environment for female workers who come against disadvantageous conditions like childbirth that they cannot avoid, and men do not experience. Therefore, for their feminine gender, some special regulations should be introduced that allow them to live professional lives in the workplace and the society (Felder and Vuollo, 2008).

Accordingly, NDS 2011-2016 suggested a practical and realistic plan of action specifically to contribute to gender equality of Qatar women and to overcome stereotyping of women's roles and responsibility in society. For instance, it suggested four significant programmes to:

1. change women's public image;
2. increase women's empowerment projects;
3. provide women's leadership programmes;
4. and to improve work-life balance for women

(Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011).

The aim of these programs are integrated and prioritized with further-action concrete goals along with time-bound targets, which are expected to be achieved by the end of 2016.

For example, in contemporary Qatar society, (i.e., post 1995), the government of Qatar has developed an extensive legal base that advocates Qatari women's rights and expands their opportunities to participate in the labour market (Fenton, 2012). Part 9 of the Labour Law of the State of Qatar

2004 is titled 'Employment of Women' and includes articles (93), (94), (95), (96), (97) and (98). These articles stipulate that the legal rights of working women are similar to those of men including working relations, pay, opportunities for training, promotion and so on. Part 9 safeguards working women's rights in these matters (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2004). According to a study titled, Integrating Foreign Workers Issues Into Qatar Strategies and Policies, that was conducted by the Permanent Population Committee (2012), the:

'Labour Law defines the legal frameworks for recruiting employees, individual work relations, between employees and employers, employees' dues, rights, vacations, health coverage and working hours. It also identifies throughout its articles the terms and conditions of employment of women. In addition, it stresses employees' safety and health at work as well as social welfare and compensating system. Equally important, it regulates the collective disputes and the process of work inspection' (p.20).

Accordingly, women contend equally with men in the labour market in terms of efficiency in the workplace, quality of work and determination (Fenton, 2012). The development of several downstream industries has provided various career opportunities for Qatari women to enter professions that were previously dominated by men. It has encouraged them to attain academic excellence in most specialties and to contribute substantially in the spheres of education, health care, charitable organisations, arts, law, media, foreign policy, finance and other areas.

However, national labour market is highly segmented because of heavy concentrations of Qataris in the public sector and expatriates in private

sector. According to NDS 2011-2016, in order to create a more capable and motivated workforce, the challenge here is to provide major labour market reforms, ‘especially in ways that encourage Qataris to participate in the private sector’ (p.15). Providing developmental national programmes and initiating salary and social allowance packages for Qatari men and women, will increase their involvement in the private sector and reduce their dependence on the public sector. Relatively, Qatari women’s participation in the private sector is low. Therefore, the participation, recruitment and retention of the expatriate workers in the private sector should be reduced to only attract qualified expatriate workers; career planning and professional programmes should target the Qatari nationals, where possible.

The establishment of Strategic Qatarization Plan which is defined as ‘the identification and development of quality, competent Qatari male and female employees to assume permanent established positions’(Qatarization.com.qa), encourages Qatar national employees to overcome organisational barriers and climb the career ladder ladder in accordance with clear developmental plans to attain senior positions in Qatar’s energy and industry sector. The overall Qatarization percentage targeted for this sector sector is fifty per cent. The target is a function of focusing on key and sensitive positions, tied to company business plans and reaching and maintaining fifty per cent, or greater, Qataris in permanent positions (Qatarization.com.qa). This plan indicates that the national labour force would set Qatari nationals free to replace professional expatriates in critical positions. According to the Qatarization Plan:

‘Some Qataris join the companies at either Senior Staff or Junior Staff levels, depending on their qualifications, either as a direct hire, or to a position where they require further

development. The latter is targeted to a position and placed on a tailored development plan' (Qatarization.com.qa).

This confirms the legal base of women's equality in the private sector in terms of occupational diversity, training opportunities and promotions to leadership roles. Furthermore, Breslin and Jones (2010) have recommended two points to create more career opportunities for women in the private sector as follows:

- 'The government should encourage women's participation in the private sector by directly addressing and, where possible, remedying the cultural stigmas associated with such work.
- The government should continue to tailor academic opportunities for women to the actual market needs of Qatar in an effort to diversify future job options for women. Additionally, high schools and universities should coordinate with local businesses to create internship programs that involve female students in fields, in which women are underrepresented' (p.18).

The primary objective of the gender equality project in Qatar is to have increased numbers of women in managerial positions in an organization where they can give direction on policies and decisions. More encouragement from government organizations, and non-profit associations should help increase the same desire in women to get educated reflected in the job industry.

At the same time, statistical data (see section 2.2.1) shows that women are still significantly underrepresented in top-management roles in Qatar labour market because this conventional, gender-segregated tribal society, which is governed by Islamic (Sharia) Law, maintains honour by keeping strong

associations with its past. Qatar is considered a place where conservative traditions encounter modernity and where growth is rapid; it is a worthwhile subject of an ethnographic study. The next section provokes assumptions about the challenges facing the implementation of gender equality policies in the labour market.

### **2.2.2 Challenges Facing Gender Equality in the Labour Force**

However, several obstacles influence the process of implementing gender equality policies into governmental and private institutes: some government policies are contradictory; women's education is not aligned with labour market demands; cultural norms and traditions are influential; and there is a lack of training programmes for employed women. These factors fundamentally affect women's fiscal contribution and participation in the labour force, which remain modest compared to men in various professions and high positions.

As in other oil-rich GCC countries that rely on foreign workers to advance their economy, women in Qatar are surpassed by men in a ratio of two to one, thus establishing a society dominated by men. For instance, in a Gender Inequality Index (GII) published in a UN report in 2014, Qatar was ranked 116th among 155 countries. This low rate was because of the lack of women in Qatar's labour market. For example, the percentage of working females was 50.8% compared to 95.5% for working men (UNDP, 2015).

At the social level, the formation of Qatari family is governed by Islamic principles (Sharia) and is based on tribal affiliation. According to NDS 2011-2016, 'measures will be undertaken to preserve the country's national heritage and culture, enhancing Arab and Islamic Qatari values and identity' (p.40). The interpretation of Islamic principles has shaped Qatar's traditional and social norms, while the tribe is a major force in family life. Mainly, it

exercises its authority over its member families, and controls the societal lives of men and women. In Qatar, the social recognition of tribal backgrounds is essential, it includes two groups: traditionalists (who strictly follow traditional values and social norms) and modernists (who preserve core traditional identity while believe in modernisation and development within a society). Generally, Qatari society is still patriarchal, and men are the key decision-makers in the family, which mean that women are still restrained by patriarchal attitudes towards gender roles. Yet, tribal background plays a key role in considering the basis of gender relations, and in shaping cultural limitations placed upon its family members, especially women.

Community life is normally segregated according to gender; many civic places have separate schedules and spaces for men and for 'families' comprising women and children (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010). Hence, the conventional norms and values continue to influence the scope of women's activities in the public sphere. As a result, these issues tend to cause substantial tensions in society by preventing women from having opportunities for sustainable development (Fincher, 2014).

In this broad since, women have minimal meaningful societal, fiscal, or political life contributions which can be observed outside the family. They are allowed to partake in all areas linked to the family (i.e., domestic chores and child-rearing), but Qatari tradition dictates that men have the ultimate word regarding many core family decisions, predominantly with regard to finances (Fenton, 2012). In the home, women are responsible for organising daily routines and activities, arranging family gatherings and playing a fundamental role in arranging marriages.

Moreover, the principle of extended family relations (such as between grandparents and grandchildren, cousins, uncles, aunts etc), which extend beyond the 'nuclear' unit of parents and their children is a popular trend in Qatar society. This trend incorporates further responsibilities placed upon women towards members of the extended family which include social obligations such as taking care of familial individuals, planning family events and organising weekly/monthly gatherings, which in turn creates home/ work conflicts.

In a study titled '*A Trade-off between Two Social Output: A Reference to the Qatari Women's Case*', has been conducted by Lulwa Al-Misned (2007), in which she investigated two indicators of Qatari women's contribution to social production and reproduction through Qatar's twentieth century economic history. The first indicator is women's market activities, and the second is contemporary fertility level. Perhaps the resolution of Qatar government is the most conventional one: encourage the populace to have larger/ extended families because marriage and children is a top priority in Qatar society.

The government is extremely committed to provide academic and career opportunities as well as health-care to its citizens. Whilst this is, naturally, a good thing, it has the curious side effect that knowledgeable and many emancipated Qatari women are not hurrying to marry as before. As a result, life expectations have changed within the society, as family sizes have recently dropped. When that fact is allied with strict regulations and customs concerning suitable marriage partners in the nation, what people are seeing for some years now is a gradual decline in the native population. Although this decline is not discussed much, it is the ground for concern in high places.

Nevertheless, the well-developed market for domestic workers in Qatar besides other GCC states; tend to facilitate the labour force participation for women. Since the type of lifestyle of such societies insists upon the recruitment of a foreign female domestic helper, through domestic help agencies that could help in the recruiting process, to help in domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning and keeping house responsibilities. This somehow removes obstacles limiting women's participation in education and employment, because household chores are maintained by domestic servants. Yet over-reliance on domestic helper has influenced the local labour market, for instance. In 2010, 18 million out of 41 million constituted labour migrants, representing 40 percent of the GCC total population (Fargues and Shah, 2014).

These social forces are significant impediments to the progress and professional development of Qatari women, which has led to the emergence of various problems, as one of them is the unequal employment opportunities provided to women in the respective region (Walker, 2016). A woman's capability to select her occupation or profession remains lawfully and socially limited to occupations that offer 'tolerable' occupations for women, and in practice, most women are health care professionals and teachers or fill secretarial jobs. A small number of women work in the private sector, and even fewer hold executive-level positions. However, the government of Qatar has developed the Business Women Forum to stimulate female leadership in private enterprises.

It could be stated that there are state/ organizational barriers that hinder women's progress within workplace. For instance, the provisions of several government legislations are contradictory and not in harmony with labour market demands. This gap could be considered a barrier to women's progression in the workforce because it affects women's occupational



diversity and their participation in adequate training courses, leadership positions and part-time work. For instance, Articles (94) and (95) of Qatar's Labour Law prohibit women from undertaking dangerous or arduous work and determine suitable work hours for working women, which does ensure the safety of employed women in the country. It is essential aspect provide protection and avoid harms that may affect women's health or cause injuries in the workplace. However, this policy can be seen as discriminatory against working women because they are not treated equally in comparison to their male counterparts. According to Breslin and Jones (2010), the provisions of Article (94) and Article (95) treat women as minors who are unable to make decisions about their own safety. But, the lack of further community-based organizations geared towards the wellbeing of women is also a major challenge.

The government is aware that for women to have the potential to transform their lives, the entire society must tackle the cultural biases and discriminations based on patriarchal attitudes towards women's academic and intellectual endeavours. Hence, Qatar's government has taken noteworthy measures to guarantee women's equal rights. Gender equality legislation have been enforced through implementing plans that are in accordance with the requirements of the labour market, whereby Qatari women would be represented relatively evenly across all professions and sectors through several significant steps: 1) promoting social benefits and career opportunities for women employees; 2) providing more educational opportunities to study in previously male dominated working fields; and 3) incorporating monitoring systems in public and private institutions to ensure that gender equality strategies are optimally implemented.

The next section provides figures and statistics to show that national legislation has improved women's fiscal rights and educational opportunities in comparison to men.

### **2.2.3 Education and employment in Qatar**

In Qatar, the education framework is experiencing a widespread reform, and special programmes are being introduced for women, which replicate the actual labour market demands. Education is viewed as one of the most essential pillars of social progress and the first field in which the equality of women is grounded. Education is also employed as a tool to empower women to take active roles in the public and private sectors (Wilson, 2004). In recent years, more women have been eager to complete a university education and enter the labour market. Currently, a substantial number of women are better educated than men are (Fenton, 2012), and they are progressively stimulated to enter spheres traditionally deemed appropriate for them. In public education, all educational levels are gender-segregated, but such segregation is not practised in private schools and universities. However, the government ensures equality for all individuals in the country's education system, and it is keen to invest in public and private schools and universities and provide free education for both genders.

Investments in the educational infrastructure arguably have decreased the gap in the educational opportunities available for women and men. Literacy rates increased from 75.64% in 1986 to 97.75% in 2014. Hence, the order of literacy in the country has been reversed because most older Qatari men are better educated than their counterparts are because they have always had access to education. However, the opposite is the case in the population below 40 years, as most Qatari females are better educated than Qatari males are (Al-Hail, 2005, p. 100).

A statistical report by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (2010), *Woman and Man in the State of Qatar*, measured educational and training opportunities for women and men 15 years and older. According to the report, some important indicators are illiteracy, literacy, education levels and training through the period from 1990 to 2010. It was observed that there was a significant increase in women's total and net enrolment rates at all educational levels, including primary, middle and secondary schools as well as universities.

In relation to the increase in student numbers at different educational levels in Qatar, it is important to note that the number of female students during the period from 1989 to 1990 amounted to approximately 40% compared to 50% for the male enrolment in the same period (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010). However, the female enrolment rate in education significantly increased in the period from 2008 to 2009, with a 70% participation rate, which was the same as the male rate. Women were somewhat more anticipated to be better educated than men were, and women comprised 50% of pupils registered in the secondary education system in Qatar. In 2012, 68% of all alumni of post-secondary schools were female (Martorell *et al.*, 2008).

The government of Qatar enacted various policies aimed to improve the higher education system and to increase the number of university campuses in Qatar, enabling more women to enter higher education (Felder and Vuollo, 2008; Yyelland and Paine, 2009). Women's enrolment in higher education began in 1973 with the establishment of Qatar University, which provided the first generation of women students with access to university education. Furthermore, as part of the government-funded education, in 1995 the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development was founded as a non-profit organisation by a decree issued by the Emir,

H.H. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2004). It accommodates branches of some of the world's most renowned universities, which are not gender segregated unlike Qatar University.

Moreover, programmes such as the Academic Bridge Programme (ABP) have been established to help high school students gain entrepreneurial skills before they enter universities. In addition, the Ministry of Education encourages public and private institutions to provide scholarships and study grants for both men and women to receive their education in Western countries. In addition, the Qatar leadership academy programme is in partnership with the Qatar Foundation in an effort to aid both girls and boys in enhancing their athletic skills.

Stasz, Edie and Martorell (2007) found that more than half of Qatari female students graduating from high school anticipated pursuing higher education and attaining a university degree. Statistical data showed that the total net enrolment of students in higher education increased in the academic years 1989/1990, 2008/2009 and 2014/2015 from 5,637, 13,133 to 21,129, respectively, representing an annual increase of 5% (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010; Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2015).

In the academic years 1996/1997, 6,191 female students attended university in Qatar, while the corresponding figure for 2014/2015 was 15,231 (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2004; Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2015). Table 1 shows the number of students attending university in Qatar according to their gender and college in the academic years 2014/2015.

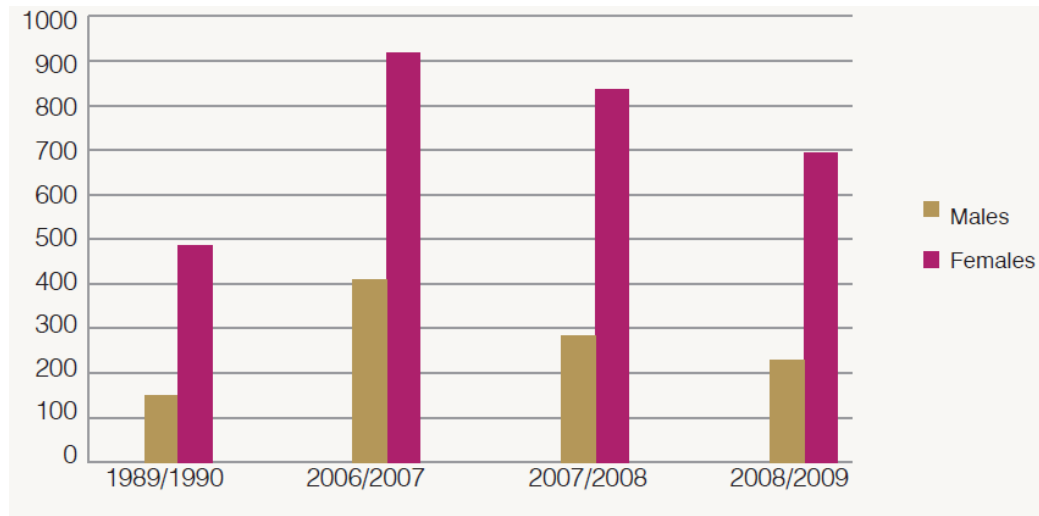
**Table 1: Students of Public Colleges and Universities by Gender and College 2014/2015**

Faculty	2014/2015	
	Female	Male
Education	1,264	77
Art and Science	5,386	1,099
Islamic Studies	626	206
Engineering	1,238	1,465
Administration and Economics	2,596	1,332
Law	762	394
Pharmacy	156	0
Community College	2,570	953
Courses Study	89	31
Post Graduate Studies	544	341
Total	15,231	5,989

Source: Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, Education Statistics (2015)

As shown in Table 1, the female students outnumbered males in all faculties except engineering. Most female students were concentrated in arts and science faculties, which offer many courses, including humanities, social sciences and sciences.

Because the number of women attaining university degrees is increasing, most research projects have found that there are more women university graduates than men (Kadhim, 2013; Stasz, Edie and Martorell. 2007). Figure 1 shows that in the academic year 2008/2009, the number of female graduates was around 700 or 74.4% of graduates, whereas it was barely 500 in the academic year 1989/1990.



**Figure 1: Number of university graduates by gender**

Source: Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Planning Council, Woman and Man in the State of Qatar - A Statistical Profile (2010)

In the academic year 2014/2015, of 1,441 students, 1,052 Qatari women graduated from university compared to 389 male students. Scholars have underlined the importance of higher education as a tool for advancing the role of women in society. It is one of the fields in which women demonstrate their ability to outnumber and often to outperform men (Bahry and Marr, 2005; Sulaiman and AlMuftah, 2010). Female graduates outnumber and outperform men because they have greater interest in continuing their higher education, compared to males who often participate in business activities and enter the labour force immediately after high school.

The workforce demonstrates upsurges in the participation of both Qatari men and women. The state policy formally grants equal employment rights to all Qatar nationals, and it aims at increasing employment opportunities for Qatari women and men as well as foreign workers. Various joint ventures have been established by the government of Qatar with global partners to boost all sectors of the national economy, and the labour market of the country is sound and approaching full employment.

For instance, Qatar's employment rate exceeded 99% between 2006 and 2012 (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics and the Diplomatic Institute, 2013). The unemployment rate is slight compared to developed economies. However, it is comparatively higher among young Qatari females, particularly those searching for their first employment after completing their higher education (Martorell *et al.*, 2008). According to statistics, the population's economic activity rate significantly increased between 1986 and 2010 because of the remarkable growth of Qatar's economy, but it jumped from about 64.2% in 2006 to 76.1% in 2009, an increase of approximately 19% for both men and women (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010; Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics and the Diplomatic Institute, 2013).

An essential indicator of women's status is the extent of their integration into the formal workforce and their representation in public affairs, legislative elections and senior management positions, as well as their access to equal pay. The state prioritises issues affecting employed women in its development agenda, which arguably has been successful in increasing female labour participation in the public sector and in improving women's future career opportunities and their contributions to economic development. Furthermore, the government encourages women to take active roles in several fields, such as finance and investment, tourism, aviation, banking, literature and journalism, arts, law, charity and health (Embassy of the State of Qatar, 2010).

Women's participation in the workforce could lessen Qatar's dependence on migrant labour and enable them to contribute to current ambitious development schemes. For national women in Qatar, labour market nationalisation offers additional opportunities for education and training, recruitment and selection, increased remuneration and consequently career

development (Omair, 2008; Sabbagh, 1996). Employers are faced with the choice of investing in the recruitment and development of Qatar women or paying a levy for employing experienced and fully trained expatriates (Metcalf, 2007).

In addition, the emergence of non-governmental organisations (NGO) in Qatari civil society has had a positive effect on promoting the influx of Qatari women into the private sector, and it has provided them with new career opportunities. Moreover, governmental institutions, such as the Social Developmental Centre affiliated with Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, now offers programmes for women to enhance their qualifications and skills (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2004).

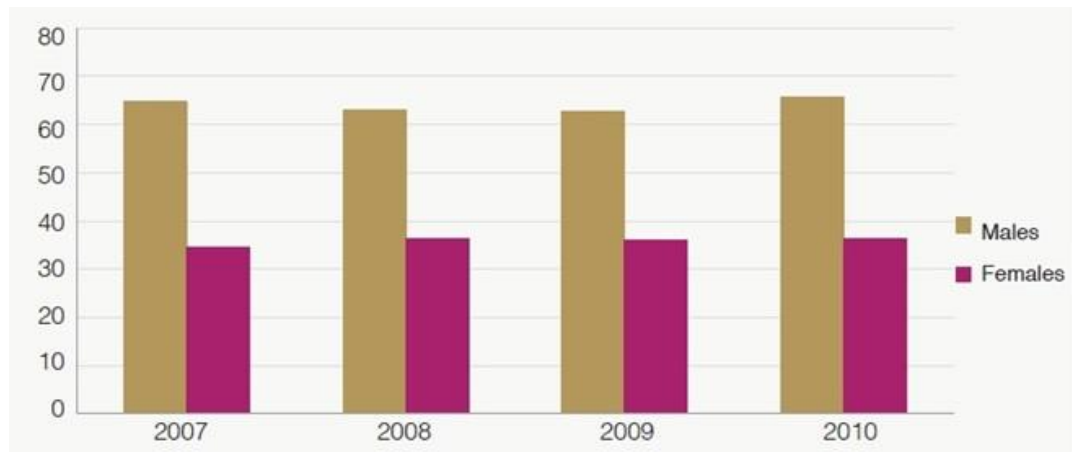
Several studies explored some trends regarding the participation of Qatari women in workforce. Special attention was given to considering the advances they are making in labour force, and suggestions were offered that might improve their future career opportunities and contribution to economic development. These studies have argued the following: government has expanded the opportunities for women in the workforce (Felder and Vuollo, 2008); Qatari women's participation in formal labour market has curtailed the Qatari population and labour force growth (Lulwa Al-Misned, 2007); Qatari women form an expanding group of workers in the country, and their participation was 40% in 2003 (Stasz, Edie and Martorell, 2007).

In Qatar, the participation of females in the workforce improved considerably from 27.4% in 2001 to 34.7% in 2014 because of the growing interest in education and much better job opportunities in all industries (Walker, 2016). The increasing rates of women in the workforce are generally attributed to the educational attainments and affluence of women,



as well as alleged positive changes in attitudes towards women in the workforce. However, the female contribution is still modest at 50% lower than males. However, yet according to NDS 2011–2016, the government expects Qatar’s rising rate of female participation in labour force to be 42% by the end of 2016.

Figure 2 shows that women became active in the business market between 2007 and 2010. However, statistical data demonstrated the presence of a gender gap among males and females concerning their rates of economic activity in the labour market.



**Figure 2: Gender-specific economic activity rate in the Qatari population**

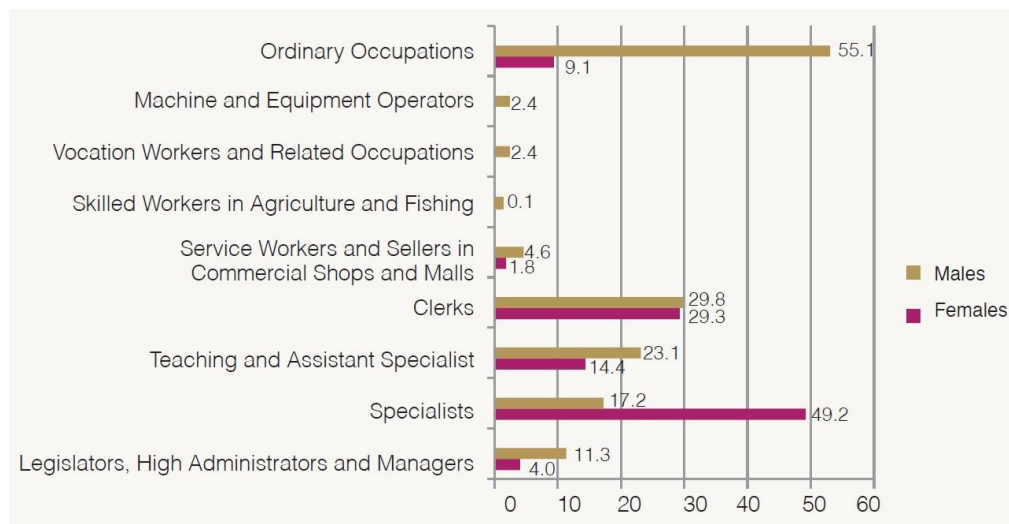
Source: Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Planning Council, Woman and Man in the State of Qatar - A Statistical Profile (2010)

Although the gender gap between the economic activity rates has narrowed, it has not significantly decreased for two main reasons: 1) a large number of inactive females are housewives; 2) the ‘higher male numbers in the total population, which is linked to higher rate of male expatriate labour flow, to work in the rapidly developing and huge projects’ (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010, p. 38).

### 2.2.3.1 Addressing Labour Market Segregation

In Qatar, the economically active population is concentrated in the public sector, particularly governmental ministries and institutions. There were differences in the distribution of economically active males and females by sector: economically active males were concentrated in the private sector, whereas most of the economically active females were concentrated in the public sector. Figure 3 shows that in 2010, there were some differences among the economically active population by occupation according to gender. Qatari women were employed in specialised professions, followed by clerical professions: 49.2% were in specialised professions, 29.3% were clerks and 14.4% were teaching and assistant specialists.

Figure 3 also shows that in 2010, women were underrepresented in leadership positions although they held the necessary qualifications: 4% of women were employed as legislators, high administrators and managers compared to 11.3% of men, who had leadership roles.



**Figure 3: Proportional distribution of the economically active Qatari population by occupation and gender in 2010**

Source: Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Planning Council, Woman and Man in the State of Qatar - A Statistical Profile (2010)

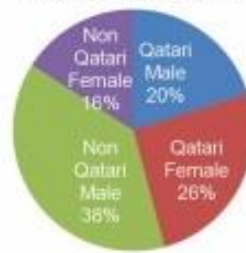
Because of the nature of the jobs available in the labour market, more women work in the governmental/public sphere, which offers gender-segregated workplaces. This explains why the percentage of female participation in the labour force is less than that of males, which is mainly attributed to the lack of employment opportunities rather than the lack of interest.

In 2010, women were employed primarily in specialised professions that reinforced the division of labour by gender, which limited their ability to choose their profession. These choices are socially restricted to fields that offer 'acceptable' roles for women, such as healthcare and education. According to Chang (2000), if women choose occupations on the basis of family considerations, or if a large presence of women in an occupation makes that occupation more friendly to workers with family responsibilities, then the concentration of women in those types of occupations may reinforce a gendered division of labor in which women's, but not men's, labor force decisions are influenced by family and household responsibilities (cited in World Bank, 2004). It is made complex by the fact that women are subject to social mores in a patriarchal male-dominated society (Foquahaa and Maziad, 2011). Therefore, they are physically segregated in the workplace because of the belief that exposure to men may have harmful effects on their reputation (El Jardawi, 1986; Omair, 2008).

Although the number of women who work in previously male-dominated professions such as politics, economics, law and media has increased, it is still less than the number of men who work in these areas. According to Felder and Vuollo (2008), 'both employers and education and training institutions should be proactive in developing opportunities for women in male-dominated fields. Few, if any, occupations should be unavailable to women who genuinely wish to pursue career opportunities in fields currently

dominated by males'. Moreover, Felder and Vuollo (2008) suggested that additional exposure and orientation to the range of women's roles in fields, coupled with career counselling regarding appropriate job opportunities for women, might increase female interest in various fields as a career. Figure 4 shows the distribution in 2012 of trainees by gender and nationalities in ministries, government and semi-governments institutions and private centres. The percentage of Qatari female trainees was 26% compared to Qatari males in various professions at 20%.

Distribution of trainees by Gender and Nationality in ministries, government and semi-governments institutions and private centers, 2012

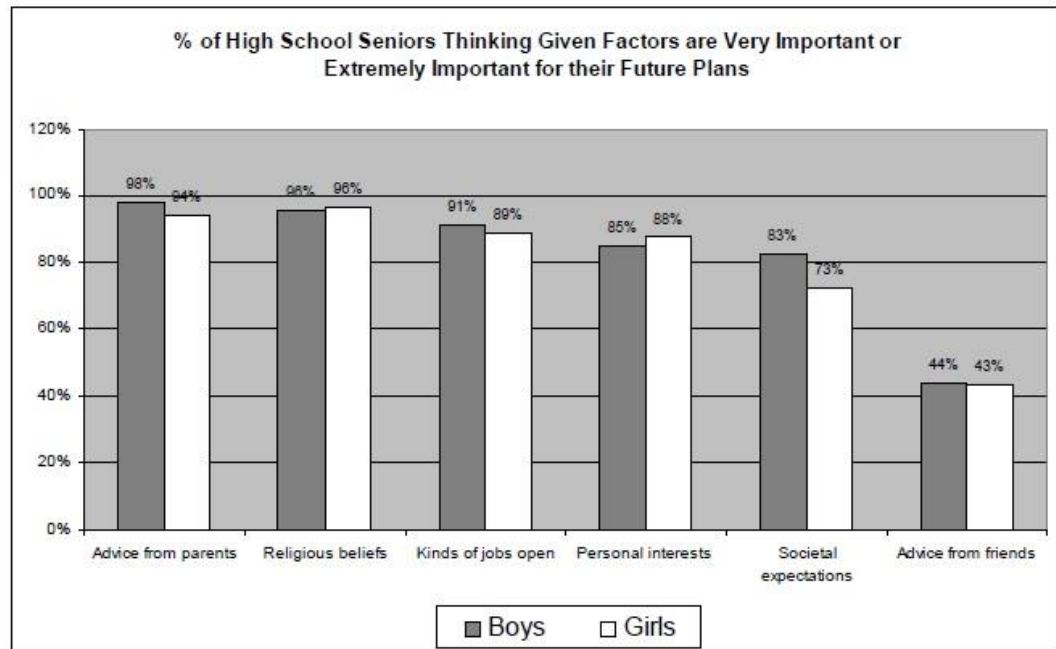


**Figure 4: Distribution of Qatari trainees by gender**

Source: Walker, L. (2014). *Female University Students in Qatar Outnumber Men 2:1*. (Online). Available at: <http://dohanews.co/female-university-students-outnumber-males-nearly/> (Accessed: 29 August 16).

As discussed earlier (section 2.2), societal and cultural aspects play crucial roles in manipulating the choices of young women regarding whether to accept employment opportunities, particularly in private industry. Primary data were collected by Stasz, Edie and Martorell (2007, cited in Felder and Vuollo, 2008) regarding the attitudes of women towards work, factors affecting their career choices and the job characteristics they value the most. Two main aspects, religious beliefs and parental advice, were found to be highly followed by Qatari women in both cohorts of secondary school graduates in making career choices. However, 88% of the girls who

graduated in 2006 also thought it was important that their future careers reflected their personal interests (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Factors influencing career choices – 2006 cohort**

Source: Stasz, C. *et al.* (2007). *Post-secondary education for Qatar: Employer demand, student choice and options for policy*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.

Furthermore, the salary gap between Qatari men and women has decreased greatly; however, it is still substantial among all work-related groups. The percentage of Qatari women's salaries compared to men's salaries increased from 0.66% in 2007 to 0.75% in 2014 (Catalyst, 2016). This step towards wage equalisation demonstrates the enhanced civil rights for Qatari women, which is observed particularly among job-related groups such as experts, engineers, technicians, and junior professionals, as well as lawmakers, senior bureaucrats and corporate executives.

Table 2 shows the average monthly income and working hours of females compared to males by occupation (between 2008 and 2009). Working hours are defined as the time spent at the workplace by an employee, whether

working, preparing or waiting for work. In 2009, the average working hours per month for females was more than that of males at 102%, exceeding the latter by 2%.

