

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**Exploring the barriers to work-life balance for
women in Saudi Arabia**

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By

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Abstract

In recent years, the increasing demands of organisations on their employees, together with more family and non-work commitments, raise questions of how to balance these conflicting demands. This is especially relevant currently for women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), as they have high levels of educational attainment and are being encouraged into the workforce by government initiatives, yet are still expected to perform the traditional domestic roles assigned to them by religion and culture. Flexible work is considered in some cultures as one of the solutions that might resolve conflicts between employees' family life and work. The purpose of this research is to explore the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia. To achieve this aim, three questions are raised: 1) Do women in Saudi Arabia have autonomy and flexibility in their work? 2) Do women in Saudi Arabia desire to have autonomy and flexibility in their work? What might be the benefits for their work-life balance? 3) What barriers do women in Saudi Arabia face to achieving flexibility? Moreover, this study explores the impact of religion and national culture on the context of work-life balance, and the potential of flexible work and job crafting for achieving an environment of work-life balance. In order to assist in the identification and interpretation of issues influencing women's ability to achieve work-life balance, this thesis draws on work-family border theory. Semi-structured interviews were used in collecting data. Thirty-one women employees in the health, education, and banking sectors were interviewed, these being the main sectors of female employment in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this research show that women largely lack autonomy and flexibility in their work due to lack of formal policy, bureaucracy and stereotypical attitudes in the workplace. However, they desire to have autonomy and flexibility in their work, and perceive benefits to themselves, their families and their employers if such opportunities were made available. In addition, the findings provide a deeper understanding of the different problems which Saudi women face in achieving

work-life balance. The factors identified in this study that prevent working women in Saudi Arabia from achieving a satisfactory balance between work and home include the culture, religion, transportation, lack of suitable childcare, and family and work responsibilities. The study shows how border theory can be developed by adding new constructs to expand Clark's (2000) model to make better sense of the issues faced by Saudi working women, specifically the interacting influence of personal and institutional (including cultural) factors on the strategies employed by women to negotiate work/family borders. By drawing attention to dynamics previously neglected in the border theory literature, the study contributes to debates on how border theory can inform understanding of work-life balance in previously unresearched cultural contexts.

Dedication

To the most important people in my life, my mother Safiah Batarfi and my father Omar Bahudhailah, who cared for me, inspired me, and always encouraged me to learn;

To my lovely wife, Allaa Alamoudi, who stands by me, and gives me unlimited encouragement, time, endeavour, and support; also, to my daughter Joanne and my son Fahad;

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List of Abbreviations

BS = Banking Sector

EPS = Education, public sector

EP1S = Education, private sector

GDP = Gross Domestic Product

HPS = Health, public sector

HP1S = Health, private sector

HRM = Human Resource Management

KSA = Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

MENA = Middle East and North Africa

OPEC = Organisation of Petroleum- Exporting Countries

PBUH= Peace be upon him

SAMA = Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority

SR = Saudi Riyals

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores the challenges faced by working women in Saudi Arabia in achieving a balance between their family roles and their roles in the workplace. This chapter begins by introducing the problem of work-life balance and the features of the research context in order to highlight the rationale and significance of the research, leading to the identification of the specific aims and objectives of the research and the questions it addresses. There follows a more detailed account of the specific sectors in which this research was carried out, banking, health and education, these being major employers of women in Saudi Arabia. Current issues facing women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole are outlined, and essentialist versus social constructionist views of gender are introduced, to set the research in a wider regional and theoretical frame, leading to discussion of specific features of the Saudi context that have implications for the work-life balance of women. The purpose of these discussions is to help in identifying gaps in extant literature and to provide a necessary context for the discussions that follow in later chapters. After a brief identification of the intended contribution of the thesis and summary of the issues, the chapter concludes by outlining how the study proceeds in the remainder of the thesis.

1.1 Background

In today's working environment, extended working hours and more significant work pressures raise questions about how individuals can balance work with other needs. In particular, the significant growth in numbers of workers, especially women, who are married and have children, gives rise to concerns about how these families balance their work and family roles and about the reciprocal influences between roles (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010). In most nations, employees work according to standard weekly schedules of eight hours a day for five days a week (Griffin & Moorhead, 2012). However,

Bohlander and Snell (2009) identified that a shift from the normal schedule might be necessary to keep high organisational productivity and enhance the morale of workers by giving them control over their work schedule. This is because people now have a wide array of needs and desires at different times in their lives. The typical expectations of a worker might be the need to attend to family commitments, for leisure to enjoy earnings, and social duties such as maintaining religious and extended family ties (Snell & Bohlander, 2012).

Managing role expectations can be particularly difficult for women. Throughout the world, women are challenged by gender role expectations; it is assumed that a woman will attend to household chores and look after her husband and children, while men are not expected to stay at home (Zinyemba, 2013). Gender is a fundamental part of the way societies are organised, based on differences ascribed to the sexes and on identity and power relations underpinned by unequal values assigned to those perceived differences. Research on gender is concerned, not with women per se but with the balance of power between the sexes, their access to resources and participation in decision-making (Metcalf & Rees, 2010). This study will explore whether Saudi women perceive that the balance between work and family life can be managed and the possible role of flexible work, as well as barriers to achieving work-life balance.

1.2 Context of the Study

1.2.1 Overview of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is ranked as the 14th largest country in the world with a total size of 2,149,690 sq km. It is just over a one-fifth of the United States in size and just over 8.5 times the size of the United Kingdom. The coastline of Saudi Arabia is 2,640 km. More than 60% of Saudi Arabia's area is covered by desert, which explains the

dry, harsh conditions and high temperatures (CIA, 2015). The major cities in Saudi Arabia are as follows (CIA, 2015):

- Riyadh (the capital) with 6.195 million population
- Jeddah (the main port) with 4.076 million population
- Dammam (the second port and the capital of the oil industry region) with a population of 1.064 million.

These are the main centres of employment, including concentrations of public sector services where many women are employed.

The country is a monarchy founded on the Islamic religion. Islam's holiest sites are located in Saudi Arabia. The Holy Cities are:

- Makkah (the birthplace of Islam and the site of Al Masjid Al Haram Holy Mosque) with 1.7 million population
- Madinah (where the Prophet Mohammed is buried and the location of the Prophet's Holy Mosque) with 1.28 million population.

As will be discussed later, Saudi Arabia's distinctive Islamic heritage has a bearing on this study, because of the influence of religion on cultural perceptions of women's roles and the constraints they face.

A total of 30,770,375 million population was recorded in 2014, of whom expatriate residents constituted an estimated ten million in 2014 (GASTAT, 2015). The number of Saudis unemployed is 646, 854, of which 250,886 are male and 395,968 female. However, the unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia (11.6 %) consists mainly of unemployed women, who account for 61.2% of the unemployed (CIA, 2015). This raises questions about factors that may constrain women from entering or remaining in the workforce. Saudi Arabia's population growth is 2.15% a year. Also, the 15-24 age group constitute 19.11%

of the population, and the 25-24 age group represent 45.9% of the population (CIA, 2015). This growing population and young age structure mean that large numbers of women are of employment age, but also of an age when they are likely to have family commitments. The same, of course, applies to men, but as will be seen later, the tension between work and family has greater resonance for women, for cultural reasons.

Saudi Arabia in its present form was founded in 1932 by Abdu Al-Aziz bin Abdu-al Rahman Al- Saud (Ibn Saud) after a 30-year campaign to bring most of the Arabian Peninsula under his control. According to the Kingdom's Basic Law, succession has passed to his male descendants. King Salman bin Abdu Al-Aziz ascended to the throne in 2015 and nominated the first next-generation prince, Muhammad bin Nayif bin Abdu Al- Aziz, to the line of succession as Crown Prince. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, and Islam's two holiest shrines are located there in Makkah and Madinah; thus the king bears the official title of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (CIA, 2015).

The Kingdom's Basic Law of Governance identifies the King as the Prime Minister and defines the membership, roles and powers of government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). The Legislative Branch consists of a Consultative Council (also known as Majlis as-Shura or Shura Council) whose role is to advise the King on issues of importance for the state. The Council consists of 150 members, appointed by the King for four years, which may be renewed. They are assigned to 12 committees, addressing human rights, education, culture, information, health and social affairs, services and public utilities, foreign affairs, security, administration, Islamic affairs, economy and industry, and finance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

Moreover, each of the 13 provinces has a governor and deputy and its council comprising not less than 10 citizens. In October 2003 plans were announced for a gradual introduction

of appointment by election for one-third of the Consultative Council members, and half those of provincial assemblies, although this has not yet been implemented (Helen Ziegler & Associates, 2016).

In September 2011, King Abdullah declared the intention to allow women to be appointed to the Consultative Council. In January 2013, the first 30 women were appointed to the Council, following enactment of a law requiring that at least 20% of the Council's members should be women (Helen Ziegler & Associates, 2016). This can be seen as a significant step towards improving women's status and opportunities in society, which, as will be seen later, has been followed by changes in employment law, although the impact so far has been limited.

1.2.2 Economy and labour market

The Saudi Arabian economy has been radically hastened from a rural economy dominated by nomadic Bedouin herdsmen and farmers, to a prosperous oil-based economy that has an influence on the world economy as a whole. Before oil, Saudi Arabia was a poor country with little physical infrastructure and very limited industrial development (Simmons, 2006). Limited commodities existed, such as soap, pottery, household goods, and furniture (Sabri, 2001).

Since the discovery and exploitation of oil, economic development in Saudi Arabia has impacted enormously on people's life and work style (Shoult, 2006), bringing wider education and work opportunities. In 2012, the Saudi Arabian economy witnessed growth as the result of infrastructural change and activities undertaken as a result of earlier macro decisions. An increase in gross domestic product (GDP) of 1,217.9 billion Saudi Riyals from SR 1,58.5 billion within the 2011-2012 time period originated from an escalating contribution of non-oil sectors (SAMA, 2013). Simultaneously, GDP for the oil sector

increased by 5.5%, while non-oil sectors increased by 5.0% over the previous year (SAMA, 2013). The Saudi Arabian economy, in which the government strongly controls major economic activities, is heavily oil-dependent. The Kingdom accounts for about 16% of the world's proven petroleum reserves, is the world's largest exporter of petroleum and is a leading member of OPEC. Oil and related products account for about 80% of budget revenues, almost half of GDP, and 90% of export earnings. This imbalance in the economy has, however, raised government concerns, leading to conscious attempts in recent years to restructure the economy, which may have implications for women, as discussed later in this section.

The government is seeking development of the private sector in order to reduce dependence on oil and provide jobs for Saudi citizens. The diversification policy especially targets power generation, telecommunications, natural gas exploration and petrochemicals, which in Saudi Arabia are male-dominated sectors, and likely to remain so, since women are not encouraged to study or work in these areas. In 2014 the Kingdom faced a budget deficit for the first time since 2009, and the situation is expected to continue because oil prices are not high enough to balance the country's budget. Although foreign assets and borrowing could cushion against high deficits for some time, if oil prices do not increase in the near future, a reduction of capital spending is likely (CIA, 2015).

The transformation of the Saudi Arabian economy from its traditional standard to a global standard occurred in a shorter period compared to its neighbouring Arab countries (Al-Wakeel, 2001). The Kingdom employs over 6 million foreign workers, especially in the petroleum and service industries, yet at the same time, there is a problem of unemployment among nationals. A particular concern is unemployment among the large

youth population, who do not generally have the education and technical skills called for by the private sector.

As a result of globalisation and socio-economic and social development, Saudi policymakers have concluded that comprehensive and sustainable socio-economic development is not attainable without the active role of all social actors in the global society (Metcalf & Rees, 2010). At the same time, the kingdom is facing a problem of unemployment among its citizens, resulting in the emergence in the past two decades of a policy of “Saudization” as a cornerstone of development efforts. This Saudi employment strategy is a key factor in the provision of jobs to citizens (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2014). Despite a degree of economic diversification in recent years, reducing dependence on oil, Saudi Arabia still relies heavily on a large number of expatriate labour. Employment among Saudi nationals is predominantly in skilled and professional fields requiring technical or university qualifications, while foreign labour are extensively employed at lower and middle levels (Ertürk, 2009). However, there are considerable difficulties in overcoming the unemployment problem. There is no statutory minimum wage, and foreigners, who are prepared to work for lower wages and fewer benefits than nationals, deprive nationals, especially youth, of many work opportunities. The private sector favours cheaper foreign labour in the interest of profit margins. The Saudization policy, initiated to reduce dependence on foreign workers by encouraging or forcing businesses to employ more nationals, has had limited success (AlMunajjed & Sabbagh, 2011).

The Ministry of Labour provides various programmes for reducing the percentage of unemployment and increasing the number of Saudi workers, especially in the private sector. One of these important initiatives is called “Natiqat” or “ranges”. This programme evaluates the Saudization performance of organisations, classified into excellence bands:

green, yellow, and red. It rewards the green band who come top in Saudization, deals firmly with those in the red band who are doing least in Saudization and provides facilities to support those in the yellow band, so Saudization is a new feature sought by organisations for excellence and competition (Ministry of Labour, 2013). Whilst Saudization regulations do not contain specific provisions on employment of women, it is possible that the pressure to fill their quota of Saudi employees may encourage organisations to recruit more women. However, this hope may be undermined by the requirements to provide separate facilities for women and the cost this would entail.

1.2.3 Employment of women

As part of its plan to ensure the Kingdom benefits from the full potential of its population, the government is paying more attention to the role of women. There is evidence that Saudi Arabia is adopting a new policy of recruiting qualified women into high positions in both the public and private sectors (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Saudi women are gradually entering into senior roles in government, academia and business, such as deputy minister, university president, Shura Council consultants, board members of Chambers of Commerce and many others (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Many changes have occurred in Saudi society and culture with regard to women; for example, now it is more acceptable than before to see women working as tailors, lawyers, waitresses, saleswomen, and holding other jobs (Kattan et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, in both public and private sector employment, women are impeded by the absence of family-friendly policies and organised infrastructural support such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and child-care facilities (AlMunajjed & Sabbagh, 2011). Moreover, those Saudi women who work outside the home depend on male members of the family for career support at the workplace, for various reasons. First, public sector organisations in Saudi Arabia do not facilitate career development by the provision of

mentoring programmes and formal networks. Second, in public organisations, women are physically segregated from men, in separate departments, or even separate buildings, in conformity with cultural values and religious traditions related to women's modesty and virtue, which are thought to require avoidance of direct contact between the sexes. Thus, a boundary is preserved between men and women at the workplace in order to avoid arousing suspicion and disapproval that might harm their reputation, more especially that of women, at work and in the community. Moreover, Saudi women's entry into middle-level management positions is relatively recent, with few so far in top positions. For this reason, there is a shortage of women in senior positions who can act as mentors or role models (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015).

In a situation where women continue to face structural constraints despite advances in their situation, the issue of female empowerment is attracting growing attention (Quamar, 2016). On the one hand, there are those who seek to promote better conditions for women, albeit without highlighting the idea of gender equality, which results in overlooking some rights which should otherwise be available to them. On the other hand, there is a stream of public opinion that is alarmed by the trend toward women's greater freedom and independence. Proponents of latter claim that families are disintegrating and children suffering due to women's neglect of their responsibility of caring for the family, which is seen as their primary role (Quamar, 2016). Such moral panic increases the pressure on women to demonstrate their commitment to and competence in their family roles.

Since 2011, the Ministry has issued several ministerial decisions in the implementation of the Royal orders to open opportunities and areas of work for Saudi women, such as the organisation of women's work in shops selling women's necessities and sales accounting in retail stores. Saudi women have been allowed to work in shops, parks and family entertainment, where they can serve other women or family parties, but will not be

required to deal directly with unaccompanied men. Also, women can work in “distance working” jobs, that is, jobs they can do from home, via telephone and computer, which again allow them to work without direct contact between the sexes. Such distance workers are taken into account when calculating firms' percentage of “Saudization”. The Ministry of Labour has developed specific laws and regulations for women’s work in the private sector. These include removal of some previous restrictions. For example,

- if women are working in a special section, it is not necessary for them to obtain a permit from the Ministry of Labour or any other entity;
- there should be no wage discrimination between men and women workers for work of equal value;
- a guardian’s consent for women's employment is not required.

Moreover, in order to protect women's health and family life, employers are required to provide medical care for working women during pregnancy and childbirth. Working women have the right to maternity leave for the last four weeks before the expected date of delivery and the subsequent six weeks. The law prohibits the employment of women during the weeks immediately following the birth. The employer must pay a working woman during the maternity leave, the equivalent of half her wages if she has more than one year of service with the employer, and the full wage if the period of service is more than three years (Ministry of Labour, 2013).

Working women who return to work following maternity leave are entitled to take additional breaks in the working day, up to a total of one hour, in order to breastfeed, albeit with pay reduced accordingly.

An employer cannot dismiss a woman during her maternity leave, or during a period of illness related to pregnancy or childbirth, on the condition that the illness is attested by a

medical certificate, and the women's absence lasts no more than one hundred and eighty days.

Other provisions are intended to protect women from situations considered harmful to their health or morality, by imposing restrictions on hours and conditions of work. Such restrictions, which reflect prevailing cultural views of family life and gender roles, may in practice have the effect of limiting job opportunities for women. For example, women may not be employed effectively functioning for more than eight hours per day, or more than forty-eight hours a week. Moreover, employers must not employ women during the night, between sunset and sunrise, for a period of not less than eleven consecutive hours, except in health, charitable or educational work or if the facility uses only family members, in cases of emergency or in certain specified contexts (Ministry of Labour, 2013).

A particular concern for women's virtue and chastity is reflected in employment law, in the form of regulations that prohibit or strictly control contact between the sexes in the workplace. In general, a mixed environment between males and females in the workplace is prohibited. The employer must provide privacy for women. For example, women working in institutions and companies must work either in a completely separate building from the men's building or in a department in the same company or institution building that meets the following requirements:

- There must be a special section for women.
- It must be separate from the men's section.
- It must be self-contained, equipped with its own Mosque, rest area, toilets and any other additional service arrangements

Women working in sales can only serve women and families, not unaccompanied men. The employer should put a barrier between male and female workers in the case of their

being in consecutive rows or alongside each other. Women workers are not allowed in stores or shop sections that target men only, or in settings leading to their mixing with male customers unaccompanied by their families.

Such regulations may pose practical barriers to women's work, as it may be impractical or prohibitively expensive for employers to provide separate accommodation and facilities for men and women. This may help to explain why women are commonly employed in areas such as education, which provide a single-sex environment.