**Table 2: Average Monthly Income and Working Hours of Females Compared to Males by Occupations**

Occupations	2008		2009	
	Female/male average pay	Female/male average working hours	Female/male average pay	Female/male average working hours
<b>Legislators, High Administrators and Managers</b>	85.9	86.4	77.2	90.7
<b>Specialists</b>	73.1	86.4	79.8	86.4
<b>Teaching and Assistant Specialists</b>	72.3	90.9	89.1	90.7
<b>Clerks</b>	83.1	90.7	89.1	90.7
<b>Service Workers and Sellers in Commercial Shops and Malls</b>	94.1	98.1	89.1	96.3
<b>Skilled Workers in Agriculture and Fishing</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Vocations Workers and Related Occupations</b>	148.0	96.3	252.7	87.0

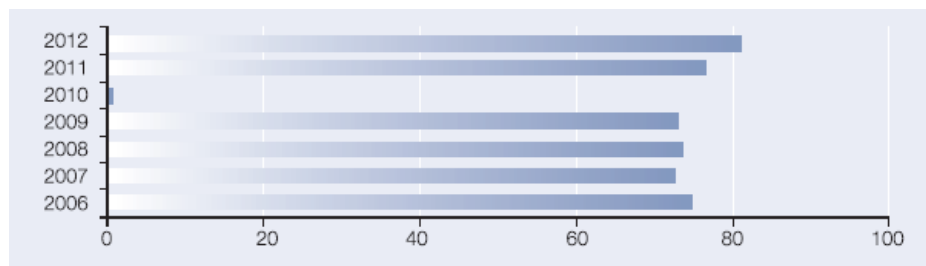
<b>Machines and Equipment Operators</b>	97.2	105.3	78.3	103.6
<b>Ordinary Occupations</b>	34.2	124.0	38.0	117.0
<b>Total</b>	72.2	104.0	72.0	102.6

Source: Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Planning Council (2010). *Woman and Man in the State of Qatar - A Statistical Profile*.

In line with the statistical report, Table 2 shows a positive relationship between average working hours and income; as the working hours increase, the average income increases, and vice versa, regardless of sex (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010). Moreover, in ordinary occupations, which include housekeepers, machinery operators and assemblers, the ratio of average working hours of females compared to that of males reached 117.6% and 103.6%, respectively. There are no skilled women workers in agriculture and fishing; the general trend indicates that these occupations are not considered appropriate for women in Qatar society although the international community has called for women's contribution to the agricultural sector in order to achieve its development.

Table 2 also shows that the ratios of the average monthly female income to the average monthly male income were 38.0% and 78.3%, respectively, in 2009, which indicates that females earn less than males by 28%. Another statistical report showed that the percentage of the average wages of females wages compared to male wages diminished significantly between 2006 and 2012 (see Figure 6). According to the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics and the Diplomatic Institute (2013):

In 2006, males were paid on average 26.4% more than their female colleagues were. This gap narrowed to 18.1% in 2012. This is not to say that wages of males have decreased; rather female wages have risen, and so the gender pay gap has decreased by 31.5%. (p. 11)



**Figure 6: Percentage of average female wages to average male wages (2006–2012)**

Source: Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics and the Diplomatic Institute (2013). *Labour force survey: Sustainable development indicators in the State of Qatar*.

Figure 6 shows that the gender pay gap was narrowed by raising female wages in accordance with their academic qualifications and skills and their participation in full-time employment and new economic sectors. This decline in the gender pay gap is expected to continue because of the government's significant efforts to promote gender equality regarding the average wage.

### 2.2.3.2 Managerial Positions

The representation of Qatari women in decision-making positions in governmental and private institutions has increased because of the leadership's vision. The NDS 2011-2016 stated the government's commitment to establish a women's leadership centre to 'build women's capacity and increase the number of women in political, organisational and business-related decision-making positions' (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011, p. 176). This programme aims to be



implemented properly across all sectors through conducting gender research and studies aimed at removing the social and cultural obstacles that women face in trying to obtain a leadership position.

Public sector jobs have been occupied by women but not at gender parity, as men continue to hold the executive-level positions in both public and private sectors. Statistics showed that in 2009, only 3% of economically active Qatari women held leadership posts. Over the past ten years, this number has ranged between 2% and 4% of the total Qatari female labour force and 9% of the total female labour force in the governmental sector. The NDS 2011-2016 programme aims to increase the number of women in leadership positions by 30% in 2016.

The appointment of women in leadership positions began with the first generation of female graduates, who witnessed both the old and new regimes of political leadership in Qatar (i.e. pre-1995 and post-1995). The women who have been appointed to decision-making positions includes the appointment of the first female Minister of Education and Higher Education in the State of Qatar from 2003 to 2009 and the Minister of Health from 2008 to 2009 (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010).

Additionally, senior positions of leadership have been assumed by Qatari women, such as the President of Board of Directors of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QFESCD); the President of Supreme Council for Family Affairs; President of the Board of Trustees of Qatar Museums Authority; Vice-President of Supreme Council of Health; Vice-President of the Supreme Education Council; President of Qatar University; the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Communications and Information; and the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. Moreover, many women are members of boards

of directors of higher councils, institutions and government bodies, in addition to participating as members of permanent committees that set policies and strategies, such as the Permanent Population Committee, and interim committees that set various legislations (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010).

It has been determined that women in leadership are concentrated in the professions of directors and heads of departments and assistant directors, as shown in Table 3. There was a slight increase in the number of female directors and heads from 2001 to 2004, which indicates that Qatari women's share of top managerial/administrative positions and major professional jobs is slowly increasing. However, despite their high educational levels, it is still very low compared to the number of men in these positions.

**Table 3: Distribution of Leadership Civil Service Positions According to Gender 2001-2004**

Position	2001		2004	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>1- Minister</b>	32	0	42	2
<b>2- Undersecretaries</b>	18	3	38	1
<b>3- Assistant undersecretaries</b>	20	1	31	1
<b>4- Secretaries of the ministry</b>	5	0	2	0
<b>5- Ambassadors</b>	115	0	148	0
<b>6- General managers</b>	92	1	98	2
<b>7- Directors and Heads</b>	52	8	55	15
<b>8- Assistant Directors</b>	64	9	56	11
<b>Total</b>	398	22	470	32

Source: Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Planning Council, Woman and Man in the State of Qatar - Statistical Overview - April 2006

The statistics shown in Table 3 contrast Felder and Vuollo's (2008) findings, that the increase in the number of women graduates from the world's best colleges and universities is an important factor in the appointment of women to leadership positions. As mentioned earlier, women made outstanding achievements in academia compared to their male counterparts, which means more female graduates participate in the labour market, but they have limited access to leadership roles. Hence, the criteria of appointment in leadership positions do not necessarily depend on employee's qualification but other factors that are mainly related to cultural and societal constraints that currently prevent women from being regarded as suitable leaders.

### **2.3 Patriarchal Beliefs in Qatar: Implications for the Workplace**

This section discusses the relevance of patriarchal views of gender roles and cultural limitations, which were shaped by Islamic religion, as barriers to women's equality in the workforce, including their appointment to leadership positions. It is argued that the forces of change in women's position in Qatar society were mainly initiated by political leadership rather than women's feminist movements. In the light of women's contributions to maintaining patriarchal relations, this section addresses further changes that must occur in the workplace and elsewhere to embed gender equality in everyday life practices and social policies; it also discusses men's behaviour in response to these changes.

The influence of the Islamic religion in the Arab world, of which Qatar is a part, is obvious in terms of behaviour, social interactions and social relations (Madsen, 2009). It has shaped cultural and social interactions in the Arab context; it gives women equality in education and employment and highlights their important role in the society and their families. However, differing interpretations of Islam are deployed by different Arab societies regarding the roles of women and their equal rights in the areas of

inheritance, divorce, marriage, child custody and nationality. In addition, patriarchy traditionally has been built on a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities for men and women in the Arab world (Foquahaa and Maziad, 2011).

In Qatar, the role of the state in initiating certain forms of women's empowerment, the changes brought about by social and economic changes, and the affluence and education of women has influenced societal attitudes towards women and their activities. Qatar has increasingly incorporated new gender roles into its culture. Belk, Sobh and Gresse (2008) noted that the desire for modernisation among Qatari leaders has resulted in openness to the adoption of these values. As a result, traditional practices are being replaced in the process of modernisation. Hence, the modernisation process in Qatar positively influences the way in which women are perceived in the country. Improving the public perceptions of women and loosening the grip of tradition could be an important step towards the achievement of equality and empowerment of Qatari women.

Qatar society has indeed made progress in terms of gender equality compared to twenty years ago, but as a country under Islamic (Sharia) Law, the patriarchal mind set is still the norm (see section 2.2). It is essential to stress that Qatari women, like many other Arab women, have been traditionally regulated by patriarchal views of gender roles, such as in the domestic sphere where women are expected to be wives and mothers. The most fundamental family principle in Qatari society is that of the clear division between gender roles. Traditionally, strict segregation has dictated the roles of husband and wife: men must earn money for household expenditures, and women must be in charge of household work and childcare. In other words, the gender division is based upon the distinction

between the public and private spheres. Men occupy the public world of work, and women occupy the private domestic sphere.

Moreover, the notion of extended families is a popular trend in Qatar. This trend creates further social obligations for women in addition their household work and childcare responsibilities. These social obligations include planning social events and organising family gatherings. Consequently, Qatari women experience numerous dilemmas in balancing traditions, customs and family roles with individual aspirations (for education, employment etc.). According to Sharabi (1988), there is still 'a conservative relentless male-oriented ideology, which tends to assign privilege and power to the male at the expense of female' (p. 33). In a male-dominated society, family norms regulating family life maintain a male-centred and female-subordinated structure. Women's rights are seen from male perspectives, which is apparent in the process of subordination of women to men.

Therefore, the leading factors that greatly hinder women's equality in education and employment (i.e., restricting women's choices in education and job sectors and preventing women from occupying leadership positions) are related to patriarchal practices and cultural limitations. For instance, traditional ties prevent women's socialisation with men at universities or in the workplace. Furthermore, woman's role in the household (i.e., childcare and marital responsibilities) might be affected by their absence from home and thus prevent women from participating in jobs that require long working hours, such as managerial positions.

According to some sociologists, a vast number of traditional practices have been discriminatory because they have prohibited women from accessing certain academic and work fields, participating in politics, driving cars and so on. Thus, the traditional ties of creative women to their families hinder

them from mingling with other creative minds in the public domain (Bradley, 2005).

### **2.3.1 Potential Changes**

However, women do not consider themselves passive, non-resistant or victims in need of protection. In fact, they view themselves as strong, competent and capable of finding different activities within the restrictions of their male-dominated society (Fincher, 2014). For instance, it has become a standard for Qatari women to include the consent to pursue study, find work or travel abroad in their marriage contracts, which clearly illustrates the shift towards their emancipation in the contemporary society. This means that women are experiencing a gradual change in the patriarchal discourse while maintaining their Islamic principles and social norms.

Moreover, as noted, the lifestyle in Qatar requires the recruitment of foreign female domestic workers through domestic help agencies to help women in their domestic chores, such as cooking, cleaning and housekeeping responsibilities. This has changed the idea that working women cannot occupy the private, domestic sphere unless they are married with children because of their childbearing duties. The ability to have domestic help should remove the obstacles preventing women's participation in education and employment, including leadership positions, because women's household responsibilities can be met compared to women who do not have domestic help.

In their dominance, men have indirectly denied women rights by limiting their access to public participation, limiting their freedom of expression and demand for rights that oppose custom and tradition, which are seen as rebellion against men. In a recent empirical study conducted by Asma Al-Attayah and Ramzi Nasser (2014), four dimensions have been developed to

measure women's perception of their civic rights, wellbeing, legal rights and economic and educational rights. The study adopted a quantitative strategy method by taking a random sample of one hundred and forty university female students. These female students were enrolled in the national public university of Qatar. It has been determined through outcomes that women believe they have rights across educational, economic, social, cultural, civil, and fundamental freedoms on the basis of sex.

Table (1) shows Qatari women's perception of barriers to their rights in relation to three main dimensions that the study has established. These dimensions measure the extent of restrictions on women from their rights. Women feel that their rights are limited due to a lack of knowledge of these rights, their desire to preserve social status and the current behavioural structure, which perpetuates the public and perceived social role of women. This includes the several barriers which are related to: families' indirect denial of women's rights especially male family members (e.g., father/brother/husband), woman's capitulation and subservience to a male-dominated society, women's rights seen from the viewpoint of males, the stereotypical image of the superiority of men, women's rights are seen as rebellion against men, Predominant public image of women and women's image and roles in child rearing and family nurturing.

**Table 4: Women's Perception of Barriers to their Rights**

Rights	Mean	SD	t-value
<b>Women's distress and lack of knowledge</b>			
Women's ignorance of their rights within society	2.57	0.72	9.27*
Ignorance of constitutional law and how to claim the rights guaranteed	2.68	0.51	15.52*
Women's notion of their own permissiveness	2.19	0.79	2.91*
Fear of criticism of women of claiming their rights	2.77	0.52	17.61*
Fear of claiming women's rights goes against customs and traditions	2.63	0.61	12.19*

Asking for one's right may lower one's self-esteem	2.64	0.61	12.30*
Women's fatalistic dispositions and lack of belief in change	2.29	0.69	5.07*
<b>Public and Family perceived social role of women</b>			
Families indirect denial of women's rights	2.45	0.68	7.70*
Male family members (e.g., father/brother/husband) denial of women's rights	2.47	0.72	7.71*
Woman's capitulation and subservience to a male dominated society	2.51	0.68	8.79*
Women's rights seen from the viewpoint of males	2.63	0.67	6.33*
Unconnected participation between men and women	2.35	0.80	5.21*
The unbalanced role of females and males the subordination of women to males	2.49	0.72	8.06*
Societal defined and accepted female and male roles	2.44	0.67	7.70*
<b>Desire to preserve social status</b>			
The stereotypical image of the superiority of men	2.54	0.69	9.16*
Women's call for their rights and freedom of expression without respect to tradition and customs	2.19	0.83	2.66*
Women's rights are seen as rebellion against men	2.45	0.76	7.00*
Women's image in popular culture as being rebellious toward men	2.55	0.70	9.15*
Predominant public image of women	2.85	0.70	9.80*
A common understanding of rights being incompatible with Islamic law	2.27	0.80	3.90*
Women's image and roles in child rearing and family nurturing	2.47	0.70	8.05*

\*Significant at 0.05 – level

Source: Asma Al-Attayah and Ramzi Nasser, 2014. Qatari Women's Perceived Rights in Light of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

On the basis of results obtained from Table 4, it has been determined that:

'Women believed there were barriers that ran across the 3 dimensions. Women believed their social and perceived public image was a major barrier.'(p. 95)



Additionally, the study presents that women in Qatar are still stifled and lack the rights that men have regarding economic participation, educational attainment, health, wellbeing and political empowerment. Besides this, it has also been examined that they are still stifled from the full equality envisioned in the CEDAW. Moreover, one of the conclusive results of this study is that women have highlighted fear of criticism by others as one of the major barriers in accessibility of human rights. It is believed by women that struggling for their rights would subject them to stereotypes of being unorthodox, rebellious and non-comforting, which may be considered as an aberration in a collectivist, conservative and close-knit society.

This means that increased educational and work opportunities for women do not necessarily make life easier for them. The strong traditional values are simply not commensurate with the improved social status of women. Although the structures of gender roles are changing largely due to the increased participation of women in the labour force, they are expected to fulfil both roles simultaneously as full-time homemakers and professionals.

In the workforce, Qatari women are at a disadvantage because of discriminatory patriarchal practices. It has been observed that customs and traditions have a negative influence on women's participation in the labour market (Al-Muhannadi, 2011; Berrebi, Martorell and Tanner, 2009; Mufta, 2010; Williams, Bhanugopan and Fish, 2011). The patriarchal practices that discriminate against women working outside the home include limiting women's choices to traditional 'female' roles, limiting the access of women to higher and managerial opportunities, as well as unequal pay, lack of training, limited promotions, exclusion and occupational segregation.

Some factors also hinder women's participation and efficiency in the labour force. Traditionally, biological sex determines the nature of the work

performed by both genders. Consequently, men participate in the public sphere and women participate in the private sphere. Restrictions also exist regarding how successful an individual could be in a job depending on his or her gender (Richardson, 1993). For instance, the increased participation of married females in the workforce could have many consequences, including less time for their families and different ambitions for the future (Macionis, 1995). Because long working hours rob women of the time spent with their families, therefore they may not be willing to take jobs with long working hours (Berrebi, Martorell and Tanner, 2009). These issues can have a negative influence on marital relations and contribute to the growing divorce rate, as some Qataris may be reluctant to change their conventional beliefs concerning the roles that women and men ought to perform.

With regard to traditions, the roles of men and women were very different. There were minimal interactions between the two genders except in marriage or business (Estrada, García-Ael and Martorell, 2015, p. 69). This limited social interaction affected the socialisation and acquisition of ideas, which could have transformed women's lives (Mazzarella, 2010). A study by Berrebi Martorell and Tanner (2009) blamed traditions and culture for women's unwillingness to work in settings where they have to interact with men employees. Because the social mores are influenced by Islam and tradition, many women are uncomfortable among strangers in public.

Nevertheless, in survey of job characteristics, in which young women were asked whether they would consider co-working with men, 95% felt that working in such an environment would be a very or extremely important characteristic of a future job (Felder and Vuollo, 2008). Recently, most Qatari women feel comfortable studying and working with men, which is evident in the cases of celebrated Qatari women who are role models emphasised in public discourse.

Although a few research projects and publications have examined gender-related issues in the workplace, no previous study has focused on gender equality in the workplace through the lived experiences of Qatari women in leadership positions. Al Ghanim (2008) examined the extent of women's appointments in specific working fields, providing important information to identify individual views about women occupying leadership positions in public life and determining the social and cultural challenges affecting such views. Ikhlas A. Abdalla (2015) was concerned about the high number of Qatari men occupying senior management positions in comparison to women. Similarly, Mufta (2010) questioned the extent to which Qatari women are enabled to progress to the top in the economic and educational spheres and examined the challenges faced by Qatari women.

Women's representation in leadership positions is mainly concentrated in the ministries and institutions that are social in nature. There is a high concentration of women in the education sector, healthcare system and administrative field, which are perceived as acceptable roles for women in Qatar society. In her study, Al Ghanim (2008) found an increase in the number of women appointed to leadership positions. However, her study also demonstrated that Qatari women have been slow to enter many working fields and to hold managerial positions in specific industries for several reasons that are related to social constraints. She found that many well-educated women managers tended to be appointed to leadership positions in fields that did not match their qualifications.

Because of social norms, women remain underrepresented in certain areas of work. Although governmental efforts are aimed at expanding women's preparation to work in sectors, which are traditionally dominated by men, and despite the change in women's work distribution over different professions such as security, communications, economy, media and politics,

the number of women in leadership positions in these fields is almost zero (Al Ghanim, 2008).

In the legal profession, for instance, the representation of women in political and legal ministries is low. However, a statistical report found that an increasing number of women were able to occupy diplomatic posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

[T]he beginning of the year 2010 witnessed the appointment of the first Qatari woman as ambassador. In addition, Qatari women occupy leadership positions in official missions abroad, and represent the State of Qatar in international organization meetings, especially those related to the field of human rights and social development. (Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2010, p. 53).

Hence, women's participation in politics has become a reality, and their involvement in the democratic process has developed through the high participation of women voters in 2007 compared to 1999. However, not many Qatar women are allowed to be members of the Municipal Council elections or work as diplomats in the Foreign Service (Felder and Vuollo, 2008). Moreover, some conservative groups in society still consider that the issue is sensitive and that these are inappropriate fields for women, adhering to the stereotypical gender perception that women are too emotional to hold such positions.

Furthermore, women managers in Qatar face several barriers, the greatest of which is the reluctance of men to accept women in management, the lack of professional networking, and the absence of legislation and policies that ensure the recruitment of women for management positions. The region also

has few female role models that influence women to take management positions. Additionally, women in top management positions face the challenges of overt discrimination at work, lack of trust and confidence in their ability to manage, as well as cultural taboos (Phillips and Imhoff, 1997; El Jardawi, 1986).

In her study, Ikhlas A. Abdalla (2015) examined the challenges and opportunities of Kuwaiti, Emirati and Qatari female managers at the major milestones of their career paths. She found the following:

The discriminatory managerial practices in favour of men were rampant even in organisations/industries where women were in majority (e.g., the education sector). Hence, women were restricted from obtaining the more central and strategic career opportunities and experiences, and they find themselves at a disadvantage when competing with men for managerial positions. (p. 36).

Mufta (2010) observed that women's participation in education and economy had improved significantly. She nevertheless expressed the concern about the obvious lack of women in senior managerial posts: only 5% of the total Qatari female workforce held such positions. In contrast to their male counterparts, Qatari women held only 2% of senior managerial roles. Mufta (2010) attributed the poor representation of women in management to cultural influences, such as tradition and religion, which meant that women had limited possibilities of being employed in professions other than in the educational field.

Further fundamental barriers found in Mufta's study included the lack of commitment by organisations to ensure that they recruited and selected

women for high management positions; traditional stereotypical attitudes about women's roles and capabilities; lack of individual assignments for women to demonstrate their abilities; exclusion from informal communication networks; lack of mentoring opportunities; lack of experience in line management; and personal and family responsibilities.

Traditional stereotypical attitudes towards women managers include varying expectations. In most cases, the attitudes are based on negative stereotypes and broad assumptions concerning the characteristics of women. There is also an indication that gender roles commonly contribute to the discouragement of women's employment outside the home. Moreover, an Arab country such as Qatar seems to be reluctant to abandon their traditional views of women as being mainly committed to the house and children. Therefore, the strong emphasis in Arab culture on masculine attributes is expected to contribute to Qatar society's traditional attitudes towards women managers.

In addition, women face the issues of maintaining the required balance between their work and family responsibilities. They feel exhausted by the numerous challenges encountered by them in the workplace, especially when they choose to work flexibly to manage their life and work balance. Other women striving to progress face the lack of senior managerial support to assist in their development and even promotion (Whitehead, 2001).

Furthermore, they are also adversely affected by long working hours. In Qatar, there are few senior and visibly successful women to motivate other women to climb the ladder of management. Research revealed that the majority of women who have achieved top positions in management tend to work all the time and have no children to care for at home (Foquahaa and Maziad, 2011). Hence, some women in Qatar have less motivation with

regard to management posts because of the possibility that the role could tear them apart from their families.

In contrast, Felder and Vuollo (2008) stated that women leaders are well known in Qatari society, and they influence the social attitudes towards them by demonstrating that they can successfully hold jobs and at the same time meet family obligations. Their associations with family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances impact others' impressions of what is possible and appropriate for women, and their influence on liberalising attitudes towards working women has expanded as their numbers have increased.

In her study, Mufta (2010) recommended that organisations be obliged to ensure that more women hold decision-making positions in their organisations, and organisations should be required by law to ensure that they promote the advancement of women. In contrast to much of the 'official' state literature and some scholarship, Mufta's study suggests a qualified perspective on the equality and empowerment of women in Qatar, highlighting in particular the 'glass ceiling' encountered by Qatari women seeking career advancement.

Al-Muhannadi (2011) conducted a study to determine the effects of tribalism and tradition on women's advancement. The study included sixty-eight participants studying at two universities in Qatar. The sample included both men and women from the Bedouin and Hadar tribes. The findings revealed that most respondents (77.6%) perceived Qatari society as both tribal and modern, 17.9% viewed their country as tribal, and only 4.5% viewed the State of Qatar as modern. Furthermore, most respondents (74.2%) felt that the two tribes (Bedouin and Hadar) viewed women's empowerment differently: 25.5% thought that these tribes were similar in their modernity and women's equality; 89.2% of the respondents perceived that tribal

customs and values affected the role of Qatari women. The findings also showed that approximately 73.8% participants agreed that women should participate in the political sphere of Qatari society.

These findings regarding the acceptance of women to participate in Qatari politics were also reported during subsequent interviews. The implications are that traditions and tribes may potentially undermine women's advancement. However, the study also revealed that modern views have undermined some key traditional perceptions of women. In other words, modernity is helping women to loosen the bonds of subservience to tribal customs and values (Al-Muhannadi, 2011).

Nevertheless, the success of women in obtaining top management positions in Qatar strongly depends on their families, especially spousal support. The family lies at the core of society and plays a key role in the economic, political, religious and social spheres (World Bank, 2006). In this region, individuals are conscious of each other's family membership, status and identity. Parents facilitate their children's access to jobs, institutions and government services. They are aware that women's contribution to decision-making is important because it enables them to influence the formulation of policies, particularly those relating to women's affairs.

Despite some patriarchal views that a woman's primary role is in the private sphere, globalisation has caused a shift towards liberal thinking (Foquahaa and Maziad, 2011). With the passing of time and education, it is likely that tradition will have diminishing power to resist the forces of modernisation. Notably, because of the social changes after 1995, Qatar society has been divided into traditionalists (who strictly follow traditional values and social norms) and modernists (who preserve traditional identity while believing in women's rights and equality). Hence, more women have been able to



progress towards various study and career disciplines, including management roles, despite the restrictions imposed by traditional perspectives of society.

The governments' initiatives inspire men to eliminate destructive stereotypes, demonstrate respectful behaviour, cultivate healthy associations and support the civil rights of all Qatari citizens. Gender equality cannot be attained without considering men's attitudes. Although the transformation is gradual, men are progressively involved in supporting women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women. Currently, it is extensively acknowledged that enhancing women's status and broadening their rights produces benefits for the entire society (Walker, 2016).

Print and broadcast media continue to play key roles in portraying Qatari women in stereotypical roles. They rarely discuss the issues and limitations experienced by women (Felder and Vuollo, 2008). One of the reasons for the media's attitude is the lack of women's participation in the media industry. Social customs restrict women to work in a narrow range of occupations. Nevertheless, women are employed in both print and electronic media, working as journalists, reporters, newscasters and executive producers, but their numbers in the media industry are insignificant.

Qatar's swift fiscal and social growth, severely affected by internationalisation processes, continues to influence conservative Qatari family life. Nevertheless, despite the patriarchal issues, the gendered roles of males and females have been modified relatively quickly, which is indicated by the changing roles of women because of their progress in educational attainment and participation in the labour force. In addition, gender bias seems to be decreasing, but it still lingers in Qatari society because cultural values that are associated with a strict gender division have not been altered at the same rate, hence remaining resistant to change.

#### **2.4 Feminism in a world of patriarchy: the General and Arab Perspectives**

Feminism is defined as ‘the set of beliefs and ideas that belong to the broad social and political movement to achieve a greater equality for women’ (Owen M. Fiss, 1994, p. 413). The concepts of the West and the Middle East regarding gender equality have gained solidarity in recent years despite their different opinions and interpretations. Feminists and liberal activists in the West and in Arab countries share many common standards when it comes to women’s civil rights and gender equality in the workplace. An extended examination of diverse examples of feminist contributions demonstrated that the two regions have more similarities than might be expected (Altan-Olcay, 2015). Because feminism has been crucial in initiating social change and gender equality in the West, this section argues that creating a new form of Islamic feminism would further embed gender equality in the everyday life practices in Islamic societies.

In both Arab and Western societies, the characteristics of progressive feminism have emphasised offering women opportunities to complete higher education, enter the labour market and have other civil rights. Even religiously conventional women in both Arab and Western countries have supported these characteristics of progressive feminism. They also have emphasised the significance of women’s roles as spouses and mothers. Women campaigners in both Islamic countries and the United States are mostly professional experts (Altan-Olcay, 2015). Sociologists such as Connell (1997) have emphasised the global dimensions of gender inequality and have demonstrated a scepticism about Western social theory generally together with an understanding and affinity for theoretical and empirical research emerging from the Global South (e.g. Connell, 2007) including that of Islamic societies.

Feminist theory questions how concepts such as class, ethnicity, and nationality intersect with gender. It examines the experiences of women, their social roles and feminist politics in a variety of disciplines, such as sociology, literature and philosophy. Several historical typologies have been advanced to describe the history of feminist theory. According to Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker, the historical context of (Western) feminism can be divided into three waves. The first-wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second wave was in 1960s and 1970s, and the third wave extends from the 1990s to the present (Feminism, 2009).

First-wave feminism focused on civil and political rights compared to men (i.e., it focused on overturning legal obstacles to equality). However, according to Walby (1990), first-wave feminism changed the course of history, however; it did not lead to an elimination of all the forms of inequality which it sought to eradicate. The second wave of feminists' movement addressed a wide range of issues, including official legal inequalities, sexuality, family, the workplace and reproductive rights (Feminist Movement, 2009). In recent years third wave feminists have increased their involvement in political organizations, in science and scholarship. Furthermore, Showalter (1977) describes a multi-phase approach to the development of feminist theory in her model of the three stages in the history of women's literature. The first phase is androgynist poetics, followed by female aesthetics, which is accompanied by gynocritics. By the early 1990s, the debate had shifted from an exclusively feminine agenda to broader issues of gender in social and cultural contexts.

Generally, feminist movement in the West has traditionally covered three issues: women in public life (access to the legislature, education and politics); women in private (health, sexual and other domestic violence); and the point of intersection between these two worlds (rape conviction rates,

provision for victims of domestic violence, abortion rights, and government decisions about other health matters).

The attitudes towards feminism in the Middle East are diverse, which may be surprising to some experts in the West. Many feminists in the Arab region are secular and consider that religion should be avoided in discussions of women's rights. On the secular side, progressive, collectivist and conservative feminists collaborate to resolve different issues, such as reproductive rights, eliminating gender-based violence, ceasing discrimination in policymaking and the labour market, and stimulating fiscal justice.

Nevertheless, there are also feminists in the Arab region who directly oppose patriarchal views of gender roles (Walker, 2016). While they encourage women's roles as homemakers and mothers, they do not consider that women are less important than men are, nor do they consider that women should be restricted to the household domain. They utilise democratic interpretations of Islamic norms to lobby for improved rights for women in marriage contacts, separation, dress code, job, political involvement and education. There are many opportunities for women's rights campaigners in both the Middle East and the West to demonstrate their cohesion and collaborate to achieve common objectives.

In Qatar, as in many other Arab countries, the term 'feminism' has the negative connotation of taking power away from men. A significant issue observed in Qatar is related to the lack of women's activism (or feminist movements), which is not as same as the situation in the West. This means that the forces of change in women's status in Qatar society were through political reforms that led to the revolutionary liberalisation of women's legislations initiated in the 1990s, a liberation based on Islamic sources of

the equal status of women, which could be extended to women's rights and liberties in the cultural, economic and political spheres.

Nevertheless, Qatar women are aware that they are still marginalised within the workforce in terms of their appointments to managerial positions, their pay and their training opportunities. They are also exposed to societal and cultural pressures in making professional and education choices. However, they are indeed fighting for gender equality because the Western form of feminism has no place in Qatar. One reason for the lack of feminist movements in Qatar is linked to the improper role played by the government in depriving women from seeking their rights through their participation in democratic parties. Religious issues and cultural limitations have also intensified the pressure existing in Qatari society in relation to gender inequality and cultural discrimination (Walker, 2016).

Therefore, in a region where cultural standards impose limitations on women's lives and where laws and regulations are often unclear and illogical, legal restructuring alone will not properly foster further social changes. For substantial reforms to occur beyond the beneficence of the current head of state, they must be established through legal and democratic means. It is important to emphasise that Qatar women should call for greater compliance with their rights through establishing women's organisations.

## **2.5 Summary**

The literature review demonstrated the role of the state in closing the gender gap in the labour force through examining the enforcement of effective national policies in terms of gender equality that would economically benefit Qatari women, protect their rights and implement further legal policies within the domestic law. The review revealed that patriarchal views of gender roles, which restrict women's roles to homemakers and mothers,

continue to exist in Qatar and affect women's lives. However, democratic interpretations of Islamic norms encourage women's equal participation in education and employment, for instance.

Few studies have provided empirical data for policy makers regarding how women in leadership positions perceive their access to employment and leadership opportunities. Therefore, this thesis explores how the governmental progressive reconstructions contribute to advocacy on behalf of women within the traditional, social and cultural constraints and how Qatari women have been able progress towards gender equality in the labour force.

The next chapter provides the theoretical framework of the study.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In order to understand the interaction of women's equality in the field of employment in the recent history of Qatar, a theoretical framework has been developed at the intersection of sociology and feminism. This theory was developed in Sylvia Walby's *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990). To return to the objectives of this research stated in Chapter 1, the main research question is:

- RQ1: To what extent does Sylvia Walby's theory of gender apply to the case of inequality in the workplace for women in Qatar?

This chapter outlines the relevance of this theoretical framework for this thesis and considers the overall role of 'theory' in the research, including its interaction with empirical inquiry. The chapter demonstrates my position regarding how this theoretical framework is applicable to the workplace in Qatar through deconstructing Walby's binary configuration of the private patriarchy and public patriarchy divide and showing how this divide requires interrogation in the Qatari case. The chapter then concludes by providing an in-depth critique of Walby's theory of patriarchy.

### **3.2 Gender-based Stratification**

The concepts of women, development, equality, empowerment and related issues such as globalisation are significant components of contemporary theories within feminism and the sociology of gender. They provide insights into the role played by women in development both locally and globally, including the cooperation between international agencies (e.g. the United Nations) non-governmental organizations (e.g. Amnesty International) and nation states (e.g. Qatar).

Understanding of the overall development of a society is heavily based on several concepts of social theories involved with the development of social and cultural norms. Social stratification in the postmodern era is based on various factors defining the structural schema and affecting overall concepts of structured inequality among individuals. Any society's structure is historically composed of and entails a collection of cultural aspects reflected through the dominance of varied social interest and contexts.

In his book, *Modern Sociological Theory*, George Ritzer (2008) argues that structural oppression theories tend to recognise oppression by the fact that some groups derive direct benefits from controlling, using and subjugating other groups. Structural oppression theorists analyse how interests in domination are enacted through social structures, and they focus on the structures of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and heterosexism. The enactments of domination and experiences of oppression occur via the interplay of these structures.

Important stratifications in society occur especially when those having greater power, status, and privilege are favoured over others. Essentially, social stratification ranks populations in a hierarchy of diverse levels such as socio-economic status, race, class, ethnicity, intelligence, religion, and gender. According to feminists, a primary form of social stratification and a fundamental basis of social and cultural organization is the distinction between masculinities and femininities and male and female (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005).

The powerful social structure which controls the structure of gender relations can be structured in varied ways. According to Humm (1995), feminist theory is concerned with extending feminism into a theoretical and philosophical discourse as means to explore the status of men and women.



The objective is improving the lives of women in accordance with their experiences within a particular social context; these experiences are generated from an interaction of social structures derived from ideology, religion, politics, economics, and culture.

With the integration of various conceptual frameworks, the term 'gender' is mainly identified as one of the major distinguishing features that distinguish men from women; the distinctions are prominent throughout a society (Connell and Pearse, 2014). It refers to the cultural difference of women and men based on the biological division between male and female. It must be understood as a social structure involving a specific relationship with the body. This is recognized in the common-sense definition of gender as an expression of the bodily distinction the biological sexes (Connell, 2009).

Hence, gender segregate humans from each other within a society based on biological, cultural and societal differences. Sociological perspectives on gender aim to understand the key social differences between men and women and attempt to explain these with reference to social (rather than biological or psychological) differences, which are referred to as the 'gender order' (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005).

Raewyn Connell's contemporary sociological theory of 'gender order' (e.g. 2002) consists of both historical and structural features. While it is pro-feminist and shares second-wave feminism's critique of functionalist sex-role theory (e.g. Parsons and Bales, 1955) and a hostility to any notion of biological essentialism, it is also critical of the distinctions sometimes drawn within feminism between notions of biological sex and socio-cultural gender (e.g. Oakley, 1972). Historically and initially addressing the Western tradition, Connell (1987, 1995) posits three 'ruptures' which have characterized the interaction of gender and capitalism: (1) between work and

home; (2) between public and private worlds; and (3) between the social spheres allocated to men and women.

In simplified terms, the general historical process suggests that just as men have become associated with the first term of each ‘rupture’ – with work and the public world – so women have become associated with the second term – the private world and the home. Connell’s additional point is that these sets of associations tend to illegitimately equate men with a world of public ‘reason’ whilst relegating women to a world of private ‘emotion’. Yet it has been argued that the dichotomous pair of reason/emotion has oppressed both men and women in different ways; therefore, patriarchal relations need to be removed from society (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989).

According to Connell (2002), this historical analysis provides the impetus for the structural theory of gender order consisting of the following three features:

1. The division of labour – which underlines the segregation of the world of work from that of home;
2. The structure of power – which underlines the sheer visibility of men’s power both at work and home and the ways it is used to control the ‘command’ positions of society (e.g. the state and the military) and the domestic environment;
3. The structure of cathexis<sup>1</sup> – which underlines the fact that modern (Western) relationships tend to be organized around one individual’s emotional attachment to another (e.g. in heterosexual ‘couple’ relationships).

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<sup>1</sup>Connell is borrowing the term from Freud (1991) where it possesses a particular role in the metapsychological theory. Connell is generalising its meaning to imply, more straightforwardly, ‘emotional attachment’.

According to Connell (1998), several debates are undertaken in face of the practical issues related to gender roles in society. These gender roles often give way to various other complexities that must be dealt with in order to maintain social balance. Most societies are dominated by patriarchal rules that treat women as an inferior part of society. Traditional societal settings, defining individual job roles for each sector, have a crucial impact in providing equal rights to all. Social orthodoxies predetermine gender roles and fail to incorporate any changes occurring in the gender order (Connell, 1998).

According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) gender roles defines the major seclusions within society which creates a process of societal hierarchy. Hierarchical rankings based on gender occur when gender disparities offer men superior opportunities and power over women. Traditionally, social status has relegated women to a lower status than men, and this has negatively affected women's overall lifestyle (Ickes, 1993). Yet a shift in gender roles has increasingly been undertaken by both men and women, causing the behavioural aspects of both genders to change, although these behaviours can still be segregated on the basis of their social status (Ickes, 1993).

Consequently, hierarchies lead to gender inequality in most other settings such as education, health access, and employment. Several scholars and theorists have diverse theories that explain the occurrence of gender-based stratifications in society. Sociologists offer a theoretical framework that should be employed when describing the effects of gender inequality, which refers to the existence of disproportions among people based exclusively on their gender as opposed to their abilities, skills, or place of origin (Blau, Gielen, and Zimmermann, 2012).

Gender inequality has been an area of concern for all major economies. According to Preston (2003), gender inequality in social life exerts a prominent influence within both developing and developed economies. Yet the source and the effects of gender inequality in society differ. There are some conceptual frameworks which serve as a social schema for developing the institutional domains for analysing the various dimensions of inequality (Walby, 2009). According to Wadesango (2011), equality between men and women in terms of the distribution of power and wealth remains an area that requires reform. It creates biases among social groups and impacts social status among men and women within a society; this imbalance vitally affects both social settings and the progress of countries.

Furthermore, women have been less developed in various societies and have often been deprived of some legal, social, economic, and political rights to which they are entitled. For instance, most of the world's presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, generals and civil service managers are still men (Connell, 2009). Women also gained legal status and the right to vote much later than men and in some parts of the world still do not have legal equality. Moreover, another such right is the right to receive an adequate education (Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, 2007).

Gender theorist Judith Butler (1990) theorises that the performance of gender, sex and sexuality are socially and culturally permitted to appear as coherent. Yet she notes that gender inequality is essentially a social construction phenomenon. In social constructionism, everything that is known to the individual is primarily situated socially. Therefore, most things that happen are dictated by society, thus, people act in accordance with this social creation (Butler, 1990). In this sense, the concept of gender inequality is socially constructed as a reality.

The structural functionalist approach involves perspectives that highlight several hypothetical frameworks that explain gender inequalities. Structural functionalists seek to describe the disposition of social order and its association with various structures in society through probing the functionality of each construct to ascertain how it influences the stability of society as a whole. Therefore, while other theorists argue that gender stratification is grave for society, the structuralists posit that gender differentiation is essential for society.

Structuralists also argue that young boys and girls are taught diverse worldviews (Eisenstein, 1995). For instance, girls are taught to be emotional, while boys are taught to be more aggressive and less expressive. There is also an instrumentality perspective that emphasises a focus on long-term objectives and tasks. To instil this culture of valuing long-term goals, boys are encouraged to actively participate in goal-oriented activities. As a result, men are perceived to have the capability to handle tasks with greater responsibilities or goal-oriented tasks. Consequently, they are accorded more preference in the job sector than women are.

Other liberal feminists such as Anne Phillips (2013) stress that people experience gender inequality due to their inability to see differences that distinguish women from men. For instance, she notes that the men are quite different from women in terms of masculine and feminine unique abilities. Since ancient times, discrimination has been based on gender, with women usually referred to as inferior to men (Connell, 2001). Their status has been used to justify their seclusion from society and the suppression of their enjoyment of major societal advantages. Owing to their substandard status quo, as defined by society from primitive times, they are often subject to ill treatment (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Conversely, gender discrimination varies among cultures, geographical locations, and religious

backgrounds, but is prevalent across all nations and in every society across the globe (Connell and Pearse, 2014).

Connell (2005a) argues that social discrimination among women and men is a discourse of the social structure rather than being a biological discrimination. These discriminatory practices are heavily dependent on the cultural settings that guide the overall social stratification for women. The understanding of masculinity and femininity has often been an outcome of the social setting that is prominent within society

As a result, women have always been a secluded section of society and are identified as lacking in social identity to a greater extent than men (Duflo, 2012). In this regard, traditional societal settings have been prominent around the globe as women have often been invisible from the major sections of society and have had a negligible influence in improving their status as well as their rights (Beckman and D'Amico, 1994). Correspondingly, Connell and Pearse (2014) state that in various social settings, social discrimination practices have a huge effect on power inequality and social health for women because their relegation to a degraded status eventually affects women's overall social status and lifestyle.

Yet according to Connell and Pearse (2014), the extremity of the events and the extent of discrimination vary from nation to nation, but the display of hegemonic masculinity is prominent even in well-developed sections of the world. Connell is chiefly known for his theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' (see Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), which has generated an enormous amount of research upon 'men and masculinity' (see Kimmel, Hearn and Connell, 2005), but that theory has always been subsumed within this wider account of gender order, a characteristic structural feature of which is the power of men ('hegemonic masculinities') over women and other

subordinate men. Furthermore, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state that hegemonic masculinity is a remnant of an ancient era that remains prominent in various sections of society today. Hence, it can be inferred that hegemonic masculinity influences the gender hierarchies prominent throughout society (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

According to Connell (2005b), the development of women's equality is even a question of strategy, as the people who are vested with the authority to decide the rights of women are men. Butler (1990) offers different perspectives that people can adopt to reduce gender inequalities, whether in employment or other areas of stratification. For instance, she notes that people should look at gender as a variable influenced and controlled by the way people act at different times and in distinctive situations, rather than who they are. Butler argues that deconstructing the feminine/masculine gender binary has the potential to help societies move towards equality between the sexes where individuals are not bound by masculine or feminine gender roles (Butler, 1990).

Through this comprehensible view, I shall argue that an analysis of gender relations which explain how women suffer from various manifestations of gender inequality because of men's oppression practices to attract the highest levels of economic powers and social prestige can be appropriately approached through the structure of patriarchy (Ritzer, 2008).

### **3.3 Theorising Patriarchy: Sylvia Walby's Perspective**

A critical analysis of patriarchy is considered indispensable in achieving a thorough understanding of gender relations. In feminist theory, patriarchy is considered the power relationship between men and women. In society, this relationship involves the context of a clear monolithic conception of male dominance and female subordination. Essentially, patriarchy is a social

system that subordinates women in several ways; it also suppresses men. It has set the stage for contemporary feminism (Bennett, 2006). Hence, feminism involves the awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression of women in all spheres of society.

Instead of eradicating the duality within society, there has been a change in the status of inequality imposed by the societal settings within the changed norms (Haferkamp and Smelser, 1992). Today, women are supposed to progress on merit, but patriarchy creates major obstacles to women's development in both public and private spheres of society. Hence, the social discourse has benefitted men to the detriment of women. The patriarchal nature of society gives priority to men in general and some men more than others while limiting women's human rights (Bankston, 2000).

Hence, society's patriarchal institutions are responsible for the inferior or secondary status of women in society. Observably, the mentality of the patriarchy is to degrade women's social status. Women have always been treated as a suppressed segment of society with inferior status in comparison to their male counterparts (Connell, 1998; Alexander, 1987).

Feminist sociologist Sylvia Walby's (1990) theoretical perspective on a dual system of feminism combines features of Marxism and radical feminism in one theory. She has made significant contributions to debates about the theorisation of patriarchy, the gender division of waged labour and formal politics, and equal opportunities policies. *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990) provides both a critical academic and a didactic political approach to the study of society. It is a lucid and subtle investigation of the socio-economic, cultural and political condition of men and women in contemporary society.



Simultaneously, Walby (1990) comments on the patriarchal system, stating that gender inequalities are sustained through a range of social structures that subordinate women, and that the patriarchal system, which is prominent within global society, affects the status of women all over the globe. Walby's patriarchal theory offers a wide range of theoretical tools for understanding gender relations, yet it has been criticised by several theorists because it does not address the various historical and cross-cultural forms of women's subordination (Barrett, 1980; Beechey, 1979; Carby, 1982; Connell, 1988; Coward, 1978; Hooks, 1984; Molyneux, 1979; Rowbotham, 1981; Sargent, 1981; Segal, 1987).

In this broader sense, Walby (1990: 20) defines patriarchy as:

‘a system of social structure, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women... the use of the term social structure is important here, since it clearly implies rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one... patriarchy is composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions...’.

Clearly, her definition rejects the notion of the superiority-inferiority complex between men and women in society (i.e. a rejection that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman is in a subordinate one). Walby's theory focuses on both the historical and structural features of gender. Initially examining the Western tradition, Walby (1990) posits a historical shift from ‘private to public patriarchy’. Walby suggested the following six structural features of patriarchy:

1. Household Production – the exploitation of women in the home in the form of unpaid housework and other domestic duties;
2. Paid Work – the exclusion of women from the labour market or segregation within sectors of low status and pay;
3. The State – women’s exclusion from or marginalisation within branches of the state (executive and legislative);
4. Male Violence – men’s socially patterned behaviours of (among others) rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence;
5. Sexuality – practices that promote ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ as distinct from lesbian, gay or transgendered relations;
6. Culture – major social institutions such as religion, education and the media.

Walby (1990) argued that in many Western societies there has been a move away from the ‘private patriarchy’ of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which excluded women from the public sphere as a result of the prevailing concept of patriarchal domination, to a system of ‘public patriarchy’ that predominates the social landscape in the twentieth century. The man in his role as the husband or father has been directly associated with the notions of oppression and beneficiary relationships in the nineteenth-century household (Bahry and Marr, 2005). Throughout the twentieth century, women experienced huge changes in terms of access to the public worlds of work, the state, and civil society, which amounted to a change in the form of patriarchy rather than its demise.

While women may have escaped some restrictions of family life, they still encounter segregation and subordination in the public sphere. According to Walby (1990, p. 201), ‘women are no longer restricted to the domestic hearth, but have the whole society in which to roam and be exploited’. However, women are still disadvantaged, marginalised and exploited within

paid work in a range of ways. The nature of the type of subordination in the workforce differs from one society to another and even affects the overall development of employed women, irrespective of the economy to which they belong (Kofman and Youngs, 2008).

For the last 20 years, theorists have studied the interaction of the women and work in relation to shifts in gender roles or divisions of labour (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2004). A growing body of feminist and pro-feminist research has provided sociologists with a more detailed understanding of the relationship between gender, work and organisation, and particularly of how men's and women's experiences of work differ. Feminists have also highlighted a range of ways in which work is gendered based on some being seen as women's work and others as men's (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005). Moreover, spatial locations determine the character and possibilities of changes in gender regimes. In the same context, women's paid labour is also dependent on changes in education, organisations, and the law. Class structures and age have been moderators of these changes.

Other feminists base their studies on perspectives of gender-based inequality developed by the United Nations and other governmental and non-governmental organizations (Chen et al. 2005). A study by Freeman and another by George focus on gendered division of labour in diverse economies (George, 2005; Freeman, 1999). Beneria (2003), on the other hand, undertakes a more critical review of gender, development, and the issue of globalization. Other studies also focus on the gendered labour market. For instance, Jarman et al. (2013) notes that gender differences in job access and better pay are substantial because men focus on the male tasks while women focus on the feminine roles. According to this study, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Sweden, Poland, and Portugal have a high rate of gendered segregation in employment and other contexts (Jarman et al.,

2013). Others, such as Romania, Japan, Greece, and the Netherlands, have lower rates of segregation.

Gender ideology has created patterns of labour market segmentation which concentrated those women who do engage in paid work in a relatively narrow range of occupations at the lowest levels of the occupational hierarchies – ‘women’s work’; where women are majority of worker (e.g., social work), it has made men more desirable as employees and also raised the issue of unequal payment (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005). Feminists have pointed out that the labour market is segmented both horizontally and vertically. *Horizontal segmentation* means that women are segmented across the labour market into a relatively narrow range of occupations. *Vertical segmentation* refers to the way in which, within these categories, women tend to be concentrated in relatively low-paid, low-status occupations; as they are unlikely to be promoted to senior management posts of a particular occupation.

Several factors influence societal tendencies to accept or reject certain types of work or equal pay for women. On the one hand, women are over-represented in a narrow range of occupations, including those at the lowest levels of occupational hierarchies. These patterns are also reflected in the gendering of professional and managerial work. Eisenstein (1995) argued that the difference originated in job designs that define some jobs as the best fit for men while others are best suited for women. Women often are concentrated in ‘women’s work’ that reflects feminine aspects of socialising and caring, such as ‘pink-collar’ jobs as nurses, secretaries and teachers, rather than male-dominated professions, such as doctors, lawyers and pilots, which are seen as ‘men’s jobs’ (Cotter *et al.*, 2001).

This means that women are often concentrated in a narrow range of occupational sectors which include semi-skilled or unskilled non-manual work or in caring work and are usually supervised by men. They are thought to possess the attributes necessary to perform this work as a result either of their feminine nature or their gendered experience of socialisation (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005). On the other hand, it is impractical to ignore the greater percentage of women who still earn lower wages than equally qualified males. In 2010, employed women earned 81 per cent as much as men in the United Kingdom (International Labour Organization, 2015) and the gap continued to narrow.

In most societies, the gender pay gap is evident through women getting less pay than their gender counterparts do for performing equal tasks. Although the disparities vary by employment sector and the country in question, it is estimated that around 70% of women in formal employment settings earn lower wages (ITUC, 2009). However, the International Labour Organization (2015) notes that equality in pay in the US has been improving since 1979. Abbott, Wallace and Tyler (2005) have cited a research review by the Equal Opportunities Commission in the UK (EOC, 2001) which highlights women's concentration in a narrow range of occupations and in part-time work as two of the main factors contributing to the persistence of the gender pay gap. The report also argues that, compared with other industrialised countries, women in the UK suffer substantial earnings losses over a lifetime, particularly those who leave work to raise children.

Hence, it is clear that Walby addresses the dimensions of the shift from 'private to public patriarchy', which has apparently led to the extensive subordination of women in employment and working contexts, implying that the consequences of such a phenomenon still could be experienced today. This has also meant a move away from strategies designed to exclude

women from paid work (e.g., through ‘protective’ legislation) to segregationist and subordinating strategies manifested in occupational segmentation and in women’s under-representation in trade unions and professional bodies and pay discrimination, for instance (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005). Although women were not extensively exploited by individual patriarchs in their homes, they were exploited by men on a collective basis through their apparent subordination in various public areas (Walby, 1988).

Walby, similar to other proponents of her school of thought, was dissatisfied with both concepts of patriarchy and feminism, which motivated her to develop a conception of the relevance of patriarchy to feminist theory. Those two categories seem interconnected and complex, which means that they should be explored from various perspectives in the attempt to uncover the subtle mechanisms by which patriarchy is deeply embedded in certain social structures (Walby, 1990). Patriarchy and feminism are distinct forms of social relations with distinct sets of interests that coexist even in conflict. Endemic to the history of the interaction between patriarchy and feminism are conflicts over the labour exploitation of women in the interests of capitalism and patriarchy, are discussed later in this thesis. Walby’s theory of patriarchy is deeply engaged with the history of this interaction (Fuller, 2011).

Hence, there have been huge changes in the concepts of feminism within an every changing patriarchal system. The essentialist conceptualisation of patriarchy ought not to be at varying levels of abstraction to exist as a system of social relations that include capitalism. This means that Walby’s (1990) theoretical account gives as much weight to the system of capitalism as it does to the system of patriarchy. She considers that capitalism and patriarchy are interrelated. Indeed, capitalism benefits from patriarchy to a particular

extent, and she provides empirical evidence to support this variation, especially in relation to the sexual division of labour. Even though certain differences exist in terms of domination, the overall principles of male domination of women remain the same because men always try to be in control of any situation involving women (Golkowska, 2014).

One of the major goals of socialist feminism's theoretical project was to support an argument for interrelated dual knowledge, which is the knowledge of oppression under the patriarchy and oppression under capitalism from the standpoint of women's experience, which was unified under the term of *capitalist patriarchy* (Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1979; Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978).

Present-day societies operate based on the patriarchal social settings that have overwhelmingly determined the status of women. In terms of developing capitalist societies, some sociologists appear to claim that men employ a financial hierarchy whereby they exclude women from posts of power (Buskens *et. al.*, 2014; Connell, 2001; Walby, 1990). Patriarchy is concerned with the subordination of women to serve the needs of both men (including their sexual needs) and capitalism by securing a flexible, cheap labour force in which women's supposedly 'innate' skills can be commodified and exploited in the pursuit of profit (Walby, 1990). Hence, although it may be in the interests of patriarchy for women to stay at home, it is in the interests of capitalism for women to engage in (low) paid work (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005). In contrast, Connell (2005b) stated that with the advent of internationalisation in the modern-day context, slight changes within the level of discrimination among women have occurred. However, complete equality irrespective of gender cannot be established within society (Connell, 2005b).

Correspondingly, Abbott, Wallace and Tyler (2005) noted that feminists argued that patriarchy and capitalism have competing interests but reach mutual accommodations. Thus, men (as fathers, partners and husbands) benefit from the additional income generated by women who work. However, research has indicated that many women continue to retain the major responsibility for childcare and domestic labour (especially given their relatively lower wages than men).

Although there have been advances with regard to women's access to the public world, discrimination remains evident with respect to gender roles. Marchand and Runyan (2000) also commented that some societies consider men better equipped with social and financial decision-making skills and that women have nothing to do with economic planning within the family. However, the concepts of capitalist patriarchy and feminism are analytically distinct in their explanations of the continued subordination and unequal status of women in society. Walby's conceptualisation of capitalist patriarchy does not recognise the reduction of patriarchy to capitalism, despite gender relations in societies that are significantly changing under capitalism. According to Walby (1990), feminism was not a derivative of either capitalism or patriarchy (Fuller, 2011). She states that capitalist patriarchy is essentially gender blind and therefore aggravates the subordination of women in society. Hence, rather than perceiving women's subordination as dependent upon patriarchy, Walby understands capitalism as being of least equal importance in understanding the contribution of the subordination of women to feminism.

From the feminist perspective, the focus on authority systematises society into multifaceted relations based on the affirmation of male superiority. In terms of dual system theory, radical feminists assert that patriarchy is the leading cause of gender inequality, whereas socialists hold that gender



inequality is the result of capitalism. Because of criticisms and counter-arguments, theorists came up with the dual systems theory, which postulates diverse types of interaction between patriarchy and capitalism. The dominance of certain patriarchal structures that tend to restrict women and lead to male domination has led to emerging challenges to female emancipation.

Walby argues that different groups of women continue to encounter the negative effects of such deeply embedded attitudes into contemporary society's public and private patriarchy. The inevitable interaction between capitalism and patriarchy has given rise to specific forms of occupational segregation by sex in work (Walby, 1990). In this sense, radical feminists note that patriarchy perpetuates male dominance even in employment (Ferris and Stein, 2008), which means that the concept of patriarchy can be comprehended from the perspective of operating through paid work, creating a significant obstacle to female advancement and development and emphasising how women encounter horizontal and vertical segregation. Consequently, women receive lower rates of pay compared to men, indicating that the patriarchal trend contributes to exacerbating the gender inequality in society (Johnson, 1996).

A further relevant example of this argument, which is found in the literature on female subordination and patriarchy, is related to the situation of British women of Afro-Caribbean origin, who are more likely to be oppressed by public patriarchy (Al-Misnad, 2010). It also has been revealed that British Muslim women tend to experience the limitations attached to private patriarchy in society. Walby further indicates that despite the existence of patriarchy in Britain, it has changed in certain aspects. For instance, it has been shown that young women have made substantial progress compared to older women, and they have succeeded in overcoming the challenges of

female subordination in public areas (Golkowska, 2014). Older women may still encounter private patriarchy, but younger females tend to have better educational qualifications and experience, which helps them secure better employment opportunities.

In the dual system, women's working potential is significantly marginalised by their actual dual function in society: they are responsible both for performing both child-rearing duties and formal employment roles. Another patriarchal structure described by Walby refers to the gender division of labour in the household. This aspect is believed to force women to take primary responsibility for housework and childcare. Although women work in full-time employment, the patriarchal structure of the gender division of labour is considered to limit females' potential for professional realisation in the workplace (Walby, 1990).

Additionally, Hartmann (1979) maintained the analytical separation between capitalism and patriarchy although admitting that capitalism changes the nature of employment to some extent. She argued that both housework and wage labour are important areas of women's exploitation by men. Within the field of paid work, occupational segregation is used by organised men to restrict the access to the best-paid jobs to themselves at the expense of women. Within the household, women do more labour than men do, even if they also have paid employment (Hartmann, 1981). This argument is problematic in its ability to sustain the duality of capitalism and patriarchy in its analysis.

Moreover, Ann Oakley (1982) has suggested that the sexual division of labour is socially constructed, not based on natural biological differences. Other feminists have argued that many of the assumptions underpinning the sexual division of labour are not only grounded in structural inequalities that

disadvantage women but also rely on empirically unsustainable cultural assumptions about women's 'nature' and ways of life. Women's marginalisation and exploitation in paid work exist largely in reference to the dynamic relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. For instance, based on gender ideology, which influences the type of occupations that women seek and are offered, most women assume (as do their husbands, employers and the state) that even if they have paid employment, they are still solely or primarily responsible for childcare and domestic labour.

Consequently, employers exploit this dual role of women in terms of job offerings and pay. In the work setting, men's perspectives and contributions are valued more than those of women. Women are silenced and marginalised irrespective of their intelligence and skills. Furthermore, women are required to depend on upon the male gender both socially and economically, which is another reason that women are accorded lower status in the work place. Nonetheless, it has been recognised that women have gradually gained greater access to public domains as part of the broad emancipation movement. In fact, their opportunities for employment have substantially increased despite the disadvantages they encounter in the labour market compared to the situation with male employees.

Walby also discusses the patriarchal basis of heterosexual relationships despite the fact that women have made certain progress in this context, especially in relation to modern contraception practices and liberalisation of abortion and divorce law. It has been indicated that the most sustained patriarchal structure is represented by male violence against women, which shows the subordinate position of females in society to a significant extent (Walby, 1990). Walby points out that patriarchy is sustained by the precise activities of the state in the sense of promoting patriarchal, capitalist and racist values and principles. Moreover, research has shown that certain

reforms have been achieved in this relation. For instance, women have increasingly equal educational opportunities, and divorce laws have been revised to protect females against the deeply engrained patriarchy in society (Golkowska, 2014).

The patriarchal research has further indicated that women are powerless and deprived of rights and resources. From this perspective, patriarchy is viewed as a broad, institutionalised system of male dominance, which means that various social institutions and groups tend to extend the dimensions of such dominance. In this limited system, different types of violence may be utilised to control women. In different parts of the world, male violence against women is considered legitimate (Sonbol, 2012). The states' refusal to intervene in male violence further complicates the situation regarding women's protection and basic human rights. The persistent sense of female insecurity is usually derived from different forms of male violence, indicating that those women are kept bound to the home to exploit them socially and economically.

In such patriarchal systems, males and females behave and think differently because they have been encouraged to think of masculinity/femininity discourse as fuelling gender differences and inequality (Berger and Luckmann, 1971). The elements of this patriarchal system are often experienced in the workplace of certain countries, especially those with male-oriented tendencies, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. The emphasis on specific masculine qualities, which have been commonly identified as strength, bravery and competitiveness, has increased gender inequality in the workplace (Golkowska, 2014).

It is worth mentioning that over time, Walby's theory has become increasingly sophisticated (2003, 2009) such that the six structures of

patriarchy have now been transformed sociologically into the overarching notion of a 'social system' bifurcated into 'institutional domains' and 'regimes of inequality' (Walby, 2007). Still, the theory remains recognisably feminist but is also influenced by recent developments in sociology which stress that social inquiry researches complex, open systems and that such research has implications for social policy formation (e.g. Byrne, 2002, 2011).

Walby's four 'institutional domains' now consists of economy, polity, violence, and civil society. Her 'regimes of inequality' are multiple (for example, racism and homophobia), but clearly the focus of this research is gender. One of Walby's central points, however, is that 'regimes of inequality' tend to consist of 'multiple intersecting inequalities' (Walby, Armstrong and Strid, 2012), i.e., an individual may be simultaneously oppressed not just as a woman but as a black woman, as a black woman with disabilities, and so on (see Crenshaw, 1991).

There are two further significant features of Walby's recent work. The first is a concern with what she calls the 'co-evolution of global processes with trajectories of development' (Walby, 2009: 41-46). This prompts questions about the ways in which phenomena such as globalisation, Americanisation, Westernisation and modernisation are implemented but also contested by national and local cultures.

The second significant feature is the phenomenon of 'gender mainstreaming' (Walby, 2005) by which she updates the argument of 'from private to public patriarchy'. Walby's discourse is primarily concerned with the prospects of 'mainstreaming' within the UK, Scandinavia and the European Union. In positive terms, it refers to the embedding of policies to eradicate gender inequalities at the level of the state and the main political actors in civil

society (for example, NGOs), signalling the success of feminist activism. But as Walby also points out ‘gender mainstreaming’ is, to say the least, a ‘contested concept’ (2005: 321) and has even been considered as ‘hollow’, ‘purely technocratic’ (Daly, 2005) or even a co-opted ‘suspicious place’ for ‘social movement activists’ (Woodward and Kohli, 2001).

### **3.4 The Relevance of Walby’s Theoretical Framework for the Research**

Examining how Walby’s sociological gender theory relates to gender inequality in this specific context involves the process of analysing the extent of the historical transformation in Qatar ‘from private to public patriarchy’. This section deconstructs Walby’s binary configuration of the private patriarchy and public patriarchy divide and shows how it aids the interrogation of the Qatar workforce. In doing so, it questions the processes of change adduced by Walby and shows the extent to which they are applicable to the status of women in the workforce.

As previously noted, Walby uses the term ‘patriarchy’ to refer to a broad form of social organisation in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women in a range of social settings (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005). Walby’s structures of gender relations in domestic work, the state, male violence, sexuality, culture and paid employment are fundamentally relational, in that each structure contains a set of gendered practices that exclude or marginalise women. Hence, Walby’s theoretical framework appears relevant to the present research, considering the notions of private and public patriarchy that are still prevailing in some sections of Qatari society. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, the contextual material considered the degree and form of patriarchy that Qatari women experience in their access to the public worlds of work, the state and civil society, which showed a change in the form of patriarchy. Although it is true that women may have

escaped some of the restrictions of family life in the household, they encounter forms of segregation and subordination in the public sphere.

In Qatar, the structure of the 'labour' market is visible both in the increasing presence of Qatari women in the workforce and the clear causal link between women's employment and reduced gender inequality. However, there is an obvious absence of women in senior positions of managerial control. The literature review revealed that women still carry out core domestic chores and childcare, which may restrict their presence in either the workforce in general or in senior management positions in particular, thus creating limitations to the progress of Qatari women in the workplace. The literature also suggested that the historical 'drag' of culture and tradition back to the 'domestic hearth' remains a barrier to employed women's equality.

However, because of the substantial number of Qatari women entering the workplace, it is important to explore this theoretical framework from new perspectives (Walby, 1988). Even though the economic participation of women in the Arab states is low, women in Qatar represent the fastest growing group in the workforce, and they have great potential to contribute substantially to the country's economy. In this regard, Ogato (2013) noted that in less developed countries (LDC) the status of women is extremely underdeveloped, and their equal rights still need many years to develop. It is important to note that Qatar is an example of an Arab country in which the traditional concept of patriarchy, as perceived by Walby, has started to change gradually (Al-Malki *et al.*, 2012). Young Qatari women have been changing their social attitudes towards education and employment, which challenges the notions of both private and public patriarchy.

It has been indicated that Qatar women tend to perceive their identity as deeply embedded in the family and religion, particularly Islam (Golkowska,

2014). Despite the fact that Qatari women recognise the importance of various educational and professional opportunities, they might not be ready to give up the security of their home and religious beliefs. This perspective is closely linked to Walby's model of private patriarchy, through which Qatari women seem to identify themselves with higher levels of personal comfort and security (Walby, 1990). The idea of private patriarchy may be considered a protective mechanism that helps women feel secure in their home environment. The notion of private patriarchy in the Qatari case seems interrelated to the impact of religion. The latter is perceived as protecting Qatari women. Therefore, the common attitude shared by contemporary Qatari women is associated with the dialectic of tradition and modernity (Golkowska, 2014).

On one hand, those women tend to demonstrate the prevalence of modern elements in their thinking patterns, especially in their strong willingness to educate themselves and aspire to professions once dominated by males. On the other hand, Qatari women seem unable to embrace modernism to their fullest potential. In this context, it appears irrelevant to those women to elevate themselves above the typical, patriarchal structure of the family as a specific unit of influence (Al-Misnad, 1985). In the majority of the cases, Qatari women are largely unprepared to compromise their Muslim identity, which is embedded in their family structure.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the subordinate status of women is affected by men's perceptions, which are drawn from traditional and societal contexts. Gender inequalities are often derived from the cultural beliefs and emphases on different natures that are prominent within the social domain (Kofman and Youngs, 2008). Gender discrimination is often camouflaged by the norms, rules and regulations directing the society, which have their roots in the traditional male-dominant society that underlies social structures



(Walby, 2009). This means that gendered assumptions about appropriate work for men and women, as well as the impact of women's domestic responsibilities, continue to shape the gendered division of professional work (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005).