In some cases, contact between male and female workers cannot be entirely avoided, for example, to coordinate design - making and work between men's and women's sections of an organisation. The law seeks to limit and control such contact, providing that when the work requires a meeting between male and female workers, the meeting should be on a temporary basis and in an open space or in the hall where the proceedings can be clearly seen. The law also controls women's dress code. It provides that female employees must adhere to standards of decency at work, including the commitment to the Islamic hijab. A female worker may wear the uniform of the employer, but this must in all circumstances be decent, modest, cover the body and be non-transparent.

There are also legal provisions which in theory may facilitate women's balancing of work with family life, namely, the permissibility of part-time and distance working, reflected in regulations stipulating, inter alia, that such employment is counted for Saudization purposes.

According to the Ministry of Labour, women are allowed to work part-time. However, women who work in two part-time jobs at the same time will not be accounted in the percentage of resettlement or Saudization. Also, women who work part-time are counted as half-staff in a calculation of the proportion of resettlement or Saudization. Moreover,

the number of working hours must be not less than 20 hours and not more than 24 hours weekly, and the employee must be registered in the social insurance system (Ministry of Labour, 2013).

The Ministry of Labour requirements for the inclusion of women working remotely (distance work) within the Saudization ratio, and on the Saudization programme (Ntiaqat) are the following: not less than 20 years old and not more than 35 years, registered with social insurance, and registered for a full-time job only. The employee should provide a bank certificate confirming the receipt of their wages for the relevant working period. (Ministry of Labour, 2013). Such regulations show there is no legal reason why women may not work part-time, or remotely. It remains to be seen, however, whether employers actually provide such opportunities, or whether women favour them. Moreover, it may be suggested that the rigid regulations imposed on such forms of work may in practice reduce the autonomy and flexibility available to women to work in ways that meet their needs for work-life balance. It can be seen from the above that, notwithstanding the advances in the empowerment of women, there are still many constraints on women, in and outside the workplace. There are still relatively few progressive women who advocate modernity (Kattan et al., 2016).

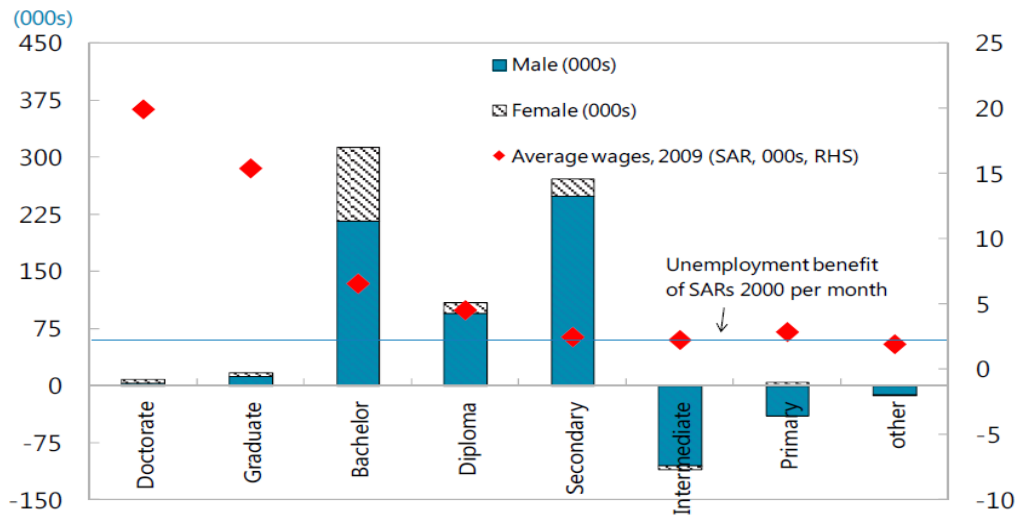
The Saudi Vision 2030 is looking to reinforce the ability of the Saudi economy to generate diverse job opportunities. The goals of Vision 2030 include not only reducing the rate of unemployment overall from 11.6% to 7% but also increasing women's participation in the workforce specifically from 22% to 30% (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016)

This goal, which concerns women directly, could directly affect the daily lives of families in the future, as women receive more encouragement and opportunity to play a role in enhancing Saudi society, economically and socially. However, this will raise further

questions about how they can balance their new workforce participation with their traditional family roles.

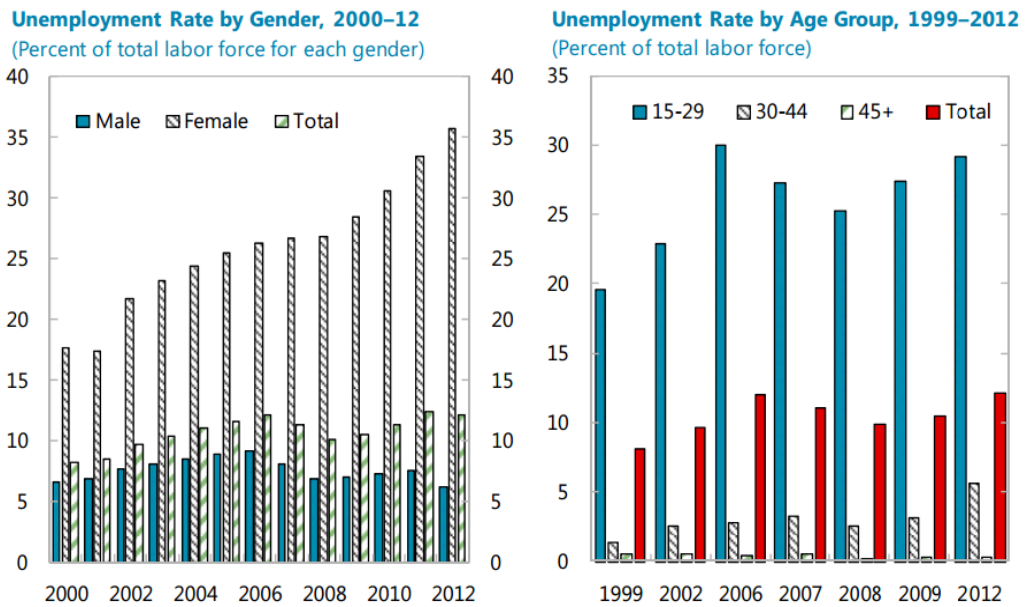
It is estimated that women aged between 15 to 65 constitute 15.4% of the total Saudi labour force (GASTAT, 2015). According to a World Economic Forum Report (2014), Saudi Arabia ranked 130th out of 142 countries for gender parity (WEF, 2014). In other words, it is highly unequal in terms of the number and range of opportunities for women. In 2012 over 80 per cent of the registered job-seekers were women (CDSI, 2013). The disparity in unemployment between men and women is clearly evident in figure 1-1 below, which shows that in every year of the twelve covered by the report (IMF, 2013), the percentage of unemployed women has exceeded that of men; for example in 2000, around 17% of the female workforce was unemployed, compared to around 7% for men. By 2012 the gap had widened, with 35% of women unemployed, whereas after some fluctuation, male unemployment had returned to its 2000 rate of 7%. Thus, in Saudi Arabia's society, a large proportion of total unemployment is because of low female involvement in the core workforce. Such disparity occurs despite women's high educational achievement. Although 57% of Saudi women are university graduates, 78% of those are unemployed, and 60% of the graduates are PhD holders who are not working (Locke, 2013). Statistics show a high percentage of educated women in KSA; figure 1-2 illustrates the changes in Saudi women's education from 2009 to 2012.

Figure 1-1 Saudi Arabia: Employment Trends



(IMF Report, 2013)

Figure 1-2 Change in Saudi Employment by Gender, Education, and Average Wages end 2009 – end 2012



(IMF Report, 2013)

These changes show that the increase in education has not been reflected in jobs and careers for women to the same degree that it has for men, since women are still concentrated in a few selected sectors that are considered suited to their stereotypical “nurturing” role, and are able to offer a gender-segregated work environment. Moreover, women work in an unequal environment where male dominance is high, both numerically and in terms of decision-making power, especially in government sectors, so it is hard for them to realise their potential (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). There are limited opportunities for women in leadership positions. They may, for example, be principals of all-female education institutions or departments, but even then, ultimate decision-making power tends to rest with the corresponding men’s departments or male-occupied higher authorities.

Currently, 30% of government employees are women, and out of all Saudi working women, 95% are working in the public sector, of whom 85% are working in education, i.e. administration and teaching (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). The public sector offers higher job security and added benefits compared to the private sector, and so has a significant concentration of the active, educated female workforce (AlMunajjed, 2010). According to the Central Department of Statistics and Information (2013), the largest percentage of women workers in KSA in 2013 was in the education sector with 71.7%, then the health and social service sector, with 11.7%. These have historically been the main sectors that were considered culturally acceptable for women, as suited to perceptions of their nurturing role, and also enabling work in an all-female environment. However, only 2% of women are working in the banking sector, which is considered the third largest sector in which Saudi women work (SAMA, 2013).

Various researchers (Jamali et al., 2005; Mostafa, 2005; Al-Lamky, 2007; Omair, 2008) have studied the work life of women in Saudi Arabia and identified that the main barriers

to women's career growth are the attitudes towards women and male-dominant power relations. The attitudes towards women are influenced and defined by the religious understandings of women's place within the social order and the social-cultural structure of Saudi Arabia (Elamin & Omair, 2010). According to AlMunajjed (2010) Saudi women, assigned by culture the main responsibility for home and family, face the question of how to balance work and family. They argue that achieving a comfortable work-life balance is not determined just at the personal, family, or workplace level; it is also very much a function of having an appropriate national policy in place (AlMunajjed, 2010). However, national policy is shaped by social norms, and in KSA, as a Sharia law based country, such a policy is determined by Islamic rules and regulations (Sidani, 2005). Saudi laws based on the Sharia guarantee a woman's right to work, but stipulate that she should work in an appropriate environment – i.e., not mixing with men or being exposed to harassment. Occupational gender segregation in professional jobs is therefore prevalent. "Women are concentrated in professions that are seen as feminine and remain in less distinguished positions than men" (BI-ME staff, 2010:5).

In the present culture of Saudi Arabia, perceptions of women's education and women's work lean more to the Islamist view (Al Alhareth et al., 2015). In the Arabian culture, family cohesiveness is very important, and the family always comes first. Women have to prioritise their families rather than advancing their career (Al-Harthy, 2000). It is generally held that provided women first fulfil their responsibility towards their families, they may work outside, although the decision for a woman to work outside is not an individual but more of a collective family decision (AlMunajjed, 2010). Leaving a job for the family or to take care of children is common in the Arab culture, as family interests continuously outweigh the individual interest, particularly for women. Sometimes, after graduation, women prioritise their family responsibilities over working outside (Al-Harthy, 2000). Sometimes, this decision is imposed by the woman's husband, but in any

case, women are socialised to see their family role as primary and so may make such a choice of their own volition. In view of this conflict of responsibilities, therefore, there is a need to explore whether or how Saudi women can balance their work and home life in a way that is satisfactory to themselves, their families and employers, which in turn will affect their ability and willingness to enter employment. Flexible work, that is, the potential for some tailoring of work location, duration and hours to meet the employee's personal needs and preferences, is considered in some cultures as one of the solutions that might resolve employees' family and work conflicts (Galinsky et al., 2009). Flexible work can free time for workers to engage in other activities and so balance work with other demands and needs in their life (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014).

By implementing flexible work policies in public and private sectors, organisations might help their employees to balance work and family life. This research, therefore, will explore the potential for implementing flexible work in Saudi organisations, and how this might help women to achieve a more satisfactory work-life balance, as well as the barriers that might stand in the way of women's achieving flexible work. In order to make sense of the dynamics and interactions between Saudi women's family and work roles, I will draw on and develop Border Theory (discussed further in Chapter Two) as a key framing. Border Theory seeks to predict and explain the challenges that people face in trying to negotiate and balance their roles in different domains and the factors that enable or constrain these negotiations, in terms of the status of the individual, the nature of the border between domains, and the role of influential others, such as family members, colleagues and bosses. I hope by using this framing, not only to better understand the dynamics facing Saudi working women, but also to explore how Border Theory can be developed to take account of the distinctive features of this under-researched cultural context.

1.3 Aim and Objectives:

The aim of this research is, using the framework of Border Theory, to explore the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia. The objectives of this research are:

1. To understand the social and cultural context of Saudi women in the workplace and at home.
2. To investigate work-family conflict (in terms of the time, physical and emotional demands of each, which may affect women's ability to balance satisfactorily between them) among Saudi working women.
3. To explore the potential impact of job crafting, that is, the ability to tailor aspects of the job to meet one's own needs, on achieving work-life balance.

1.4 Research Questions:

1. Do women in KSA perceive themselves to have autonomy and flexibility (ability to make decisions on when, where, and how to work) in their work?
2. Do women in KSA desire to have autonomy and flexibility in their work? What might be the benefits of such autonomy for their work-life balance?
3. What barriers do women in Saudi Arabia face to achieving work-life balance?

1.5 The Sectors in Focus

The Ministry of Economy and Planning (2014) in its Sixth Development Plan set out a key strategy for development: giving the private sector opportunities to invest in and operate industries and services previously run by the government. In this context, the private sector has witnessed rapid and significant development over the past four decades, from 34.7% of real GDP in 1969 to 65.9% in 2013 (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2014). Currently, women are employed mainly in the government sector, especially in

education, which is the main source of female employment. The other main sectors employing women are health and banking.

There will clearly be particular organisation dynamics, such as HRM/Personnel policy, related to the organisations in these three sectors, and some of these are mentioned in the findings chapter, where specific examples were raised by the participants. However, these are not discussed specifically in this study, and my focus was on women's work-life balance in the Saudi Arabian context, which took me to these particular industries (health, banking, education) in both private and public sectors, as the main areas where women work. Thus, my concern was not with industry-level or organisation-level policies, so much as with the way they and their impacts were perceived and experienced by the participants. Those three sectors, as the ones from which the participants in this study were recruited, are introduced below.

1.5.1 Banking Sector

Although the banking sector accounts for a relatively small proportion of female employment in Saudi Arabia, it was until recently one of the very few employment fields open to women. The Saudi banking system, which is strictly regulated by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA), provides both conventional and Islamic banking (Assaf et al., 2011). SAMA is responsible for ensuring the stability and effectiveness of the banking system in performing its role for the service customers and the nation at large. The Banking Control Department is tasked with regulating the banking sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through granting licences, issuing effective policies and regulations and exercising oversight to ensure the banking sector's compliance with regulations and take remedial actions in the event of noncompliance (SAMA, 2015). As of 2014, the sector employed 47,588 Saudi (male and female) workers, constituting 89.1 per cent of all workers in the banking sector. The total sector workforce comprised 76.6

per cent Saudi men. 10.8 per cent non-Saudi men, 12.5 per cent Saudi women and 0.1 per cent non-Saudi women (SAMA, 2015).

Currently, there are 23 banks licensed to operate in Saudi Arabia: 12 local banks and 11 banks licensed to operate as foreign banks. There are four Islamic banks (Al Rajhi, Al Biland, Al Inma and AlJazira), but all other local banks in Saudi Arabia provide limited Islamic services through dedicated Islamic branches (SAMA, 2015). Banks provide credit services to depositors, and this is a very important and risk-prone job, where error is not acceptable, so banks focus strongly on the service provided and customer care. Most banks in Saudi Arabia have special women-only branches, windows or allocated working hours to deal with female professional clients.

1.5.2 Health Sector

The health sector is the second largest employer of women in Saudi Arabia, meeting the need for female staff to treat female patients. The Saudi Government has placed a strong emphasis on developing health services, both quantitatively and qualitatively, reflected in notable improvements in recent decades (Almalki et al., 2011). The Ministry of Health is the body entrusted with formulating health policies, managing and planning public health care and supervising health programmes, as well as overseeing private health services. All Saudis and foreigners working within the public sector are entitled to full and free access to all public health care services (Almalki et al., 2011). The budget of the Ministry of Health in 2014-2015 represented 7.01% of the overall government budget (Ministry of Health, 2015). There were 453 hospitals, eight more than the previous year, and 81,532 physicians, doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. Of the 94,960 allied health personnel and health management 72.6% were Saudi (Ministry of Health, 2015).

A key segment of health service is the private sector operation, including 141 hospitals, 125 private clinics, 28,746 pharmacies, 41,768 nurses, and a total of 18,467 of allied health personnel and health management (Ministry of Health, 2015).

The health sector is a notable exception to the general principle of sex segregation; medical schools are mixed, and women and men generally work side by side in hospitals and health centres, as this is considered necessary for more efficient use of resources and to enhance service quality (Ertürk, 2009). Nevertheless, contact with male medical staff and patients, together with night shift-work, make medical employment for women not always acceptable in Saudi society and can affect woman's marriage prospects (Mobaraki & Söderfeldt, 2010). In addition, women's work in the sector is constrained by local interpretations of Islamic law, which affect women's legal and social status in Saudi Arabia. For example, since women in Saudi Arabia were, until recently, not allowed to drive, it is customary for them to be driven to and from their places of work by male relatives. This makes it difficult for women to work in hospitals and clinics far from their families and homes. For this reason, non-Saudi Arabian female health workers cannot easily be replaced with Saudi Arabian women (Mobaraki & Söderfeldt, 2010). Moreover, although women in the medical field have achieved success at junior levels, they often face discrimination at higher levels (Mobaraki & Söderfeldt, 2010).

Part-time jobs and flexible work are rare in the health sector, especially in hospitals. The rationale is that employees are required to provide a high quality of service with no mistakes, as their work concerns the health and the life of the patient. A doctor, therefore, is required to be available in the hospital full time, responding to medical health problems presented by patients, including history taking, diagnosis and treating patients, performing operations and specialist investigations. Thus, the nature of the work is seen as inherently incompatible with part-time jobs or any kind of flexible work.

1.5.3 Education Sector

The Ministry of Education was established in 1954, and currently oversees all educational stages in Saudi Arabia. Initially, state education was offered to males only, and there were no schools offering education for girls (Alamri, 2011). However, since girls' education was formally established in 1960, it has grown rapidly.

Government attention has been devoted to improving access to education and reducing the gender gap at various educational stages. This, in turn has contributed to various social developments in the country, such as the lowering of fertility and mortality rates, improved health and nutrition, and greater female participation in the labour force. Nevertheless, deeply-rooted social norms and traditions, and the structure of the system of public education, have limited opportunities for women, including their full participation in the labour market. Currently, reforming female education has become a priority as well as a great challenge for the Saudi government (AlMunajjed, 2009). According to the Ministry of Higher Education, higher education in the Kingdom has witnessed a steady increase in the number of female students enrolled for bachelor degrees; the number of female students enrolled in public universities in 2012 was 511,593 while in 2013 it reached 551,192.

Evidence of women's increased participation and success can be seen in the Manpower Research Bulletin published by the Central Department of Statistics and Information (2013) which shows that 17.1% of Ph.D. holders are women, as are 22.6% of Master degree holders, and 42% of Bachelor degree holders, while only 8.63% of women are illiterate. However, the same source shows that only 14.6% of the workforce are female.

Education in Saudi Arabia is a sector that offers many opportunities for women, as teachers and ancillary staff in girls' schools and colleges. Indeed, the education sector is

the major employer of women in the kingdom. Since schools in Saudi Arabia are divided by gender, there are two administrations within the Ministry of Education, with few shared resources and periodic communications between the two departments for planning (Mustafa & Cullingford, 2008). In 2014, the number of teachers in KSA was 659,293, just over half of them women. Also, the number of faculty members at universities increased to become 73,817 in 2014, of whom 40.5% were women. Women teachers are allowed to work only with girl students. Women teachers' movements are highly restricted (Al-Sulaimani, 2010); their travel is constrained, limiting their access to workplaces. Nevertheless, they face the same issues as their male counterparts: lack of time, little opportunity for professional development, shortage of resources, and the pressure to meet the requirements of the centrally- prescribed curriculum (Mustafa & Cullingford, 2008)

Due to cultural restrictions and biases in relation to the expected role of women in society, the system of education reinforces gender-related cultural norms. Teaching is generally perceived as a women's job, and a social extension of a woman's cultural role as mother and housewife (AlMunajjed, 2009). It can be seen that there have been a number of positive developments in women's access to education, which have increased women's literacy rates within a relatively short period of time. However, this progress has not yet been translated into a comparable increase in women's participation in the labour force, and they have little opportunity to participate in decision-making (Ertürk, 2009). Nevertheless, this sector is one of the few offering substantial opportunities for women's employment, including some senior positions.

1.6 Women in the MENA Region

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) encompass diverse countries, but they nevertheless have commonalities that distinguish them from countries in other parts of the world (Unicef, 2011).

Women in MENA countries often lack autonomy, being subordinate to and dependent on their husbands, which constrains their ability to work outside the home. Such a lack of freedom to make their own decisions places women in a culturally inferior position (Markle, 2013). According to Unicef, such gender inequality is an obstacle to growth and progress across all countries, albeit to varying degrees (Unicef, 2011).

Such inequalities are not unique to the Middle East but are also found in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and North America, depriving women of the opportunity to fully realise their rights (Kelly & Breslin, 2010). However, the gender employment gap is especially marked in the MENA countries. According to Ross (2008), attributes to the dominance of the mining and oil sector, which is essentially a masculine sector in most of the countries, is a key factor in this disparity. Rauch and Kostyshak (2009) attribute significant gender inequality in employment in the Arab world to the prevailing gender norms in society. Markle (2013) argues that the MENA countries are characterised by gender discrimination embedded in national cultures, religion and social and economic structures, which constantly challenge women.

Although these constraints are often imposed in the name of religion, Islam actually accords women rights, including the right to engage in social and economic activities. Nevertheless, women in the Middle East, like their counterparts in many other regions, face inequality and discriminatory constraints in education, employment and family roles. Many of these oppressive restrictions are claimed to have their roots in local cultural

traditions (Hattab, 2012). For example, family care in the Middle East is almost wholly feminised, excluding women from the workforce based on the traditional construction of women's role as located in the home, and focused on the care of the family (Markle, 2013).

Such restrictions are, in the MENA region, reinforced by the various legal systems in operation. Some countries, notably Yemen, Iran, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, apply Islamic Shari'a law, while others maintain a hybrid legal system where Shari'a exists alongside versions of French, British or Egyptian legal codes. Family law, which deals with issues such as marriage, divorce, and child custody, is through most of the region governed by Shari'a, although Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Sudan allow religious minorities to apply their own communities' religious standards to some personal status matters. In all countries of the region, legal systems, whether Shari'a-based or hybrid, contain provisions which could be viewed as discriminatory against women from a human rights perspective, especially where personal status codes are concerned. In Saudi Arabia there is no codified personal status law; judges are left to issue rulings based on their own interpretations of religious texts, which could result in arbitrary decisions (Unicef, 2011).

The relative weakness of women's status is illustrated by the issues surrounding guardianship, which in most of the region is distinct from custody. Usually, the father is the guardian of the children and is responsible for their financial maintenance. If a couple divorce, the mother might be granted custody of children up to a specific age, but the father will still be their legal guardian. A distinctive feature of Saudi Arabia is the guardianship, or "wilaya", system whereby even adult women are considered the dependants of a male guardian (usually their husband or father) and have limited legal capacity in their own right (Unicef, 2011).

Gradually, legislation in MENA countries has been changing to allow women to obtain a passport and travel abroad without their husband's or guardian's permission. In Saudi Arabia, such changes have been made very recently, and as a matter of custom, a woman may still be expected to demonstrate proof of her husband's or guardian's consent for travel. Moreover, their freedom of movement is further confined by the strict imposition of sex segregation in public spaces (Unicef, 2011).

A common feature of most of the Middle Eastern countries is their adherence to Islam, which to some degree overrides cultural, social, and economic differences among them. However, it should be borne in mind that Islam is not the only factor shaping MENA societies and influencing women's cultural identities (Smail Salhi, 2008). For example, as Alselaimi and Lord (2012) comment, while Islam accords women the right to participate in the workforce, conservative groups in Saudi Arabia forbid the mixing of the sexes and insist on segregated workplaces. They do so of fear that Saudi women, if freed from such restrictions, would be influenced by the lifestyles of their Western counterparts, who have different values and priorities.

In this way, they have enforced a reductive conceptualisation of 'Muslim women' that diminishes the identities of millions of women of diverse ethnicity, economic status, and geographic location to a monolithic notion shaped by a single element: Islamic religion. Such one-dimensional thinking is underpinned by an essentialist perception that reifies Islam as the main or even sole factor influencing how women live (Smail Salhi, 2008).

1.7 Essentialist vs Social Constructionist Views of Gender

In order to gain insight into the challenges facing women, not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in many other parts of the world, it is useful to take as a starting point debates on the nature of gender, which underlie gender roles and opportunities in different societies. A

broad distinction can be made between a school of thought that sees gender characteristics as inherent and fixed, and one that sees gender as a social construction, and therefore open to challenge and change. These are termed the essentialist and social constructionist positions, respectively.

As a general philosophical term, essentialism refers to a belief that entities have essential characteristics or abilities that are fundamental to their identity (Stone, 2004). Among feminists, it refers particularly to the view that women have certain intrinsic features, common to all, which define them as women. It has been identified as a mindset that considers indications of gender differences as inborn and universal. Proponents of this view typically invoke biological differences between the sexes, claiming that these explain and justify broader displays of gender difference (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2017).

Heyes (1997) offers a more complex understanding of 'essentialism', identifying four types, all subjected to critique within feminist discourse: (1) metaphysical essentialism, the view that there exist real essences (of the sexes) which are inherent and not influenced by social construction; (2) biological essentialism, the belief in real essences that arise because of differences in physical forms and biological functions; (3) linguistic essentialism, the belief that the term 'woman' has a fixed and invariant meaning; and (4) methodological essentialism, which denotes an approach to researching people's lives that takes for granted the validity and appropriateness of gender as a basis for social analysis.

Such kinds of thinking, particularly the metaphysical and biological, have been widespread in Saudi Arabia, manifested in the writings of religious scholars, sociologists and historians, and in statements of government policy. For example, Hasan (2004:7) moves from the "established medical fact that men and women have different biological

compositions and temperaments” to the claim that “the woman's biological make-up has made her excel as a homemaker” whose “gentle, caring and self-sacrificing temperament is best suited to bringing up children” (p.10). In government policies, monolithic references are made to ‘the Saudi woman’ and occupational fields that ‘suit her nature’.

One effect of essentialist views of womanhood, such as are often invoked in Saudi Arabia, is the concentration of women in occupations that conform to such conventional thinking about their attributes, such as caring (nursing, social work), domestic skills (cleaner, dressmaker) and physical attractiveness (receptionist, shop assistant). In a similar way, stereotypes attribute to men the characteristics of physical strength and aggression (Joyce & Walker, 2015).

In contrast to such essentialist perspectives, according to Kim-Kort (2012:87) “feminist constructionism focuses on the social, cultural, and linguistic sources of our views of women and women’s nature”. In other words, it argues that manifested differences in behaviours between men and women are the results, not of inherent attributes, but of social pressures, expectations and arrangements created to serve particular purposes and interests and perpetuated through formal and informal institutions in society.

From this perspective, gender can be defined as “an achieved status: that which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means based on a person’s sex, which is purely biological” (West & Zimmerman, 1987:125).

From the social constructionist view, biological sex and gender are distinct, and there is no causative link between them; gender, as a role and sense of identity, is a social construction. Although females have certain anatomical features, these do not determine or imply identification with a particular set of purportedly “feminine” social traits, activities, and roles ascribed to femininity. Accordingly, social constructionists reject the

confounding of biological sex and gender roles, characteristic of biological essentialism, in its attempts to explain and justify the contingencies of social arrangements in terms of the necessities of biology (Stone, 2004).

This social constructionist view is concerned with understanding how social identities, generally speaking, help individuals to form and understand their personal identities and roles with reference to them as members of a particular social group. Adherents of this view see identity as comprising two dimensions: the personal, consisting of individual characteristics, such as personality and physical and mental attributes, and the social, which is shaped by relevant membership of sex, race, class, and nationality groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Berger and Luckman (1966:194) write, "Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallised, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations". In constructing self through interaction with others, the individual is also constructing society (Young & Collin, 2004).

In my view, there is a relationship between the essentialist and social constructionist views of gender. Views of womanhood may start with biological essentialism, but then these ideas are socially reinforced, resulting in a continuous cycle. Essentialism tends to view women as weak, nurturing, caring, submissive, and in need of protection, because of their biological role of bearing children. Where such views prevail, women are likely to be socialised to believe that, and boys socialised to see males as dominant, controlling, leaders. Since women's opportunities are limited to those consistent with their assigned role, they have little option but to behave as expected.

Saudi assumptions and socio-cultural values in relation to gender give rise to a set of norms and beliefs that influence women's behaviour and, moreover, are reified and institutionalised in organisational structures and cultures that impose discriminatory rules

constraining women's careers within organisations (Al-Asfour et al., 2017), and indeed, their roles and opportunities in society in general.

Gender inequality is enhanced in Saudi Arabia's governmental and social structures (Kelly & Breslin, 2010). The unequal power relations between men and women in Saudi Arabia are not explicitly set out in legislation, but are deeply rooted in the social and government structures and practices (Al Alhareth et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there have been some advances in recent years; for example, they can now to study law, hold identity cards in their own right, and register businesses without being required to provide evidence that they have a male manager (Kelly & Breslin, 2010).

Such normative pressures and practical constraints can lead to essentialist views of gender being internalised by women, influencing their behaviours. According to Tlaiss and Elamin (2016), Saudi Arabia's highly conservative thinking on social and gender issues explains the continued tendency of women to display a preference for "feminine" areas of education and occupation, such as the humanities, arts, teaching, and health care. Similarly,

Azmi et al. (2014) find that Saudi Muslim women's prioritisation of their family roles, alongside various constraints resulting from gender-normative thinking, such as limited access to professional training and development opportunities, exclusion from networks and mentoring opportunities, gender bias and male employers' unwillingness to take women seriously, contribute significantly in constraining women's careers.

1.8 Factors Influencing Women's Life and Work

Women's work opportunities and experiences in Saudi Arabia are shaped by religiously and culturally-defined roles and expectations. In these respects, Saudi culture is very

conservative. The interweaving of tribal and Islamic affiliations creates a distinctive and complex culture, and makes it difficult to separate Islamic injunctions and Arab customs. This section introduces some of the main factors expected to influence women's work and the balance with family life.

1.8.1 Religion

Saudi Arabia's legal system is based on the rules of Shari'a (Islamic law). Thus, Saudi Arabia's supreme law is declared to be the Quran and the *Sunnah*. It is essential to understand that, as the holiest historic land of Islam and as the home of the world's biggest and main pilgrimage, the *hajj*, KSA embraces its uniqueness among the Islamic countries of the world (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004), and this is reflected in the pervasive influence of Islamic principles in all areas of life.

The root meaning of the word Islam is "peace". The basic tenets of Islam are that there is no God other than Allah the Mighty, whose revelation was transmitted through the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), and set out in the Holy Quran, the sacred book. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was born in 570: he was noted for his patience, courage, wisdom, generosity, intelligence and magnanimity and has inspired millions of people worldwide (AlBukhary 1959 cited in Alselaimi, 2014: 15). The teachings of Islam are very detailed, showing clearly that Islam is not only a religion but a lifestyle. Islam constitutes a complete system for living. It provides laws (Al-Shari'a), a societal framework, an economic structure, and behavioural and scientific teachings (Alselaimi, 2014). The prophet Mohammed (PBUH) advised his followers on all aspects of life from an Islamic perspective, such as medicine, business, finance, family matters, social matters, educational matters, law and politics, and even women's rights (Al-Hashimi 2003; AlBukhary 1959 cited in Alselaimi, 2014: 15).

Women in the early Islamic community were very active economically. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) encouraged female engagement and education and respect for women. Above all, he made no distinction between women and men with regard to intellectual capabilities and economic performance. Indeed, his first wife, Khadija Bint Khowalid, was a very well-known, wealthy businesswoman and many women were well-known for making and selling goods in the marketplace at that time (AlBukhary 1959 cited in Alselaami, 2014: 15).

According to Mellahi (2007:88): “Saudi Arabia is governed by an Islamic monarchy in which Islam makes up the civil, cultural, economic, legal, political and social fabric of the country”. Saudis see themselves as the guardians of Islam and the custodians of the two holy mosques, one of which is in Makkah and the other in Madinah (Niblock, 2006). With this background, Islam is deeply rooted as the main influence on daily life. Saudi Arabia follows Islamic law (Shari’a) based on the Holy Qur’an and the sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him (Vogel, 2003). However, customs and attitudes of the tribal community pre-dating Islam play a role in the conservative attitude towards women, often mistakenly ascribed to Islam (Al-Ahmadi, 2011).

According to Sidani (2005), the debate on women’s status in the Middle East is divided into two rhetorical groups: Feminist and Islamist. Feminists encourage women’s participation in work (albeit retaining the veil), as feminists believe that the veil is not an impediment to women’s work and participation. Moreover, they argue that, when women are modestly dressed and veiled, a gender mix within the working environment is accepted and expected. In contrast, Islamists mostly consider that women should dedicate their lives to their family and stay at home. They may accept women working in specific jobs, but reject women’s involvement in “men’s domains” and insist on strict segregation between women and men.

Islam does not prohibit women from education or employment. Indeed, Islam assigns men and women equal religious, ethical and civil rights, duties and responsibilities. These include the duty to seek knowledge, in order to understand the true spirit of Islam, so Islam does not discriminate against women in terms of their right to education (Kausar & Tlaiss, 2011). Moreover, the Holy Book (Qur'an) gives women the right to make their own decisions about things that concern them; however, the structure of society gives men the power to control these capabilities and change them to serve their needs (Al Alhareth et al., 2015).

Hamdan (2005) argues that the challenges facing women in Saudi society are often erroneously ascribed to Islamic teachings. For example, some customs, such as the ban on women driving or their exclusion from certain professions such as Law or Engineering, have no basis in Islamic law but are deeply rooted in the culture (Al Alhareth et al., 2015). Whatever their origins, the fact remains that Saudi society manifests gender inequalities that are evident in its education system, and which are institutionalised and difficult to contest on an individual basis. Women's inequality is embedded in the structure of society. However, Saudi women have found their own ways to challenge gender inequality and achieve social justice, not only in education, but also in all aspects of life (Hamdan, 2005). This study will shed light on the ways in which Saudi women have found strategies to cope with the challenging circumstances they face, in order to achieve a degree of work-life balance.

Al-Lily (2011) explained that Saudi culture involves a complex interplay of traditional and Islamic values, such that it is difficult to distinguish between 'the social' and 'the religious.' This culture is politically enforced through laws and policies that act as a protective device, ensuring that any reform, change or development does not overstep

acceptable boundaries (Al-Lily, 2011). Saudi women thus occupy a unique position, in which they are present and yet non-present in the public sphere (Hamdan, 2005).

Islam respects women, and is not to blame for the old unbending social traditions and outdated customs that have assigned women subordinate status. Unfortunately, traditions and behaviours which their proponents claim are required by Islam have misrepresented the religion. Failure to distinguish between religious and secular ideas has enabled men, and society as a whole, to exploit misguided beliefs to the detriment of women. By framing women's subordination, incorrectly, as a religious rule rather than a matter of tribal tradition, they legitimise it and make it difficult to challenge, thereby perpetuating inequality. Despite the fact that social, economic, political and technological developments have contributed to the creation of a new social structure, which encouraged women to venture beyond the home sphere to participate in public life, they remain isolated and subject to the control of men (Zamberi Ahmad, 2011).

Saudi women, like women everywhere, come from a variety of social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds; differences that must be set aside in order to challenge gender inequalities. The invocation and acceptance of a single religious interpretation of the Quran (extremism or fundamentalism) to reinforce the dominance of men is a serious social concern. The more conservative religious scholars portray women as irrational and incomplete beings (Hamdan, 2005), justifying their exclusion from certain roles. This is by no means characteristic only of Saudi or Muslim society, but Saudi society is distinctive in the way this framing has been institutionalized and invoked to justify constraints on women. The Sharia laws, and even more so, the tribal culture, have defined gender roles and relations within Saudi society, in a way that marginalises women in society, constraining them through gender segregation in various aspects of life. However, a movement has emerged among women in the main cities, e.g. Riyadh, Jeddah and in

the Eastern region, who have completed higher education, in many cases abroad, and who are dissatisfied with the current status of women in society, to seek improvement of their situation. They make periodic efforts to put pressure on the government to change and improve women's status within society. For example, for years they campaigned demanding the right for women to drive cars, contrary to the government policy of the time and prevailing social norms (Al Alhareth et al., 2015).

Another strategy used by women to challenge strict interpretations of Islamic and religious texts invoked by conservative religious scholars to subordinate women in the name of Islam, is to use religious ideology as a tool for improving women's situation by invoking the language of Islam, which their male peers cannot contest, to legitimate their demands and achieve their goals. They are also taking up the study of Islamic law and Shari'a so they can claim Islamic authority for their demands and challenge the status quo (Hamdan, 2005). The blurring of the boundaries between religion and culture, in Saudi society, however, confronts the government with a dilemma over education for women; despite women's legal rights, they face many social barriers to get an education, due to the dominance of male authority.