According to Golkowska (2014), young Qatari women do not perceive themselves as passive citizens or even victims of the prevailing patriarchal structure of Qatari society. On the contrary, those women are highly determined to find agency within the limitations of such a patriarchal society. Therefore, the application of the concept of public patriarchy to the Qatari case seems relevant (Golkowska, 2014). For instance, it has become a common practice for young Qatari women to include a written statement of permission to pursue education and employment in their marriage contracts. This aspect illustrates a significant change that has taken place in the mind set of Qatari women despite certain social tensions caused by the emergence of the concept of public patriarchy, which was thoroughly described by Walby (1990).

Nevertheless, despite Qatar women's awareness of their rights, gender inequality often leads to gender discrimination in public and private worlds. Because society is believed to function perfectly in stratified gender situations, people accept the latter, which explains why people promote gender inequality in the public world. Moreover, such structures emphasise that there should be efforts to *maintain* gender stratification. Another structural perspective defends the need to establish the division of labour within families. Naturally, women have a biological role that they need to fulfil. Men, however, have responsibilities that require greater strength than that perceived to be needed by women (Ferris and Stein, 2008).

Additionally, gender theorist Judith Butler (1990) asserted that practices of gender inequality in the workplace were the result of categorising every woman to an integrated group disconnected from men, which arose from the perception of gender as a fixed binary. As a result, the choice of occupation, work assignments, pay and career advancement are decided according to the masculine/feminine gender binary. Moreover, widening gender inequality in employment arises from perceiving people, particularly females, as a unified homogenous group, thus depriving women of their individual identities.

In this regard, at present Qatari women are concentrated in a small number of occupations, primarily in the education and health care sectors. Hence, these women are still limited because of the dominant perspective of public patriarchy, which seems to fuel gender inequality in the Qatari workplace, especially when women aspire to leadership positions. Certain sectors of the economy, such as construction, trade, manufacturing and tourism, are extensively considered inappropriate for the inclusion of Qatari females in the workforce (Henderson and Rajakumar, 2010).

Walby (1990) argues that in Western Europe and North America, for young white women with good educations the relationship between paid employment and decreased gender inequality is obvious. However, the same notion does not apply to Qatari women, especially working-class and older women who enter into paid employment. Hence, Qatari women may be differently positioned from white educated women. This aspect can be explained by the patriarchal structure of Qatari society, mainly its conservative sections. The notion of inappropriateness of specific occupations for women is interrelated with the substantial influence of public patriarchy, as outlined by Walby. In fact, such patriarchy is behind the construction of specific social structures and practices in which Qatari men tend to dominate women in terms of occupying leadership positions

(Abdalla, 2015). Therefore, Qatari men are more evenly distributed across various sectors of the Qatari economy because they are provided greater choices in selecting their professional occupations compared to women.

Even though it might be irrelevant to argue that Qatari women are victimised despite the significant economic and social changes that took place in the country, it is clear that they have built their lives around the direct experience and expectations of a domestic gender regime that is associated with the concept of private patriarchy (Budworth and Mann, 2010). It would be more reasonable to claim that those Qatari women could be considered disadvantaged in relation to the lower wages they tend to receive in the workplace compared to men. Nevertheless, Qatari women have started preparing themselves for a lifetime of paid employment with sufficient education and training opportunities.

Moreover, Walby argues that such social structures allow for particular flexibility because not all men are found in dominant positions, and not all women are dominated. This statement is applicable to the Qatari case, considering the substantial economic and social transformation of this Arab state (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2006). Unlike other, more conservative Arab societies, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatari society has undergone major changes from rigid patriarchal structures to flexible and less limiting practices that allow women greater freedom in selecting various education and employment options.

These changes in Qatar society indicate that the development of the nation is strongly tied to the development of the economy. The overall development of gender roles is clearly dependent on the economic development that the nation has experienced over the years (Eastin and Prakash, 2013). The major economic and social changes in the country have been reflected positively in

the status of employed women. The implementation of new perspectives is required to determine the possibilities for Qatari women to progress to their full potential (Henderson and Rajakumar, 2010).

In light of these positive changes, it is relevant to conceptualise certain changes in the sexual division of labour in the contemporary Qatari workplace. As noted, the changing economic and social landscape of Qatar indicates significant prospects for the empowerment of Qatari women to a substantial extent in the future (Hausmann *et al.*, 2013). There is evidence that positive social attitudes towards Qatari women working outside the home are continuously developing, which is an obvious sign of an extensive transformation across the Qatari society and may reflect decreased gender inequality in the workplace, especially with regard to Qatari women's aspirations for leadership positions.

In Chapter 2, the position of Qatari women was examined in order to understand the specific circumstances under which they enter paid employment and utilise this important change for their further empowerment. The literature review showed that the number of Qatari women entering new professions has substantially increased in recent years as increasing numbers of Qatari females have started to pursue occupations such as lawyers, agents and police officers. In response to labour market needs, different universities across Qatar have opened programmes such as architecture and chemical engineering to women (Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008).

These measures indicate the major social changes taking place in the country, which to a certain extent have challenged the notion of public patriarchy. In this dynamic context, it is necessary to explain modern social change such as that taking place in the reformed Qatari society (Walby,

1990). The contextualisation of changes in gender relations is an important aspect of Walby's theory of change.

Walby indicates that private patriarchy is prevalent in the experiences of older women, and this notion is applicable to the Qatari context. From this perspective, it can be argued that the factors of age and generation emerge as significant indicators of different social stages in the lifecycles of Qatari women (Henderson and Rajakumar, 2010). Women of different ages tend to embody various systems of patriarchy, implying that the overall notion of patriarchy cannot be eliminated. It thrives in different and substantially changed social contexts. Thus, the life trajectories of Qatari women appear to be structured by different social systems and practices with regard to education and employment opportunities (Johnson, 1996).

In Walby's theoretical model of change, the concept of participation might be irrelevant in distinguishing certain social practices. From this perspective, placing Qatari women in the context of a decision-making hierarchy could not be used as a decisive factor in determining their overall level of participation in leadership positions in the modern workplace (ESCWA, 2006). Even though women in Qatar have started participating actively in different organisations, they may remain subordinated within those organisations.

Therefore, the concept of female segregation to less powerful positions emerges in the Qatari case. Although Qatari women obtain better educations than Qatari men, which has received attention recently, the former are still limited in demonstrating their leadership skills to their fullest potential (Henderson and Rajakumar, 2010). Thus, segregation should be extensively analysed in the social context of complex and unequal gender relations in

Qatari society. From the perspective of Walby, segregation is a patriarchal strategy.

According to Buskens *et al.* (2014), societal and cultural limitations influence the mentality of people and even affect their decision-making about articulating proper reforms for preventing discrimination within the workforce. According to Alexander (1987), the micro links that are prominent within society play a vital role in developing the behavioural traits of an individual. Micro links generally refer to the orientation of family, cultural and religious beliefs of an individual and his or her peers, and they eventually have a huge influence on the overall behaviour of individuals (Alexander, 1987). Thus, it can be stated that both micro links and macro links are major influences on developing the attitudes of men towards women (Buskens *et al.*, 2014).

Hence, Qatar government is a key target in gender politics, and it is the focus of most political mobilisations on gender issues. It is also the heart of gendered power and is liable to crises and change, which include problems of legitimation related to men's violence and tensions arising from the gender division of labour (i.e., equal opportunity for women and the 'glass ceiling') (Connell, 2009).

The Qatari government plays a significant role in improving women's working conditions by initiating policies and regulations related to social services, political mobilisation, and promoting equal economic rights for both genders. According to Strange and Bayley (2008), human wellbeing has been a major area of concern for the development of the overall economy. Hence, economic development is heavily dependent on the development of equality among members of society, and equal rights for all human beings are likely to enhance the ability of an economy to succeed within the global

domain (Servaes, 2008). Therefore, it is true that social settings must incorporate the establishment of equal human rights for all human beings and eliminate sexual discrimination (Haferkamp and Smelser, 1992). In addition, Varghese (2011) commented on the fact that women's empowerment and liberalisation is a major issue for the development of the status of women in a global context. Consequently, collaborative women empowerment projects have been a major need in developing Qatar's society.

The significant number of female foreign workers in Qatar is considered an essential factor in the liberalisation of Qatari women (Henderson and Rajakumar, 2010). Moreover, changing family relationships in the country tend to reflect new, dynamic views of female roles. Women's ability to balance family and work responsibilities has been consistently emphasised in the context of changed social relations that seem to decrease gender inequality in the Qatari workplace (Johnson, 1996).

Additionally, offering equal employment opportunities for both genders in Qatar can be interpreted as the desired level of change anticipated by Walby in her theoretical framework of a changing public patriarchy towards a refined understanding of women's empowerment. Another positive sign of these changes in the modern Qatari workplace is related to employers' views of women as valuable assets in organisations. It is hoped that such an attitude will prevail in Qatari organisations, replacing public patriarchal practices that intensify gender inequality (Jawad, 1998). The change in Qatari women's expectations and attitudes then could be embraced.

Women have significant prospects for higher leadership positions in the future. For instance, it has been illustrated that younger Qatari women do not appear extensively concerned with the prospect of working in a mixed-gender environment. In fact, these women are motivated to have successful

careers, as they are focused on attaining their professional goals. Hence, Qatari women will enter the modern workplace with more open minds and flexible attitudes compared to their predecessors (Jawad, 1998). Hence, it is relevant to note that these women would aim at balancing the traditional expectations of their patriarchal society with their own aspirations for professional success, indicating that in Qatar society, a private patriarchy model exists in the context of public patriarchy.

In addition, the advancement of Qatar's economic development goals could be entirely possible with the active participation of women in the workforce and their achievement of leadership positions. Such objectives are mostly related to the country's vision to expand the percentage of Qatari nationals in the labour force, promote the privatisation of different industry sectors and improve the efficiency of the government's sector operations (Henderson and Rajakumar, 2010). Therefore, Walby's theory of change is applicable to the case of Qatar because of the preparation and extensive motivation of young women to work and prove their potential in different spheres of social and economic life.

A significant part of this change is associated with encouraging employment opportunities for Qatari women in the private sector. In Qatar, the private sector has experienced ongoing transformations, as the idea is to encourage females to consider working in industry because of the interesting and challenging opportunities available. As a result, a similar change is expected to lead to Qatari women's long-term professional achievements and career success (ESCWA, 2006). By increasing Qatari women's participation in high-demand occupations and leadership positions, the prospects for empowering Qatari females are significant. It is important to consider the fact that Qatari women represent a dominant percentage of the educated



labour force in the country, implying that such a tendency should be further utilised to expand the advantages to females (Jawad, 1998).

Therefore, it should be noted that women subordination, which has direct roots in traditional societal settings and attitudes, has been perpetuated by the laws that have been incorporated in the societal system. This is identified as the main force of change in the patterns of patriarchal societal settings, leading to equal opportunity policies within the Qatar workforce. Notably, the tradition-centred hegemony—the predominance of masculinity in domestic life—is challenged. Thus, the state laws are shifting the characteristic forms of both patriarchy and masculinity.

In addition, in Qatar the patriarchal model exists not only at the family level but also at the community level. However, the shift from ‘private to public patriarchy’ follows a top-down model rather than a bottom-up model in the country. This can be considered a different approach to achieving women’s rights in the workforce. However, this change is irrelevant in Walby’s bottom-up model of the patriarchal shift because the empowerment projects of women were initiated because of governmental commitments to improve the status of women in the labour force. Thus, the theoretical model of change as outlined by Walby, can only be applied to the Qatari case in the shift from public patriarchy to more opportunities for women empowerment and through a new approach to patriarchal shift. Therefore, an attempt to refashion Walby’s theory may be required to identify core societal settings in Qatar that are not covered in her analysis (e.g., extended family dimension, the recruitment of domestic help etc.).

### **The Role of Walby’s Theoretical Framework in the Research**

In this thesis, the role of Walby’s theoretical framework is to orient the research to the macro-features of women’s equality in the workforce and to

inform and guide the micro features of the research design (see Chapter 4). Investigating patriarchal relations in paid work, which is considered a form of patriarchal structure that operates at the economic level in the recent history of Qatar, can identify forms of significant gender inequalities. Hence, the theory is intended to help clarify what Alexander *et al.* (1987) called the ‘micro-macro link’ in which the ‘lived experience’ of participants ‘on the ground’ is not only understood for its own sake but also brought into productive engagement with the historical and structural features of gender inequality in Qatar’s labour market.

Hence, the present research does not ‘test’ a theory in order ‘falsify’ it (Karl Popper, 2002), which would imply the prioritisation of the theoretical framework over the empirical research and a sociology of social structure, that is the ‘macro’ over human agency the ‘micro’. Interestingly, one of the earliest critiques of Walby’s work in *Theorising Patriarchy* (1990) was that it constituted a form of ‘abstract structuralism’ (Pollert, 1996) which is explored in the following section.

### **3.5 Criticism of Walby’s Patriarchy Theory**

It is important to note that there has been substantial criticism of the notion of patriarchy, as illustrated in Walby’s theoretical approach. This section provides critiques of Walby’s binary thinking, which has been criticised by postmodern feminists and other critics, and it discusses my position regarding these critics.

Various critics of the patriarchy school of thought were concerned with this approach’s tendency towards essentialism and biological reductionism. For instance, Walby’s work was criticised by Niklas Luhmann (1985) because of its essentialism (Browne, 2005). Walby rebuts the critics and provides

branches of the complexity theory. In her overview, she rejects the equilibrium assumption included in those earlier theories.

In addition, she draws on existing critics such as Anna Pollert (1996), who claimed that while 'class' remains an important category, patriarchy has no internal dynamic of its own. Pollert (1996) argued that Walby is guilty of 'abstract structuralism', insisting, theory, rather than being abstract, needs to be embedded in the substantive empirical analysis of social process. Walby loses the tension between agency and structure, which is necessary to understand social processes, ending with a static form of systems theory. In order to address this tension, the analysis needs to be embedded in an empirical, micro-sociological study of 'lived experience' that consists of women's experiences of home, work, sex and so on. Heidi Gottfried (1998) asserted that gender must be analysed in lived experience in order to dissolve the static opposition of capitalism and patriarchy.

According to Murray (1992), Walby's combination of class analysis and radical feminist theory and the implications of such a position are potentially the most problematic area of her work. Walby (1990) argues that there are different forms of patriarchy, which interact with six patriarchal structures rather than simply one base, which is necessary to avoid reductionism. She seems to take an anti-reductionist approach, but ironically, she appears to have committed to an economic definition of relations of production, which have been associated with 'base' and 'superstructure' and ultimately reductionist models of social relations in Marxist discourse. Relations of production may thus comprise elements that are often considered part of the superstructure, such as state and cultural institutions.

Walby's work was also criticised by Lovat (2012), who stated that the issue of assumed patriarchy was not fully analysed nor was the issue of race and

gender. Walby deftly steers a middle course between what has become an unnecessary and unproductive dichotomy (in her terms) between modernist theorising and postmodernist theorising. She argues for a structural, but not structuralist, use of the insights of discourse analysis in specifying social structures (Howard, 1999). Mary Maynard (1992) also claimed that it is not clear why the six structures chosen by Walby were included as elements of a patriarchal system, nor is it clear how some structural elements relate. She stated that one must ask questions such as ‘What is it that constitutes them as structures, rather than as practices; and in what theoretical sense are they equivalent as structures of social phenomena?’

Postmodern feminists argue that as a theory, patriarchy appears quite flawed because it is related to the description of certain concepts pertaining to the situation of women, rather than providing a relevant explanation of those aspects. This implies that the essential role of individual agency is completely denied under Walby’s patriarchy theory, indicating that such a critical approach is represented in the view that women are broadly perceived as victims (Nicholson, 1989). Women are described as unable to escape their predetermined conditions, which is particularly valid in conservative societies such as Qatar. According to Muravyeva and Toivo (2012), the concept of patriarchy reflects a system through which women are not given the chance to exploit their potential and are always rendered passive. These authors argued that patriarchy highlights male repressive power and fails to explain male-female relationships. Hence, Walby’s theory was criticised because it views patriarchy as a universal and static or fixed system based on male domination and female subordination.

However, in the postmodern feminist critique of Walby’s theory, the notion of patriarchy implies that gender relations are fluid. Such fluidity was illustrated by the example of changing family structures through which

common male and female roles are persistently challenged. For instance, the role of fathers has been questioned and enhanced in order to include them actively in the process of raising their children (Walby, 1988). However, the notion of the reinforced position of fathers may seem irrelevant in the Qatari case because the patriarchal structure of society is still prevalent.

As a universal theory, Walby's model of patriarchy has certain limitations. One limitation pointed out by critics is related to the inability to provide an appropriate explanation of the differential experiences of diverse groups of women around the world. The same critical conclusion applies to the Qatari context where it is challenging to present strong conclusions regarding gender relations in the workplace because the nature of these relations is dynamic. By failing to include the diverse experiences of females in the workplace, the opportunities for understanding the way gender relations are constructed can be significantly diminished (Nicholson, 1989). In this respect, some women may face fewer challenges in the Qatari labour market compared to other females.

Despite the arguments against the persistent usefulness of the notion of patriarchy, different postmodern feminist approaches have emerged to introduce a harsh critique of women's realities in terms of gender and equality in the workplace. As a result, males' concerns and interests have gradually started to dominate the discourse of public and political agendas in different societies around the world (Kottiswari, 2008). Therefore, a recent trend observed in the relevant discourse is associated with replacing the notion of patriarchy with one of gender. Hence, it could be argued that Walby's concept may be considered outdated in the context of modern social and political conditions, including the situation in Qatar. Terms such as gender relations and gendered attitudes have occupied a substantial part of public attention.

Furthermore, it is relevant to note that gender is an elastic concept compared to the notion of patriarchy. However, the male-female dichotomy, in addition to masculinity and femininity, are crucial to individuals' understanding of the complexity of social relations. An emerging challenge pertaining to the nature of patriarchy is that it cannot properly accommodate the constantly altering attitudes in response to changing gender relations (Kottiswari, 2008). From this perspective, postmodern feminism is mostly associated with the emergence of gendered stereotyping (Nicholson, 1989). Pollert (1996) also criticised Walby's theory of gender inequality by arguing that patriarchy lacks an explanation and description sufficient to allow people to understand gender inequality. This author criticised the use of patriarchy to explain gender inequality and the dynamic mechanisms of interactions between men and women.

Simultaneously, critics such as Linda McDowell (1998) asserted that Walby's overall theorisation of patriarchy failed to capture the current extent of the variety of ways in which gender relations are being restructured, especially regarding some of the class and ethnic differences that seem to be widening among women as well as between women and men. Furthermore, Kocabiçak (2013) suggested that patriarchy has been misunderstood as a form of conspiracy that blames all men; yet not all men are dominating. Such criticism is based on the proposition that social hierarchy causes inequality or disparity in society. Patriarchy does not provide a full description of the intersecting oppressions that occur across gender.

According to one reviewer (Walters, 1991) of Walby's book, *Theorising Patriarchy* (1990), Walby's theorising of patriarchy has two main aims: 1) to rebut criticisms of the essentialist nature of the concept; 2) to demonstrate that 'the specification of the separation between patriarchy and capitalism is

necessary and achievable' (p. 7). In Walby's book, the former comes to the fore while the latter tends to be assumed and not demonstrated.

In *Patriarchy at Work: Patriarchal and Capitalist Relations in Employment* (1986), Walby defines patriarchy as 'a system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women' (p. 51). Myra H. Strober (1988) believed that the term 'exploitation' should be omitted from the definition of patriarchy because it is defined differently in various economic theories and because Walby repeatedly stresses the analytic and empirical autonomy of capitalism and patriarchy. Thus, it seems particularly desirable to define patriarchy without employing the term 'exploitation' and its possible capitalist/Marxist connotations, which are discussed in section 3.2.

According to Daly (2005), capitalism can be used instead of patriarchy to explain gender differences and oppressions because capitalism is more realistic than patriarchy. It shows how gender relations are shaped by economic structures. Moreover, Murray (1992) stated that Walby's appraisal of Marxist feminist analysis is far from convincing because it is overly focused on capitalism, rendering it unable to explain gender inequality in pre- and post-capitalist societies. However, Marxist/socialist feminism has not confined itself to an analysis of women in capitalist societies.

Hence, the notion of patriarchy has been somewhat denigrated as a solid foundation for understanding social relations. However, it can be concluded that the arguments provided by Walby still can be used to determine the level of gender inequality in workplace settings, particularly in the Qatari case.

### **3.6 Summary**

This chapter outlined the relevance of Walby's theoretical framework to this thesis through deconstructing Walby's binary configuration of the private patriarchy and public patriarchy divide. It also provided a considerable

critique of Walby's theory of patriarchy and presented the ways in which Walby's theory of patriarchy is linked to Qatari women's position in society. This framework confirmed that patriarchy plays a significant role in influencing gender inequalities in the Qatari context, particularly in employment settings, but empirical findings in the later chapters will confirm whether or not this is the case.

Depending on women's social status and the changes in the gender roles that Qatar women presently play in society, it can be inferred that a new perspective on the patriarchal system is evident in the Qatari case. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate how 'social processes' and the 'lived experience' of Qatari women in leadership positions are explored to avoid the pitfalls of the 'abstract structuralism' of Walby's patriarchy theory. The interaction of this theoretical framework with the empirical analysis of the collected data will result in information that could probably reduce the extent of unfavourable gender inequality practices among employed women. The subsequent chapter builds on this chapter, details the research design and addresses ethical considerations.



## **Chapter 4: Methodological Approach and Ethical Considerations**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the overall perspective of the thesis, the research method and the research design, including the sampling procedure and the data analysis. It also discusses the ethical considerations relevant to this thesis. This chapter concludes by providing a reflexive account of my insider-outsider role as a researcher.

### **4.2 Research Method: A Qualitative Approach**

A researcher has a plethora of options to choose from when carrying out research. Such decisions are based on the theoretical and empirical frameworks of the research in relation to the main aims of the research, as different methods of collecting data results in different findings. In this thesis, the research methodology was qualitative, and the procedures and techniques were applied from the perspective of feminist research (Reinharz, 1992). In the research, semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with twenty-five women in senior management roles in a range of civil society and public sector organisations, including those specialising in the areas of women's rights and gender equality.

The previous chapter outlined the framework designed to respond to the main theoretical question posed by the thesis:

- RQ1: To what extent does Sylvia Walby's theory of gender apply to the case of inequality in the workplace for women in Qatar?

This chapter returns to the remaining two research questions posed in Chapter 1 – section 1.1 (‘Aims of the Study’), which relate to its empirical, methodological and ethical aspects:

- RQ2: To what extent has the State fostered gender equality in the workplace from the perspective of women in leadership positions?
- RQ3: What do women in leadership positions identify as the cultural, social and organisational challenges relating to gender equality in the workplace?

The main aim of the semi-structured interviews was to address these questions and explore the subjective experiences of women in leadership positions who had lived, studied, and worked in Qatar since the recent socio-economic changes in 1995. In choosing a qualitative approach as the research method, however, my aim was not to confirm a feminist theory but to provide insights into the respondents’ career experiences when the government was keen to encourage further developments in the social and economic wellbeing of the country.

The attitudes of these senior participants were analysed in relation to these changes in order to provide an useful picture of the economic rights and equal opportunities provided in the workforce. The choice of this research design helped to develop a sound argument that offers a compelling explanation of the ‘lived experience’ of the participants and how it contributed to their personal development. In this regard, the semi-structured questions are not expressed theoretically but are focused on the everyday lived experiences of the women in leadership positions, their memories of life transitions, study and work, their career progression, and the challenges they might have encountered along the way.

Smith (1975) contended that semi-structured interviews are suited for exploring beliefs, attitudes and values. Participants are given the opportunity to voice their views and opinions in their terms. Hence, the information that is collected provides not only answers but also the reasons and explanations for the answers. In this thesis, the use of semi-structured interviews provided the interviewer with the ability to remain flexible and engaged throughout the entire process. Therefore, the sequence and content of the questions changed, the interviews were adapted to particular individuals and the interviewer probed further to elicit complete and exhaustively explained responses.

According to Miles and Gilbert (2005), the methodology differs from structured interview techniques because it relies on an interview catalogue, inventory or support memoire that enumerates the topics, issues and themes to be discussed in the course of the conversation rather than an array of regulated questions. In addition, it differs from unstructured interview techniques, in which there is no assumed order in the list of issues to be handled and no set boundaries regarding the topic to be covered.

The opportunity to hear the voices of the participants who give meaning to their own experiences became crucial to the research. Face-to-face interviews entail synchronous communication in place and time. As a result, the interviewers and interviewees can take advantage of social cues and non-verbal expressions such as facial expressions, voices, intonation, and body language, using these to understand how and what to do next. Understanding the signals gives the researcher an insight into what the interviewee says.

Gorden (1969) argued that this technique provides the interviewer with the opportunity to question the integrity and reliability of the replies given by the participants. Furthermore, the method provides reliable, comparable and

qualitative data because it ensures that each participant answers all the questions. The participant does not need assistance from others in the process of formulating the responses. The participant is given the freedom to talk through any topic that they might consider distressing or uncomfortable with the interviewer. Moreover, they can ask the interviewer questions during the process, and they can stop at any time (Miles and Gilbert, 2005). In addition, face-to-face interview enables the parties to create a good ambiance allowing all parties to become comfortable. The environment allows all parties to get to know each other, thus creating an ability to understand each other (Oakley, 1974). Developing that understanding is key to establishing appropriate boundaries during the interview. Moreover, participants respond well when the interviewer is a good listener and a good communicator (Rogers, 2001).

### **4.3 Research Design**

#### **4.3.1 Snowball sampling procedure**

Conducting a good semi-structured interview requires comprehensive planning that involves identifying and selecting participants, deciding on the number of interviews, preparing the interview schedule and ensuring that the participants are ready. The interview participants are often selected based on the focus and content of the research. When the researcher has identified the study population, various methods can be used to select a sample from that population.

In this thesis, snowball sampling was employed to identify the research participants who met the criteria of this thesis. I recruited a purposive sample of 25 Qatari women, all of whom held senior management positions. These women are well known in Qatar society; for example, they appear in media and newspapers. I found their personal contact information and biographies in web sources. The initial contact was by phone or by email, and the

interviews were employed to 'snowball' further informants. The number of interviews was not determined at first because the employed sample was limited to a group of Qatari women managers, which is a category that is meaningful to people in Qatar.

Purposive samples are often used in semi-structured interviews when there is a lack of time available to conduct a second interview with the participants or to take a larger random sample. Purposive samples prioritise qualitative findings from particular perspectives within the population rather than quantitative findings from larger populations. In this thesis, the sampling strategy combines purposive and theoretical sampling, the latter because the framework inform both the sample to be accessed and the themes to be explored and the former because although the sample to be accessed is a specific cultural domain, the purpose of the research is explicit in the research questions. It also enables the analysis of 'critical cases', which in epidemiological or randomised research is regarded as unrepresentative 'outliers' (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Bernard, 2000; Barbour, 2001), but in this thesis, it provides an illuminating context for a qualitative study.

Notably, my choice of participants was influenced by the purpose of the research, which was to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experience of 25 Qatari women managers. Criteria were used to recruit the participants were mainly because the results of a qualitative study cannot be 'generalised' to the wider population. Miles and Gilbert (2005) emphasised that the method used to select a population sample should be dependent on the level of generalisation that the researcher hopes to be able achieve based on the data collected.

Therefore, it was reasonable to expect that Qatari women managers share similar circumstances and experiences and make plausible connections to reflect and measure how far the State of Qatar has progressed towards achieving the gender equality and economic empowerment of women since 1995 when new policies and modernisation agendas were implemented. Miles and Gilbert (2005) suggested that the researcher identify the essential features in which the sample population would likely vary and then choose participants who are likely to provide the largest variation. Hence, this sampling strategy was used to achieve diversity with regard to the participants' fields of work and socio-economic backgrounds. The wide range in the careers of the participants facilitated the recruitment. Finding participants in a narrow range of fields would have been more difficult because a smaller number of women would have met the criteria.

Recruits who were interested in participating were given my contact information in order to arrange a meeting time for data collection. Flick *et al.* (2004) asserted that it is necessary to contact the participants beforehand to explain to them the objectives of the research and to agree on issues such as where the interviews would be held, which should be free from distractions and easily accessed by the participants. It was also necessary to send the participants copies of the interview schedule beforehand so that they could review the purpose of the interviews and the types of questions they might be asked.

In this thesis, the participants were informed about the research goals and the potential questions that they might encounter during the interviews, so they were fully aware of their participation in the interview process (Arksey, 1999). When they agreed to participate, appointments for the interviews were made, and these took place mostly at the participant's workplace or at their preferred location. Some participants asked to be sent the interview schedule

in advance to understand the topic and become familiar with the research questions.

### **Descriptions of the Research Participants**

The twenty-five participants who participated in the study ranged in age from 34 to 61 years. There were four single women, fifteen married women, five divorced women and one widowed woman; all participants were born in Qatar. They had a wide range of education levels: ten held doctorate degrees, seven held a master's degree in their field, and the rest held bachelor's degrees.

The participants were employed as managers in different fields, including business, sociology, arts and humanities, media, health, education and psychology. All participants were engaged with both male and female employees at the time when the interview took place. However, the participants who managed professions that were dominated by women, such as social work or education, tended to supervise more female staff than male staff. They worked for public and private organisations, including but not necessarily limited to the following:

- Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA)
- Qatar Foundation for Child and Women Protection
- Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development
- Family Consultation Centre
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Social Development Centre
- National Human Rights Committee

Table 5 shows the demographic information about the participants' age, marital status, number of children, educational level and occupation.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Field of Study and Work</b>
Participant A	56	Married	None	PhD	Director	Human resources
Participant B	56	Divorced	2	PhD	Director	Psychology
Participant C	56	Single	None	PhD	Director	Educational Psychology
Participant D	46	Married	4	PhD	Executive Director	Psycholinguistics
Participant E	41	Married	5	PhD	Director	Politics and State Relations
Participant F	46	Married	None	PhD	Executive Director	Counselling Psychology
Participant G	61	Married	3	PhD	Director	Arabic Language
Participant H	51	Married	6	PhD	Head of Department	Physical Therapy
Participant I	40	Married	4	Master Degree	Director Department	Business Administration
Participant J	56	Divorced	None	Bachelor Degree	Head of Department	Sociology and Social Service
Participant K	46	Married	3	Master Degree	Director	Business Administration
Participant L	56	Married	2	Master Degree	Director	International Law and International Relations
Participant M	46	Single	None	Bachelor Degree	Director	Education
Participant N	66	Widowed	4	Bachelor Degree	Director	Law
Participant O	46	Married	5	Bachelor Degree	Director	English Education
Participant P	56	Married	2	Bachelor Degree	Director	Sociology and Social Work
Participant Q	34	Married	3	Bachelor Degree	Assistant Director	English Literature
Participant R	46	Single	None	Master Degree	Executive Manager	Executive Management
Participant S	46	Divorced	1	Master Degree	Director	Business Administration
Participant T	48	Married	6	Bachelor Degree	Director	General Administration
Participant U	46	Divorced	None	Master Degree	Director	Media and Public Relations
Participant V	51	Divorced	None	PhD	Head of Department	Philosophy
Participant W	40	Married	4	PhD	Head of Department	Arabic language
Participant X	56	Single	None	Bachelor Degree	Head of Department	Law
Participant Y	56	Married	4	Master Degree	Consultant	Public Policies



### **4.3.2 Data collection**

#### **The Interview Process**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Arabic. The length of the interviews ranged from one hour to ninety minutes. All interviews were carried out in one session, as the participants had dedicated one hour of their time to be interviewed. Twenty of the twenty-five interviews took place in the participants' workplaces. Of the five remaining interviews, four were held in public places, and one took place in the participant's household. An audio-recording device was used to record the interviews to collect data for subsequent analysis. I initially informed the participants that the interview would be recorded, and I asked for their permission to record. All participants agreed, but in some cases, they politely asked why the interview had to be recorded.

The use of audio recording had both positive and negative aspects. The positive effects of the recording were that I obtained the full content of the interviews. The recording helped me transcribe the interviews and elicited visual memories of the interview. It provided the tone of the participant's voice while answering the questions, which showed the emotional content of their responses. According to Wyse (2014), this process allows the interviewer to review the data at a later time, possibly getting information that they missed during the interview. Another benefit is that it gives the interviewee an opportunity to consent as to what should be released and what should be deleted from the tapes. The negative effects of the recording were that the participants may have been more cautious in their responses. In some cases, the participants gave short answers or did not engage in a meaningful discussion of the issue under consideration. However, most of the participants opened up enormously in discussing various topics.

At the beginning of the interview, the structure and purpose of the interviews were defined in order to control the situation. I first introduced the topic of

the interview, explained the purpose of the interview and the use of the audio-recording device. I asked if the participant had any questions before the interview. I then asked the participants to sign a consent form.