1.8.2 Culture

Culture is defined as “those customary beliefs and values that ethnic, religious, and social groups transmit fairly unchanged from generation to generation” (Guiso et al., 2006:23). As Becker (1996: 16) writes, “Individuals have less control over their culture than over other social capital. They cannot alter their ethnicity, race or family history, and only with difficulty can they change their country or religion. Because of the difficulty of changing culture and its low depreciation rate, culture is largely a ‘given’ to individuals throughout their lifetimes.” Understanding of how culture dimensions influence the boundary between work and family and gender (a cultural construct) is central to the exploration of

the relationship between the spheres of work and family life (Galea et al., 2014). Hofstede has defined “culture” as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”(Hofstede, 1984:21).

Human societies differ in their opinions about gender roles and behavioural expectations for women and men, as well as in the way work is structured. Cultures differ in the nature and intensity of differentiation between genders, their roles and ideologies, and gender stereotypes. For example, in some countries, males are the breadwinners and females are caregivers/ homemakers, whereas in other countries the social roles of men and women are more or less blended (Lyness & Kropf, 2005). Demographic, societal and cultural pressures have created boundaries between people’s personal lives and work. The balance is further challenged by disturbing elements such as fast changing or restructuring of labour markets due to the participation of women, dual-earner couples and personal desires for achieving job and leisure satisfaction to enjoy a better quality of life. Furthermore, in many societies, gender roles are rapidly changing to realise a gender-equal society (Sánchez-Vidal et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Arellano (2015) claims that, while women have frequented the work domain in the past decade, gender barriers at work remain much the same.

In Saudi Arabia, the family has a major part in shaping the society, and in spreading behavioural norms and attitudes concerning the way family members relate to each other and to the wider society (Doumato, 1992). Saudi families are patriarchal, with fathers being assigned power and control by law. Children belong, legally, to the father, while the mother is assigned the role of maintaining social solidarity by passing on cultural and religious traditions to the family (Doumato, 1992; Pharaon, 2004). Although similarities exist in the challenges facing women worldwide, the unique culture in the Gulf region poses additional and distinctive challenges (Al-Ahmadi, 2011).

According to Meijer (2010) gender segregation, the prohibition on *ikhtilāf* (mixing of sexes) has been one of the defining features of Saudi Arabia. “Saudi law enforces the separation of men and women in the public sphere, with the result that women have their own exclusive public spaces in schools, universities, charitable organisations, hospitals, restaurants, and government offices” (Meijer, 2010:2).

Due to globalisation and its effect on the Arab culture in the last few decades, Saudi Arabia has undergone social changes, particularly regarding women’s employment and role within the workplace (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Gender inequality, nevertheless, remains characteristic of Saudi working culture, where women’s activities are limited by constraints, e.g. travel and (until recently) requiring the agreement of a male relative, even though women are being offered higher professional opportunities and levels of education (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004).

The Arab family has been described as being a tightly knit social unit, patriarchal, hierarchal, and extended (Sidani & Al Hakim, 2012). The father is the head of the family and the source of power and authority. Girls are socialised from an early age to defer to men (Sidani & Al Hakim, 2012). Despite the social change in recent decades, the primacy of the family as a central unit of society remains, and its impact and prevalence persist (Metcalf, 2007). Family bonds remain extremely strong, irrespective of living arrangements. Although the concept of the extended family of two or three generations occupying the same residence is declining, there is still a tight network of relationships among family members (Sidani & Al Hakim, 2012). Such networks increase the obligations of family members, and the range of influences and pressures on women, regarding their expected roles toward other members.

In this respect, Saudi Arabia is more conservative than some other Arab countries, apparently due to the fact that these countries, unlike Saudi Arabia, do not construct their legitimacy on the basis of religious nationalism, so have more readily been able to adopt new thinking on gender. Neighbouring Gulf states have not imposed such restrictive requirements on women, as has Saudi Arabia. Because women in those states were not constrained by the requirements of preserving a pious community, they have had more success in attaining citizenship rights, economic participation, and empowerment than their Saudi female counterparts (Al-Rasheed, 2013).

In cultural terms, in Saudi Arabia, the social structure has denied women access to most public areas, on the rationale of safeguarding their honour or protecting them from foreigners (Al-Munajjed, 1997). Saudi women are subject to a male-dominated, patriarchal society in which they are constrained by strict codes and unwritten social norms imposed by men (Miller-Rosser, 2006). In particular, gender segregation has resulted in the creation of exclusive women-only public spaces in which services are provided by women and for women, such as schools, government offices, charitable organisations, women's administration and women-only shopping centres (Le Renard, 2008).

Although similar challenges face women leaders in Arab and Muslim countries, the working environment of Saudi women may be distinctive, given their fairly recent participation in the workforce and the enforcement of separation of the sexes at work and in public life generally (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). Moreover, Saudi culture assigns women responsibility for household tasks, even if they are employed outside the home. This has been attributed to the domination of men: fathers, husbands and brothers. Working women return home early to do housework and look after their children. It is not usual for Saudi men to share in domestic work; their responsibilities are outside the home, in

earning income to support their families, and in this way gender roles in the household are considered to be 'balanced' and complementary (Alghamdi, 2014).

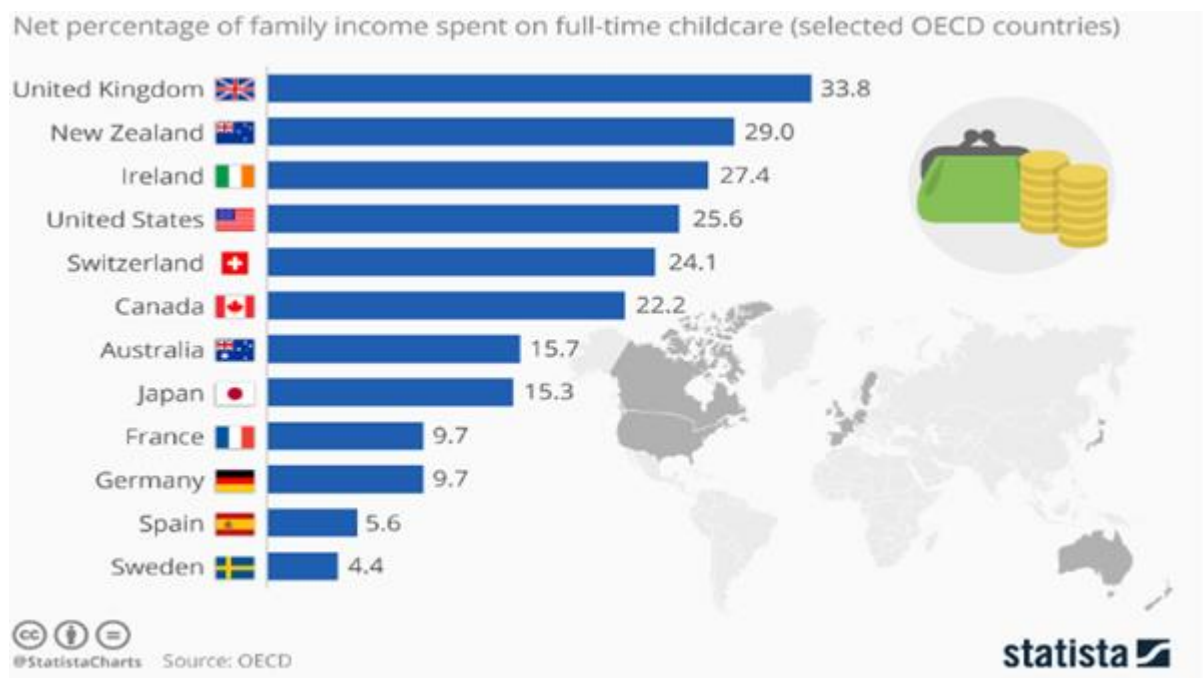
It is true that Saudi society is socially distinctive; however, the Saudi government has been urged to increase its investment in particular specialisations and skills, in order to reconcile tradition with calls for women to be enabled to contribute productively to society (AlMunajjed, 2009). One of the main challenges impeding women's progress and equality is the male guardianship law, whereby women are subject to the total control of male relatives, preventing them from exercising their basic rights to manage their own lives. By law, a male guardian controls a woman's access to education, work, travel and modes of transportation, legal recourse, medical treatment, the holding of official documents such as ID papers and passports, entry into contractual relations, and discharge from rehabilitation or detention institutions (UNDP, 2014). Two areas in which expectations of women imposed by socialisation, and enforced by workplace policies and even the law, affect their access to employment and duty to balance work and family responsibilities are childcare and transportation.

1.8.2.1 Childcare (Nursery)

Working women face a particular conflict between work and family as traditionally, the care of children, dependents and the home is assigned to them. This gives employers potentially an important role in work-family issues (Pasamar, 2015). In most countries, childcare has traditionally been a family responsibility and assigned to women. In particular, employers were not concerned with it, while at a governmental level, interest was often confined to providing welfare assistance for poor families; it was assumed that most families were able to take care of their children, and that this was essentially their responsibility (Hein, 2010).

Childcare for working parents must usually be paid for by the parents, so that the ability to make satisfactory arrangements for looking after children depends on social class and income. A good nanny or a place in a quality day-care centre can be costly and unaffordable for low-income and even middle-income parents. This leaves limited and unsatisfactory choices. They can adjust their working time by working different hours, in the case of dual parent households, or working fewer hours (especially in the case of women) and thereby sacrificing income, or they can leave the child with poor-quality care or no care at all (Hein, 2010).

Figure 1-3 Net Percentage of Family Income Spent on Full-time Childcare (selected OECD countries)



(World Economic Forum, 2017)

According to the World Economic Forum (2017), the cost of childcare is a global problem. For example in the UK, families spend over 30% of their income on childcare.

In Saudi Arabia, according to the Ministry of Labour (2013), every employer who employs 50 workers or more must create a place with a sufficient number of available nannies and workers for the care of children under the age of six years, if there are ten or more such children. If an employer employs one hundred or more women in one city, the ministry has the power to require him to establish a nursery of his own or in conjunction with other employers in the same city, or contract with a nursery for the care of children under the age of six years during work periods. In this situation, the Minister of Labour determines the terms and conditions governing this nursery, as decided by the costs imposed on the workers benefiting from this service.

However, it is common for families in Saudi Arabia to hire foreign domestic help, often from Africa or South Asian countries, to assist with tasks such as cleaning, cooking, laundry, ironing and childcare. Some also employ a chauffeur, especially staff of embassies or consulates, staying in the country on a short-term basis, or to transport women (Angloinfo, 2015).

According to the Ministry of Labour, the number of domestic workers' visas issued in 2015 was 995930, of which 581,196 were for males, and 414,734 for female workers (Ministry of Labour, 2016). The ease of importing foreign domestic workers has had impacts on family life, in some ways facilitating the working role of the women who employ them; female domestic workers, in particular, perform a dual role within the household, providing not only domestic services but also personal care. Generally, people in Saudi Arabia do not hire a babysitter or a nanny; it is more common practice to employ housemaids, who might be asked to take care of the children of their employer, necessitating high levels of trust (Zhou, 2014).

In recent years, the family system in Saudi society has undergone changes as a result of social, economic and cultural transformations, resulting in a shift from the extended family to the nuclear family and also higher status of women within the family as an outcome of education and employment, resulting in an expansion of women's roles. As a result of the strain imposed on families by the multiple obligations of women, in particular, recourse to housemaids has increased, with both positive and negative impacts on the Saudi family and society as well (Alttarif, 2011). Concerns have been raised that the majority of those maids brought from foreign countries differ from Saudi women in culture, language and behavioural patterns, customs, traditions and perhaps religion too. Moreover, many have little education and are untrained in the work for which they are hired (Alttarif, 2011).

The need to employ domestic labour is blamed for a number of social changes, such as an alleged deficiency in the family's performance of its functions, as well as a structural imbalance due to an entry of strangers into the family who sometimes takes over the mother's role. This is said to affect the process of socialisation, leading to the weakness of social control. Foreign domestic workers are accused of spoiling children, and teaching them strange customs and traditions. Such influences, in turn, are blamed for the increased incidence of unruly behaviour and crime in society. For this reason, it has been suggested that housemaids should be subjected to annual physical and psychological checks, and before obtaining a job in a Saudi family, should be taught the religious principles and customs and traditions of Saudi society (Al-Freeh, 2011). Another form of moral panic surrounds reports of crimes carried out by domestic workers, child abuse and illicit sexual relationships, which are regarded as moral crimes threatening the cultural values of the Saudi family (Alttarif, 2011).

In the face of the social and economic realities which have led to increased need for childcare, and concerns about the impacts of untrained foreign employees, there have been calls for the expansion of nurseries and kindergartens attached to schools, universities, government ministries and women's workplaces, and payment of adequate wages for the care of children of working women during working hours.

1.8.2.2 Transportation

The United Nations Development Programme (2014) singles out the ban on women driving as a major obstacle to women's advancement in Saudi Arabia. Until very recently (see below), they were reliant on family members and personal drivers or had to use alternative private transportation. In fact, there was no actual statute that prohibited women driving, but in practice, since citizens must by law hold a locally issued licence to drive within the country, and such licences were not issued to women, it was effectively made illegal for them to drive (Alsharif, 2011). This was the situation prevailing at the time this research was carried out. Such restrictions on mobility constituted a barrier to women's access to higher education and employment, since they were unable to attend unless they had a chauffeur, or a close male family member was willing to drive them to and from the institution or company (Szilagyi, 2015). Such restrictions would be likely to reduce women's flexibility and freedom of choice with regard to their locations and hours of work.

On the 26th of September 2018, a historic announcement was made by the Saudi government, which allowed women to drive cars. In a society where gender roles are rigidly demarcated and strictly enforced, the ban on women driving used to be one of the major barriers that women faced. It was announced that women would be officially able to drive by July 2018. Driving will give women greater social and occupational mobility. This may make it easier to fulfil various roles and have work-life balance. In a sense, it

reflects a relaxation of men's control. However, in practice, it might be that women's driving will still depend on a parent's or husband's permission and co-operation. There is also a sense in which being allowed to drive could actually put more pressure on women, as men who have previously done shopping and taken children to school, for example, because of the ban on women driving, may now expect their wives to do so.

1.9 Significance and Expected Contributions of the Study

This study derives its significance from its potential to contribute substantively, theoretically and practically to a number of current debates in the area of gender, work-life balance, and the applicability of work-family border theory in a cross-national and specifically Middle Eastern context.

Recent years have seen the emergence of a body of scholarship addressing gender issues in the Middle East generally, and in Saudi Arabia in specific, as exemplified by the studies referred to in sections 1.5, 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8. Such studies have focused predominantly on the gender employment gap e.g. Al-Ahmadi (2011) and on a range of cultural and other factors that constrain women's workforce participation, or limit the progress of those who do enter the workforce, based on prevailing essentialist arguments about the nature of women and, hence, their social role. Authors advocating women's empowerment and opportunity (Kelly & Breslin, 2010; AlMunajjed & Sabbagh, 2011; Markle, 2013) as well as international organisations (Unicef, 2011) have discussed the impact of organisational policies and patriarchal family structures on women's opportunities (AlMunajjed & Sabbagh, 2011; Kattan et al., 2016). There has also been a discussion of the supposedly deleterious social impacts of the trend towards women's greater freedom and independence reflected in the relatively new phenomenon of working women (Quamar, 2016).

Such literature has, however, not addressed women's experience from a work-life balance perspective. Meanwhile, the systematic literature review reported in Chapter Two revealed that scholarship on work-life balance and flexible work has often addressed gender and the difficulties faced by women in particular, in achieving work-life balance (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007; Giannikis & Mihail, 2011; Wheatley, 2012; Azeem & Altalhi, 2015; Schilling, 2015). However, such work has been primarily in Western contexts. Although authors such as Chandra (2012) and Schilling (2015) point out that attitudes and behaviours related to work patterns differ among countries, implying the need for the context-specific understanding of the issues around work-life balance, no such study has been conducted in the Saudi context.

This study, therefore, has the potential to enrich both the above debates, by exploring in depth Saudi women's understanding and experience of work-life balance, their perceptions of their roles in both domains and the factors that shape them, as well as the extent to which they can enact strategies to facilitate their negotiation of the border between domains. The study presents Saudi working women not merely as targets of government policy or the victims of patriarchal culture, but as active agents, striving to make sense of and shape their experiences as educated, capable women, balancing their economic and domestic roles in accordance with their needs and values.

At the same time, the study is also expected to contribute to the understanding and development of border theory in two ways. On the one hand, it tests and demonstrates the applicability of Border Theory in a new context, revealing the potential of the Border Theory to provide insights into the way Saudi working women, as border crossers, negotiate the balance between the work and family domains, and the factors that influence the strength and permeability of those physical, temporal and psychological borders. Conversely, the application in the Saudi context is also expected to contribute to the

development of the theory by offering a more complex and nuanced understanding of the theory's main components, border-crossers and border-keepers, and the ways in which their roles and experiences are shaped by a variety of personal and institutional factors. Accordingly, an expanded model of Border Theory actors and processes is offered in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

1.10 Summary

This chapter has introduced the purpose and rationale of this research, which concerns the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia. It was noted that Saudi Arabia has witnessed significant social and economic changes in the last few decades, due to the discovery of oil, which has prompted a transition from nomadic Bedouinism to a modern urbanised society. Women have benefited from increasing education, and more job opportunities. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate among Saudi nationals remains an issue of concern, and is particularly high among women. The work system and regulations both protect and impose restrictions on women working in different sectors in KSA; these are influenced by religion and culture, in particular, the importance attached to women's virtue, which is "protected" by segregation, and cultural constructions of gender roles, rooted in biological essentialism, that give primacy to women's "nurturing" characteristics. This contextual information has highlighted the challenges that working women are understood to face in the Saudi context, raising the question of how they can balance the conflicting demands of work and family roles. The following chapter provides a review of theories of work-life balance before introducing and justifying Border Theory as a theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics in order to establish the conceptual base of the research and set it in the context of previous studies. It then reviews the literature on work-life balance, and on flexible work and job crafting, as strategies often advocated in the literature to resolve the tension between roles,

1.11 Structure of Thesis

This research is divided into five chapters, including this chapter, the Introduction, which has set out the purpose, rationale and context of the study. In order to do so, it provided a brief background about Saudi Arabia, and the issue of work-life balance for women there, before introducing the research aims, objectives and questions. The chapter has provided an understanding of employment in Saudi Arabia, and of the main sectors employing women, as well as religious and cultural issues affecting women's life, showing these to be typical of the MENA region, and reflecting notions originating in essentialist views of gender, subsequently reinforced by social constructions.