### **Interview Schedule**

The semi-structured interviews included a sequence of topics to be covered. A detailed sequence of questions were prepared and derived from the reviewed literature and my background as a Qatari woman. The researcher read the questions, recorded the responses, and asked for clarification and elaboration of the answers given, which added value to the research objectives. In order to fulfil the objectives of this thesis, several essential topics were determined, which are summarised as follows:

- The position and the status of employed Qatari women in leadership positions in both home and work
- The influence of social and cultural aspects, the contribution of the recent socio-economic developments and the role of the state on the future of women's economic empowerment and gender equality
- The opportunities and challenges that Qatari women might have encountered in the workforce

Berg (2001) suggests four types of questions that might be useful for a semi-structured interview. First are the essential questions, which can be grouped together or uniformly scattered throughout the interview. Second are the extra questions. They might not be different from the fundamental questions but should be differently structured, so as to ascertain whether the responses provided are valid. Third are throw-away questions. They are completely irrelevant to the research subject and are asked at the beginning of the interview or in between the interview items to build rapport with the

respondent. Last are the probing questions. They are fundamental to the semi-structured interview technique and form the core of the methodology. They are designed to prompt the respondent to elaborate more on a response given to an earlier question. Hence, the questions were formulated to take into account the use of three types of questions: open questions, probing questions and closed questions. Open questions were asked to allow the participants to provide extensive answers and to encourage them to reply as they wished but with a particular focus and direction. Closed questions were designed to obtain specific information or to confirm a fact or opinion.

The interview schedule contained a list of questions that the researcher asked the participants during the interview. According to Gomez and Jones (2010), the questions should be arranged in a manner that is the most natural and enticing. Each interview began with a request for demographic information, which was followed by an open-ended question in order to permit participants to discuss their perceptions and experiences related to their education and work phases, relationships and the portrayal of employed women in everyday culture. Generally, interview schedule included four main parts: 1) section one, social and demographic characteristics; 2) section two, professional qualifications; 3) section three, social life; 4) section four, the role of the state in providing equal rights for its citizens.

The first section contained social and demographic characteristics, such as the participant's age, marital status, number of children, field of work and academic study. Subjective social status measures are composite measures of socio-economic status, which include factors such as education, occupation, and income (Singh-Manoux *et al.* 2003; Webster and Driskell 1978).

In the following sections, each question is evaluated with respect to a thematic dimension and its relevance to one of the main topics listed above.

Section 2 of the interview contained questions about the participants' professional qualifications, their employment history, career experiences and approximate current income. The participants were also engaged in a discussion about their senior management roles and their experience of leadership positions. They were introduced to this discussion by the following statement:

Within the past few years, employment opportunities have increased for women in various fields. The participation of women in the labour force is one of the important aspects of improving the social status of women. In current Qatari society, women's roles have changed from traditional roles (procreation, housekeeping and child care) to modern roles (employment, economic independence and social participation).

The following statement and questions were also presented: people think of women who hold leadership positions in different ways. Please describe women in leadership positions in whatever way is the most meaningful to you. What are the qualifications that need to be available for women who hold a leadership position? What are the positive and negative aspects of holding a leadership position? They were also asked whether they personally would seek any higher leadership position.

The concept of leadership positions was adopted to explore the State of Qatar's commitment to empowering women economically through their appointment in decision-making roles. This was an essential reflection of women's empowerment, and it was best reflected in the participants' leadership experience. Hence, it is worth mentioning that the participants

clearly understood the term 'women in leadership positions', which ensures the validity of the findings.

The researcher considered asking more 'what' and 'how' questions than 'why' questions in order to promote clear discussion about the participants' experiences in leadership. It should be noted that questions were not asked in a particular order, as they depended on the follow-up answers of the participants. The sequence and form of the questions were varied according to the participants' answers and stories (Kvale, 1996).

Section 3 contained questions about the position of women in the household as well as their attitudes towards social and cultural aspects. It also contained questions about the responsibilities and core duties that the participant carried out within the family. The questions were formulated to elicit how difficult it was for the participant to manage responsibilities at both home and work. It also aimed to show the impact of social and cultural limitations on the development of employed women and the ways of overcoming barriers faced in workplaces. The participants were asked to describe how they had personally experienced (positive or negative) local norms and values in terms of their education and career choices (i.e., achievements and obstacles faced during their employment history) and how social norms had changed over time.

Because ideas about the social changes in society are very important among Qataris, the influence of modernisation seemed important to discuss. For example, the participants were asked whether it were an acceptable practice to socialise freely with men (which some groups in Qatari society consider inappropriate). Another idea was allowing women to travel abroad for either study or business purposes. Some participants talked about how marriage affected their social lives. It seemed that most women felt their duties as

wives and mothers had restricted their social lives because they did housework, took care of their husband and raised their children.

The last part of the interview schedule contained questions about the role of the state in promoting gender equality and equal opportunity projects as means to increase the representation of women in leadership positions in the workforce. Some participants opened up and began telling about situations that they had experienced in terms of governmental legislation, increasing the richness of the data. I took several notes about comments or explanations the participants added about their views of the role of Sheikha Moza, the Emir's wife. The participants' personal experiences showed the level of success of the Qatari government in eliminating discrimination against women in employment.

The type of questions asked enabled me to explore similarities and differences in the participants' experiences and perspectives. Therefore, it was hard to theorise across responses because there were slight differences in the experiences expressed by the participants. Generally, I tried to avoid questions that suggested answers in order not to influence their viewpoints. Therefore, the wording of the questions was clear and directly asked for the opinions of the participants. The wording did not suggest answers or lead their thoughts to follow a particular path. As some participants may have obtained information from the question, there was a need to test the consistency and validity of the participants' viewpoints.

I was at ease and clear in asking the questions, and I showed interest in and respect for the participants' answers. The fact that I tried to make the experience as stress-free as possible seemed to be an advantage in getting the participants to speak freely about their leadership experiences and to broaden their understanding of the subject. The participants were encouraged to

express themselves in their own terms and to determine the pace of the interview. Some participants required little prompting to talk; they tended to openly answer the questions, and they introduced various topics in their responses. At these times, I needed to formulate questions that were derived from and related to the interviewee's answers.

It is critical that the interviewer determines the quality of data because when interviewers develop bias, it limits the quality of the data collected. The ability of the conductor to read the cues and understand their subjects well is important (Oakley, 1974). Therefore, I have steered the conversation using probing questions. The probes can also be non-verbal cues, such as nodding and smiling.

However, some participants preferred to be asked questions that encouraged them to talk about their leadership experience in their workplaces. However, Miles and Gilbert (2005) caution that the prompts should only act to enable the participant to provide further explanation on the subject matter without evolving into a leading question. I used a printed list of questions in the interviews to help me ask about topics of interest. Some women discussed difficult life events that were sometimes upsetting to recall. When I reached a point where the respondent feels uncomfortable about providing an answer, I used throw-away questions to allow the participant to talk about something else, then later steer them back to the research topic.

At the end of each interview, I asked the participant whether she had any recommendation or comment to add, and I asked for their reflections on the topic. I then made notes on both the content and the process of the interview in order to keep a mini research log of each interview.

### **4.3.3 Data analysis**

Data analysis of the interviews is a crucial part of every research process. It was conducted by transcribing the semi-structured interviews and translating and analysing the data with the assistance of NVivo software (see Chapter 5). According to Barriball and While (1994), each phase within the research process can potentially affect the results of the study. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers avoid committing errors during each step to enhance credibility. The proper analysis of data assists the researcher to come up with answers to the research questions or hypothesis and even to predict future implications. The ability of the interviewer to stimulate and elicit responses from the interview audience has a strong effect on the quality and depth of the data analysis process.

A further period of analysis followed during which the analysed data were brought into engagement with the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework. The subjectivity of the data remained in focus at the micro level. The link to the macro, structural level of analysis was maintained by analysing the tensions, contradictions, transitions and crises of the participants as they encountered social structures, institutions and power relations (see Chapter 6). Following Walby, the approach used was fundamentally 'relational' (see Crossley, 2010). A final critical analysis was carried out to triangulate (see Denzin, 2009, pp. 297-344) the data at the theoretical and empirical levels. The results were used to make recommendations for social policy.

The interviews were transcribed in Arabic (i.e., oral conversations were translated into written Arabic texts) and then translated into English. This process was complex because it involved translating from Arabic oral conversation with a set of linguistic rules to the English language with another set of linguistic rules. However, I tended to emphasise the exact



meaning of the interviewee's answers and limited my interpretation of the data, in order to produce coherent written texts.

The translation from oral conversations to written texts made the interview conversations accessible for analysis. Although this seems an apparently simple and reasonable procedure, the transcriptions involved a series of methodical and theoretical problems. The quality of the transcriptions was improved by checking their validity. It gave an impression of the time and effort the transcription of an interview requires.

Following Kvale (1996), three main parts were employed in the data analysis. The first part involved structuring the often large and complex interview material for analysis. The computer programme NVivo was used to assist and facilitate the analysis of the qualitative material. The programme structured the interview transcripts for analysis and my further interpretation of the data. It also enabled concentration on meaningful interpretations of the interview texts. The programme allowed for various operations, such as writing memos, writing reflections on the interviews for later analyses, coding, searching for key words, doing word counts, making graphic displays and note taking while reading the transcripts.

The second part consisted of clarifying material to make it amenable to analysis. For example, superfluous parts such as digressions and repetitions were eliminated, and distinctions were made between the essential and the non-essential (see Chapter 5). The third part involved developing the meanings of the interviews, by shedding light on the subjects' understanding and providing new perspectives on the phenomena (see Chapter 6) (Kvale, 1996).

The common mode used to present the findings of interviews is through selected quotations, as they give the reader an impression of the interaction of

the interview conversations and exemplify the material used for the researcher's analysis (Kvale, 1996). Chapter 5 presents a framework of clearly interpreted quotations, which was shaped by explaining the participants' points of view. It presents all standpoints but concentrates on the similarities in the participants' perspectives, which might influence the understanding of the process of gender equality in Qatar's labour force. I selected statements that described differences or similarities among the participants' perspectives in order to avoid compiling too many pages of interview material.

Hence, the quotations were chosen from several subjects with similar or different styles of expression. The quotations sometimes connected to other statements, while other quotes could not be related. I used the well-structured quotations and eliminated the statements that indicated the same viewpoints and opinions. If the participants' viewpoints were different, I presented the range of viewpoints in clear quotation format. An interview quotation should not exceed the maximum length, which is ordinarily half a page, as readers can lose interest if they are too long (Kvale, 1996). Thus, I removed all repetitions, digressions and pauses, and I transformed it into a well-structured written style and provided my own explanations.

The writing of interview reports is key in an interview inquiry. Reporting is not simply representing the views of the interviewees and accompanying them by the researcher's viewpoints in the form of interpretations. The interview report is itself socially constructed by the author's choice of writing style and thus provides a specific view of the subject's 'lived' words. The aim of an interview report is to inform other researchers and the public of the importance and the trustworthiness of the findings, and it should contribute new knowledge to the development of a field (Kvale, 1996).

In this thesis, the main findings of the qualitative interviews were presented in the form of quotations followed by interpretations, that is, I presented my comments on and interpretations of the quotations). My aim was to make a well-structured, rich report of the data; therefore, the main themes and the researcher's perspective were presented (see Chapter 6).

I presented the quotations and interpretations in accordance with the theoretical model of the research, and I reported the main findings. The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts led to the main findings, which are mainly related to gender equality in the workplace. Each interview transcript was analysed using the NVivo programme and then categorised into corresponding cross-cutting main findings, which resulted in six sub-findings.

Thus, the main findings emerged from the participants' points of view. They are presented in a form that gives a clear and well-structured overview. The reliability, validity and generalisability of the findings were critically evaluated (Kvale, 1996) in a significantly documented manner that illustrates the main idea of the research.

#### **4.4 Ethical Considerations**

The thesis was approved by the Durham University Committee at the School of Applied Social Sciences. It was conducted in accordance with the British Sociological Associations 'statement of ethical practice'.<sup>2</sup>

The main ethical considerations were the intention to gain informed consent and to store the interview information securely in order to protect the participants' confidentiality. I tended to meet participants in public places; I always introduced myself as a research student who was studying the

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<sup>2</sup>See <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/27107/StatementofEthicalPractice.pdf>

empowerment of Qatari women. Prior to including any participant in the research, I explicated the goal and procedures of the thesis. According to Kvale (1996), the ethical issues in designing research involve obtaining the subjects' informed consent to participate in the research, securing confidentiality and considering the possible consequences of the research for the subjects.

Consequently, the researcher obtained informed written consents from the participants. The informed consent for the interviews was straightforward: upon her agreement to participate, each woman was given written informed consent documentation (an information sheet in Arabic and a consent form). According to Kvale (1996), informed consent entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project. Informed consent further involves obtaining the voluntary participation of the subject with his or her right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

To protect the participants' identities, thus ensuring confidentiality, they were asked not to share sensitive or personal information through which they could be identified. According to Kvale (1996), confidentiality in research implies that private data identifying the subjects is not reported. I explained to the participants that their information was confidential and that they were allowed to withdraw from the interview at any time. During the interview, the confidentiality of the subject's responses needs to be clarified, and the consequences of the interview for the subjects must be taken into account, such as stress during the interview and changes in self-image (Kvale, 1996).

Each participant was informed of her right to withdraw from any section of the interview at any point. I also explained to each participant that she could

change her mind after the interview. Women were advised that the information would be kept confidential and that they had the right to refuse to answer questions. In each case, I was sensitive to any indications that a participant was upset or uncomfortable so that I could stop the interview or discussion at that point. However, all the participants seemed very open and willing to provide as much information as possible.

I hoped that the research might benefit women in leadership positions, therefore discussing such topics with this group of participants was informative. In particular, I hoped that the participants would benefit by gaining insights into their own lives from the information they received after the interview. Indeed, many women were eager to get this information. I hoped to offer the participants the opportunities to share their life experiences and to contribute to the research, which could help improve women's empowerment services.

In summary, with regard to the ethical considerations that were taken into account in conducting the semi-structured interviews, the participants were approached in writing, by email or by telephone. An information sheet and contact details for supervisors was provided. Consent to participate in the project was indicated by a signed consent form, and the individual's right to withdraw from the project at any time was emphasised. Because the participants belonged to various state and civil society organisations, any organisational requirements of ethical procedures were clarified and followed. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, which were included in the information sheet and the consent form. The participants were informed of their right to see the written transcription of their interview in order to check it for accuracy.

In terms of the information held about participants, the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998) were observed.<sup>3</sup> The data were processed only for the specific purposes of this project and will not be retained for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's stated aims. All data were thoroughly anonymised through the assignment of unique symbols so that the personal identification of the research subject cannot be derived from any accompanying stored demographic or discursive data. Particular attention was given to assuring anonymity at the dissemination stage of the research, which involved conference presentation and publication. Only the PhD supervisors had access to the anonymised interview data during the research, including quotations and qualitative information.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the project were governed by the formulation of the research questions, the theoretical framework and the methodology. For this reason, men were excluded from the research. The research involved practical work, such as interviewing, which required the researcher to travel to and from public locations, but no risk or harm occurred beyond the risks encountered in everyday life.

#### **4.5 The Insider-Outsider Role of the Researcher**

This section provides an analysis of the fieldwork I conducted in order to show the influence on the research process of the insider-outsider role of the researcher during and after the interviews and during the interpretation of the data (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). This section shows the importance of the researcher's identities and strategies for gaining access to the participants in the research. It also highlights the researcher's role in making close

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<sup>3</sup>See ESRC guidance at:  
[http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC\\_Re\\_Ethics\\_Frame\\_tcm611291.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm611291.pdf).

relationships with the participants and the effects that had on the findings during the research process.

It is important to strike a balance between accounting for the researcher's subjectivity and the need to focus on the research participants. In ethnography, the researcher has to account for the personal role and the self in research (Merrill and West, 2009). In qualitative research, the researcher is central, which influences the collection, focus and interpretation of the data (Kvale, 1996). Hence, I argue that my researcher identity was an insider for several reasons that will be explained below.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the cultural and social norms of Qatari people have been shaped by their religious background, customs and traditions. There are various groups of tribal families with different backgrounds and traditions that influence their decisions and choices in their everyday lives. Under the current political leadership, Qatari society has experienced recent socio-economic development, which has changed the social structure, by raising the standard of living and providing healthcare, education and employment opportunities for all its residents, particularly Qatari men and women. Many Qatari tribes have adapted to the social, political and economic progress within the country, which has influenced some traditional cultural values.

The similar socio-economic status of the researcher and the research participants was crucial in accessing the sample because it greatly influenced the outcomes of such interactions. Kadjar Mruck and Franz Breuer (2003) noted several articles that attempted to provide examples from the research process to underline the relevance of subjectivity and reflexivity as possible resources for increasing knowledge. They articulated ways in which sub-cultural, social, professional, biographical and personal characteristics

influence what is perceived, experienced, interpreted and published. These characteristics tend to influence knowledge generated in the research process.

In this research, I also was an insider because my identity played an important, clear and stable role in the interview process and influenced the practice and the findings. The fact that I am a Qatari woman who was pursuing education abroad (a PhD degree in the UK) and who was sponsored and funded by Qatar University attracted the participants to take part in the research. It also built a trustful relationship between the research participants and the researcher. Most Qatari women in leadership positions would encourage postgraduate students because they are aware of the importance of education within the country and the importance of supporting Qatari women to develop their positions within the public sphere.

During my fieldwork, the process of recruiting research participants through a snowball sampling strategy was very useful in gaining access to other participants who would likely accept my invitation because they were part of the other participants' interpersonal network. The participants often provided much support in recruiting other research participants for the research. They introduced me to many people in their personal networks, who were keen to help me as a favour to their friends, and they did not consider me a stranger. I met women who would have been much more difficult to access without the help of other participants.

My strategy for meeting and engaging with the research participants was straightforward. My main activity in the fieldwork (i.e., visiting women in their work, home or in public places) helped participants feel open and at ease. The research participants were very helpful in returning phone calls and making appointments according to their schedules.



Some participants invited me to their workplaces and homes. They were very welcoming, even though not all of them felt comfortable in meeting new people. Indeed, being a guest in the participant's preferred place took up the majority of my time during the fieldwork. For Qatari women, the ability to be a host is extremely important. Although there are many acceptable alternative spaces, offering hospitality is considered a virtuous activity in Qatar. Thus, the interviews in the workplaces and homes of participants often seemed to be part of the hospitality, which included the cups of tea and meals that I was given. In this context of being a guest at a participant's workplace or home, rather than in a public space, asking questions about their lives and the details of their experiences of gender equality was facilitated.

Very few participants suggested that we meet in public areas, such as shopping malls, cafes and restaurants, because they were more comfortable talking about their career experiences outside the bubble of their living/working conditions. In public places (including the workplace), the participants (and myself) would usually dress in traditional clothes: black headscarf (Shailah) to cover the head and a black dress (Abayha) to cover the body. Although the upholding of old values is considered primary in traditional Qatari identity, women are engaged in a constant balancing act between the traditional and modern.

Because of my 'insider' identity, I obtained comprehensive data. The research participants were willing to reveal their perceptions and experiences regarding the topic. During their interviews, they answered all the questions with no hesitation, which greatly helped in collecting the information needed for my research. My experience suggests that women often found ways to make their point. I was always polite in agreeing with the interviewees. This situation facilitated the research process and the researcher in better

understanding what the participants said during the interviews and in interpreting their perceptions of women's rights and all aspects of their experience in this regard. It also helped me to expand the research topic in order to analyse and interpret the data.

Furthermore, the topic of the thesis played a role my ability to develop relationships with the participants, who were impressed its relation to their current roles as managers in institutions and departments. They were given the opportunity to discuss their situations and the challenges they faced. They answered questions related to their experiences and perceptions of the state's role in providing economic rights and equal opportunities for women. This focus seemed to make the participants eager to talk about their experiences in their education and their work.

Throughout the data collection process, I tried not to reveal my prior knowledge of employed women's career experiences in order not to influence the participants' responses and the research outcome. I personally experience the development of employed women in the workplace, but I have heard only a few experiences of other women. For the most part, I pushed aside what I had learned from my reading of the literature, and I tried to engage in open-minded listening to the participants' responses about their experiences. When they asked me about my opinion, I expressed that there was still much be learned about the topic and that I was interested in learning from them as well as from other sources.

On the occasions when I was asked about my own career experiences, my answers were simple. I gave a general explanation with reference to women's education, paid work, leadership positions, social life and related topics. I invited the participants to discuss these experiences and to ask questions. In the discussions, I emphasised that many questions about

employed women in leadership positions and their career progression were still unanswered, and I invited the participants to express their opinions. Although I was concerned that these explanations might disrupt my own ability to learn about the participants' beliefs and ideas, there appeared to be little impact. In some cases, the participants' ideas about women's rights were simple; in other cases, the participants expressed a good deal of knowledge and experience of the issue.

Surprisingly, this position of being an 'insider' did not shift during the interviews. I also might be considered an outsider because of my academic and work experience, professional status in the field as a young researcher at Qatar University who had no connection with the research participants prior to the interviews. This also involved the fact that I am a researcher who deals with different research systems, searches for updated academic studies and struggles with complex global issues. However, my 'outsider' identity was not employed because it would have hindered me from accessing information or it would have affected the data collection.

I was keen to establish close and mutual relationships with the research participants. I achieved close relationships with the participants by reflecting on and describing myself and my actions in the context of this research. This closeness led to positional conversations with the interviewees about their lives, beliefs, opinions, through which I developed a deep understanding of Qatari society and Qatari women's experiences of leadership and women's empowerment. This understanding also led to the scientific outcome of the research process whereby new knowledge was generated.

For instance, I clearly described the research process. I began by explaining the objectives of the research and its aims, the type of data that would be collected and the collection method, the audience of the research

participants, the time and location of the data collection process, and the starting point of data analysis in order to make them more aware of the topic.

The process of writing my own ideas and thoughts during the interview process is considered the beginning of the data analysis process. I gained much insight into the visible findings, and I decided the direction of the research as the connection between theory and practice became clear.

With regard to the data interpretation, I contributed my personal experience as a Qatari woman who has experienced the developmental process of women's empowerment strategies in the country as have many other women in various fields. The influence of my experience in relation to the participant's viewpoint was clearly represented in the data interpretation process, which resulted in scientific findings that generated new knowledge about gender equality in Qatari workplaces.

Overall, as a Qatari woman researcher conducting research with a sample of Qatari women, I was perceived as an insider. I gained the trust and consent of the participants to discuss their experiences of gender equality in the workplace. My research identity encouraged them to build a professional relationship as the means to expand their social networking, to gain access to other research projects and to exchange resources.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter described the qualitative approach used to conduct semi-structured interviews as an effective research method. The research design utilised snowball sampling, and the data were analysed using the NVivo software. It also provided a discussion of the ethical considerations relevant to this thesis and concluded with an account of my insider-outsider role as a researcher.

It is apparent that, the strength of this method is that it would capture the multitude of subjects' views of a theme and portrays a manifold and controversial human world. According to Kvale (1996), the knowledge obtained from the qualitative interview is not objective but is subjective in the sense that it depends on the subjects interviewed. The live interview situation, with the interviewee's voice and facial and bodily expressions accompanying the statements, provides a richer access to the subjects' meanings than the transcribed texts will later show. On the other hand, the method has some drawbacks as well. Interviews are cumbersome and time-consuming, since the two parties require time to prepare; the interviewer may be biased; or the interviewer could influence the answers (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1981).

The next chapter presents the data analysis and the main findings of the research.

## **Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and describes the data analysis. The data are presented with respect to answering the second and third research questions of this thesis:

- RQ2: To what extent has the State fostered gender equality in the workplace from the perspective of women in leadership positions?
- RQ3: What do women in leadership positions identify as the cultural, social and organisational challenges relating to gender equality in the workplace?

The subsequent chapter, Chapter 6, concerns RQ1, which relates to the theoretical aspect of the research. It explores the relevance of Walby's framework to the changes in Qatari women's positions pre- and post-1995, especially with regard to their employment and education. It then discusses the empirical and methodological aspects of the study.

Based on the thematic analysis of the major findings by utilising the NVivo software, this chapter explores the opportunities and potential challenges for Qatari women managers on their career paths in relation to the current societal changes that are driven by the state's policies on women's empowerment. The arenas of family and socialisation outside the workplace are analysed separately. The main implication of this approach is to recognise the possibility of interaction or overlap between the two arenas.

## **5.2 Women's Socio-economic Development**

### **5.2.1 The home and social arenas**

This section explores obtained data on the home and social arenas. It touches on the participants' family backgrounds, their position within the family and the responsibilities and duties that they carry out within the family. In Qatar, the family is seen as a pillar of society's stability by the government (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). The wellbeing of families is fundamental to a sound social structure that should practice moral and religious values and humanitarian ideals. Therefore, the personal, marital and parental responsibilities in marriage are crucial in a healthy, cohesive family. However, one of the core assumptions about gender inequality is the unequal family and work divide, which is based on the social expectations that men are generally expected to work outside the home and women are expected to be responsible for the reproductive aspects of family life.

The Qatar government is deeply involved in upholding traditional familial and cultural values. However, it has shown an increased dedication to enhance women's capacities and promote their progress in the labour force through initiating equal opportunity legislation. In Chapter 2, the statistical data showed that the majority of Qatar women were appointed to leadership and political decision-making positions during the 2000s. According to World Bank (2004), the value placed on the family suggests that women's ability to combine work with family responsibilities will be a key factor in increasing women's participation in the labour force in MENA (p. 95), including decision-making roles. In this thesis, through investigating the family/work balance of women managers therefore could be useful in evaluating the rapidly altering Qatar family dynamics. In this study, most participants had between three and five children. The main findings revealed that the duties of married women in leadership positions had necessitated

their awareness of the ways they met household demands and childcare responsibilities.

Some participants reported that their responsibilities as wives and mothers include carrying out duties such as supporting the spouse and fulfilling child rearing and housekeeping duties (participants D, E, H, Q and Y). Participants D, E, T and Y noticed that the extent to which they were able to participate and remain in the labour market was linked to their abilities to schedule weekly and monthly plans and impose prioritisation mechanisms to carry out work recruitments during official hours, which helped to organise and cope with their family duties. Research has shown that the lack of time is a significant source of stress for working women. Therefore, women leaders who need to reconcile their family life and professional life should practice time management skills and effective techniques of managing task priorities in order to overcome conflicts arising from home and work demands. For instance, Participant Y elaborated:

I try to provide enough time for my children and my family through good guiding and following up while managing workloads.... I am a very patient person and have time management skills.... I always try to schedule time for my family and household responsibilities besides my work requirements.

Other participants reported experiencing significant conflicts in managing career and home demands because of their positions as managers. They indicated that they were overwhelmed by their double burden and could not create the required balance between work and family domains because of their dual responsibilities. Participant S faced the challenges of long work hours and the pressure of completing job tasks because of the difficulty of



balancing work and family life. Therefore, she had to minimise her personal and social events and modify her activities. This was in accordance with Participant O's statement that she devoted time and effort to perform work tasks outside working hours, which impacted her marital and family life. Participant E revealed:

I am a wife and a mother of four children. During my first years of marriage, I faced many major challenges; I had to sacrifice my job and life in Doha for the benefit of my family. I agreed to move temporarily to the United States with my husband and children, as my husband was employed in a company there.... I was also responsible for many core duties such as housekeeping, taking care of my husband and children, keeping up with social relations....

Participants F, O, R, S, T and V also remarked that they felt the pressure of their workloads as managers, as they consumed considerable amounts of time and effort. It affected their family life, schedules, children's development, mental health, social communication with others and their future goal plans (Participant R). They were challenged when there were seasonal days when they were required to be at work for long hours and to work under pressure (Participant S). Participants G and T revealed that they felt dissatisfaction with life in general because their workloads impacted their overall health by causing high blood pressure and diabetes. They also reported that they felt depressed and irritated.

This means that Women have achieved a lot of progress in their work environments where they get equal treatment to their counterpart men and special treatment to some calls of nature like childbirth. However, despite more women willing to immerse themselves in the job industry, their

workforce has been accepted but their responsibility back home remains. The male community of Qatar is not willing to help with house chores firmly believed to responsibilities of women. The lack of aid to women by the men in their lives when it comes to home responsibilities is a hindrance to their indulgence on the workforce (Berrebi Martorell and Tanner, 2009). Most men are firm believers of the duties of a woman. It would be taboo for them to take on duties not meant for his gender.

However, most participants claimed that they sponsored full-time domestic helpers in their private homes, who performed housekeeping duties. For instance, Participant D expressed that her duties included supporting and nurturing all the members of the family, tracking her children's homework, protecting, valuing and teaching them religious and cultural beliefs, but other domestic chores were mostly done by a domestic worker.

However, Participant F stated that that because she had no children, she could fulfil her responsibilities at work and at home:

I am a married woman but do not have children; therefore, I am not committed to doing many duties at home... and (thanks to God) I do have time to arrange my priorities for work and for myself. I do not underestimate the role of housewives and mothers in the household, but the fact that I do not have children creates more space and time to fulfil my work duties as a leader.

Participant F also stated that she did not sponsor a domestic help and that she carried out her martial and household responsibilities. This could explain why a woman's family conditions, especially a married woman with

children, created conflicts between her household responsibilities and leadership duties.

Some participants stated that they were responsible for the social obligations related to their extended families. For instance, both Participants E and Q revealed that their social responsibilities and obligations included planning social events and organising weekly family gatherings, which added to the pressure on them. Participant E expressed:

In Qatar, we live in extended families, not just nuclear ones; therefore, our social responsibilities and obligations create more duties for me.

Some married participants (excluding single, widowed and divorced women) reported that they had to forego a considerable number of their household commitments to fulfil their work demands, as they found it difficult to manage household commitments, domestic chores, and childcare as well as work duties with minimal or no help from their husbands. They had the sole responsibility for domestic chores, had no domestic help, and they carried out social and economic household duties with little or no help from their spouses. This finding aligned with Participant J and W's statements that their spouses were businessmen and consistently travelled abroad for work purposes. This negatively affected them because of the excessive demands arising from their work and household responsibilities. Participant J expressed:

I play the role of both parents at home; I take care of my children alone and manage the financial needs of the family.... This has a great impact on my personal life.

Participant J expressed that in addition to her parental responsibilities, she spent her income to meet the financial demands of her household, while her husband spent most of his income on outdoor activities. In patriarchal societies, social prestige advances the man the person responsible for family circumstances, particularly financially. This finding indicates that gender roles are changing in the public and private domains.

Similarly, Participants G and H expressed that they oversaw their family commitments regardless of their duties as directors, which affected their performance at work. Their roles as wives and mothers were expected to take precedence, and their husbands did not help with housework. They sometimes failed to carry out their workloads and could not find enough time to manage both domestic chores and work commitments because they were responsible for all family and household affairs.

Both Participants D and I expressed that their spouses' roles as fathers and caregivers were visible because they usually participated in family life, and they shared household responsibilities and childcare duties. Participant I expressed:

I am blessed that my husband understands my duties as a leader at my workplace....He sometimes shares housework and child care responsibilities while I do my work duties. This helps me to manage my home and work duties.

In such cases, the participants felt that the men's involvement in families could increase the possibility for working women to achieve a well-balanced life. Researchers in diverse settings have found that men do participate in care work or domestic activities through their involvement with their

children by providing guidance or financial support (United Nation Publications, 2011).

In general, these findings suggest that several participants could not maintain the demands of home and career demands. They felt that their professional success as leaders was not easy because it required much time and effort to manage commitments at home and in the workplace. However, although some women leaders were unable to achieve a well-balanced life because of home/work conflicts, their self-motivation and ability to overcome these social and personal obstacles were major steps towards achieving their ambitions.

### **5.2.2 Career path and leadership experience**

In this section, the data are scrutinised with regard to the participants' experiences of the culturally conditioned underestimation of their educational ability and qualifications for leadership positions. Although women's participation in university education and the labour force has increased, traditional views of appropriate avenues for women's employment and study disciplines prevail. The participants' reflections on their leadership experience, including their motivations for leadership, are also analysed. The participants' leadership behaviours and styles and their understanding of effective leadership are also analysed. The analysis of these attributes reveals the challenges faced by the participants in their careers.

#### **5.2.2.1 Study and career disciplines**

Recalling their education and first job, some participants reported that they were influenced by traditional views in their study and career choices (i.e., their university degree majors and career), which were limited to women's traditional fields, such as education, social sciences and medical sciences. Other participants were fortunate to overcome these societal limitations and

obstacles because they were part of the very first influx of Qatari women who were able to enjoy career opportunities. They were part of the force that led to societal changes in the country during the 1990s. In Qatar society, a huge cultural shift has taken place over the past twenty years although the participants indicated that their generation has struggled in the past in terms of career opportunities in comparison to contemporary Qatar, where women enjoy a wide range of career opportunities created by Qatar's economic development.