Chapter Two, Literature Review, begins with a discursive review of theoretical perspectives on work-life balance, leading to the presentation of a detailed rationale for adopting work-family Border Theory as a framework for this study. Then an explanation of the method of the systematic literature review. It goes on to review is provided with the concepts and impact of work-life balance, flexible working and job crafting.

Chapter Three, Methodology, describes the method chosen for this research. Following that, the process is described by which this research was completed.

Chapter Four, Findings, presents the analysis of the data collected. It also contains a discussion of the findings in the light of the theoretical framework and previous studies.

Chapter Five, Conclusion, concludes the thesis by highlighting the substantive and theoretical contributions of the study, its policy implications, and reflection on the methodology adopted, followed by the study's limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set the research in the context of existing knowledge on work-life balance and related issues by reviewing relevant theory and previous empirical studies related to work-life balance and flexible work. Reviews of literature in a field of study commonly take one of two approaches; a discursive review based on qualitative analysis, and a systematic review based on a quantitative bibliometric analysis (Acedo & Casillas, 2005). In this study, the former approach was used to explore a wide range of theories with potential relevance to understanding work-life balance and select a theory to be adopted as a framework to inform this study. However, a systematic review was conducted in order to identify relevant, high-quality, up-to-date materials on the key topics of focus. Accordingly, the chapter proceeds as follows. First, theories from a variety of disciplines, pertinent to work-life balance are presented, and a rationale is provided for the adoption of work-family border theory (Clark, 2000), as a theory with the potential to help in exploring and making sense of a range of issues of interest in this study. This is followed by an explanation of the systematic review process carried out in order to identify and select materials on work-life balance and related ideas. Then the concept of work-life balance is defined, and its implementation and impacts are discussed. This is followed by two sections addressing, in turn, flexible work and job crafting as approaches that may help in achieving work-life balance. An examination of challenges in achieving work-life balance concludes the chapter.

2.2 Theories of Work-Life Balance

A variety of theories have been used in work-life balance studies from different perspectives, informed by literature including sociology and psychology.

Despite the fact that there is no single extensive theory of work-life balance (Carlson et al., 2013), several theoretical points of view come together to suggest that balance is allied with positive attitudes and behaviours (Wayne et al., 2017).

Despite differences in the meaning of “work-life balance”, different conceptualisations are discussed in the literature as if they are interchangeable and their differences irrelevant. Insufficient clarity in the comprehension of balance is a challenge because theories are founded on strong constructs. Thus, an accurate and precise definition is crucial to derive a strong construct. Prior to identifying how balance relates to other constructs, it is essential to develop a concise and comprehensive analysis of the definition of balance (Wayne et al., 2017).

From a theoretical point of view, an important question is whether balance is a single construct or multiple constructs. A theoretical framework can be formed around a single construct if the different conceptualisations of it are essentially similar and related measurement instruments can be interchangeably. In contrast, when the conceptualisations are significantly different, it becomes crucial to comprehend the distinctions amongst them, to adopt unique terminology for each construct and take the differences into account when formulating a theory (Wayne et al., 2017). It is also important to evaluate the possible qualities that the different perspectives can offer as a theoretical lens to study a particular phenomenon.

Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) contended that a problem with many work-family/work-life studies is the absence of a solid theoretical base. Indeed, often writers do not make explicit reference to theories. Therefore, in the following discussion, a brief overview is provided of some of the more common theoretical approaches, pertinent to exploring work-life balance (Morris & Madsen, 2007).

The relationship between work and family life has been discussed using varied perspectives and theoretical bases in works of different researchers and practitioners (Zedeck, 1992; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Some take a psychological, others a more sociological approach, and yet others are multidisciplinary. In this study, however, I am less concerned with rigidly categorising the origins of theories or the claimed affiliations of their advocates, and more with how they have been used and their potential value for exploring and making sense of the issues of interest in this study. These are the concerns that eventually led me to the choice of theory to inform this study. The theoretical approaches considered are briefly defined as follows:

2.2.1 Role Theory

Role Theory focuses on a major aspect of social life: characteristic patterns of behaviours called roles. It views individuals as occupying particular social positions leading them to hold assumptions about the way they and others should behave (Biddle, 1986).

According to the Role Theory in social psychology and sociology, daily activities can be understood as the acting out of socially defined categories, for instance, a mother, a manager or a teacher. A role can be summed up to a combination of behaviours, norms, rights, and duties to be fulfilled by an individual. The basic assumption is that human behaviour is predictable and people's behaviour is usually related to their context, depending on factors such as social position (Michener & DeLamater, 1999).

The forces that initiate the feelings of expectations in an individual's behaviour and those of others can be explained in sociological terms by the Role Theory (Biddle, 1986).

The five primary models of Role Theory as defined by Biddle (1986) are:

1. Functional Role Theory, which views roles in terms of social norms shared by individuals, related to a particular social position,
2. Symbolic Interactionist Role Theory, which analyses personal reactions to behaviour as the causative factor of role development,
3. Structural Role Theory, using mathematical modelling to analyse the impact of society, in contrast to the individual in roles,
4. Organisational Role Theory, which investigates how roles are developed in organisations,
5. Cognitive Role Theory, which Flynn and Lemay (1999) explain as being concerned with the correlation between expectations and behaviour.

Many practitioners and analysts of Role Theory argue that it is among the most convincing theories explaining the link between social structure and individual behaviour. The behaviour of an individual is guided by roles which are partially defined by both social structure and social interactions. Conversely, individuals and groups shape the expectations, behaviours, and norms related to roles. The functionalist view defines roles as the collection of expectations that society imposes on its members. By tacit agreement, certain practices are regarded as suitable and others as wrong (Şesen, 2015).

Role overload occurs when individuals have insufficient resources, including time and energy, to meet the expected requirements of all their roles. Role conflict occurs when there is an inconsistency between the expectations of different roles. Role overload and conflict often lead to role strain, which can be defined as the challenge associated with meeting different expectations (Goode, 1960). In many sociocultural settings, women are

victims of stress and distress caused by handling both family and work roles (Aryee, 1992; Lai, 1995; Matsui et al., 1995). However, the levels of conflict vary depending on the culture, its perceived gender roles and the time allocated for family and work duties (Moore & Gobi, 1995).

Nevertheless, there is evidence that implies that opportunities and benefits can be derived from having multiple roles. According to Marks and MacDermid (1996) in the theory of role balance, individuals who can fully engage in the activities of different roles experience more innovation and higher self-confidence, in addition to less strain. Moreover, according to Rose Coser (1975), multiple roles allow people to articulate their individuality and act independently in compliance with or in contrast to typical expectations. Therefore, for the growth of personality and intelligence, numerous roles are essential. Verbrugge (1983) discovered that performing the multiple roles of paid worker, wife and mother had a positive impact on women's health, as compared to women with none or only one of these roles. Carlson et al. (2009), drawing on Role Theory, distinguish between work-family conflict and work-family balance.

Jackson (1998) offers several criticisms of Role Theory, one being that it elevates ideologies to the status of objective, universal entities. Second, Role Theory is more concerned with social conformity than with challenging social arrangements. Third, it fails to explain clearly the socialization process, whereby individuals are inducted into their roles. Fourth, human agency is not sufficiently accounted for. Moreover, Jackson (1998) claims that Role Theory is unable to explain sufficiently the complex relationship between people's behaviour and social forces. Role Theory essentially does not explain the skills individuals employ to make their own significant life decisions in a context of social, economic, and familial pressures. It overlooks the sociopolitical forces that both restrict and are shaped by individual actions.

2.2.2 Spillover Theory

Spillover refers to the way work and family impact on one another, leading to convergence between the two roles (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Alternative terms for spillover include generalization, isomorphism, continuation, extension, familiarity, and similarity (Staines, 1980; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000)

Spillover Theory proposes that the circumstances that favour occurrence of spillover between work and family spheres may have a constructive or destructive effect. According to analysis of work-family relationships, if the interactions are strictly structured to a defined timeframe and space, then there are negative implications on energy, time and behaviour caused by spillover; equally a flexible job that grants individuals time and space to combine family and work duties has a constructive effect on achieving a significantly healthier balance between domestic and work responsibilities (Hill et al., 2003).

Researchers have explored spillover of mood, values, attitudes and behaviour from one role to another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), although there has been more attention to mood spillover than the other aspects. Spillover can be interpreted in two ways (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000): (a) the positive correlation between work and life satisfaction and work and life values (Zedeck, 1992) and (b) transfer of expertise and behaviours between spheres (Repetti, 1987) , for instance, when tiredness due to work is felt in the home domain or when domestic demands impede work roles.

Emotional spillover between work and family implies that work-related moods or attitudes are brought home, or conversely, family-related moods or attitudes are taken into the workplace. While moods and attitudes are both effective constructs, they differ

in the extent to which they are stable and targeted toward a specific situation or phenomena (Krishna & Lakshmypriya, 2016).

Grzywacz and Marks (2000) found evidence of four possible forms of spillover by creating a matrix of the direction of influence (from family to work, or from work to family) and its nature (positive or negative). Their study revealed that work and domestic elements that facilitated growth, for instance., decision scope, and family backing, were linked to less negative and more positive spillover between work and family, whereas domestic and work hindrances, for instance, work stress and domestic conflicts, were correlated with less positive and more negative spillover between domestic and work roles.(Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

This theory has been used in a variety of contexts, for example, to examine the multi-faceted causes and consequences of work-family conflict in Nigeria (Adisa et al., 2016), or the work and life responsibilities of female entrepreneurs in the Philippines (Edralin, 2012).

Wayne et al. (2017) applied this theory to expound on four explanations of work-life balance: additive spillover (the individual impacts of two directions, enrichment and conflict); multiplicative spillover (the intermingling consequences of higher enrichment with lower conflict); balance satisfaction (an individual's view towards allotment of resources between domestic and work roles.); and balance effectiveness (an individual's self-assessment of satisfying joint expectations of home and work roles). The researchers define the differences in theoretical bases among these approaches and theorize the different ways in which they operate in forecasting family and work attitudes and performance. Moreover, their investigations depicted that additive spillover was the best predictor of work attitudes such as job fulfilment, organisation commitment, and intent

to quit. Next in impact were balanced satisfaction and effectiveness. Balance effectiveness and satisfaction were jointly the most significant predictors of family satisfaction and performance in both domestic and work roles (Wayne et al., 2017). While Spillover Theory could potentially help in explaining some aspects of the relationship between home and work that could affect perceptions of work-life balance, it has certain limitations as far as this study is concerned. It does not address the physical and temporal interface between home and work, or how tangible and intangible forces at the social, institutional and individual level may operate to influence spillover effects in a particular cultural context.

2.2.3 Compensation Theory

According to Staines (1980) in contrast to the ‘spillover’, which assumes that workers’ feelings and behaviour in one sphere are transferred over to the other, ‘Compensation Theory’ suggests that engagement in one domain is increased to derive gratifications that are lacking in the other sphere.

The Compensation Theory concerns attempts to counterweigh adverse experiences in one domain to obtain positive experiences in the other, for instance, offsetting negative experiences from work with positive experiences from home. An example of such a step to take is to intensify participation in one domain, for instance work, while simultaneously decreasing immersion in the other, e.g. home. Alternatively, one could pursue the domain offering higher rewards and greater fulfilment at the cost of the domain that provides little or no rewards and satisfaction (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

Several researchers have argued that compensation ensues when time, energy and effort from one domain are used to meet the needs and requirements of another (Staines, 1980; Lambert, 1990; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Sastry & Pandey, 2000). Further, the notion

of compensation as a technique through which one social role can support another, which provides insufficient positive experience, was discussed by Edwards and Rothbard (2000) in their research study on the link between the domestic and work spheres.

Zedeck and Mosier (1990) assert that compensation can be classed into two general types: supplemental and reactive. Supplemental compensation occurs when workers have insufficient satisfactory experiences at work, and so pursue them at home. Reactive compensation occurs when positive experiences at home offset negative experiences (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990). In simple terms, according to the concept of compensation, there is an inverse relationship between work and domestic life; thus, employees endeavour to meet needs that are inadequate or unavailable in one sphere by means of fulfilment in the other (Clark, 2000). Tenbrunsel et al. (1995) discovered a compensatory interaction between employees' work and life roles; also, Rothbard (2001) recounted that women who had adverse effects from domestic issues immersed themselves more deeply in their work, thus supporting the compensation theory. However, since the theory focuses on counterweighting effects between domains, it does not account for situations where an individual feels equal fulfilment in both roles, or alternatively, in neither. Nor does it account for social influences that shape the definition and opportunity for fulfilment in either role.

2.2.4 Work-life Conflict Theory

Work-life conflict refers to the experience of conflict between the work and life domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work-family conflict was formerly considered as unidimensional but it is now conceptualised as bidimensional (Frone et al., 1992).

Work-life conflict is a state where the duties related to work and other aspects of life are not utterly harmonious; thus, immersion in one role makes it challenging to engage in the

other (Voydanoff, 2005). Moreover, previous studies show that stress arising from involvement in both work and family spheres can lead to conflict between the spheres.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) suggested eight theoretical concepts relating to the relationships amongst role strain, time and behaviour, as follows: stress comes from both work and domestic roles; self-identification with a role is crucial; role salience affects the interactions and it is positively associated with conflict; conflict is most significant when there are disadvantages related to non-compliance; directionality is founded on the origin of the conflict ; conflict is related to career stage and achievement; and external support is associated with conflict.

Causes of conflict include job dynamics such as working hours and workload. Allan et al. (2007) discovered that an extreme workload has worse impact on work-family strife than long job hours. However, Major et al. (2002) discovered a direct relationship between excessive working time and work-family conflict, thus, leading to reduced health and weak family functioning. According to Poelmans (2005), a rigid job schedule and long working hours increase work-family conflict. Also, Grzywacz and Marks (2000) observed that job features such extreme work pressure, lack of workplace support and lower decision, making latitude were the principal sources of work-family conflict.

Kanter (1989:56) points out that “family situations can influence individuals work orientation; motivation; abilities, emotional energy, and the demands they bring to the workplace”.

In addition, studies have demonstrated that work family conflict is associated with health problems such as psychological strain (Noor, 2003; Mauno et al., 2006), depression and anxiety (Lapierre & Allen, 2006). Conversely, employees with lower levels of work-family conflict experience higher levels of job satisfaction(Hill, 2005). Also, people who

spend more time with their families enjoy a higher quality of life (Greenhaus et al., 2003). A variety of formal (e.g., flexibility policies) and informal (e.g., family-supportive supervision and organisational cultures) sources of organisational support are associated with low work-family conflict and high work family enrichment, both of which contribute to greater balance in life (Greenhaus & De Hauw, 2014). This perspective provides insight into how organisational policies and practices can reduce work-family conflict and enhance satisfaction. However, focusing more on psychological states, it does little to explain social and cultural frames that may shape such policies and women's perceptions of home and work domains, or the strategies that women themselves employ to achieve work-life balance.

2.2.5 Work-Family Facilitation Theory

Work-family facilitation is defined as “the extent to which participation at work or home is made easier by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed at home or work” (Frone, 2003:145).

Work-family facilitation refers to the idea that a person's participation in one life domain (e.g., work) may be made easier by the skills, experiences, resources, knowledge, and opportunities they have acquired as a result of participating in another domain (e.g., family) (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Grzywacz et al., 2002; Frone, 2003). Such a view is attracting growing interest in discussions of the work-family interface.

Grzywacz and Butler (2005) claimed that facilitation occurs as a result of social systems (families and institutions) utilizing the accessible means to attain development. The form and strength of facilitation, as a development, are derived from the characteristics of both persons and resources, in a particular context (Grzywacz & Butler, 2005). According to

Grzywacz and Butler (2005), it remains unclear if work–family facilitation is the direct opposite of work–family conflict.

In contrast, other researchers claim that work- family facilitation and work-family conflict are distinct, since work-family conflict, theoretically, refers to irreconcilability between family and work, fuelled by the competing demands and pressures in each sphere (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Conversely, facilitation depicts development in one sphere that is enabled by resources obtained from involvement in a different domain (Grzywacz et al., 2002). This contrast outlines the basic, important difference that pressure is the primary antecedent of conflict, while resources are the main antecedent of facilitation.

The foregoing explanation indicates that work-family facilitation and work-family conflict are theoretically unique and different paradigms (Grzywacz & Butler, 2005). Thus, as stated by Frone (2003), work-family facilitation is not the bipolar opposite of work-family conflict. The latter statement indicates that models of work-family conflict will not necessarily help in improvement of work-family facilitation.

Better understanding of work–family facilitation is needed because of its salience to the broader concepts of “fit” and “balance.” Generally, indicators of work– family facilitation have been associated with enhanced mental and physical well-being (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003), as well as greater family and organisational satisfaction and effort (Wayne et al., 2004).

Hammer (2003) suggested that this notion should be explicitly incorporated in discussion of work and family. Nevertheless, the idea remains theoretically underdeveloped and is little used in practice (Frone, 2003).

2.2.6 Work-life Enrichment Theory

Greenhaus and Powell (2006:73) defined enrichment as "the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role". Such experiences may include those from instrumental sources (skills, abilities, values) or affective sources (mood, satisfaction) (Morris & Madsen, 2007).

Several advantages can be hypothetically derived from immersion in different roles, such as security; role privileges; personality enrichment; and status improvement, according to early investigations on work-family enrichment (Sieber, 1974).

Work-to-family enrichment takes place when job experiences enhance the quality of domestic life, and family-to-work enrichment takes place when home experiences increase the quality of the job life (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Enrichment is related to work-family conflict, in the sense that each reflects the extent to which particular roles impact others, either negatively or positively (Carlson et al., 2009).

Enrichment takes place in two ways; the instrumental path, in which resources obtained in one role directly enhance performance in the other role; and the affect path, where advantages in one role indirectly increase performance in the other role due to general increase in the individual's experience of positive feelings (Carlson et al., 2006).

In addition, Frone (2003) claims that absence of work-family conflict or the incidence of work-family enrichment is similar to work-family balance, although balance is wider than a person's unique experiences of conflict and enrichment, so this perspective alone would not sufficiently encompass the issues of interest in this study.

Work-family enrichment has recently been related to a number of important work, non-work, and health-related outcomes (Nicklin & McNall, 2013). For example, Baral and

Bhargava (2010) claim that work-family enrichment mediates the association between work features and all job outcomes and between overseer support and affective commitment. However, the lack of a psychometrically valid and reliable measure of work-family balance is a noteworthy obstacle to understanding the relevance of work-family facilitation (Carlson et al., 2009).

2.2.7 Integration Theory

The integration of job and non-job demands is among the major difficulties confronting families and individuals (Lambert & Kossek, 2005).

Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999:407) defined integration as “a situation where attitudes in one role positively spill over into another role, or when experiences in one role serve as resources that enrich another role in one’s life”. Thus, according to Lambert and Kossek (2005) Integration Theory seems to be founded on Spillover Theory, since it proposes that individuals transfer perceptions and beliefs from one role to another. Consequently, integration is referred to as the a state midway between total separation of roles (segmentation) and complete overlapping of roles(enmeshment) (Chesley et al., 2003).

Integration Theory implies that, in general, a healthy system of flexible and permeable boundaries can better facilitate and encourage work-life and community-life domains (Clark, 2000). Morris and Madsen (2007) stated as an advantage of integration theory that it brings additional contextual elements, such as community, into the understanding of the relationship between work and life.

The Person-Environment Fit theory supports integration, due to its proposition that the more job-level role integration corresponds to an individual’s preferences, the more

effectively he or she will be able to combine work and domestic roles to his or her satisfaction (Kreiner, 2006).

2.2.8 Social Exchange Theory

Since the early research by Homans (1961); (Blau, 1964) and Emerson (1976), the Exchange Theory has been amongst the most significant and widely accepted theories in psychology. The theory built on earlier psychological perspectives based on utilitarianism and behaviourism.

Homans (1961:13) defined social exchange “as the exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons”.

Blau (1964: 91) defined social exchanges as “voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others.”

Eisenberger et al. (1986) used social exchange as a conceptual basis for interpreting the relationship between a worker and an employer. They claimed that workers form general perceptions about the “intentions” and “attitudes” of the hiring institution on the basis of the way they are treated by the management and through organisational policies and practises, giving human-like characteristics to their employer.

According to Lambert (2000), Social Exchange Theory observes that people feel an obligation to repay those whose actions benefit them. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) claim that the Social Exchange Theory is one of the most prominent theories for comprehending behaviour in the workplace.

According to Stock et al. (2016) the norm of reciprocity, in an organisational context, leads employees to develop social exchange relationships with various partners, including colleagues, supervisors or the organisation itself. Lambert (2000) used Social Exchange Theory to explain her observations that the employees who perceived benefits from the employer as good were more engaged at work and more likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour, such as interpersonal helping and contribution of suggestions, which she termed the 'currency of reciprocity'.

Homans (1984), however, argued that the expression 'Exchange Theory' is a misnomer, partly because the theory is not limited to social behaviour that looks like exchange but also because it implies that it is a distinct kind of theory, whereas in Homan's view, it is simply an application of general behavioural psychology.

Kelliher and Anderson (2010) invoked Social Exchange Theory to investigate workplace factors that contribute to work intensification, and to developing understanding of how workers responded to flexibility in their working arrangements, with reference to work-life balance.

Social Exchange Theory can be utilized to predict the results of impressions of Human Resources practices on workers' behaviours (Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005; Gould-Williams, 2007). Accordingly, it can be assumed there is a likelihood that employees will respond with positive work attitudes if they see that the HRM practices influence their well-being positively (Kooij et al., 2013). Equally, employees who perceive that HRM practices lead to a stronger work-life imbalance are likely to respond with harmful job practices (Gould-Williams, 2007).

However, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) observed two primary weaknesses of Social Exchange Theory. First, its constructs are not clearly defined and identified, and studies

of them often left out conjunctural variables. Second, some expressions of the theory are subject to multiple interpretations, as they are vague. These critics note that such vagueness renders the theory difficult to test. Moreover, it seems inadequate for this study, as it focuses on behaviour within the workplace and does not specifically address issues in the home domain.

2.2.9 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory is a social psychological theory that views conflict within a group as a result of the way groups define themselves (Islam, 2014).

Social Identity Theory is formulated on the assumption that people define their identities in relation to social categories and that such identifications enable them to safeguard and boost their self-identity (Tajfel, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Furthermore, the formulation of a categorical group identity involves classification of an “in-group” in relation to an “out-group” and the propensity to be biased towards one's own group (Scheepers et al., 2013). Moreover, Tajfel (1979) proposes that people construct several identities founded on their experience of participation in or exclusion from other particular societal categories.

The Social Identity Theory has not yet been utilised specifically in the explanation of the issue of work-life balance; although nevertheless, it is pertinent to some aspects of individual behaviour in relation to the balance between work and private life (Swarnalatha, 2017).

“The basic idea of Social Identity Theory is that the social category (e.g. nationality, political affiliation, organisation, work group) within which one falls and to which one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in term of defining characteristics of the category a self-definition that is a part of the self-concept” (Hogg & Terry, 2014:3)

The variety of contemporary methodologies utilizing the term “social identity” makes analysis complex. Moreover, the concept is still developing; it reflects the broader debate on the significance of the “social” in social-psychology, which is a question crucial in psychologists’ concern to link issues of cognition, attitude, and feelings within wider social phenomena (Islam, 2014).

When viewed from a critical psychological perspective, the theory provides valuable understanding of the way social identity ascriptions contribute to discrimination, prejudice and intergroup conflict, by identifying these as outcomes of group-based classification and the desire to enhance one's own perceived or ascribed status. The theory also provides intriguing insight into how intergroup conflict is re-defined as components of individual identity (Islam, 2014).

Essers and Benschop (2009) use the term ‘boundary work’, (distinct from Boundary Theory, discussed later) to explain strategies used to reconcile issues related to the intersectionality of social identities.

Intersectionality is about how different social categories (e.g. gender, culture, and ethnicity) interact; they are not independent. No category is necessarily more important than another is. The way they interact and the primacy among them depend on the context and the individual case.

Adherents of this view consider that lived experience is shaped by historical and structural/ institutional factors. For example, Essers and Benschop (2009) look at the intersection of gender, religious identity and identity and entrepreneurship.

They identify four kinds of ‘boundary work’ (strategies) by which women reconcile their multiple identities:

- 1) Resist strict gender segregation, while observing certain limits, to maintain respectability.
- 2) Emphasise the individuality of faith, when deciding which rules to apply.
- 3) Adopting progressive interpretations of the Quran, citing female Quranic role models and the morality of work.
- 4) Historicizing and contextualizing the Quran, e.g. asserting that the rigid gender constraints are related to a different time and culture.

The study by Essers and Benschop (2009) addresses some issues of relevance to the present work. However, the authors do not address the pressures arising from working for others; nor do they elaborate on family life and how social identities effect work-life balance

2.2.10 The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour is a dispositional approach to the prediction of behaviour in specific contexts (Ajzen, 1991).

According to this theory, an individual's behaviours are governed by the person's intention to perform the behaviour, which is shaped by the individual's attitude towards the behaviour, his or her subjective norms and their view of their ability to control the behaviour. It argues that the best predictor of behaviour is intention (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991: 181), "intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behaviour; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try in order to perform the task".

A criticism directed towards the Theory of Planned Behaviour and other reasoned action models is that they are too 'rational,' neglecting the role played by cognitive and emotional processes that influence human judgments and behaviour. The Theory of

Planned Behaviour highlights the controlled aspects of human information processing and decision-making. The theory is used mainly in explaining behaviours that are goal-oriented and affected by conscious self-regulatory processes. Ajzen (2011) however, notes that this does not inherently mean that the theory expects individuals always to be, rational actors who review all the available data in an objective manner to come to deciding on a particular behaviour, but actually offers a more complicated and elusive image (Ajzen, 2011). A possible role of this theory in the present study would be to explore women's reasons for working outside the home, and its emphasis on the role of subjective norms would be of particular interest in taking account of the Saudi cultural context, such as family influences and social constructions of women's roles, or social pressures influencing organisational policy. However, it is concerned only with the prediction of behaviour, not its outcomes. Thus, it would not explain perceptions of work-life balance.

2.2.11 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory defines institutions as “cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Institutions are transported by various carriers—cultures, structures, and routines—and they operate on multiple levels of jurisdiction” (Scott, 1995:33).

Institutional Theory offers a theoretical basis for explaining the presence of distinct organisational forms, processes, strategies, outlooks, and abilities as a result of outcomes of social interaction and adaptation (Selznick, 1996).

Institutionalism has gone through various phases, with different emphasises. “Old” institutionalism focused on the deliberate efforts of individuals to respond to social

pressures in a manner consonant with the institution's rituals and formality and based on salient norms and values (Stinchcombe, 1997).

Sociological institutionalism postulates that there exist three types of isomorphic pressures that give rise to and reinforce organisational practices; they are regulative, normative, and cognitive structures and activities. The regulative dimension occurs in the form of direct guidance to institutional members, often through influences, controls, rewards, and sanctions. The normative component regulates the behaviour more indirectly through common societal norms and values. The cognitive element controls behaviour through formulation of "social identity" (Scott, 1995:45).

From this viewpoint, there are increased institutional pressures on organisations to improve work-life arrangements, resulting from increased attention to these issues, more state regulations and a changing workforce that seeks to combine paid work with other roles (Den Dulk et al., 2013).

Scott (1995) Institutional Theory to describe work-life balance, focusing on the components of family cohesion and flexibility. Family cohesion is partially founded on normative influences that family members impose on each other; it can be seen as mirroring the normative isomorphic impact of "new" institutionalism. Flexibility, with its structural focus, reflects components of "old" institutionalism (Leaptrott, 2005).

Nevertheless, the limitation of Scott's model (1995, 2001) is that it defines organisational factors as theoretically separated structures, and thus, the model fails to elaborate how the elements are connected in the real world. This weakness makes it difficult to explore conflict in Institutional Theory (Crubellate, 2007).

Jenkins et al. (2016) explored work-life balance practices in Australian SMEs enterprises, demonstrating how Institutional Theory conforms to and adds an important nuance for work-life balance practices, because it underscores the role of organisations and provides strong evidence that work-life balance research is appropriately premised on Institutional Theory.

Institutional theory may help to explain pressures on organisations, and employees, to behave in particular ways. However, it does not (despite the claim of Jenkins et al., 2016), appear to be able to explain exactly how such practices enhance or inhibit work-life balance, nor the countervailing strategies by which individuals might challenge institutional forces in order to improve their work-life balance.

2.2.12 Boundary Theory

Nippert-Eng (1996) formulated boundary theory as a basis for understanding the variety of meanings that individuals allocate to family and work.

Boundary Theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al., 2000) suggests that people create and manage physical, temporal, and psychological boundaries between work and home domains and the roles they play therein, such as employee or parent, to achieve work-life balance. The boundaries vary in strength and permeability. The professional and domestic boundaries set in employees' lives can be conceptualized and measured by segmentation (i.e. separation) and integration (i.e. overlapping) of low to high flexibility and permeability, lying on a continuum (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000).

Integration promotes intermingling between work and private life; segmentation keeps the two domains separate (Ashforth et al., 2000). A stronger integration between two spheres leads to a more porous boundary between them. At times an individual may be physically present in one sphere but engaged mentally, behaviourally and emotionally in

issues of another sphere. While this may allow free intermingling between roles, it also increases the likelihood that unwanted cross-domain elements will interrupt productivity in the current role (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Hecht and Allen (2009) discovered that boundaries which are more porous and accommodating of role integration were related to high inter-role conflict, both at home and at work.

Further, the boundary theory claims that workers have varying preferences for integration or segmentation of life domains. Some workers may be inclined to integrate the work and family spheres; for example tailoring work commitments to fit with family responsibility or, conversely, thinking about the job at home. Others prefer to segment the domains, with fixed hours for each domain and not allowing either to impinge on the other. The inclinations to segmentation or integration may be different for the two boundary features, flexibility, and porousness (Daniel & Sonnentag, 2016).

Boundary Theory illustrates that social classification is associated with emphasis on consequences such as the connotations perceived by people for their life domains, home and work (Nippert-Eng, 1996) and freedom to switch roles more often (Ashforth et al. 2000:). Ashforth and co-workers discuss what they refer to as micro-role transitions, meaning “cognitive and/or physical switching of roles” (2000: 472). Micro-role transitions also have been portrayed as distinct physical role movement, independent from psychological movement (Matthews et al., 2010). Whereas a physical role transition results by physically moving between work and family domains, cognitive role transitions may be realised at alternative temporal and spatial points. In their review, Allen et al (2014) stressed the contribution of policy flexibility and boundary permeability toward greater role synergy between work and family. Many scholars investigating the current developments in Boundary Theory emphasise that, as a result of integrating work and family in flexi-time and flexi-place job designs, although both the domains are permeable,

each is interfered with by the other's influence (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006; Bulger et al., 2007).

For the majority of people, role boundaries will comprise a mixture of flexible and inflexible permeable, porous and impermeable features. It is important to distinguish between boundary flexibility and boundary control, in describing a person's capacity to enact boundaries in a manner that accords with his/her preference (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). In general, employees show a preference for more boundary control; however, those with greater preference for segmentation prefer less flexible role boundaries, which facilitates segmentation of roles. People's preferences for either segmentation or integration of their work and domestic roles are associated with corresponding preferences for the flexibility and permeability of their roles (Piszczek & Berg, 2014). Nevertheless, circumstances may arise where individuals inclined to segmentation, who maintain inflexible and non-porous work hours, who usually prefer to keep family demands out of the workplace, may need to deal with a family emergency during work hours. Similarly, integrators, if they face overwork, may sometimes desire a vacation without any work interruptions. Although integration and segmentation are viewed as a continuum in Boundary Theory, actual inclinations towards for one or the other are likely to be more complex and vary from one situation to another (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012).

Leduc et al. (2016) outline the necessity of using relevant boundary management strategies to encourage improvement of work-life balance; further, that greater segmentation or integration of the different domains of life does not imply a better balance. Although both approaches can enhance enrichment from one domain to another, the techniques also increase the possibility of conflict. Work-family balance, therefore, is still a crucial issue in modern society and impacts most employees, who must alternate between professional life and personal life, both of which are very demanding.

2.2.13 Work-family Border Theory

The work-family interface has attracted attention over the last two decades because of the evidence that work and family are mutually influential, despite being separate domains (Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015). From the above analysis, it is evident that there are several models including spillover, segmentation, compensation, conflict and institutional, that have been applied to explain the concept of balance between work and other aspects of life. Although they offer some interesting insight, they have been criticised for insufficient attention to causal and consequential relationships and being over descriptive. Also, they do not sufficiently explain the boundary between work and domestic life (Guest, 2002).

These theories generally failed to integrate different concepts. Work-family border theory is an attempt to overcome the limitations of past research, such as the spillover and compensation theories (Clark, 2000), which were of limited usefulness because “they did not adequately explain, predict and help solve the problems individuals face when balancing home and work responsibilities” (Clark, 2000: 749). Work family border theory builds on concepts from several disciplines; one of these is Kurt Lewin’s idea of life space, which aids in ascertaining the nature of the boundary between non-job and job roles (Clark, 2000).

The theory focuses on the relationship between two domains (work and family), the nature of the borders between them and how people negotiate between the different domains to attain a work-family balance (Clark, 2000). Border crossers’ peripheral or central participation is an essential element of the theory, which theorizes work-family balance as a consequence of primary involvement in the domestic and work spheres. Therefore, “role centrality is critical in comprehending how the spheres are connected. (Clark, 2000).

Border crossers can have central or peripheral roles in work and/or home domains. Peripheral players are people who do not assume domain responsibilities fully, communicate less with central domain members and are less competent in their responsibilities, as they are ignorant of the domain values. Therefore, they are more susceptible to difficulties in controlling their domains and experience role conflicts as a consequence of stress generated by domain spill-over. In contrast, central border crossers can be relatively more competent towards role sharing, since they personally identify themselves with domain responsibilities effectively. As a result, they become noteworthy and enjoy freedom and autonomy in their associated domain (Donald & Linington, 2008). Therefore, it can be inferred that role centrality is a key to negotiating the borders between the two domains and may result in an increased self-control over one's life, enabling the individual to maintain harmony between work and private life.

According to Emslie and Hunt (2009), a factor influencing role centrality is gender, with its associated role expectations, and they criticize Border Theory for gender-blindness. However, Donald and Linington (2008) illustrated that gender role orientation encompasses self-perception regarding appropriate gender role ideologies at work and home. Therefore, it represents role centrality involving importance, recognition and participation in the home and work domains.

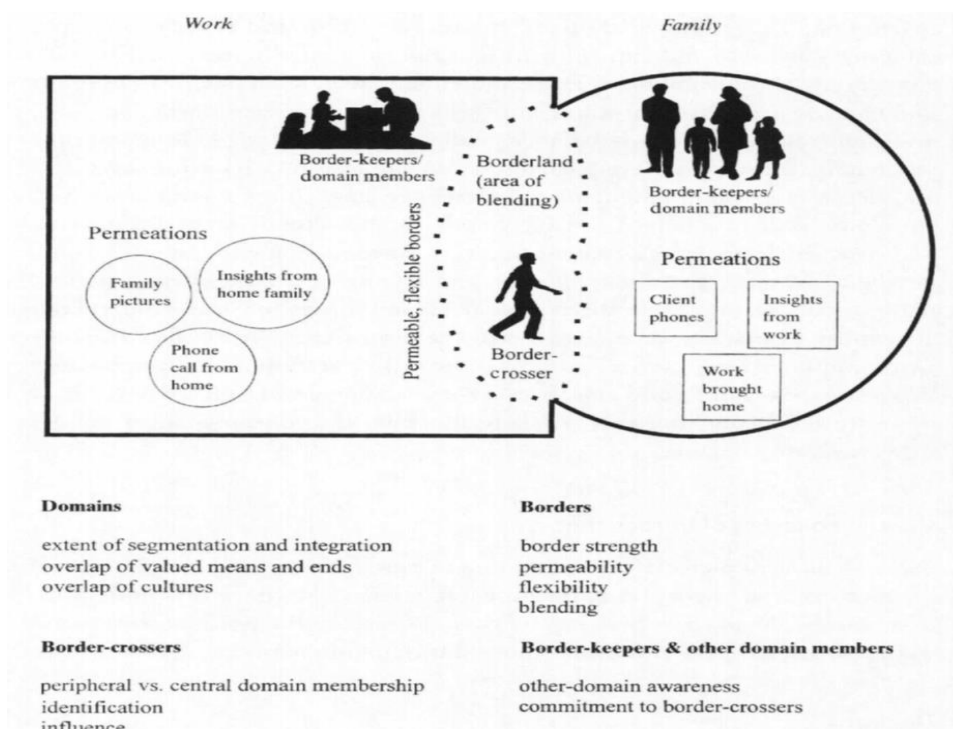
In practice, very often, men are central in the work domain but peripheral at home, because of the delegation of family roles to women. Evidently, gender difference shapes lives at work and home and therefore a gender lens is required for evaluating the relationship of work and family (Gerson, 2004). Against the set traditional gender-roles, egalitarianism favours an attitude that allows gender to be disassociated from role centrality such that, irrespective of gender difference, both men and women aspire equally

to both roles. Moreover, from this perspective, gender is conceptualised as dynamic and socially constructed, rather than a fixed and binary category (Emslie & Hunt, 2009).