Twenty-one participants of twenty-five (N = 25, 84%) reported that the permission of parents and/ or male family members or other relatives was critical in their decisions about education, further education, employment perspectives and even business travel. According to participants G, J, M, O, R, V and Y, in their early lives, male family members (i.e., fathers, brothers and husbands) usually intervened in their career choices and directed them to traditional female disciplines. For instance, Participant J was forced to apply to the social sciences college at university, and while Participant P was directed to education. Participant G expressed:

Choosing my major at university was not my decision alone....  
My family members forced me to choose a subject area that I did not personally prefer; I was afraid that I could not graduate and complete my studies efficiently.... What forced them to refuse my choice to study in the field of media was [related to] social roles.

According to some participants, social roles include several assumptions about gender relations and cultural dimensions in Qatar society:

- Some governmental sectors require women to co-work with male colleagues for long hours, which is contrary to social and traditional norms (Participant J).
- Women are ineligible to access previously male-dominated professions because they are not qualified enough (Participant J).
- Co-working with male colleagues would limit women's eligibility to get married because men do not prefer women who work in such conditions (Participant P).

As noted in Chapter 2, social expectations about gender relations are based on traditional values and the stereotyping of women's roles and responsibilities in society. These expectations limit women's choices to government ministries and social institutions, which are perceived as acceptable workplaces for women. In some contexts, strict family circumstances that strongly preserve gendered Islamic identity stem from the dominant patriarchal discourse promoted in Qatar society. This was obvious in Participant O's experience with her father, who used to be a diplomatic ambassador and was open to other cultures. However, he did not allow her to be in mixed-gender workplaces. Participant Y also shared a similar situation involving her brother:

My brother refused my career choice because it required me to co-work with male employees. Eventually, I was employed at a posting that he forced me to access.... However, my experience turned out to be useful.

The findings showed that because of familial barriers, women usually remain underrepresented within selected areas of study and work. Most participants worked in governmental departments, while others preferred male-dominated

professions in the private sector, which were often discouraged by male family members. According to Reem al-Darwish, equality in the workplace has never been the problem, but the family setup in which a woman was brought significantly influences the decisions they make later in life. The close minded perspective of parents does not allow women to be involved in settings of missed genders. This way, productive women are locked out from achieving their full potential in surrounding where they work with men (Harris, 2011).

Participant M argued that in a conservative culture, the Eastern mentality of men could not easily change to accept women's equality, freedom and democratic participation. However, it is worth mentioning that during the interviews, almost all participants noted that they did not regret their choices of study and career although they were based on the preferences of family members or relatives.

As noted in Chapter 2, in the Qatar context, traditionalists usually preserve strict patriarchal views while modernists are more flexible regarding women's equality in the public sphere. Eventually, because of the societal changes that resulted from the state's gender-sensitised legislation to encourage more women to participate in the labour market, the community's perceptions have shifted to cope with the new modern lifestyle of women. When some families came to realise the importance of creating an enabling environment for women's professional and personal growth, they valued and respected women's choices in study and career disciplines because they felt confident in their capabilities.

This attitude was evident in the data analysis. Some participants were not prepared to accept the cultural limitations placed upon them, and they fought to achieve their ambitions. Eventually, these participants worked male-



dominated professions, such as in media (Participants G, U and W), politics (Participants E, N, X and Y) and the oil and gas sector (Participant O). However, because of their strong opposition to cultural and social norms, the participants encountered challenges. For instance, Participant O had been the ‘only woman’ in the department of energy at her first job, which was not acceptable in a conservative culture. Hence, the lacks of study and career choices because of the conservative culture have not always hindered women because some were able to fight to study or be employed in the disciplines that they wanted to pursue.

Participants E, G, I and S were among the first Qatari women to work in the field of media, which was regarded as a non-female field. Their decision to choose this field shows their strong opposition to the traditional and cultural ideologies. They fought for their choices to participate in journalism in local newspapers and magazines, radio and TV broadcasting. Participant I explained that society used to regard women who worked in the field of media as cheap, and they were easily targeted by men in personal romantic relationships. Participant S expressed:

[D]uring the 1990s, Qatari society was still conservative and my family follow Islamic honour and identity approach.... They prevented my participation in TV broadcasting programmes.... Over time, they were influenced by the dramatic social changes in the country, and they eventually allowed me to achieve my career goal as a TV broadcaster.

Because of her education and work in the discipline of psychology, Participant F faced some challenges in her workplace during the 1990s. Despite her credentials and ability, male co-workers used to regard her as a less capable employee who did not possess the required professional skills to

perform job tasks. Participant F used to fight against leaders who would argue with her that society does not accept women's presence in the field of psychology because of the need to work with male colleagues for long hours in the workplace.

Participant G expressed, 'my family came to understand that I am a responsible woman who can overcome obstacles and face challenges in the discipline that I have chosen'. Participant M proved that she was worth the position she worked in because she created a positive image of her role. Moreover, Participant E recalled the support and encouragement she received from her parents, family, relatives, key role models and individuals, who respected her brave decision to continue in her chosen field:

My relatives encouraged me to participate in journalism in newspapers and local magazines during the 1990s, a period when the society prevented women from using their names in press and media, as it was a shameful matter. I was only allowed to be addressed by a nickname.... I used to address my literary articles with my name and received negative attitudes from people.... My family have respected my decisions and have stood beside me in difficult times in order to overcome cultural influences.

Participant G expressed that she used to stand by her choice to participate in radio and TV broadcasting against the prevailing cultural limitations and against the wishes of her family. She broke traditional social roles and focused on her tenacity and determination to achieve:

In the past, co-working with men was regarded as a call to liberation, freedom and openness.... However, my subsequent

success in creating an honourable image of Qatari women in media owed a great deal to my personal ability to make difficult choices against nonsensical traditional practices.... Therefore, customs and traditions no longer form any obstacle, and they do not affect my dignity and freedom.

In 1994, Participant E was an influential woman in leadership. She encountered many women in her generation who were not prepared to accept cultural limitations but could not fight for their study or career choices in the same way as she did, as most of them had their studies or careers chosen for them by their families or relatives. Subsequently, she initiated programmes aimed at educating the community and spreading awareness about the importance of women's participation in all fields in order to change the negative perceptions of women. These workshops also aimed to attract Qatari women to talk about their personal experiences in cultural limitations and how they overcame societal barriers.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a significant issue observed in Qatar is related to the lack of a feminist movement. Participant E expressed the effectiveness of women's activism in initiating social change and changing patriarchal views of gender roles. Fighting for gender equality in the workforce while preserving cultural identity, could lead to women's professional advancement.

This finding aligned with Participant X's experience in the political domain, which was considered a male-dominated field. She expressed that her highly distinguished qualifications and performance as a politician have proven that women are able to succeed and lead in the same careers as men.

The findings revealed the main constructed theme: Despite their ability to perform and accomplish job tasks properly in other fields, qualified women's study and career opportunities are limited to 'women's fields' because of gender stereotypes. The lack of career choices and the hindrance of cultural expectations can negatively influence the development of many women who are not able to make brave decisions and fight for the disciplines that they want to study or work in because it is regarded as contrary to cultural and social practices. This exclusion from certain sectors and professions can reduce promotion opportunities for leadership positions. Most Qatari women lead education committees, health care committees, childcare committees and women's rights organisations that influence local public policy making. Notably, this finding indicates that a typical image is perpetuated by the social norms and principles that challenge women's suitability for certain educational and professional fields. This image leads to women's confusion: a woman cannot attain her ambition if she accepts some cultural norms. Each woman, however, has her own priorities in life, and she can either fight for her decisions or choose the stability of her family life and follow society's norms.

#### **5.2.2.2 Behaviour in the workplace**

In Chapter 2, the literature review showed that Islamic customs and traditions continue to play a major role in influencing women's workplace behaviour. The cultural attachments shape the social behaviour and attitudes of employed women and heavily affect their conduct at work, especially in their dealings with male colleagues, which is regarded as a challenge for most women. According to Islamic principles, the work relationship between men and women should be based on respect and professionalism. In this study, the participants described their experiences in mixed-gender workplaces and their behaviour when they interacted with the opposite sex.

Participants S, J, K, S and V admitted that traditional values influenced the way they set boundaries while co-working with male employees. For instance, Participant S recalled:

In 1998, I was employed in a mixed gendered workplace where I was required to deal with male colleagues. This was a great challenge for me, as I was not used to dealing with strange men my whole life....I have been influenced by my Islamic morals and faith in situations where I have to co-work with them....In some cases, I avoided all interaction; however, the situation in the past is very different from what it is now....Today, I tend to develop working relationships that depend on a respectable manner and social norms.

In addition, Participant J expressed that she followed cultural norms:

I avoid side talks with male colleagues and only focus on work matters; these habits cannot be easily changed, as it is rooted in our Islamic religion....A joint group of men and women employees can lead to active team and productive work if it is based on Islamic rules with great respect and commitment as well as rational and emotional skills.

Participant K shared the similar view that she was influenced by Islamic morals and principles such as displaying respectable manners. She emphasised that such norms did not hinder her personal development and success:

I apply Islamic norms more than traditions and customs that have been initially set out by people....Creating boundaries

with male colleagues at work is an effective way to avoid problems....I only deal with male colleagues in order to exchange thoughts and ideas and gain more access to work requirements.

Participants S and V insisted that most employed Qatari women preserve social principles and maintain their personal values in accordance with Islamic rules. Participant V expressed that in dealing with male employees, she followed good manners:

The type of interaction between other men and me depend on the degree of formality or the type of job duty we are discussing....I try to keep the discussion as simple and informative as possible and try to deal with them in a very respectful manner.

Participant S offered:

Some male staff at work looked at me as if I am weak and less capable of performing my job duties, while others encouraged me on various occasions....I always tend to display the spirit of a good woman colleague who is strong and can deal properly with conflicts and manage work tasks.

Surprisingly, Participant W had achieved many productive projects while working with male colleagues. She felt discomfort when entering a traditionally male domain and was still challenged in interacting with them. She expressed that she did not prefer mixed-gender workplaces:

My experience is not very pleasant. There are some men colleagues who deal improperly with women employees, and I received several gender-based comments. But, as far as I am concerned with the matter, I have learned to focus on work and ignore such attitudes.

Significantly, these participants saw the need to uphold Qatari customs and traditions while building a society where women can take active roles. It is essential to keep social values in place and encourage women to present themselves in a respectable manner in order to improve the mixed-gender workplace.

This finding showed that some cultural barriers and obstacles blocking women's progress in their career life were partly removed when stereotypical attitudes to women's roles and perceptions of mixed-gender workplaces were changed in wider society by modernists who came to realise that single-sex workplaces do not lead to productivity. Instead, effective performance, productivity and professional accomplishments at work depend on the capabilities and skills of both men and women employees. Joint work creates a well-balanced atmosphere where the sharing of ideas happens smoothly and results in productivity.

### **5.2.2.3 Motivation for leadership**

In this section, the findings are presented with regard to the supports and barriers that have motivated ambitious women to advance in the organisational hierarchy pre- and post-1995. Chapter 2 clarified how old and modern regimes either impeded or supported participants to move up the organisational ladder. The main findings showed that most participants assumed that who or what supported them in achieving leadership positions and helped them in progressing up the leadership ladder in contemporary

society post-1995 were the following: 1) familial individuals; 2) Qatari women role models; (3) professional and governmental support resources in organisations that implement equal opportunity legislation aimed at increasing women's participation in higher level management roles.

The findings showed that the participants' family members were a source of motivation. For instance, Participant M asserted that her mother played a great part in her early life and influenced her to be a leader. She recalled that her mother was a real leader in both the household and the workplace:

My mother used to do all the daily chores, cleaning, cooking and taking care of us while working as a teacher. She worked really hard to create the required balance between duties at home and in the workplace....She encouraged me to be an educated woman who could take responsibility for myself and my siblings and work towards a bright future.

Clearly, Participant M acquired key leadership attributes because she grew up in a supportive family, which inspired her leadership skills of taking responsibility and multi-tasking. She observed her mother's multi-tasking skills, which motivated her to be a female leader.

Additionally, a type of women activism in Qatar emerged as women's participation in political elections in 1997, which eschewed traditional barriers that hindered women's participation in decision-making in the country. This activity also altered perceived stereotypes of women ability to lead. The main findings indicated that the participants had been influenced by the role models of Qatari women in the late 1990s (Participant H). Participant F expressed:



I cannot deny the effective role of some Qatari women who took the lead in fighting for their equal rights in education and employment during the 1990s in inspiring me to be engaged in the decision-making process in the country and to take part in its social and economic development.

In addition, many Qatari women were influenced by Sheikha Moza, who is considered a role model for Qatari women. Her Highness emphasises the importance of supporting the wellbeing of Qatari women and their education in order to create an ambitious, healthy and well-educated generation of women leaders. Participant O expressed:

I seized the opportunity that Sheikha Moza has provided through improving the education system in the country.

Participant E also expressed that Sheikha Moza inspired her to obtain a university degree, expand her career experience and leadership capability in order to achieve her leadership ambition.

Other sources that motivated participants to progress to their senior management roles included organisational support resources at work (i.e., equal training opportunities and recruitment strategies for men and women employees). Participants R, S T and Q, for instance, observed that they had received several organisational rewards and promotions and accordingly were designated by their managers to be leaders based on entirely meritocratic and fair grounds alongside male staff (i.e., according to their academic qualifications, scientific expertise and work experience). Participant R expressed that her direct manager was wise, humble and caring:

I was a well-qualified employee.... My manager at work used to observe my yearly performance reports, my excellent appraisals, my academic background and my work experience certificates and used to certify these achievements. He then decided to improve the overall organisational structures and efficiency through applying developmental strategic plans to elect eligible men and women as leaders. As a result, he appointed me to my current decision-making role.

Additionally, the role of Qatar's government in fostering gender equality in the workplace was considered a source of motivation by some participants. As noted in Chapter 2, the Qatari government is formally committed to implementing legislation to eliminate discrimination acts against women and encourage their access to leadership roles through initiating strategies such as NDS 2011-2016 and QNV 2030. Participant N expressed:

Since 1995, the government has shown an increased dedication to enhancing women's capabilities and empowering them to participate more fully in all spheres, including economic and political spheres.

This finding correlates with Participant T's response:

The Qatar government has promoted gender equality legislations in the workforce....The extent of efforts to resolve challenges facing women employees is high....These are [applied to] male and female employees equally.

Most participants mentioned that governmental policies are considered one of the major forces behind their professional success. Participants B, M, N, P

and Y emphasised that implementing NDS 2011-2016 in government ministries and institutions shows the governmental investments in women's advancements and equality. Participant B declared that the integration of clear strategic plans that are based on Qatari culture has led to the positive professional and personal development of women. For instance, the gender-sensitized legislation (NDS 2011-2016) upholds the Islamic culture and Qatari traditions while enhancing the capacities and prominent societal roles of women.

In recent years, Qatari women have achieved high educational and professional qualification because of the government's efforts to promote their equality. Participant Y mentioned the burden of the governmental policies on women:

Qatari women must prove that they deserve equal rights granted by the government. They should prove their efficiency and take advantage of all current opportunities available.

For instance, Participant M noticed that the government has provided sufficient opportunities for women to develop their professional skills and to include them in decision-making roles. The establishment of the Qatar Centre for Leadership at the Qatar Foundation and the establishment of the Institute of Administrative development aim to increase the number of women in leadership positions through providing leadership programmes designed to develop both male and female managers according to their roles and needs. Both Participants P and Y have taken advantage of leadership programmes and courses related to strategic planning, assessment and evaluation and managerial skills. Participant Y offered, 'I have been trained in how to chair a department or an organisation'.

The participants agreed that, despite the low number of women in leadership and decision-making positions, the state's clear vision in implementing mechanisms aimed at empowering women confirm its dedication and commitment to providing equality in the country. Although the process of application is slow, there should be a radical change in women's status in the coming years while preserving their national identity and religious values.

The findings showed that the participants' key sources of inspiration were familial individuals, female role models and professional and governmental supportive resources. The findings showed that the participants were motivated and charged with these leadership roles based on their highly distinguished qualifications and high-quality work performances. These findings indicate that although the sources of leadership motivation vary, women should obtain the qualifications necessary to reach leadership positions because the rate of women in leadership positions in Qatar remains low.

#### **5.2.2.4 Leadership behaviours and styles**

The participants were asked about their personal style of leadership and their perceptions of effective leadership. Their responses suggested two simultaneously interacting attributes that described their leadership philosophies: 1) the extent of individual and organisational characteristics and a non-gender linked leadership style; 2) the degree of gender differences in leadership styles while performing 'masculine' or 'feminine' leadership approaches in their management roles. Generally, the 'masculine' leadership approach is a 'command and control' style, whereas 'feminine' leadership pattern includes an ethics of care, nurturance and communication.

The 'women in management' literature focuses on gender differences in management styles, arguing that women's ways of managing are particularly

appropriate to contemporary work organisations and that women's skills in multitasking and in interpersonal communication are ideally suited to management (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005). For instance, key management writers such as Judy Rosener (1990), Nanette Fondas (1997), Davidson and Cooper (1992), Ibarra (1993) and Sturges (1999) focused on the differences between male and female management styles in work orientations and commitment as well as on 'the ways in which women managers are controlled and marginalised' (Fiona Wilson, 1995).

A leader practices essential individual characteristics and role requirements that are necessary for leadership in performing a non-gender linked leadership style. Participants B, C and G shared similar thoughts about the traits that a successful leader exhibits, including cognitive attributes such as patience, wisdom, competitiveness, ambition, dominance, understanding, helpfulness and self-confidence. A leader always identifies personal strengths and weaknesses, which is essential for the development of effective leadership skills. In addition, in order to achieve a high standard of work, Participant F believed that a leader should maintain good managerial skills, such as teamwork, management skills, tackling challenges, problem solving and assertive decision-making. Hence, these participants perceived successful managers, both male and female, as possessing similar individual characteristics. They did not appear to side with either 'masculine' or 'feminine' approaches to leadership.

Other participants focused on gender differences (e.g., Participant S) and the effects of sex stereotyping. Participant S did not deny that she usually follows her natural feminine compassion and empathy in relationships as well as her ability to influence people. She considered these features beneficial for a woman leader who possesses different informational resources and acts according to her feminine values and attitudes.

A related essential aspect was explained by Participant R, who considered her feminine leadership approach, which involves helping and understanding others, as an asset in performing her current role as a manager:

I am participative leader.... I do not put aside my natural feminine values and behaviours to adopt a 'masculine' style of leadership.

The second feminine value is related to the communication style of leadership. According to participants' perception of a successful leader, the most important attribute of effective leadership entails an 'open door' strategy. This finding is keeping with the findings of three participants (Participants M, N and O) who shared this approach, confirming the importance of a team-centred approach and mutual respect while dealing with their staff. A constructive feminine style often involves caring about staff abilities and needs. Participant O described this skill as 'diplomatic communication' by which a leader tends to be 'flexible, friendly and balanced in dealing with the staff' (Participant N). Participant O expressed:

I do not consider myself a director by controlling the staff but a colleague employee who works in a friendly work environment with employees....I always tend to discuss matters, spread work-team activities and make sure to disseminate official policies and regulations among the employees so they can always track and evaluate their work performance.

Similar to Participant P, who drew on her personal experience by performing social networking skills, Participant O considered being involved in social

events and possessing good communication strategies the best approach to achieving effective leadership.

Nevertheless, women's high-level performance and success are not necessarily related to their leadership approaches because such a process is contingent on multiple factors related to the work environment. However, as Participant Y acknowledged, 'in some cases, women's leadership styles can outperform those of men'. She considered herself a good organiser and a multi-tasker who tended to focus on accomplishing the required tasks. This feature allowed her to compete with male counterparts by accurately performing the required tasks, which eventually resulted in better financial outcomes for the corporation.

Another feminine quality was suggested by Participant Q, who emphasised that her effective leadership approach to career ambition consisted of the power of renewal, productivity, creativity and continuous improvement. She expressed:

A leader should have a clear plan to enhance the institution's goals for the better in order to achieve occupational demands....I always tend to manage my work differently and to carry out my job requirements in a perfect way because I have the power of creativity.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that these participants appeared to follow feminine qualities, and they did not experience a tension between their natural characteristics and a 'masculine' style of leadership. Hence, the strength of women's leadership styles lies in their unique attributes and characteristics as well as in their abilities to balance masculine and feminine skills.

However, the findings revealed a strong preference for a 'masculine' manager, which is sometimes expected of women in leadership positions. Some women leaders employed traditionally masculine power strategies such as aggressiveness and forcefulness. For instance, Participant B commented that some women leaders practice a dictatorship strategy and follow a 'masculine' approach.

Hence, women can be exposed to multiple factors that lead them to adopt a masculine approach. For instance, in order to alter traditional stereotypes, women leaders aim to prove that they are not affected by feminine qualities, such as being emotional and sensitive. Additionally, such patterns are followed according to the leader's personality, values and attitudes. This style can be followed in response to challenges in the work environment. For example, women's leadership behaviour can be affected by the degree of the male dominance in some managerial roles under certain circumstances.

Participants O and Y expressed that they imitated masculine characteristics to earn respect as leaders. Participant Y noted that her male counterparts used to feel that she could not take assertive actions. Consequently, she used to be more aggressive in dealing with employees who committed mistakes and strictly evaluated their yearly performance reports in order to meet masculine expectations of leadership roles.

Participants U and W added that the 'feminine' leadership approach is applicable in traditional 'women fields', such as the social and medical sciences. However, in specific work conditions and certain career fields (e.g., law, media, engineering etc.), adopting a 'masculine' approach is required. Participant U elaborated that the field of media, which is considered a male-dominated professions in Qatar, made her change her feminine behaviour, adopt a 'command and control' style and socialise with the public.



Participant X's political leadership role forced her to acquire masculine behaviour in order to prove that she was a high-potential employee who was as assertive and competitive as her male counterparts.

The findings showed the participants understood that leadership roles have become very competitive in Qatar, and thus they are required to display adequate and clear leadership approaches in performing the required management duties. There was a tendency for the participants to employ both clear individual and organisational principles in their positions, which indicates a link between these two interacting attributes. Both 'masculine' and 'feminine' behavioural patterns stem from the leader's personality, values and attitudes but are exacerbated by challenges in the work environment.

#### **5.2.2.5 Challenges as women managers**

The emergence of several challenges was identified by the participants, which was caused by an influx of cultural, social and organisational factors relating to gender equality in the workplace. Social norms included patriarchal and cultural influences. Although organisational challenges varied among the participants, several tendencies could be affirmed: long working hours, payment, allowances, promotions and training opportunities. The academic literature on managerial work has focused on the barriers women face with regard to the effects of the 'glass ceiling' in organizations, as women often do not enjoy the same conditions of employment as men, or even the protection of equal opportunities policies and employment legislation.

Some management writers refer to the idea of a 'glass ceiling' (Davidson and Cooper, 1992) as an institutional barrier that sets limits on how far a woman can rise within the workplace hierarchy and provides women with fewer

chances of advancing to managerial levels in various organizations; women are rendered invisible with the ceiling holding them back from career advancement. Cotter et al. (2001) posit that such obstacles exist regardless of a woman's education, abilities, or work experience. The effects of a glass ceiling are more common in higher-income occupations, which are largely held by men. Blau, Ferber, and Winkler (2006) note that gender ceiling effects contribute to gender income disparity. This means that women's pay is often lower than men's, even where women have broken through the glass ceiling into management positions (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005).

The findings showed that in Qatar, patriarchal attitudes towards and expectations of gender roles persist. For instance, some conservative individuals still consider that home is the women's place because women are not able to reconcile the responsibilities of home and work. They believe that women's empowerment will lead to liberation, changed family dynamics and altered social traditional values. Women, therefore, are taught to be submissive housewives, submit to the domination of male relatives, carry out domestic chores and refrain from socialising with men in public (Participant U).

Participants A, B, K and Q indicated that legislation to empower women faces several obstacles, Participant A expressed:

Society's misconception of the term 'women's empowerment' has negatively affected the process of implementing women empowerment projects in some public and private institutions. People still believe that 'women's empowerment' is a process that calls for women's liberation, which, as a result, affects the role of men and threatens their power. The liberation intended here is related to women's liberation from constraints that

prevent them from obtaining their social, economic and political rights without affecting the role of men.

Accordingly, upholding the social norms would limit the applicability of the process of promoting women to leadership positions. In the Qatari context, a modernisation process as a means to eliminate social and cultural barriers would help to build an egalitarian labour market.

Even though women's participation in the Qatar labour force has increased greatly, they still do not hold a proportionate share of the top management position, and they do not have access to certain sectors and fields based on gender-role stereotypes. This means that stereotypical masculine and feminine traits have affected the process of gender equality in the workplace. Participant N responded that many Qatari women are qualified to lead in decision-making roles but sex-role stereotypes play a substantial part in preventing women from accessing leadership roles. This finding strongly echoes Participant F, who observed that Qatari society is male-dominated, and it cannot fully accept the presence of women in leadership positions:

Traditional gender relations are originally rooted in our patriarchal society....A man always has the right to lead, control, impose his masculine authority and express his thoughts and opinions; but a woman is always a follower and encounters more pressures in the society and in her workplace.

Most participants wondered how stereotypical attitudes have created challenges for women in leadership positions and affected the way women are treated in the workplace. Women experience unfair segregation and exclusion from decision-making roles in public and private institutions

despite their scientific experience and outstanding leadership performance, which has been proved by the role models of Qatari women. The findings indicated that this marginalisation is mainly due to social expectations that are related to women's abilities to create the required balance between the private and public domains (i.e., fulfil household, parental and marital responsibilities as well as job duties). The findings revealed that some participants faced conflicts in managing their duties at work and at home, which indicates that leadership roles are more suitable for men. Based on this perspective, in most cases, employers prefer male employees who provide scant help with household duties and who therefore will not experience conflicts between their responsibilities at home and their duties at work.

High leadership positions, therefore, are seen as a male prerogative. Several participants had discriminatory acts in nominating managers based on gender preference in some governmental organisations. Participants E, G, I, P, L and V acknowledged that most leadership positions in governmental institutions are occupied by men and are exclusive to them. Participant E said that in her workplace, the number of Qatari women in leadership positions was low compared to men: 'there is a preference for gender, not efficiency'. Participant P said that 'some officials prefer men to lead the institutions', which was the experience expressed by Participant's G:

The requirement HR board at my previous workplace did not consider my work experience background, efficiency and ability to direct a particular position because I am simply a woman....The board consequently appointed a male employee who had no previous experience, based on gender preference.

Participant L related a similar experience:

I tried to convince [my director] at work that I am eligible to assume a leading position....My practical experience and professional qualifications allow me to chair the department that I work for....Eventually, he nominated a male employee to that position instead.

These experiences align with the viewpoint expressed by Participant K. In her view, male officials follow gender roles criteria in selecting men instead of women in order to fill senior positions. These misconceptions are derived from women's family commitments, and officials feel that women are less capable than men in managing work duties because of their family and social obligations:

The fact that as domestic chores and childcare duties are still considered a primary responsibility of women, the public sees these demands as obstacles because they may conflict with women's performance at work....Pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood leave little time for women at work and therefore, men are preferred to take over the responsibilities of high positions, as they will not be affected by family or social duties.

Officials are aware that managerial work requires long working hours and many duties. It also might require travelling abroad to participate in business meetings and conferences. Therefore, because of her family and social obligations, they have created inaccurate negative views of a woman's ability to reconcile her home and work responsibilities. Many women leaders

have proved that they can create the necessary balance. Participant I expressed:

Some individuals think that women have a greater responsibility in the household than men and marginalise the role of men at home despite the importance of his role....Therefore, women leaders' responsibilities might contradict the stability of their households, as home and work requirements may clash.

Furthermore, Participants O and Y said that they had experienced discriminatory acts in the workplace. They were forced to work harder than their male counterparts in order to be recognised by senior officials and to prove their leadership capability. They were considered weak and incapable of performing managerial roles simply because they were women. They also were considered inferior by their male counterparts, who tended to unite against them.

The organisational challenges include working hours, payment, allowances, and promotions and training course opportunities. Participant D said that the hierarchical promotion system in governmental institutions may have limitations and certain requirements that need to be updated so that women can have access to leadership positions:

It is possible that a woman has all the leadership skills to gain a decision-making role but there is no management or administrative department in which she can be positioned.

Another organisational obstacle that creates fewer opportunities for women in leadership roles derives from the preference for expatriate workers over

Qataris. Some experienced expatriates seeking well-paid positions in Qatar tend to take high leadership positions and fight against the progress of Qatari men and women. Participant S experienced how some expatriate employees treat Qataris who are willing to take leadership positions:

When I first started my job, I faced some difficulties as officials tended to prefer expatriates and neglect Qataris. Despite the fact that I was one of the few Qatari women in the field, they tended to exclude me from doing my tasks, claiming that they were too difficult for me to practice....I did not get enough training, as other expatriate employees in my workplace did not share any information with Qataris employees....Therefore, I decided to learn the details of the work by myself, so that I could prove that I was eligible for my current position. This was a great challenge for me, but I am satisfied with the result, and I always tend to value my achievements.

Chapter 2 indicated that in order to reduce dependence on foreign workers and fill the national gap, the government has established the Strategic Qatarization Plan which helps women to overcome the career ladder and provide more career opportunities in accordance to the market needs. However, Maryam Al-Subaiey (2015) provided several obstacles that affect the process of Qatarization as follows: 'education is not aligned with labour market demands; training programs are not adequately developed; cultural norms and traditions influence, sometimes negatively, the choice of education and work; and government policies are contradictory and are not in harmony with the Qatarization strategy' (p.2). She suggested that: 'in order for the strategy to be better implemented, and to constitute "quality Qatarization" instead of "quantity Qatarization," the government needs to

align educational efforts with the labour market and incorporate monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure quality training' (p.2).

Thus, the enforcement of this policy could be done through implementing plans that acts in accordance with the requirements of labour market whereby it would broadly distribute Qatari men and women relatively evenly across all professions and sectors through several significant steps: (1) promoting social benefits and career opportunities for women employees; (2) providing more education opportunities to study in male-dominated professions; and (3) incorporating monitoring system in public/private institutions.

A further organisational obstacle that the participants faced at their workplaces was related to *Wasta*, a local word that means using powerful social connections and nepotism (e.g., to appoint someone to lead a position based on a personal relationship with a key decision-maker). Some male and female candidates lacking the requisite qualifications have employed dubious means to gain their leadership positions. Such corruption exists in some institutions that appoint ineffective individuals because of personal relationships. Participant P related the following experience:

It is ironic that some women have been assigned for leadership positions because they are known by key decision-makers....In these cases, they cannot achieve what the job requires and present a negative example of women managers.

Participants F, L, C and U shared the similar view that the failure of some women in leadership roles increases the negative perception of women's performance as managers. Qualified women can also be excluded from such positions, as officials marginalise their leadership opportunities based on the



reputation of women leaders in Qatari society (Participant L). Participant Q was personally affected by the role played by some decision-makers who had the power to nominate unqualified individuals to leadership positions because they knew them personally:

Some officials at my department employ the process of *Wasta*; they are selective and limit the appointment of leadership positions to some preferred ones....I was more qualified than my colleague, who did not possess the required work experience or training needed for leadership....Eventually, officials nominated my colleague to lead a high decision-making position....I gradually attempted to speak for my right that I deserve such position, but the officials ignored my request.

Another organisational factor that acts as an obstacle to women attaining management positions is related to wage gap which is related to differences in earnings between men and women. The most prominent issue apart from sexual harassment is pay stratification (Weichselbaumer and Winter-Ebmer, 2005). In most societies, the gender pay gap is evident through women getting less pay than their gender counterparts do for performing equal tasks. Although the disparities vary by employment sector and the country in question, it is estimated that around 70% of women in formal employment settings earn lower wages (ITUC, 2009). When men and women are equally productive and qualified, then the differences in wages and salaries are not justified and are, therefore, discriminatory (World Bank, 2004, p. 101).

Participant T insisted that high payment packages are offered to male leaders:

I hold the same job level to a male colleague, carry out the same duties and have greater level of qualifications in terms of education and work experience, and still earn lower in terms of allowances and basic salary.

Observable factors that measures productivity formula are education, years of experience, hours of work, and so on. In Qatar, most public and private institutions treat both genders equally with respect to payment, allowances and promotions because they adopt a unified structure for payment without gender-based discrimination. This finding indicates a contradiction between the initiated and adopted policies of the state in relation to gender equality at work, such as state policies of Labour Law and CEDAW, which were discussed in Chapter 2.

The analysis also revealed another organisational obstacle: the women were offered fewer training and professional development opportunities and fewer promotional opportunities, and they faced barriers to their progress. Participant I said that the lack of leadership and administrative development programmes was the reason that some women leaders are less experienced than men:

As a manager of a public relations department, it is my duty to invest in the Qatar Leadership Development Program by conducting leadership workshops and training for all female employees to be more professionally competent, intelligent and logical...in order to move up the organisational ladder and learn how to chair a department.

Some ambitious women are not provided with the required management skills in training courses, which limits their promotion to leadership positions.

The challenges that the participants faced are summarised as follows: there is a significant gap between the percentages of men and women leaders because most institutions privilege their male employees. Officials should change the selection process of leadership, regardless of gender, as talent is not limited to a particular gender. Although the Qatari government is supportive of the women's empowerment scheme through the QNV 2030, the problem is in the application of the policy by some institutions and the lack of regular observance. Other reasons are related to gender stereotypes, which influence how women are treated in the workplace because of family constraints and responsibilities and perceptions that they lack managerial skills. In order to overcome the stereotyped perceptions of women's roles in Qatar society, it is essential to establish a civil society organisation that promotes women's issues and spreads awareness about gender equality.

### **5.3 Summary**

In this chapter, the experiences of participants were examined in relation to their performance at work and home as well as in relation to the state's role and cultural influences. The findings showed that most participants had encountered several opportunities and barriers in their households, in their workplaces and in the wider community, which called other aspects into question. Nevertheless, these obstacles did not prevent them from succeeding as managers. However, their experiences indicate that the process of women's empowerment is not progressing as rapidly as might be hoped.

The next chapter discusses the theoretical implications of the research findings and links them to the existing literature. The theoretical and practical implications of the results are discussed, including the relevance of the findings to the three research questions on which the research is based.

## **Chapter 6: Critical Discussion of the Incorporation of the Changes in the Gender Equality of Qatar Women in the Workforce in Relation to Walby's Theory of Patriarchy**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the extent to which the main findings could be incorporated into Walby's theoretical framework in exploring the changes in Qatari women's positions pre- and post-1995, especially with regard to their employment and education. In this chapter, I shall discuss the findings in order to advance the understanding of the experiences of women in leadership positions in Qatari workplaces or to refashion Walby's theory. It is meant to provide a theoretical implication, which is to orient the research to the macro-features of the 'social process' and 'lived experience' of Qatari women. These features are discussed in relation to the historical and structural features of gender inequality in Qatar in order to avoid the pitfalls of 'abstract structuralism'. Therefore, the analysis attempts to answer the first research question posed in this thesis:

- RQ1: To what extent does Sylvia Walby's theory of gender apply to the case of inequality in the workplace for women in Qatar?

The research structure described in Chapter 5 is used to compare the findings to Walby's theory, which is explained in her most prominent studies. Specifically, in order to utilise the epistemological spectrum of the research, this chapter is based on Walby's traditional view that the problem of gender inequality evolves around the dual system of patriarchy within the general theory of patriarchy, which was subsequently developed in her later work as the complexity theory of modernised states in the era of globalisation. The analysis is conducted with the extensive utilisation of employment gender patterns in Qatar, which were extracted from the analysis of the interviews in

the previous chapter. Therefore, this discussion aims to determine the extent of gender oppression in Qatar's labour market and assess the progress in eliminating limitations in education and employment according to Walby's framework.

## **6.2 Reflection on Main Findings with Walby's Framework**

Walby's structural features of patriarchy each contain a set of gendered 'relations' and 'practices', which either exclude or marginalise women. These are found in any society, including Qatar where a major historical transformation from private to public patriarchy has taken place.

Walby (1996) argues that similar to all social theory, there is an issue in feminist theory regarding the relationship between agency and structure. This issue arises in an acute form in the debates on the theorisation of changes in gender relations and particularly in relation to the question of whether women are 'victimised' or 'empowered' as a result of these changes. However, Walby insist that the approach that dichotomises structure and agency is problematic. The classic dilemma is that if women are seen as having agency then they must be seen as choosing their oppression, and if they do not choose it, according to a structural account, then they are merely passive victims.

The theory of patriarchy leads to an account where structure and agency are seen as mutually compatible, co-existing and complementary through an explanation of the change from private to public patriarchy. In *Theorising Patriarchy*, Walby (1990) explains that the changes are not only structural, particularly the changes in the capitalist economy, which led to an increased demand for wage labour, but also a result of the power of organised feminism at the turn of the century and its successful campaign for political citizenship. This focus on the importance of women's collective agency in a

political movement clearly provides for women's agency in the creation of new structures of gender relations and new forms of patriarchy.

To analyse this transition, Walby (1990) uses first-wave feminism, claiming that it helped to facilitate the transition in patriarchy from the private to the public mode. She argues that the contemporary form of public patriarchy focuses on enforcing women's subordination outside the private household. Walby (1996) concentrates on the theorisation of fundamental transformations in gender relations, especially women's increasing integration and participation in the labour market, and formal politics in the West, particularly in 'modern welfare states' such as the United Kingdom. McKenna (1998) commented that increasing educational and employment opportunities for women arise partially from their increased political representation and participation and partly from the role of the European Union in legislating fair working practices.

In attempting to apply Walby's theory of patriarchy to gender inequality in the specific context of Qatar, it is apparent that the changes in gender relations have led to a new form of public patriarchy based on several factors. Given the current local circumstances of Qatari society, the gradual steps of cultural and political change are slow and deliberate such that women have been socially and economically empowered in the areas of education and employment since 1995. All aspects of social life in Qatari society include the process of forming, constructing and adopting gendered identities, perceptions and notions about masculinities and femininities, such as in the family, media, workplaces, and so on. The Qatari government aims to preserve Qatari identity and its moral and cultural principles through building social cohesion and striving for equality and balance in Qatari society. Particularly, the specific goals that the state has attempted to achieve

are to foster gender equality, grant women a share in high-level management and reduce discrimination against them in the workforce.

Hence the 'official pronouncements' by the Qatari government, which include policies of gender equality in the mainstream society, have led to the changes in gender relations, which has affected the form and degree of patriarchy in Qatar, as well as the location of femininity, which was primarily within the private, domestic sphere and has extended to a wide range of arenas (Walby, 1990). As noted, the large-scale presence of Qatari women in education and employment is obvious. The main findings indicated that the participants seized educational and career opportunities that were provided by governmental institutions (e.g., the Strategic Qatarization Plan) in order to move up the organisational ladder. This has caused a shift from their position in the household in which their responsibilities were narrowed to family and child care to the creation of new forms of patriarchy in the public world. Therefore, gender equality in the workplace remains low.

In this broad sense, I accept the statement that the apparent historical transformation in Qatar from private to public patriarchy follows a top-down exercise rather than a bottom-up model, (i.e., it fits Walby's theoretical model of patriarchal change but through a new approach). Walby's argument is based on political economy, and her work examines how changes in gender regimes have been moderated by age and class structures, as well as the political sphere. Her theory is intended to capture the ways in which gender relations are restructured, especially class and ethnic differences, which, however, do not align with structure of gender relations in Qatar's economy because the degree of Qatar women's political activism is low. Therefore, changes in the circumstances of women's paid labour in Qatar are

often articulated as legal, organisational or educational changes and other attributes.

### **6.2.1 The role of women in the family and in the workplace**

As previously discussed, Qatar continues to encourage the active participation of women in the labour market. However, the issue arises some concerns about the ability of women to be employees and fulfil their responsibilities to the family. Qatar is a state in which laws are designed, at least to some extent, in accordance with a traditional religious agenda. The development of the country is supposed to occur with the family at the centre. In this context, the participation of women in the labour market should be limited by her duties to the family, such as raising children and promoting traditional values. Therefore, Qatari women face the problem of scheduling and prioritising the tasks related to work and the family.

The household is important for the conduct of relations between men and women. Women's domestic work is seen as 'real work' in the private world, but Walby avoided the trap of examining gender within the confines of the household. She (1996) argued that being paid for work (usually outside the home) is an improvement over working for no pay (usually within the home) because it allows women a degree of autonomy and independence from the men with whom they live.

However, the findings showed that significant life experiences affected the careers of the participants (i.e., balancing domestic chores and career responsibilities). Career women face family conflicts caused by their participation in the labour market, or they have to cope with the additional pressure in order to fulfil their family duties (Participants D, E, H, Q, and Y). As managers, they felt the pressures of their workloads, which had affected their family life, time schedule, social communication with others and their



future goals and plans. They were overwhelmed by their double burden, and they could not create the required balance between the two domains. Some participants said that the problem could be solved by maintaining a strict balance (i.e., scheduling their time and effort between home and work). Although all the participants considered that the issue might be dealt with, none of them denied its existence.

According to the NDS 2011-2016, the government emphasises that it is necessary to ensure a delicate balancing act between household and workplace responsibilities for women in order to: ‘preserve and enhance the traditional Qatari family core while empowering women to participate in all spheres of society, especially in economic and political decision-making’ (p.174). This means that the government realises that: ‘the extent to which women are able to participate and remain in the labour market is intrinsically linked to the support available to help women balance family and professional responsibilities’ (p.175). In order to implement this strategy, the government planned to adopt more family-friendly work measures, such as flex time, part-time and special leave. It is essential to take various measures to maintain a balance in women’s personal life and improve their working conditions: ‘including provisions for a 60-day maternity leave, allotted time (two hours a day for a year) to breastfeed a baby and extended care leave for women with disabled children under age of 6’ (p.175). The target here is to: ‘put in place measures that support working women, including revising the current human resources law and maternity leave policy’ (p.175).

This outcome should be achieved through implementing two comprehensive factors as follows: (1) raising awareness among the nation regarding the significance of practicing shared responsibility among family members and by updating regulations regarding domestic workers; and (2) providing a child care social service at the workplace with proper staff qualifications to

improve the personal and professional life of women, as it has a positive contribution towards the development of children.

This finding can be related to Walby's theory. She addressed the problem by arguing that the additional time spent taking care of their family causes women to lack human capital (Walby, 1990, p. 29). However, she does not address the obvious implications, which proves that Walby presumed the existence of the problem by outlining the pressure on women with regard to their being responsible for raising children and maintaining social values.

This concept is explicitly connected to the social context regarding its promotion of traditional gender roles. In Qatar, women have to deal with the additional pressure of the responsibilities for childcare. The reason is that the state has not established external institutions that could assume some family responsibilities, thus enabling women to work in the public sphere.

The issue is extensively discussed in studies of Walby's later work on the complexity theory, where the problem is defined as self-organisation. The general trend towards pervasive equality between previously favoured and oppressed groups occurs under the framework of complexity theory, which discusses how globalisation affects the elimination of disparities between races, genders, ages and so on (Walby, 2003). Although her perspective includes diverse leftist topics, her academic major evolves around the issue of the equality of women in modern world, especially with regard to employment and public rights.

Mara (2015) pointed to the dimension of 'self-organisation' as a key problem that women must face when they enter the labour market. The self-organisation phenomenon differs according to social surroundings, which are affected by the geographical location of the group (Stacey, 2005). The social

surrounding consists of traditions, norms, values and so on. In fact, this is exactly what makes women spend more time than men in caring about the family. Moreover, Mara (2015) asserted that that the problem of self-organisation often derives from tensions and conflicts in the family space, which was precisely stated by some participants in the present study. According to Stacey (2005), daily practices require additional organisational skills. Other issues include parental leave, which in some countries is considered normal for both men and women. However, in Qatar only women are entitled to parental leave.

Moreover, Stacey (2005) raised the problem of the absence of specific institutions that assist families by providing child care or family maintenance in countries that prescribe traditional gender roles. The external organisations are kindergartens, extracurricular school programmes and babysitting agencies, which have been extensively developed in non-traditional countries with commercial goals (Mara, 2015, 40). However, in countries with traditionally designed gender roles, women are expected to assume all the pressure of childcare, which triggers significant underdevelopment of external institutions that perform some family functions. Generally adopting a 'child care policy' in Qatar institutional frameworks would address this issue.

Walby's framework of patriarchy takes into account the issue of balancing work and family responsibilities, which is in line with the findings in the present study. The problem is defined as self-organisation. The findings showed that it is a significant problem for Qatari women who aim to balance job tasks and family responsibilities. To some extent, the issue is caused by the ambiguity of the government, which on the one hand promotes traditional values and consider family as the source of societal reproduction and on the other encourages women to take part in the labour market.

## **6.2.2 Change in career paths and leadership**

In this section, the findings of the participants' choices in education and career development are discussed in relation to Walby's theoretical perspective on gender inequality.

### **6.2.2.1 Education and career alternations**

This subsection assesses the coherence between the educational and employment patterns of Qatari women and Walby's framework. It is important to gain insights into how women choose education and career opportunities. It is evident that although dramatic societal changes have occurred in Qatar since 1995, and some women have been able to decide on their career paths independently, some categories of the population remained traditional in this regard, which resulted in the lack of women's freedom to make their own decisions. Chapter 2 provided a discussion on the effects of tribalism and tradition on Qatar women's advancement in the context of Bedouin and Hadar tribes and/or traditionalist and modernist groups in Qatar society (Al-Muhannadi, 2011).

Key decisions by women, which include education, marriage, children, employment or homemaking, have irrevocable consequences for the rest of their lives and the choices open to them in the future. All women make choices, but many of the circumstances under which they act are not of their own making (Walby, 1990). In addition, according to Walby (1996), there is an apparent difference between young and older women in most contemporary Western European societies, especially the UK. Young women build their lives around the opportunities and limits of a public gender regime while older women built their lives around the domestic gender regime of private patriarchy and even struggle to live under the current structures of public patriarchy. Older women will have made these life decisions under a gender

regime that was more private and more domestic than the public system of today.

However, Qatar women's choices of education and career are mainly related to traditional values, tribalism and Islamic principles. According to World Bank (2004), gender roles may affect women's aspirations and their selection of jobs and professions that they believe to be acceptable, respectable, or appropriate. Traditional social norms also affect personal and societal tolerance for gender discrimination and shape the opportunities that are open to women (p.100).

The empirical findings shows that although some participants made their own choices of education and career, 84% of the participants asserted that they had to consult their families in making these decisions. Most participants had traditionalist family backgrounds, which indicates that only a small share of the participants were completely free in their education and employment choices before 1995, according to Participants J, M, O, R, V and Y. A woman's interactions with the state and society are mediated through her husband or a male family member (World Bank, 2004, p. 94), including their education and employment. Moreover, Ikhlas A. Abdalla (2015) said that:

‘A peculiar characteristic of the Arab traditional culture is that it encourages girls' education but often discourages women from displaying their intelligence. Once their education was completed, there was no or little external social encouragement, support or guidance to turn them into high achievers in the professional fields.’ (p. 36)

Some participants said that they were literally forced to enter 'women' studies, that is, science fields that are considered 'suitable for women', such as education, social sciences and medicine. This finding indicates that family members can allow or present barriers to women's perspectives in education and employment. They are forced to consult family members, especially male members of the families (fathers and brothers) and follow their guidelines. The selections young women tend to make in higher education increase gender isolation in the labour market, with women underrepresented in the business sector and focused more on health, welfare, academic, and clerical areas of work (Felder and Vuollo, 2008).

Hence, the masculine hegemony in society, which is nurtured by parents and reinforced by the social structure, prevents women from entering certain professions (Kulkami, 2002). Moreover, women's agency focuses on individual agency, which has a tendency to underestimate the extent to which women, although making active choices, do so under circumstances that are not of their own choosing (Walby, 1996). However, on the other hand, Catherine Hakim (1995, 1996) argues that women positively choose professions that fit with the domestic and familial roles they themselves see as a priority. Moreover, Martin and Roberts (1984) reported that many women found it difficult to cope with the often conflicting demands of work and home; as a result, they seek the work most suitable to their domestic circumstances.

These assumptions also conform with Abbott, Wallace and Tyler's (2005) argument: that is, it is essential to remember that when women 'choose' to combine their commitments to unremunerated work with paid employment, the choices they make and their orientation to both are the outcome of a relatively narrow range of choices and the socially constructed expectations of women's roles and responsibilities. These choices are also shaped by

material factors such as social class inequalities, racial and ethnic power relations, and issues such as disability.

However, Chapter 2 showed that the Qatar government appears to be increasing the range of study disciplines and career fields for women across all sectors. The rates of women's participation in universities increased as the required institutional steps were taken by the government post-1995. This trend is reflected in Walby's framework. She asserted that women, particularly in the UK, not only reached the level of men's participation in higher education but also exceeded the academic performance rates of the former. She claims that this tendency has the potential to eliminate the dominance of men in the labour market and to establish equal opportunities in education and jobs (Walby, 2002, p. 18).

None of the participants said that they faced unfair admission ceilings in public universities and male-dominated professions. Indeed, they had been encouraged to enter new fields. They were able to overcome social barriers as they took advantage of career opportunities provided by governmental institutions to maintain their chosen career path. They were able to achieve success in male-dominant professions (Participants D, N, J, K, S and V). For example, Participant X expressed that women are able to succeed as politicians when they possess the required performance capabilities and qualifications while adhering to Islamic morals and principles.

However, the entrance of Qatari women in male-dominated professions was limited because a small part of the society rejected the perspective on 'traditional women' professions, which granted women the right to choose the fields independently. These findings showed that gender ideology influences the type of occupations that young women enter after they graduate, not only because of their own aspirations but also because of what

career advisers, parents, school and employers deem suitable for them (Abbott, Wallace and Tyler, 2005).

The traditional work deemed appropriate for women prevail in a society that prefers educational, administrative and clerical professions for women (Al Ghanim, 2008). The male proponents of patriarchy in society use Islamic religion principles as a tool to preserve their dominance over women in the workplace (Sechiyama, 2013). This practice has perpetuated the patriarchal domination of men in the Qatar workforce. As a result, Qatar women's access to the private sector is limited because it is not gender segregated. Therefore, most women jobseekers, including the participants in this study, are placed in government departments that offer women professions. In *Theorising Patriarchy*, Walby (1990) defined segregation as the main strategy of public patriarchy, which did not prevent women from gaining access to the public, but which used the strategy of segregation to subordinate women in all spheres of social action.

This replicates Walby's arguments about occupational segregation by sex, where women are allowed into paid work but are kept subordinated to men by placing them in 'women's' jobs. The most important concrete aspect of patriarchal relations within the sphere of paid work in industrialised countries is that of occupational segregation which takes both vertical and horizontal forms (see Hakim, 1979), and distinguished between full-timers and part-timers (see Robinson and Wallace 1984). Women and men are segregated into occupations at different steps in the vertical hierarchy, and sideways from each other in the form of horizontal hierarchy. According to the World Bank (2004), gender-based job segregation is economically inefficient, and it leads to lower labor participation by females, limits the pool of available talent, it leads, in certain occupations, to an oversupply of workers, who must work at low levels of pay, (c) raises both equity and



efficiency concerns because it affects women's socioeconomic status (p. 109).

Some population categories may benefit from gender-segregated work in which the dominant group have the better positions in employment (Walby, 1996). For instance, Participant I explained that Qatari women's participation in media professions was restricted in the 1990s because it required interacting with male colleagues for long hours and because such professions were mostly dominated by men who had access to top management positions and higher pay.

This pattern is common among different countries and persists in Western states. The problem was extensively researched, and Walby was one of those who paid specific attention to this issue. First, she posits that the end of the twentieth century was associated with the growing share of women students. She asserts that higher education allows women to participate in the labour market by maintaining better self-organisation (see Chapter 5). Moreover, the increasing rates of women in education have triggered the elimination of male dominance in fields that require high skills, which, eventually, has caused the diminishment of 'traditionally male and female' jobs (Walby, 2002, p. 14).

Another pattern observed in the field of area selection and career promotion was outlined by Walby with regard to the rates of women's participation in different professions in England. She asserts that although the gap was significantly narrowed starting from the middle of the twentieth century, it still existed at the beginning of the new millennium. According to Walby (2002, p. 16), 'traditionally male' professions remained. In addition, she states that men were more likely to acquire full-time jobs even without possessing higher education, while women were more likely to have part-

time or casual jobs when did not have higher or professional education certificates.

Therefore, it is apparent that patriarchy does not operate in a vacuum. Hence, the social obstacles are deeply embedded in the Qatari conservative culture, which condones discrimination against women in the public and private spheres. However, although the patriarchal transition in Qatar society has created new forms of public patriarchy in terms of academic and work opportunities that are appropriate for women, the government was able to make some marginal changes in the position of women within the workforce through implementing steps to promote occupational diversity across most governmental and private sectors and diminishing gender inequity in the labour market.

In post-1995 Qatar, traditional images that relate to the determination of culturally appropriate places for women in the labour market have changed to some extent. A similar situation in the UK is considered in Walby's theoretical framework of patriarchy. She asserts that women gained wider access to education and almost managed to weaken the belief in 'traditionally male' professions. In addition, she argues that gradually, with the increasing access to education and better performance, women could be able to eliminate the male dominance in the labour market.

#### **6.2.2.2 Changes in the behavioural expectations of women in the workplace**

Another problem with the emphasis on gender in the Qatari labour market is how males and females relate to each other. One issue that led to scientific interest in this topic was that the findings about educational choices showed that many women were not allowed to work in certain fields because of the possibility of interacting with males. This subsection addresses the

experiences of the participants who worked closely with males in the same organisation, which put additional pressure on them because of strict religious restrictions.

According to the World Bank (2004), in MENA, including Qatar, the imposition of social conditions on women by the 'code of modesty', which is associated with preservation of the family's reputation, to a certain degree, with the behavior of its women and the ability of men in the family to protect the honor of their female relatives and, thereby, the honor of the family (p. 111). Therefore, women's behaviour in the workplace is somehow restricted to this code; and as a result, interactions between men and women are permitted but controlled in the public space. The findings showed that the participants controlled informal communication with males because it threatened their religious beliefs. Moreover, all participants expressed the view that their religious principles forced them to wear the veil in the public space when interacting with male colleagues. Hence, they decided to burden themselves with the limits of communication and decrease their socialising with male colleagues.

In other words, from a social networking perspective, they deprived themselves of potentially useful networks, which could provide them with benefits such as promotions and higher wages. Moreover, it is possible to observe this phenomenon from Walby's perspective. First, gender-based communication could be indirectly linked to the pervasive belief that women do not perform as well as males do (Ibarra, Carter and Silva, 2010, p. 81). Therefore, even though the interactions are on the formal level, they do not exist on the informal level. The reason could be that the participants internalised the belief they are not as proficient as men are. Hence, there is no rationale of informal communication to enhance the performance of the enterprise (Walby, 2013).

Another explanation that derives from Walby's perspective is that males use informal cooperation to achieve their utilitarian goals. She claims that off-work relations between males are used to increase personal profits and gain non-monetised benefits, such as promotions, perquisites and so on. She argues that the normative system that exists within organisations, particularly commercial institutions, attempts to limit the participation of women in internal processes to increase the chances of males to succeed (Agarwal, 2010).

However, some participants indicated that the situation has changed drastically. Their responses implied that the communication boundaries between men and women were fiercer in the past, and although they still exist, the code of conduct enables women to cooperate with their male colleagues. On the theoretical level, this finding aligns with Walby's assumptions about the nature of societal change. She asserts that every system has the ability to reproduce its features. However, in every stage of development, new elements are introduced or old ones are altered.

Walby defined this phenomenon as 'emergence' and explained that it refers to need for new knowledge to be injected into the existing order of things. Specifically, she implies that collective knowledge is the driver of societal change. Consequently, the more pervasive the phenomenon is within the society, the more legitimised it becomes (Walby, 2007, p. 452). This process is continuous and its duration depends on the social context of the issue. Therefore, it can be concluded that Walby's concept of emergence has the explanatory power to assess the changes that occurred in the code of conduct of Qatari women in the workplace.

Another concept in Walby's framework is 'embedded knowledge' (Berger, 2009), which, however, does not appear in her theory of dual system

patriarchy. In her recent works, Walby extensively reflected on how the unconscious rules are implemented within commercial organisations. She argued that this type of knowledge is deeply incorporated into the organisational culture of companies and usually represents values, norms and instrumental code of conduct. This knowledge does not have to be formally recognised because it exists in the social spaces between workers and often involves appropriate gender relations (Otis, 2008). She further argues that the 'embedded knowledge' is gender biased because it is reproduced by the upper management of any organisation, which, in general, is comprised of men.

With specific reference to the normative system within the society and organisations in Walby's framework, the results obtained from the in-depth interviews showed that most participants attempted to avoid informal communication with males in order to follow their religious beliefs. Therefore, it can be assumed that this decision was not taken to fulfil personal beliefs, but to adhere to the system of rules introduced from outside, which indicates that women experience private patriarchy within the public world in the context of Qatari society. Therefore, it can be asserted that in the dominant normative system women avoid informal communication and hence social networking within the organisation, which preserves the dominant position of males on the institutional ladder in both public and private sectors.

However, there are certain optimistic tendencies in the labour code of conduct for the Qatari women. After the institutional changes were introduced in the 1990s, women gradually became more and more involved in informal communication in the workplace, which could be related to Walby's framework. Specifically, the concept of 'emergency' explains why the changes are inevitable even in the most rigid system.

### **6.2.2.3 Drivers of career success in the modern Qatar**

Another important issue researched by using in-depth interviews concerns the motivation patterns of employed women in Qatar. First, it should be emphasised that there was no academic doubt that the motivation mechanisms of women could differ from those of men because the employment structure in the country imposes different conditions for men and women. Therefore, this subsection focuses on the forces that motivate women to seek leadership and involvement in the workplace. As expected, the findings showed that the family played a large role in the emergence of women as remarkable professionals in their fields. The second incentive was the role models of Qatari women that were successful in the past. Unexpectedly, the government support for women was the third incentive, which eventually led to the great interest in this study. However, the motivational patterns in Qatari women did not align with Walby's framework. Although she makes points that could be linked indirectly to the findings of this study, her framework might need to be redesigned, which is explained below.

As previously discussed, some participants said that their family played a great role in the decision-making about career paths. On one hand, it could be assumed that families played a burdening rather than encouraging role in terms of career development. On the other hand, families were the source of the strongest inspiration some participants. A possible reason might be the fact that women are still dependent on the opinions of their family members, and in the case of positive treatment, they receive huge emotional support.

In discussing women's role models, it is useful to appeal to the common model of inspiration for oppressed or undermined groups. In addition, there may be a mechanism of external success envy that is not internalised as a negative experience because of the lack of personal contact (Díaz-García,

2010, p. 263). Some participants perceived themselves as possessing highly distinguished qualifications, achieving high-level performance, having excellent portfolios, as well a wide range of experiences compared to those of their male counterparts. This finding showed their efficiency in high-level management roles. They were encouraged by their self-confidence and the self-esteem of Qatari women role models, such as Sheikha Moza (Participants D and G).

The third empirical finding involved the participants' motivations for career success, which were driven by the state's policy which is committed to establish a women's leadership centre to 'build women's capacity and increase the number of women in political, organisational and business-related decision-making positions' (NDS 2011-2016, p.176), alongside 'women empowerment' projects and/ or 'equal opportunities' legislations. Although this factor was the last in the set of incentives for success, it could be considered important because it is a sign of the substantial changes in Qatari society. Walby (1990) had the explanatory power to explain this perspective, through suggesting that the state is central to the resolution of certain key conflicts between patriarchal and capitalist forces over the utilization of women labour (p. 50). She shifted the debate onto the question of how effective the state's legislations is in opening up further avenues of employment and closing the gender gap (p. 51).

Although these mechanisms are clear in the general sociological perspective, they were not completely helpful in connecting the main findings with Walby's framework of patriarchy. It is clear that she did not pay attention to the issue of women's motivation or the incentives to reach leadership positions in the workplace, especially when women's success is driven by state policy. Therefore, her elaboration of the dual system of patriarchy does not provide a clear discussion of the ways to overcome the patriarchal

attitudes of segregation and the exclusion of Qatari women in from top management level and better-paid professions. Therefore, Walby's patriarchal theory does not provide the present research with sufficient tools because of the two factors discussed below.

On one hand, Walby later developed a foundation for further research by emphasising the importance of cognitive mechanisms in gender bias and how they could be affected. For instance, Marra (2015) claimed that motivation is an element that underlies the mechanism of cognition capabilities. In addition to other consequences of adequate cognition, she pointed out that the human cognitive system is developed by knowledge gained from outside. She specifically pointed out that state policies are one of the sources of this cognitive change in gender perception, which affects gender-sensitive thought patterns. These patterns change men's perception of the role of women in the labour market and alter their treatment towards women. This positive tendency of cognition enables women to increase their motivation by targeting precise opportunities in the labour market. This assumption is directly linked to the third empirical finding that the motivation of Qatari women for career success is driven by state policy.

On the other hand, Walby's framework does not provide the academic with precise descriptions of the mechanisms of motivation, including the sources of motivation for modern women and how motivation for change in the labour market is altered within specific patriarchal societies, such as Qatar.

#### **6.2.2.4 Leadership styles**

Chapter 5 presented the empirical findings about the leadership style of the participants. Conceptually, the leadership styles were understood as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. The former was characterized by a strong and cold style, while the latter referred to emotional and interpersonal guidance.



It is noteworthy that the findings did not show a shared perspective on how leadership should be implemented within the organisation. Some participants expressed that the 'non-gender' style is appropriate. In other words, the vital characteristics of the leader were not associated with any 'gender model'. Other participants said that they embraced their 'feminine nature' and led the organisation accordingly.

Women are stereotyped as feminine, that is, as having 'communal' attributes, such as compassion, nurturance, helpfulness, sensitivity and concern for others. Men are perceived as masculine, that is, as having 'agentic' attributes, such as assertiveness, dominance, decisiveness, rationality, aggressiveness and self-confidence (Eagly and Karau, 2002). The findings showed that some participants appeared to remain true to their feminine qualities and did not experience tension between their natural characteristics and a 'masculine' style of leadership. This apparent 'femininity' contradicts the findings of Priola (2004), who suggested that many female managers are conflicted by their feminine qualities and the 'masculine' approach expected of leaders. In light of this view, it could be suggested that individuals and organisations should identify the unique qualities of women leaders and accept their ways of leading, rather than forcing them to pursue the socially constructed masculine model of leadership (Vasavada, 2012) in some professions that are dominated by male employees.

Judy Rosener (1990) argued that female management styles are increasingly suited to the turbulence and uncertainty of the contemporary workplace and that women adopt a 'transformational' style of management based on nurturing, enabling and empowering, whereas men prefer a 'transactional' approach, which associates leadership with direction and control. The research on transformational and transactional leadership has shown a meta-analytic generalisation that women combine feminine and masculine

leadership behaviours more than men do. A previous study showed that female managers are somewhat more transformational than male managers are and that they tend to endorse more positive and rewarding strategies, whereas men tend to use negative, threatening strategies (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen, 2003). This finding indicates that the strength of women's leadership styles lies in their unique attributes and characteristics as well as in their abilities to balance masculine and feminine skills.

However, Participants U and W expressed that they adopted a 'masculine' approach to leadership in their professions—the field of media (Participant U) and the field of politics (Participant X)—which are considered non-traditional fields (male-dominated) for women. Alice H. Eagly (2013) found that when women's roles are not strongly male-dominated, they adopt more culturally feminine leadership behaviours.

Although Walby's framework contributes to the understanding of leadership as a gender-biased concept, it does not apply to the findings of the present study. The ambiguity is driven by her view of society as a binary space of male domination and female oppression. Although Walby's framework provides insights into on different dimensions of the male leadership, they do not include the sphere of management in organisations. Instead, she emphasises that women are significantly underrepresented in the top management of companies (Walby, 2006, p. 258). First, she asserts that the state is a political entity driven by men and that women are undermined as political actors. Walby (2006) provided insights into the political dimension, arguing that 'the male model' gained new relevance with the new wave of international violence (p. 114).

Walby's framework of patriarchy is not applicable to the findings of the present study because it does not consider the role of women as managers. In

other words, the framework lacks clear arguments about how women tend to implement their management styles. Instead, Walby often emphasises that management is a space of masculinity where women are expected to perform 'masculine' jobs or where they are replaced by men (Walby, 2006, p. 269). Hence, Walby's elaborations could be applied to explain why some women in Qatar tend to acquire 'masculine characteristics' to be good managers. However, her framework is useless in analysing management styles that are either 'non-gender' or 'feminine'.

Regarding the motivation of women to participate in the labour market, Walby does not provide any clear perspective on the specifications and implications of women leadership style (Psychogios, 2007). She provides a ground for reflections by asserting the dominant role of males in the top management of different organisations and the overall embracement of the efficiency of the 'masculine' type of leadership. However, her framework lacks specifications of how contemporary women managers guide organisations and the core characteristics of successful female managers.

Nevertheless, it is vital to elaborate those conceptual elements because the main findings showed the significance of the 'non-gender' or 'feminine' traits needed to establish leadership within the organisation. Although Qatari society tends to be traditional in terms of gender relations, the findings indicated that Qatari women are able to alter the prevailing perspective on leadership within organisations.