The latter ideas, however, are contrary to the gender normative thinking of Saudi Arabia, which as explained in Chapter One reifies socially-constructed gender roles, by claiming a biological and religious foundation for them. These norms view women as inherently emotional and nurturing, give primacy to their responsibility for home and family and expect any work women do outside the home to be consistent with their assigned role in society.

The primary concepts in the Work-family Border Theory are the varied features of the domestic and work spheres, the central and peripheral involvement of border crossers and the flexibility and permeability of borders between the two spheres (Clark, 2000). These concepts are presented in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1 Work-family Border Theory: a Pictorial Representation and List of Central Concepts and their Characteristics



2.2.13.1 Basic concepts of Border Theory

The essence of the Border Theory is to identify and explain areas of separation between the personal and institutional domains, even when they are related to each other (Adisa et al., 2017).

Domains: are critical components to comprehending the Border Theory. The underlying assumption about domains is that there are two primary spheres that form the life of a person: work and non-work (home), each with its distinct rules, thought patterns and standards of behaviour. The domains can be integrated or separated depending on the individual.

Borders: are lines of separation between domains that define the point where domain pertinent behaviour starts or ends. They can be classified into temporal, physical and psychological. A physical border refers to where a domain-relevant behaviour takes place, and it can be represented by walls in the workplace or at home. Temporal boundaries indicate “when” work is done, and the time domestic roles can be performed. Psychological borders are rules formulated by people that decree the appropriateness of thinking patterns, behaviour patterns, and emotions in different domains.

Borders are typically viewed in relation to their strength, which is determined by their permeability, flexibility and blending. Thus, inflexible, non-porous boundaries that do not allow mixing are classified as “strong”, while permeable borders that are flexible and allow blending are regarded as “weak.”.

Permeability is related to the penetration of borders and the extent to which factors in one domain enter the other. Permeation can be classified into temporal when time intended for home is spent at work and vice versa; physical when some aspects of work duties are

done at home, and vice versa; and psychological when feelings originating in one sphere are carried over into the other.

When defining the flexibility of a border, researchers examine the extent to which it contracts or expands with pressure placed on it by one domain or another. Further, blending happens when there is immense flexibility and permeability around the borders.

Border Crosser: is an individual who moves activities from one domain to another. They are members in both domains, but may be either peripheral or central participants in a domain.

Border Keepers and other domain members: Creation of borders and domains and their administration becomes an inter-personal activity where numerous participants, specifically, border crossers, and border keepers and other domain members negotiate what forms the domains and where the borders are between them. Domain members who are prominent in defining the domain and border are called "border keepers". Some other domain members may also have influence in ascertaining the domain and border, while lacking power over a border crosser. Ultimately, border keepers and other domain members are crucial in the border crosser's power to manage the domains and borders.

Clark (2000) created numerous propositions on the relationship between domains using the concepts of domain overlap, segmentation, integration, social-cultural setting and strength of the borders between domains, which are defined according to their permeability, blending, and flexibility.

Table 2-1 Work-family Border Theory Propositions

Table 1 Propositions

Proposition 1a:	When domains are similar, weak borders will facilitate work/family balance.
Proposition 1b:	When domains are different, strong borders will facilitate work/family balance.
Proposition 2:	When the border is strong to protect one domain but is weak for the other domain, individuals will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) greater work/family balance when they primarily identify with the strongly bordered domain; and b) lesser work/family balance when they primarily identify with the weakly bordered domain.
Proposition 3:	Border-crossers who are central participants in a domain (i.e. who have identification and influence) will have more control over the borders of that domain than those who are peripheral participants.
Proposition 4:	Border-crossers who are central participants (i.e. who have identification and influence) in both domains will have greater work/family balance than border-crossers who are not central participants in both domains.
Proposition 5:	Border-crossers whose domain members have high other-domain awareness will have higher work/family balance than border-crossers whose domain members have low other-domain awareness.
Proposition 6:	Border-crossers whose domain members show high commitment to them will have higher work/family balance than border-crossers whose domain members have shown low commitment to them.
Proposition 7:	When work and family domains are very different, border-crossers will engage in less across-the-border communication than will border-crossers with similar domains.
Proposition 8:	Frequent supportive communication between border-keepers and border-crossers about other-domain activities will moderate the ill-effects of situations that would otherwise lead to imbalance.

Work-family Border Theory can give a theoretical framework that is missing from most research on work-family balance. As well as offering explanation of why conflict exists, it provides a framework that can help individuals and organisations to facilitate better balance between work and families. The propositions in Table 2.7 suggest a wide variety of tools for better work family balance (Clark, 2000).

The theory helps in grasping the “complex interaction between border-crossers and their work and family lives, to predict when conflict will occur, and give a framework for attaining balance” (Clark, 2000: 748). The theory proposes that, despite the temporal, physical and psychological confines between work and domestic roles, these two domains of life are connected and thus, individuals cross between the two domains regularly.

2.2.13.2 Previous studies on Work-family Border Theory

Thus far, studies drawing on Border Theory have been conducted primarily in Western contexts, and predominantly in the USA and UK. These studies reveal that the Work-family Border Theory, informed by qualitative information derived from interviews, facilitates understanding of the process of managing work-family balance. However, being somewhat broad in its ideas, it is difficult to use as a theoretical lens in order to make sense of practice. The theory proposes the need for investigating the degree of overlap of valued “ends” (gains) such as intimate relationships and “means” of achieving goals between private and family domains. However, it is less distinct on the type of means and ends that should be included and how these concepts can be operationalized. Furthermore, the theory does not clearly address the problem of overload in one or both domains. For instance, similarity in the type and number of intimate relationships in both domains eases border-crossing, while similarity in the amount of overload will not (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

Karassvidou and Glaveli (2015) based on 20 in-depth interviews in a company in Greece, observed that strong borders safeguard the powerful work domain and expand solely to adapt to its needs. According to the Border Theory, workers make a rational choice to become central participants in the influential, impermeable and rigid bordered work domain. In the Greek company studied by Karassvidou and Glaveli, a strong and deep-rooted organisational culture, together with leaders’ behaviour and leadership style,

contributed to the development of various positive work attitudes which enhanced central participation in the work domain. In this strongly bordered work setting, it was observed that employees adopted segmentation as a work-family balance coping strategy; however, in some cases, with changes in participants' life phase, or as a result of unfulfilled expectations, employees adjusted their priorities and re-evaluated their central participation in the dominant work domain.

One concern in Border Theory research is the negotiation of borders, the interface between work and family domains (Clark 2000) or between different life domains, as a potentially important aspect of the way people manage the work-home boundary. It has been noted in the context of the UK police force that experiences may differ from one organisation and one individual to another, although research on individual variables relevant to work-life balance is relatively sparse (McDowall & Lindsay, 2014).

Border Theory also highlights the importance of negotiation and communication with border keepers, important others who play an active part in influencing or controlling roles within and movement between domains. This demonstrates that work-life balance is fluid and individuals must constantly negotiate and renegotiate borders. Nevertheless, it is not clear how people can enhance their border crossing ability or how the theory might extend beyond the family into the non-work domain (McDowall & Lindsay, 2014).

Another limitation of Border Theory is the failure to address the impact of mobile phones (or indeed any other information and communication technology) on the borders between the two domains. In this respect, White and Thatcher (2015) observed that technology has definitive impact, with the emergence of separate user- groups: border extenders, border adapters, and border enforcers. Some insight on the relationship between technology and work-family border is provided in a study by Konig and de la Guardia (2014) of

employees' use of the internet for personal business while at work. They discovered that the magnitude of individual wants and identification with job duties were significant predictors of personal internet utilization. However, this was not related to work-life balance. Consequently, the researchers inferred that the Work-family Border Theory is limited in its ability to explain why individuals utilize the internet at work for private purposes (Konig & de la Guardia, 2014).

Adisa et al. (2017) observe that noticeably permeable borders worsen work-life imbalance. Also, they proposed a re-evaluation of Work-family Border Theory, specifically on its relevance in the workplace, in view of the flexibility and impending disappearance of previously narrowly defined borders. The outcomes of their study critically questioned the concept of distinct domestic and family spheres. These findings have implications for the application of the ideas of the theory in work and non-work domains (Adisa et al., 2017).

2.2.13.3 Why Work-family Border Theory?

Boundary Theory and Border Theory share the same basic principles. They both offer ways of understanding how people create and negotiate the boundaries between work and family. Boundary Theory has been used in the context of work–family interactions in order to provide insight into the ways people understand home and work (Nippert-Eng 1996), as well as how easily and how often individuals move between work and family roles (Ashforth et al. 2000; Desrochers & Sargent 2004). By contrast, Border Theory emerged as a reaction against perceived deficiencies of existing work–family theories and focuses specifically on the work and family domains (Clark 2000). Nevertheless, according to Allen et al (2014), the two theories are not distinct, but are actually different expressions of the same basic underlying principles.

Work-family Border Theory and Boundary Theory both provide frameworks for understanding individuals' boundary management. Although they differ in emphasis, they both assert that people make deliberate efforts to balance their work and family life by creating and maintaining boundaries of varying degrees of segmentation or integration, the strength of a boundary being a function of its flexibility and permeability (Qiu & Fan, 2015).

According to Guest (2002: 259) "Border Theory opens up a rich vein of analysis focusing on the nature of work and family domains, on the borders between these two domains but also on borders' permeability and the ease with which these borders can be managed or moved and so on", to enable a balance between family and work to be achieved.

Work-family Border Theory is closely related to Boundary Theory (Desrochers & Sargent, 2004). They both describe "the conditions under which varying degrees of work-family integration are likely to improve or diminish individual well-being" (Desrochers & Sargent, 2004: 40). The Work-family Border Theory, however, does not restrict its definition of borders solely to psychological divisions, but also includes classifications based on physical attributes that segment the times, locations and individuals associated with each domain. In this way, the Work-family Border Theory contrasts with the Boundary Theory. Moreover, the Boundary Theory emphasises the cognitive, and social classification defined by the meaning assigned to an individual's work and domestic roles (Desrochers & Sargent, 2004). However, Work-family Border Theory place more emphasis on the work and domestic domains, with the goal of achieving a work-family balance. This focus makes Work-family Border Theory particularly suitable for this study, which is especially concerned with work-family balance.

The Border Theory can facilitate the analysis of boundaries between personal life and work at varied levels, for instance, social and domestic; and individual and organisational levels. Understanding the border makes it easier to understand to what degree people can help control domain borders and the impact of each domain on the other is eased (Cain, 2015).

Within the Work-family Border Theory, it is recognized that there are work, personal and family domain factors that variously affect work- and family-life outcomes. Hence, the theory helps to understand how work, personal and family domain factors are related to work-life balance and other family-friendly work approaches (Cain, 2015).

“Unlike spillover and compensation theories, which focus on the emotional linkages at the work-family boundary, Clark’s theory addresses how these boundaries divide the times, places, and people that are associated with work versus family” (Desrochers et al., 2005:444).

Although Border Theory does not assume the primacy of either domain, or that either domain is necessarily associated with a particular gender, it can accommodate recognition and exploration of gender impacts, including those influenced by cultural constructions. This is because it encourages consideration of border crossers' identification with and influence in different domains, as well as the role of border keepers, all of which are likely to reflect gender constructions, roles and power relations in a particular context. Thus, investigations of the individual, family and society factors that influence border crossers' ability to negotiate borders can bring to light gender issues. This is of particular interest in a context such as Saudi Arabia, where normative thinking and traditional cultural norms around gender have traditionally constrained women's options in both work and family domains, as shown in Chapter Two.

As is evident from the preceding discussion, a wide variety of theories have been used as an attempt to explain work-life balance, but all have their limitations and have been subject to criticism. In this study, notwithstanding the criticisms reported above, Work-family Border Theory was selected as an underpinning theory for exploring the barriers to work-life balance for Saudi women, for a number of reasons. The rationale for selecting this theory relates to the features of the theory itself, theoretical support for its use in a cross-cultural context, and support from previous empirical studies that used Border Theory in a variety of contexts to explore, inter alia, issues of gender and culture, which are of interest in this study.

To begin with Work-family Border Theory itself, as noted previously, was developed specifically to overcome limitations of various prior theories, such as Spillover and Compensation theories, reviewed above. According to Clark (2000) Border Theory is better able than the aforementioned theories to explain and predict the problems that arise in balancing between work and home. In doing so, it draws from a variety of disciplines. It is not confined to providing psychological insights into the meaning people ascribe to their roles at work and in the home, but allows exploration of physical and social factors that contribute to shape the characteristics of each domain, and the strength of its borders. This can be seen by briefly revisiting the constructs and propositions introduced earlier.

It was seen in Figure 2-1 that the key aspects with which Work-family Border Theory is concerned are domains, borders, border crossers, border keepers and other domain members.

Regarding domains, border theory looks at their characteristics and preferences for separation or integration (Clark, 2000), but these preferences also differ from one individual to another. This implies that border theory can accommodate both traditional

gender role expectations, which might be expected to be manifested in a preference for separation and the potentially more integrative perspective of women who pursue a career and identify with both domains.

Similarly, with the concept of borders, there is potential not only to explore how traditional cultural values and structural factors may strengthen the borders between domains, but also to recognize modernizing influences and social changes that may affect the permeability and flexibility of borders. The concept of border flexibility is of particular relevance for this study, which is interested in whether flexible working arrangements such as those discussed in Dex and Scheibl (2001), Atkinson and Hall (2009), Chung and Tijdens (2013), and Galea et al. (2014) are possible for Saudi women, how they view such a possibility, and their perceptions of the impact on their work-life balance.

With respect to border-crossers (in this study Saudi working women) the concern of Border Theory is with their central or peripheral status in each domain, related to their degree of identification with and influence in the domain. Border Theory does not make assumptions about who will be central or peripheral in a particular domain, but it argues the importance of centrality and invites investigation into individuals' status and its impact on their ability to control borders. In Saudi Arabia, based on the cultural context described earlier in the thesis, it would be easy to assume that women will be central in the home (traditionally their assigned sphere) and peripheral at work, but in Border Theory, both men and women may be central or peripheral, to varying degrees, in either domain. This allows exploration of women's status and the factors that influence it, in both domains.

The last construct, border keepers and domain members, captures the idea that women's control over the work-family border is influenced by their relationships with others in

each domain. Saudi women are traditionally subordinate to men, so men (husbands or fathers) are likely to control the border of the home domain. However, in gender-segregated work organisations, the possibility exists of female border keepers in the work organisation.

Not only the Border Theory constructs but also its propositions are potentially useful for this study. Clark's (2000) propositions predict greater or lesser work-family balance depending on the interaction of domain characteristics, border strength, the degree of the participant's identification with a particular domain, and the attitudes and awareness of border keepers and other domain members. It suggests, for example, that women whose husbands and families (as border keepers and fellow members in the home domain) are committed and supportive to working women (as border crossers) will experience less conflict and better work-family balance. The proposition does not assume that domain members will, or will not, be supportive; it simply predicts the impact of such support, if available. This leaves it open to the research to explore whether or not border keepers and domain members are supportive and why (whether, for example, for personal, cultural or religious reasons) and whether the outcomes are as predicted by Border Theory.

Support for the application of Border Theory in cross-national contexts can be found in previous scholarly work, both theoretical and empirical. At the theoretical level, for example, Putnik et al, (2018) draw heavily on Work-family Border Theory in developing a 'Pyramid' model for analysing the work-home interface. Three of the four domains of the model, along with their sub-domains and explanations, are based primarily on work-family Border Theory. Their rationale is that this theory is not confined to simple relationships but can capture the complexity of domains and their interaction. They point out that the theory addresses both individual and interpersonal levels of analysis. Drawing on Border Theory they suggest that interactions between border crossers and border

keepers/domain members are influenced by their expectations of appropriate work and home characteristics, which in turn are a function of their own gender, professional and caring roles. They are also influenced by facilitators and obstacles in the social context (for example, economic and normative considerations related to child care and domestic help) and by social expectations regarding the appropriate degree of integration and separation between domains.

In developing their pyramid model, Putnik et al, (2018) supplement Border Theory with insights from intersectionality, in particular to develop their fourth domain, which explicitly addresses the wider cultural context. However, in this study I envisage the possibility that Border Theory itself can take account of socio-cultural factors by exploring and expanding its main constructs (the characteristics of the two domains, the nature of the border, centrality and the role of border keepers) from a context-sensitive perspective. No specific norms and values are assumed in Border Theory, which makes it potentially open to different cultural contexts by unpicking the contextual factors that influence border keepers' and border crossers' understanding of their own and others' roles in either domain.

Indeed, previous empirical studies in a variety of contexts have found Border Theory useful in exploring gender and cultural issues in work-life balance. Although most of the Border Theory research was done in the UK and USA, it has also been applied in different cultural contexts, including Greece (Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015), Hong Kong (Leung & Zhang, 2017), and Pakistan (Latif et al., 2016). The latter, in particular, is a context where, as the authors note, traditionally, gender roles are strictly differentiated and prescribed by culture, but which is undergoing social change affecting opportunities for women, with impact on the family (e.g child and elder care), conditions which also apply in the Saudi context.

Other studies that have used Border Theory to explore gender factors include Donald and Linington's (2008) study, which interprets centrality in terms of gender role orientation, and Emslie and Hunt's (2009) exploration of work-life balance, which suggests that the strength of the border between domains is influenced by an individual's position in relation to the social structure (e.g gender) and may differ for men and women. They suggest that women may integrate domains by identification of similar caring aspects in each. Such an idea may be applicable in Saudi Arabia, where women have traditionally been directed into "caring" professions (teaching, health care) specifically because they were thought to suit women's nurturing role and disposition.

Another study of interest is that of Ali et al. (2017) on work-life balance among Muslim migrant women. The authors reported that Border Theory provided insights into how culture and religion define boundaries, and affect centrality, thereby influencing the extent to which women can benefit from organisational HRM policies. This study is similarly concerned with factors that affect women's experience of work policies as part of their work-life balance, and is conducted in a context where religion is a salient factor in all aspects of life and Ali et al's. (2017) work supports the belief that Work-family Border Theory can help in analysing such factors.

To conclude, previous studies in a variety of contexts suggest that Border Theory can account for gender and cultural factors, which are important in the present study. Moreover, by employing the theory in a novel context, it may be possible to further test Border Theory in another non-Western context and to expand its cultural relevance.