#### **6.2.2.5 Challenges for women managers**

The empirical findings showed that the exclusion of women from employment is diminishing. However, although women may have escaped family constraints, they still face new diffuse forms of control in the public domain, which replace the previous control exerted by husband or father at

home. Therefore, this subsection attempts to understand the challenges that women managers usually encounter in Qatar's labour market. The findings showed that the organisational obstacles in terms of the degrees of segregation and subordination differed among the participants, which limited the generalisability of this study. However, the participants referred to the same societal challenges of public reaction and gender expectations. One of the most prominent responses was that Qatari society was not ready for the empowerment of women.

The literature review showed that gender expectations influence the treatment of women in the workplace (Khandelwal, 2002). Some participants said that they were considered less creative and intellectual than their male counterparts by their employers despite their superior qualifications and outstanding performances (Participants E, G, I, P, L and V).

In a study titled, *Impediments to Women's Leadership in the Community*, conducted by Al Ghanim (2008), the social, institutional and organisational nature of obstacles found to face the process of woman's participation in social decision-making roles, has been examined. The study has carried out three field studies (on the society, work institutions and leadership samples). The study population included a group of 1,200 Qatari citizens, which was randomly selected. The data collection has been conducted through questionnaires, and 1,015 completed questionnaires were collected to be used in the study. The second study field was to survey twenty-three institutions in different sectors, and the study tool was applied to HR managers or their representatives. The third study field sampled sixteen women occupying leadership positions from different sectors in order to identify supporting factors and obstacles they faced in their professional life on the path to their current positions.

A general trend has been observed among the sample of Qatari citizens, who completed questionnaires in the first phase of the study. This trend seems to give preference to men assuming leadership positions in society. This trend was clearly identified from a number of factors made by sample individuals regardless of gender (being males or females), education and profession. These factors can be described as follows:

- Firstly: Determination of sectors and professions appropriate for woman's work.
- Secondly: Woman's eligibility to assume leadership positions.
- Thirdly: Preference given by the sample to leader's gender, being man or woman.
- Fourthly: A husband's opinion about his wife assuming a leadership position.

Subsequently, Al Ghanim (2008) study reached general conclusions and specified policies to overcome such obstacles, whenever existing.

In an extensive review of national human resource situation, Williams and colleagues found that social norms and traditions were undermining the state's efforts to increase the ratio of Qatari women to non-Qataris in some sectors and professions at the labour market (Williams, Bhanugopan, and Fish, 2011). Another study goes in line with findings to this study terms of primary organisation-related constraints hindering women's advancement, has been conducted by Mufta (2010). To identify these constraints, the study asked three research questions. The first question sought to determine the representation of Qatari women in senior managerial roles. The second question reflects on the possibility of discrimination against women in obtaining such posts. The third question focuses on identifying possible

barriers and constraints, which frustrates or hinders the advancement of women to senior levels.

Mufta (2010) sent a questionnaire to seventy human resource directors from seventy different Qatari firms representing all sectors of Qatari economy. A total of twenty-three questionnaires (74% male) were returned, representing a low return rate of thirty per cent. Not surprisingly, the findings of the study demonstrated that Qatari women were poorly represented in senior management posts. This is confirmed by the findings that only thirty-six per cent of the returned questionnaires had been completed by females. Moreover, the study identified several barriers that hinder women's progression into leadership roles. Therefore, Qatari women believe that they need to be protected against exploitation and discriminative acts (Al-Attiyah and Ramzi Nasser, 2014) including those in the workplace.

Walby (1996) included the importance of men's agency in theorising gender relations in organisations that restrict women's access to the better-paid work and gender-segregated trade unions, demonstrating that men's agency leads to structured patriarchal practices and institutions. Therefore, women's employment is typically segregated from that of men. It is not infrequently part-time, marginalised, less rewarded by pay and pensions, and it may constitute a double burden rather than a source of emancipation (Walby, 1996).

Walby's patriarchal theory could be used to explain the implications of women's participation in the top management of organisations in Qatar. In this country, there is very limited set of areas where they can obtain management jobs. Senior management positions are filled by male leaders because they are considered masculine in both practice and meaning, which then generates resistance against women in leadership roles. The masculine

view of leadership creates greater challenges for women in government by undermining feminine qualities (Stivers, 2000; Stivers, 2002; Naff and Crum, 2000).

This pattern is described by Walby (2006) in 'Gendering the knowledge economy'. Specifically, she asserts that the main problem in the current labour market is not the overall participation of women, but rather their share in the top management in any organisation. She also claims that the limited representation of women in top management has led to the creation of 'embedded knowledge', which is unfavourable to women because it is dominated by men.

Legally, Qatar safeguards women against discrimination in the workplace, and there are specific legal provisions in place to deal with any infringements of gender equality in the workplace (Walby, 1990). However, the empirical findings showed that some participants had reached their leadership positions in ways that were more exceptional than those of men. For instance, Participants O and Y were forced to work harder to prove that they were qualified and capable of leading top management roles in order to be recognised by their employers.

Participant G explained how deeply frustrated she felt because she was discriminated against by her employer when she attempted to take a leadership position. This contributed to her disillusionment with society, partly because she had believed that there were equal opportunities of advancement for both men and women but also because she was shocked by current prejudiced attitudes. In speaking about some of her experiences of discrimination, she said that because of gender preference, the recruitment board of the HR department assigned a leadership role to an unqualified male employee.

The conceptual basis of Walby's framework is limited in explaining this phenomenon. On the one hand, she is correct in emphasising the implications of excluding women from branches of the state (executive and legislative), their marginalisation within it and of men perpetuating the oppressive gender system to maintain their dominant role. On the other hand, the dual system of patriarchy does not provide arguments about how men could react when women succeed in career and acquire significant decisive leverage within organisations. It can be argued that men would not accept this situation, and they would oppose it. In reality, Walby's framework provides no clear explanation of the main societal obstacles that women managers face in society. Therefore, her perspective should be either modified or supplemented by research on the recent trends in the employment of women in top management positions.

### **6.3 Summary**

This chapter provided a broad discussion of the theoretical implications and their relevance for the main findings in relation to the research questions. The chapter draws the study together and links it to the existing literature where possible. The empirical findings were related to the theoretical framework suggested by Sylvia Walby, a remarkable sociologist who shaped her perspectives mainly in the field of gender studies and established a credible theory of gender. The overall conclusion is that Walby's framework of patriarchy is valuable in establishing the general reasons for the phenomena that are observed in Qatari society in terms of gender relations today. However, this framework can only be partially accepted because the dual system theory of patriarchy was not applicable to the degree and form of gender inequality in Qatar society.



## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

It remains for this thesis to provide comprehensive conclusions on whether Walby's framework is relevant to the case of gender inequality of Qatari women in the labour market. The historical context of this study is the societal transformations that have taken place since 1995 when the government initiated modernisation reform policies and agendas. This chapter discusses the study's original contributions to knowledge by explaining the relevance of (western) feminism for Qatari women and describing how the findings challenge the taken-for-granted theories of change in (western) feminist theories, such as Walby's theory of patriarchy. The chapter concludes by identifying future research questions and recommends changes to government policies which might improve women's rights and working conditions in the Qatari labour force.

Understanding Qatari women's experiences in leadership roles and their relation to state policies has effectively supported the theoretical framework and the methodological approach in various ways. For instance, this understanding has opened up a space to gain further theoretical insights and questions on gender equality in Qatar workforce. This understanding was also necessary to identify important focal points to initiate further actions which can guide policy makers in Qatar.

### **7.2 Returning to research questions and objectives**

This chapter begins by returning to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. First, the overall implications of how the reforms in 1995 could change the position of women, particularly the challenges they face in the labour market, are considered. Second, this chapter addresses the limitations of Walby's theory and presents directions in which it could be refashioned to

follow the patterns developed in Islamic societies (see Chapter 6), such as Qatar. Walby's theory could be utilised as a theoretical background for assessing Qatari women's access to education and the labour market and, to some extent, the code of conduct prescribed for women in the workplace. However, the thesis has also found that Walby's theory has significant shortcomings related to the explanation of forces of gender inequality in the Qatari labour force, women's behaviour as leaders and their motivation to be successful in the workplace.

In 1995, the Qatari government committed itself to follow conventions aimed at fostering gender equality and overcoming the obstacles that equal-opportunity agendas tend to face in the country (see Chapter 2). These policy reforms have slightly improved the position of women in Qatar by enhancing their traditional image and increasing their contributions to society in general. Chapter 2 showed that the women's empowerment programme was aimed at increasing the rates of women's leadership and promoting gender equality in the Qatari labour market. These priorities are included in the Qatari National Vision 2030 strategy, for instance.

However, women's increased participation in the labour market has not meant that their experiences of work or their working patterns have been the same as men's. This research showed how occupational segregation and wage gaps discourage women's participation in leadership roles. Qatar's labour market remained gendered as some jobs have been seen as women's work and others as men's. Although these factors are economic in nature, it came as a result of social norms and cultural values. Also, data presented several factors that constrain women's ability to combine work and family duties. Moreover, gender roles within the household affect women's progress, especially with regards to their employment and education.

Nor has the implementation of these policies guaranteed fully equal rights for women. This means that the combined effect of public legislation seeking to control what happens in the private sphere (at home) has been less than expected. Although Islam as a religion does not discriminate against women or deny their equality, the institutional embodiment of state structures ensured that these beliefs have been strong cultural barriers to women's equality. The literature review revealed how cultural regimes and gendered expectations of women can hinder their progress within the labour market and society in general.

The question that must be answered is why I position myself in Walby's theoretical framework of patriarchy when there are newer standpoints available. The answer is that I believe that there is an apparent structure of patriarchal domination within Qatari workplaces, as the empirical findings demonstrated. To some extent, Walby's framework of patriarchy is valuable in establishing the general reasoning for the phenomena observed today in gender relations in Qatari society. Some patterns and elements of gender discrimination partially support the relevance of Walby's framework, while others require additional theoretical elaborations. In fact, Walby (1990) stated that the state has provided many changes which facilitate women's entry to the public sphere but there are not so many which improve the position of women in it. Also, she insisted that while the equal opportunity legislation might have been thought to improve women's position in this respect, it is widely considered to have had only a marginal impact (p. 171).

Since, Qatar's labour market is deeply rooted in traditional views of gender relations and cultural expectations, in certain circumstances, women tend to face a degree of gender discrimination in the labour force. According to the empirical findings, women's ability to access certain academic disciplines and professions and to practice leadership roles is restricted. The participants

described the ways that society tends to perceive their talents and professional work, aiming to disempower them despite their effectiveness and positive contributions while fulfilling the responsibilities of their careers. This finding aligns with Walby's major statement concerning the challenges that women face in the workplace.

Specifically, Walby provided a theoretical grounding for the growing trend of women entering masculine-coded fields in higher education and making independent decisions. In a prominent work, Walby (1990) successfully explained why women were expected to attend particular course of studies in university and why such stereotypes were being eliminated by the end of twentieth century. She offered insight into how women in the United Kingdom educated themselves and what incentives affected their choices. She also pointed to the tendency for an increasing number of women entering higher education, which is relevant to the pattern found in the results of this thesis from Qatar. At the same time, some participants in this thesis revealed that they were forced to choose particular studies or even to ask their parents for permission to enter higher education, and moreover, some stated that the situation had changed drastically in recent years, as career opportunities have opened up for women.

Walby also provided the argument that women have fewer opportunities to participate in the labour market due to family responsibilities that are mostly placed on the shoulders of women and which she framed as 'self-organisation'. This argument is extremely valuable and applicable when analysing how Qatari women manage combining work and family responsibilities. The previous chapters of this thesis outlined the significant steps taken by the Qatari government to facilitate the presence of women at work, although the government has retained a traditional orientation,

maintaining the family as the core of national development and promotion of local traditions (Gray, 2013).

This situation has put additional pressure on women. As more women have gone to work, the government has not made any attempts to diminish their burdens related to family, which emphasises the importance of Walby's recent work centred on the concept of self-organisation (Marra, 2015). The issue has been exacerbated by the ambiguity of the Qatari government's agenda regarding the promotion of family values and encouragement of women's participation in the labour market. Even though Walby's concept of 'self-organisation' was introduced later than the framework of the dual system of patriarchy, it still aligns with her assertion that the lack of human capital results from women spending less time in the public life. Therefore, Walby's framework is relevant to the issue of women's equal contribution of time to enterprises.

Moreover, Walby's elaborations are valuable in the area of codes of expected conduct in the workplace. Specifically, she partially adapted her theory to the specific problem of women's behaviour in the workplace and later eliminated the theory's shortcomings with the introduction of the concept of embedded knowledge. Specifically, Qatari women tended to distance themselves from communication with men in the workplace. They attributed this behaviour to the strong, pervasive religiousness of the society. This issue was extensively assessed by Walby from the perspective of the benefits of informal communication and the totality of the normative system (Walby, 2013; Agarwal, 2010).

The dual system of patriarchy is relevant as Qatar society as following a dominant system of male interpersonal relations which undermines women's role in informal communication by establishing a gender-biased normative

system within labour market as follows: first, women are excluded from formal communication in the workplace as they are believed to not perform as well as males. The second explanation is that men have created a specific normative system that keeps women from interacting with men in higher positions on the career ladder, which decreases women's chances for promotion and reinforces men's dominant position in any organisation. Here, the framework of Walby appears to be relevant when we address the issue of the strict communication burdens in the Qatari labour market that were explicitly discussed by the interviewed women. Therefore, on this point of the assessment of the relevance of Walby's framework to the main findings of this thesis, it has been revealed that such framework is relevant to the case of gender inequality in Qatar work force in reference to education, code of conduct and the specific organisation of time determined by the government's agenda on the promotion of women rights and position of the family at the core of national development.

However, other findings do not align with Walby's framework of dual system of patriarchy, as discussed in more detail in the following. Even though Walby's theoretical framework had a revolutionary effect on gender studies in general, her theory was criticised as she neglected the tension between agency and structure necessary to understand social processes. To address this tension, the present analysis is embedded in an empirical, micro-sociological research of lived experience, in this case, of Qatari women's experiences of home, work and state. Walby herself constantly amended and supplemented this framework in her further studies. This study's empirical data revealed other patterns of gender discrimination in the labour market in Qatar, which creates additional questions about the explanatory ability and relevance of Walby's framework of patriarchy for this particular country. Those elements are related to time management, code of conduct, motivation for change in the labour market and women's leadership styles and public

acceptance of successful women, which has been found in this study's empirical material.

The analysis here identified certain weaknesses in Walby's theory of patriarchy, particularly its applicability to the degree and form of gender inequality in the Qatar workforce context. Critics have claimed that Walby's theory is not able to provide an explanation of the experiences of diverse groups of women divided by, for instance, class and ethnicity. First, she could explain the specific modes of women's motivation in the workplace only to a very limited extent. In this thesis, the empirical findings identified certain patterns of women's motivation for career success in Qatar. More specifically, participants described the importance of role models, family and government support in driving them to achieve specific job-related goals.

Chapter 3 presented several postmodern feminist criticisms of Walby's use of the binary of public/private patriarchy to explain gender inequality when, it is claimed, the world is more complex. Walby's framework was criticised as it views patriarchy as a universal, static or fixed system based on male domination and female subordination in a binary model of private and public modes. Thus, Walby's argument completely denies the essential role of individual agency. As agency is completely denied; in Walby's framework, women are unable to escape their predetermined conditions and are broadly perceived as completely passive victims. By failing to account for the diverse experiences of women in the workplace (i.e., specific cases of women's success in the workplace provided by the interviewees), Walby's theory provides only a limited explanation of the dynamic mechanisms of interactions between men and women in Qatar. (For instance, some participants mentioned that male family members and male bosses at work encouraged them to assume leadership roles.)

According to Kottiswari (2008), the nature of patriarchy cannot properly accommodate constantly changing attitudes that reflect changing gender relations. Therefore, it can be argued that Walby's argument could be considered outdated in relation to modern gender conditions. More specifically, Walby only laid the groundwork for further research on the cognitive processes that enable women to react to the institutional liberalisation of gender relations, which was expected to increase the attractiveness of the labour market to women in general.

It should also be mentioned that Walby only partially managed to assess the creation of the specific code of conduct in the workplace, introducing her famous concept of embedded knowledge much later than the dual system of patriarchy (Durbin, 2011). Although Walby discussed the issue of time management for women, she introduced the concept of self-organisation in her later works which, in fact, were not related to the dual system of patriarchy. Therefore, this thesis only partially accepts the relevance of Walby's framework to the organisational and behavioral challenges that Qatari women face in the workplace.

In addition, Walby's framework does not take into account the leadership styles applied by women in the workplace. Her theory is not relevant to the findings on the specific leadership styles that Qatari women use to manage organisations. This limitation arose as Walby did not sufficiently study the presence of women in the top management of organisations, so she could not describe how women maintain their leadership positions. In fact, she asserted that the masculine model is dominant nowadays. However, the present research found that women follow either non-gendered or feminine styles of leadership. Ultimately, Walby's theory does not provide grounds for reflecting on the difficulties that woman managers might face in the workplace. In contrast, the present research found that particular obstacles



could be generalised to almost all women managers; therefore, these exist on the social level and require additional theoretical analysis. To some extent, it can be considered that the lack of analysis, in Walby's later work, about how women cope with public reactions to their career success, did not supplement the dual system of patriarchy (Walby, 2006). As shown in this thesis, there is a great unwillingness among workers to follow women's guidance.

Overall, it can be concluded that Walby's framework has significance for contemporary gender studies. However, it is not applicable to Middle Eastern societies, such as Qatar, where patriarchal shifts have resulted from legal and organisational state policies rather than political movements. Even though Walby has provided strong arguments on general gender issues, it can be asserted that there remains a significant amount of knowledge related to leadership of women in enterprises that requires additional academic scrutiny and the amendment of gender theories. Moreover, Walby's theory should be supplemented by specific elaborations of women's presence in top management positions in organisations. Hence, Walby's framework only partially applies to the Qatari context.

### **7.3 Original contributions to knowledge**

This section emphasises the major findings of the present research that go beyond Walby's framework. The study's contribution to knowledge, and a significant strength of the research, is to understand the relevance of Qatari society to (western) feminism. A major claim of this thesis is that the taken-for-granted theories of change in (western) feminism are not applicable to Qatar, which is a Muslim country. Walby's theoretical framework was challenged when it was applied to the empirical findings of this thesis. Nevertheless, sophisticated conclusions about the position of Qatar women within the labour force could be drawn. For women to achieve social change and gender equality, they need to initiate change in a step-by-step manner.

They must overcome strong cultural barriers in state structures to shape their future and achieve gender equality. These conclusions suggest the need to revise but avoid falsifying Walby's theory of patriarchy.

A sound argument was developed to address the type of patriarchy in the Qatari labour market compared to the social contexts of the West, as well as the relations between structure and agency developed by Walby. In particular, the Qatari government has a different role than Western governments in changing women's position and moving from private to public patriarchy. As discussed, feminism, throughout its various phases, has been critical to initiating social change in the West. Also, there exist or have existed strong feminist movements in some Islamic countries (e.g., Iran, Egypt, Turkey) (Karaca,2009), which have been helpful in women's battle for social, political, economic and intellectual rights equal to those of men. However, the forces of change in Qatari society are different as there is no clear tradition of women's activism (or even feminism).

The Qatari constitution and law regulate the freedom of peaceful assembly and association and impose strict conditions on the establishment of private societies. At the same time, the constitution asserts the principle of equality between citizens in their rights and responsibilities, and the Qatari government has continued its efforts to improve the status of women and grant them equal rights. Consequently, women's increased involvement in the public sphere has created a different approach to shift patriarchy. This different approach follows a top-down model rather than the bottom-up model of the west which resulted from women's political movements. For instance, according to the women interviewees, they are primarily supported by the state, along with their families and Qatar women role models, to rise in the leadership hierarchy, which means that some structures of gender roles are changing within Qatar society. This contradicts Walby's theoretical

framework which sees the state as an instrument of patriarchal domination and believes that its non-intervention is part of the logic of the patriarchal system.

This thesis has also identified core settings in Qatar society which were not covered in Walby's analysis, such as extended family relations, the influence of tribes on family members and the recruitment of foreign domestic servants within households. Accordingly, this thesis recognises that the world is more complex than allowed by Walby's binary of discrimination in the workplace (public patriarchy) and in the home (private patriarchy), which has been extensively criticised by post-modern feminism. In short, public patriarchy has reinforced private patriarchy, not eliminated or supplanted it. For instance, most Qatari women wear the veil in public sphere even though they are not obligatory. Moreover, according to the participants, women's experiences in the (public) workforce might differ according to their (private) family background and socio-economic circumstances. Women's workplace experiences can depend on how strictly their family and society employ such gender roles, whether they are married and have children, whether they have extended family responsibilities and whether they hire domestic servants to help with household chores.

Walby's discussion is applicable to Qatar society in terms of the general situation of women in the home and work: they remain primarily responsible for housework and child-rearing even when they have work duties. Women in Qatar, though, also experience numerous obstacles in reconciling the patriarchal implications of gender roles and interpretations of Sharia (Islamic law) with their individual aspirations for education and employment. They still experience segregation in the workforce and are under-presented in certain professions and leadership roles, even when they have qualifications

equal to or better than men's. Indeed, cultural limitations hinder women's career progress and limit their rise up the leadership hierarchy.

Overall, this thesis has retheorised patriarchy in a new way that fits a Muslim country, such as Qatar, as westernised forms of feminism have limited or no places in such male-dominated societies. The state's role in initiating a shift in the private/public patriarchal discourse is obvious. But women's own contributions (societally) to further changing patriarchal relations, should be taken into account in order to achieve fundamental social change and overcome cultural limitations in the workplace and elsewhere. This process involves creating a new form of a women's movement which seeks to achieve change in a step-to-step manner. In other words, women need to maintain Islamic principles and social manners within the public domain (e.g., wearing traditional clothes, black hijab and abayha, dealing professionally with men counterparts) in order to gradually overcome strong cultural barriers and advance gender equality within the workforce. Moreover, men's behaviour towards gender equality must change. They need to understand that the terms *feminism* and *women's empowerment* help secure their involvement in childcare and housework.

According to Gallant (2010), the form of feminism that best fits the Arab context is to create a 'sustainable, emancipatory movement by gradually challenging patriarchal discourses while still maintaining a connection to key societal norms' (p.14) and to Islamic principles. Hoodfar (1998) stated that a new wave of Islamist feminists is challenging and reforming Islamic doctrine from within. Using the language of the religious and political leaders, those women demand that the state live up to its promise of Islamic equality between men and women. Therefore, I argue that future generations of Qatari women should develop a genuine Islamic feminism that will allow let them to exercise their equal rights and distinguishes between patriarchal tradition

and Islam itself. In order to truly change Qatar's conservative culture from the bottom up, new generations of women need to change their attitudes and beliefs as regards their position in society, improve themselves and refuse male domination.

The next section offers some social policy recommendations to embed gender equality in everyday life practices and social policies.

#### **7.4 Recommendations for future research**

The concepts of women, development, equality, empowerment and related issues are significant topics in contemporary theories. The aim of this section is to inform other researchers and policy makers about the trustworthiness of the findings. Future research could attempt to build on the empirical findings (i.e., drawing inspirations from the experiences of participant who were part of the present study), which contribute new knowledge to the field, especially regarding the improvement of the condition of women in Qatari society. Based on the findings, two topics are recommended for future research:

- (1) How to initiate further ways to change traditional views on women's roles and to secure the significant reforms in the cultural, social political and economic structures necessary for the gradual equalisation of gender relations?
- (2) How to increase women's share of top management positions and to break the glass ceiling in the public and private sectors?

A combination of social policy recommendations for policy makers could pave the way to create a gender-equal society and provide specific guidelines to reduce barriers to women's access to top management roles. For instance, the Qatari government has implemented several human rights and gender

equality document, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and (CEDAW) and its optional protocol. However, it is apparent that there are no clear mechanisms to ensure that governmental organisations actually implement state policies. This lack does not contribute to the achievement of the long-term gender equality goals stated in the Qatar National Vision 2030 strategy.

Therefore, focused, procedural steps should be taken to enforce adherence to frameworks by governmental institutions and to amend existing legislation to tackle the challenges faced by women. These steps include implementing the following social policy recommendations:

*(1) Establishing and funding women's civil society organisations*

One aim of NDS 2011–2016 is to establish more women's organisations, which requires financial resources from the government. These organisations would construct a framework policy to raise public awareness about the significant roles of women and the need to transform stereotypes based on gender. In particular, investing in nongovernmental organisations would help achieve gender equality in Qatar society for the following reasons:

- Community-based organizations will incorporate specific mechanisms to address women's concerns and needs, keep them informed about their equal rights and improve their personal and professional skills to make the right decisions, understand situations, increase their participation in public life and overcome obstacles facing them. Women need to be educated in how they can empower themselves (Dwyer and Bruce, 2012).
- It will also raise awareness of gender-related issues through public campaigns aimed at challenging assumptions about women's proper roles in society and media portrayals of femininity and masculinity. It

will also contribute to coherent gender-sensitive approaches to such issues as domestic violence.

- In addition, it will invest in research to determine the effectiveness of gender equality legislation, evaluate its outcomes and disseminate information to the public. There is also a need to train research-based organisations to conduct statistical and qualitative research in a timely and efficient manner and on a regular basis. This research should give greater attention to women's special needs for income-producing activities and control of income, educational and training opportunities, technologies and other means to ease the burden and increase the productivity of women's work. It should also obtain data on gender-sensitive issues, such as domestic violence. Overall, this research will improve the evaluation of gender equality policies and legislations.
- Finally, it will contribute to reducing the burden of housework and childcare on women by increasing their access to non-traditional economic resources and removing social constraints to their participation in top management roles.

(2) *Integrating an evaluation and monitoring system in governmental organisations.* This could be achieved by making regular investigations of the forms of gender-based discrimination and violence against women and by enforcing reporting procedures for organisations to prepare annual reports. These reports could focus on specific areas where women are excluded from economic resources and occupational opportunities.

(3) *Promoting work/family policies.* This could be achieved through permitting flexible, part-time work and adopting a child care policy for working mothers and through increasing maternity leave and benefits to

assist families with children. Women are expected to completely take care of their children according to the traditional gender roles in Qatar society.

(4) *Initiating a feminisation policy in government organisations.* The main aim of this policy would be to promote the equal distribution of leadership roles, payments and training programmes among women and men and to conduct regular assessments that fully prioritise women's rights. This policy would break the glass ceiling to women's participation in top management positions through: 1) nominating qualified men and women based on meritocratic criteria (i.e. relevant academic certificates, professional qualifications, administrative knowledge); and 2) enforcing regular reviews of the performance and qualifications of leaders in all governmental and private institutions. Therefore, a feminisation policy would ensure that top management positions are filled according to merit (i.e. the right person, whether a man or woman, is in the right position) and would stop the appointment of unqualified leaders in the practice of nepotism or favouritism.

Commitments made under international conventions are key instruments that can be used in implementing further equal rights and enacting feminist legislations in Qatar. These conventions are essential for making regular assessments that fully prioritise women's rights, promote gender equality and prevent violence against women. Moreover, international conventions can also ensure that state policies are easily implemented in line with human rights standards through binding international documents using a quota system in government and private institutions.

Finally, this thesis points to further gaps and areas in diverse areas which should be further researched to advance gender equality in the workforce and promote economic rights. In future studies, focus and attention should be



given to selecting the appropriate field of work, group of study and time period for data collection.

*(1) Research and sampling methods*

The qualitative method used in this research took a great deal of time and effort. Despite the usefulness of the qualitative approach, it requires arranging interview schedules and meetings with participants before the start of data collection. Given that some associations found in the qualitative analysis in the present study come from relatively small samples, it is worth assessing the validity of the findings from quantitative studies with larger samples. Researchers have suggested that associations found in studies with small sample sizes might be less reliable than those found in studies with large sample sizes. However, there is also an opposing view: the quantitative approach can statistically prove further findings not found in the present study as it has a relatively small sample size.

It also remains possible that the results are not representative of the Qatari population in question as the snowball recruitment strategy employed here only yielded a small number of participants who were not randomly selected. Therefore, it is important that, in future studies, researchers should consider that carrying out a relatively large number of tests increases the chances of obtaining valid, significant results. At the same time, however, the recruitment strategy used here enabled broad access to participants with various ages, socio-economic backgrounds, fields of work and other characteristics of interest.

*(2) Investigations of other study groups*

Researchers seeking to study the perception and challenges facing women's managers could investigate the conferences, attitudes and viewpoints of the

men. Their behaviours might differ from those of the participants interviewed in the current study.

A major challenge in the research was gaining access to conduct semi-structured interviews with women occupying senior management roles in civil society organisations due to difficulties arranging appropriate times and places for interviews. Participants were mostly limited by their working hours and household commitments. However, they seemed to be highly welcoming and willing to disclose details of their experiences and daily life activities during the interviews (as explained in Chapter 4).

*(3) Alternative theoretical frameworks*

Future studies should accurately describe the relationship between theoretical frameworks and individuals' actual experiences. Related theories should be applied in studies to capture the acceptability of women's economic rights and equal opportunity frameworks within the workforce. There must be an overlap between theories and such processes, but through much interaction, they could further simplify and facilitate the promotion of gender equality across the globe.

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## **APPENDIX 1 - Consent Form**

### **Consent Form**

#### **Title of the Study: Gender and Equality in the Workplace: A Study of Qatari Women in Leadership Positions**

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I can withdraw my data from the study at any time.
- I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project.

(PRINT NAME)	Hereby agree to take part in the above project
Signature of Participant:	Date

## **APPENDIX 2 – Interview Guide**

### **Gender and Equality in the Workplace: A Study of Qatari Women in Leadership Positions**

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Name of Participant:

#### **Briefing**

I am a postgraduate researcher at Durham University. This interview is part of my doctoral thesis and your participation would be much appreciated. The aim of this investigation is to determine how far the State of Qatar has progressed towards achieving the equality and empowerment of women since 1995 when new policies and modernisation agendas were implemented.

#### **Interview Schedule**

**Section One:** Social and demographic characteristics

- Age:
- Social Status:
- No. of Children:
- Specialization:
- Primary Occupation:

#### **Section Two: Professional Qualifications**

The participation of woman in workforce is one of the important indicators that proves the improvement of her social position and her social rank as well as the change in her roles in the society from the traditional roles (childbearing and home affairs management and child care) to the modern roles (working and its results like; economic independence and social participation).



- What is your occupation?
- Do you face any obstacles and problems in Work?
- What is the gender of your current principle? What do you prefer?
- Is there any occupation that women are not capable of?

### **Leadership Positions**

Qatar adopts policies supporting the arrival of woman to leading positions, whereas the comprehensive vision of development (Qatar Vision 2030) has stipulated the development of promoting the abilities of woman and enabling her of the economic participation and taking decision. The representation of women in the leading positions are focused in ministries and institutions of social rank (Education and the higher board of the family and Qatar University), meanwhile, the representation of women in the political, economic and legal ministries are not existed, which means that the woman is still facing difficulties in participating such sector or affecting on it.

- Are women suitable to hold a leadership position?
- What are the qualifications that need to be available in women who held a leadership position?
- Do you personally seek any higher leadership position?
- How have you been appointed to lead this leading position?
- What are the positives and the negatives aspects of getting this leading position?
- Do women face any obstacles in getting a leadership position?
- How can women overcome obstacles in getting a leadership position?
- What are your suggestions to increase opportunities for Qatari women to hold leadership positions?
- Do some organizations prefer men in leadership positions more than women?

### **Section Three: Social Life**

- What is your position in the family? What are the responsibilities and core duties you carry out within the family?
- Do you find it difficult to manage responsibilities both at home and work?
- What are your child care arrangements? Do you hire a domestic help with the housework? (only married women with children can answer this question)

### **Society Culture: Public perception:**

- Have customs and traditions influenced your development and empowerment as a woman in Qatar? If so how can this barrier be overcome?
  1. Do you think women should be allowed to have driving licenses? How would this affect women's empowerment?
  2. Do you socialize freely with men? Is this an acceptable practise particularly for married women?
  3. Are you allowed to travel outside the country without your partner? What do you feel about such travel prohibitions?
- Does marriage restricts women's freedom and development?
- What is the society's perception towards divorced women?
- What is Westernisation? Has Westernisation influenced your daily lifestyle in how you dress, talk or your general behaviour?

### **Women Empowerment**

- What are your views on women's empowerment and status of Qatari Women today?
- How can you use your role to support and call for women empowerment in Qatar?

- Do you agree with the following statement: the cultural context of Qatar is regarded as a male-dominated society.
- What are your views on gender equality in the workplace?
- What are your views on the role of Sheikha Moza and Qatar Vision 2030?

#### **Section Four: the Role of the State in providing equal rights for Citizens**

The political system of ruling in the state of Qatar supports the rights of the Qatari human, where a system treats men and women equally in terms of education and employment.

- Do you understand your human rights as a woman? Do you have access to all your human rights? Are your rights as a woman protected under Qatar's constitution?
- Does the effort that the Qatari government provide to protect women and support Qatari women empowerment enough?
- Does the employment system protect equally men and women?

#### **End of Interview**

- Do you have any last word you want to state?