The theoretical framework potentially provides a scientific foundation for the investigation of work-life balance. I use Work-family Border Theory as a basis to explore the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia.

2.3 Systematic Literature Review

Doing a literature review in social science is considered a vital task for all researchers or scholars. It reflects to what extent the research topic might be broad or limited in a particular area (Jesson et al., 2011), and helps in identifying the limitations of existing perspectives and, hence, the particular space in which the current study will contribute. Also, it provides a guide to a specific topic in the academic field. The literature review provides critical commentary of the literature on a specific issue, which could help students in planning their research. At the same time, the literature review could be utilised to explore the different approaches and perspectives that have been employed in the field of study concerned and to inspect methodically reasons why dissimilar studies concentrating on the same question occasionally reach different conclusions (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

The literature review will lay a foundation for understanding the concept of work-life balance and barriers to achieving it as reflected in previous academic and professional literature.

The main aims of the systematic review in this study, therefore, were:

- To explore the antecedents of work-life balance.
- To explore how work-life balance has been discussed in the business and management literature.
- To explore how flexible work affects working women's ability to achieve work-life balance.
- To explore the theoretical foundation of work-life balance and job crafting.

The nature of systematic literature review is discussed in this section, followed by a detailed explanation of how the review was conducted for this study, and a summary of the review outcomes.

2.3.1 Concept and principles of systematic literature review

In this study, a systematic literature review was conducted in order to obtain a comprehensive preliminary study of journal articles and academic databases using a clear structured methodology (see section 2.2.2), with the aim of obtaining clear evidence of prior research on the topic of work-life balance with particular reference to flexible work and job crafting. The purpose was to identify all relevant published studies, to assess their quality, and to obtain findings from individual studies or reports. Such a review is performed to map the territory of the research topic and its impact and consequences from different perspectives (Petticrew & Roberts 2006). This, in turn, would inform the framing of the research questions and development of an appropriate methodological approach and theoretical foundation.

The systematic literature review process involves several stages (see Table 2.1), including: definition of the review scope, and questions; search for and selection of evidence; appraisal of evidence quality; data extraction; and reporting. Following a standardised, systematic process facilitates evaluation of the quality of the review, it is possible to see how the information has been collected (Greenhalgh, 1997).

In the following section, methodological issues will be discussed regarding the search strategy employed and citation analysis, which was an important aspect of the bibliometric study carried out, as it provided a clear understanding of paper patterns, frequencies, and citations on topics of interest to the research (Singh et al., 2011).

Table 2-2 The Stages of a Systematic Review

The stages of a systematic review
Defining the topic (in this case, work-life balance) and what kind of information is needed, then defining the subtopics, (here flexible work and Job crafting)
Searching for articles relevant to the topic by using the appropriate databases such as Business Source Premier, Web of Science, SAGE Premier and JSTOR.
Deciding which the important articles to be cited are.
Doing a quantitative bibliometric analysis of data that have been chosen.
Illustrating the analysis and results of findings.
Interpreting the results and conclusion in an academic manner in order to build a strong theoretical foundation for the research.

Source: Adapted from Petticrew & Roberts (2006)

2.3.2 Methodology

2.3.2.1 Search strategy

The investigation selected more than 50 scientific studies in the areas of work-life balance, flexible work and job crafting. Most of these studies focused primarily on work-life balance and flexible work, and include information relating to the different aspects of interest in the research (i.e., antecedents and consequences, and theories).

In line with the common strategy reported by NHMRC (1999), the research began with an initial search of major databases such as Web of Science, Sage Primer and Springer

Link using broad terms, as a way of identifying potentially relevant academic studies or articles before refining the list. Table.2.2 illustrates the search strategy and phases which were implemented in this systematic literature review.

Table 2-3 Literature Search Strategy

Search strategy		
Phase One	Initial search of literature	<p>Search Library Catalogue for existing reviews.</p> <p>Determine what databases should be searched.</p> <p>Become familiar with the topic.</p> <p>Identify key search terms for each database.</p> <p>Develop a search strategy and using particular terms related to the research topic such as work-life balance, flexible work, and job crafting.</p>
Phase Two	Conduct search	<p>Search all databases using the identified search terms.</p> <p>Use inclusion criteria to determine which papers should be retrieved.</p>
Phase Three	Bibliography search	<p>Scan the reference lists and bibliographies of all important papers for additional studies.</p>

Source: Adapted from NHMRC (1999: 70-71)

2.3.2.2 Citation analysis

Citation analysis is a popular quantitative bibliometric technique to understand the pattern of research in a particular field so as to enhance the investigation (Backhaus et al., 2011). It has been suggested that some databases reflect certain biases, for example, Thomson Reuters' Web of Science has been described as biased towards American journals (Pendlebury, 2009). In contrast, Google Scholar is broader in scope although the outcomes could to be less accurate, which could have negative impacts on the subsequent analysis (Falagas et al., 2008). This highlights the importance of selecting databases that are appropriate for analysing the articles on the selected topic. Searching multiple databases can help to counter any bias existing in an individual source, while choice of search terms and inclusion criteria can increase accuracy.

2.3.2.3 Data collection

Search terms:

Search terms used in the main literature search were suggested by previous research studies in the area of work-life balance, and the search focused on different dimensions:

First search field box: work-life balance - Second search field box: flexible work OR First search field box: work-life balance - Second search field box: Job crafting. Job crafting refers to formal or informal methods of adjusting the job demands or worker's resources in order to better fit the employee's needs (Tims et al, 2012), see section 2.5. It was included in the search because my early reading suggested it might be worth exploring as a possible strategy for improving work-life balance.

Additional search terms were included to reflect the impacts of work-life balance, based on my interest in broadly defining the impacts of work-life balance and flexible work. The aim of doing so was to obtain preliminary insights into potentially relevant issues

that could inform the research questions and data collection procedures, without too quickly narrowing down the field of inquiry.

Databases searched:

Numerous search databases exist, such as Emerald, Pro-quest, EBSCO, Science direct, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Jstor, Springer, and Web of Science. However, I selected three major electronic databases: Web of Science, Sage Primer and Springer Link. The rationale for their selection was that they were considered to offer the widest possible journal coverage, and well -regarded for the quality of their output, which provides the most highly ranked journals, based on ABS ranking.

The initial search criteria used were the words ‘Work life Balance’, ‘Flexible Work’ or ‘Job Crafting’ in the title, and the period 1970 – 2017. This yielded 6.071 documents, including published articles, book reviews, editorial material and letters to editors. Table 2.3 shows how these articles in the top 25 journals were distributed across the databases in order to show their relative importance in this particular field. The search was then filtered to focus only on articles published between 1990-2017, which yielded 584 studies, as shown in Table 2.4.

The next step after refining the results was to transfer all these references that appeared in the databases to EndNote software, which is a reference and full text organiser. It saved time in organising all references in one place, and helped me to keep track of the resources obtained and have them available for subsequent searching

Table 2-4 Distribution of Articles by Theme and Database, for 1970 – 2017

	Number of articles			
Search Term	Web of Science	SAGE Primer	Springer Link	Total
Work-life Balance	481	1118	1049	2648
Flexible Work	686	1226	1001	2913
Job Crafting	82	234	194	510
Total	1249	2578	2244	6071

Table 2-5 Results of Filtering Cart

	Number of articles			
Search Term	Web of Science	SAGE Primer	Springer Link	Total
Work-life Balance & Flexible Work	75	278	160	513
Work-life Balance & Job Crafting	6	5	21	31
Total	81	283	181	544

Table 2-6 Distribution of Articles by Themes and Database 1990-2017

Search Term	Number of articles			
	Web of Science	SAGE Primer	Springer Link	Total
Work-life Balance & Saudi Arabia	1	22	31	78
Work-life Balance & Middle East	3	45	5	53
Work-life Balance & Women	128	1334	466	1906
Work-life Balance Border theory	13	879	22	914
Total	145	2280	524	2951

2.3.3 Results

Application of the research criteria reduced the original 6038 studies to 584. The majority of these papers considering different perspectives of work-life balance. About 50 papers met the mentioned criteria for the current review on work-life balance. These papers were very diverse in scope and addressed a range of different aspects of work-life balance.

2.4 Work-life Balance

Work-life balance has been the subject of theoretical discussion and empirical research, with writers adopting a variety of perspectives and focusing on different issues.

So far, many of the empirical studies of work-life balance have focused on individual-level work-life balance factors, such as workers' calls for flexible working practices, employee satisfaction with work-life or work-family policies and programmes (Galinsky et al., 1996; Anderson et al., 2002; White et al., 2003; Thornthwaite, 2004; Kelliher & Anderson, 2008), and impact of work-life balance programmes on a number of employee-level outcomes such as stress, commitment and productivity (Lambert, 2000; Darcy & McCarthy, 2007; Grady & McCarthy, 2008). Other research has explored how work-life balance affects performance at the organisational level (Bloom & Van Reenen, 2006; McCarthy et al., 2010).

Theoretical literature has commonly portrayed work-life balance as a perceptual phenomenon, manifested in feelings of having achieved a satisfactory reconciliation of the multiple demands of work and family domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Frone et al., 1997; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Carlson et al., 2006). Since it concerns the interface between domains, the strength and consequences of the perception will be influenced by a variety of contextual factors originating from both work and family contexts, such as the type of work performed or the nature of responsibility in the home (Higgins et al., 2000). The literature on these matters, reviewed in the following subsections, helped to shape my own understanding of work-life balance as both an emotional perception and a social situation, and my ideas about how to explore it in the Saudi context.

2.4.1 Definitions and conceptualization of work-life balance

The idea of work-life balance is not new. Before the Industrial Revolution, people's time was divided among different phases: work, rest, and leisure. Working hours were based on the cycle of day and night and seasonal fluctuations throughout the year. The Industrial Revolution brought the arrival of automation, which enabled industrial organisations to change their way of working, operating longer hours and increasing productivity.

However, organisations' demands on their employees conflicted with individuals' need for work-life balance. An example of this conflict occurred in 1889, when workers in the United States went on strike, demanding that the working day be restricted to eight hours. (Brough et al., 2008).

Studies on work-life balance (some authors use the term, work-family balance) first emerged in the late 1960s, in the work of Kahn et al. (1964) who highlighted the impact of work-family conflicts as a significant contributor to employees' experience life stress. More recently, the idea of balance between family and professional life (work-family balance) has been used in exploring success and satisfaction in both areas. In broader terms, work-life balance encompasses both positive and negative aspects of engagements in both roles (Frone, 2003). There is also a trend in many organisations to use the term "work-life balance" (Galinsky et al., 1996), to include employees who are not parents but who wish to balance work and other activities, such as sports, study and travel (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). It would be fair to say that not only family obligations create issues in work-life balance, but that the individual's desire for leisure pursuits (e.g. hobbies, hang-outs) other than his or her work obligations also pose difficulties (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007).

A related term used by authors such as Greenhaus and Powell (2006) is work-life enrichment, which they view as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role. The distinction is that enrichment focuses on resources from one context used in the other, whereas balance refers to the management of work and non-work responsibilities (Poelmans et al., 2008), and is thus more appropriate to the purpose of this study.

Brough et al. (2014:2728) define work-life balance as “an individual’s subjective appraisal of the accord between his/her work and non-work activities and life more generally”. Work-life balance can be defined as “the extent to which individuals are equally engaged in and equally satisfied with work and family roles”(Greenhaus et al., 2003:513). Clark views work-family balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict” (Clark, 2000: 349). According to Grzywacz and Carlson (2007:458) work-life balance is defined as the 'accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domains'. Work-family balance has been viewed explicitly or by implication, as the absence of work–family conflict, such conflict being ‘a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect’(Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985:77).

As Chandra (2012) argued, defining the relationship between work and life requires clarification of the expected outcomes from the relationship between these two domains. For example, Voydanoff (2005:825), who uses the term work-family balance, defines it as “a global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that the participation is effective in both domains”. Chandra (2012: 1041) discussed work-life balance more broadly, from the perspective of the relationship between individual and society saying, “Work-life balance is about responding to individual circumstances to help individuals fulfil their responsibilities and aspirations to lead to mutual benefit of the individual, business and society at large.” It has been categorized on the basis of decisions made, whether to disengage from the workforce to realize full family responsibilities (staying at home), or adopt a work centred role (work as the sole social role) or adapt roles to balance work-family life (Prowse & Prowse, 2015).

A variety of literature puts emphasis on the issue of work-life balance. According to Kalliath and Brough (2008), work-life balance is a person's feeling that his/her work and other activities are in harmony and foster well-being consistent with his/her current life priorities. The term work-life balance is used to denote the ability of workers, male or female and irrespective of age, to combine work and domestic responsibilities effectively (Wheatley, 2012). Work-life balance literature has focused predominantly on women in professional occupations. Consequently, career and work-life balance issues have been discussed in relation to younger or mid-life, more highly qualified women with children and ambitious career aspirations (Schilling, 2015).

Hughes and Bozionelos (2007) criticised this view of work-life balance as somewhat narrow, as it has been largely applied to individuals, especially women, who are in corporate employment and have family obligations. In the Saudi context of my study, the emphasis on women's family obligations is relevant, as Saudi culture favours early marriage, and assigns women primary responsibility for home and family. However, Saudi women who work outside the home (still a minority) are concentrated in a narrower range of occupations than their Western counterparts. For this reason, this study provides insight into the context and pressures of other occupations, which may differ from the corporate positions on which literature has focused. Moreover, it is not clear to what extent the assumption of ambitious career aspirations is applicable in the Saudi context, since Saudi women follow cultural and religious traditions that make women's careers subordinate to family.

It is noticeable that all the definitions assume a potential conflict or tension between work and other areas of life. Most definitions contrast work only with family life (e.g. Greenhaus et al., 2003, Clark, 2000, Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, Frone, 2003). These definitions focus on role conflict. Wheatley (2012) contrasts

work with “domestic responsibilities”; this does not necessarily imply parenthood and family, but still has a relatively narrow focus of work versus home. A few authors conceptualize non-work life more broadly to include a wide range of hobbies, interests, social activities..etc., .e.g. (Galinsky et al., 1996; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Poelmans & Beham, 2008; Brough et al., 2014). The next section addresses the question of why work-life balance is widely perceived as problematic.

2.4.2 Factors affecting work-life balance

Over the past two decades the idea of work-life balance or reconciliation has gained momentum from an embellished topic, often framed in terms of family-friendly policies, to becoming a focus of political debate on economic productivity, social wellbeing, equality and inclusion. These issues have been of less concern in Saudi Arabia than in the West, perhaps for cultural reasons and also because of the heavy reliance on expatriate labour, which has contributed to alleviating both job and domestic demands on Saudi families. However, it is likely to become more salient with the government's drive to reduce reliance on expatriates, and the gradual entry of more women into the workforce, supported by government policy (Ramady, 2010).

Work-life balance is concerned with all aspects of the work and private life of an individual, irrespective of family responsibilities, care and dependency. It demands both physical (e.g. temporal and spatial commitment, family size) and cognitive (job/life contentment, pressures, general health and wellbeing) involvement. Work-life balance reflects the degree to which people can exert control over when, where and how they work, with an unsaid motive to attain physical and mental harmony along with career success (Collier, 2016).

People have different perceptions and needs regarding the balance between work and family. One person's division of time and effort between work and other activities might not be deemed appropriate by someone else. Balance means that an individual is satisfied with the way their time and energy are allocated, and their duties are divided between work and home (Clark, 2002).

Fulfilment of specific role expectations of work and family is indispensable to maintain a balance in life. Alternatively, if a person fails to meet the demands of any or both domains at any point of life, he or she faces difficulties in balancing work and home life. This explains the significance of balancing work and family and their remarkable relationship. In the Saudi context, and with specific reference to the health sector, Azeem and Altalhi (2015) observed that the structure of the workforce has evolved from the past, i.e. unlike the traditional composition, both men and women excel on the work front and fulfil equal responsibilities as hospital employees in Saudi Arabia. However, the role of women in every society is intensified by heavy responsibilities for maintaining the household. Expectations are laid down on working women to assume the domestic social role completely, along with working for 40 hours per week in the workplace. These additional responsibilities often push women more into conflicts than their male counterparts (Azeem & Altalhi, 2015).

Work-life balance is challenging for employees and confronts employees with questions of how to allocate resources and manage employees. Demographics, workplace cultures and socio-economic and labour market trends affect employee well-being, physically and emotionally. As a result of the demands of diverse work-life roles, employees face constant challenges arising from (un)paid work/non-work commitments, caring responsibilities and changing family structures, resulting in conflict between work and home demands (Malik et al., 2010).

Some aspects of work-family border management might be within a person's control: level of flexibility offered by one's work schedule, the extent which opportunities exist to work from home or fulfil family responsibilities in work time, the way they handle responsibilities in each sphere, and the degree of spillover between the two domains. (Clark, 2002). However, other aspects may be constrained by contextual factors.

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) argued that individual experience of work-family balance cannot be viewed in isolation from the social context in which it arises, because the realities of daily work and family life are complex and dynamic. Without considering the whole context, one cannot assess whether work and family are truly 'balanced' from the employee's perspective. Work-life balance is thus a complex construct that involves many dimensions, including working hours, workload, organisational expectations, the workplace culture, job satisfaction and life outside work, which may entail caring involved or the elderly, hobbies, sports, volunteering and civic responsibilities (Watts, 2009). In this section, therefore, a number of factors affecting work-life balance are highlighted.

For example, Borge and Bungum (2015) note the importance of families' response to the pressures of a member's work commitments. In some cases, conflicts may arise at home from pressure due to time squeeze while in others, employees find support from their families' orientation towards their work. The authors note that families may avoid conflict by coming to terms with effectively de-collectivised family life, accepting that there can be less family time, when all family members are present (Borge & Bungum, 2015). However, the ability to manage multiple roles differs from one person to another. Some perform better when roles are clearly distinct, and prefer to maintain strong walls around each life domain, to avoid blurring between them. Other workers favour integration of roles and function better when boundaries are less clear-cut and it is possible to operate

in both domains at the same time (Shockley & Allen, 2010). Discussions of this issue have mainly taken place in Western contexts and it is so far unclear how permeable the borders between home and work may be in the Saudi context and how this affects women. This is one of the issues explored in this study.

2.4.2.1 Demographic change in the workforce

The question of work-life balance has attracted particular attention as a result of the increasing participation of women in workforces since, in most cultures, irrespective of any work roles they may hold, it is women who are still expected to take the main responsibility for home and family. The implications of demographic change in the workforce have been discussed in various contexts, but not Saudi Arabia, where it is a new phenomenon.

In a Canadian context, interviews with married female workers with school-age children indicate that many of the problems related to increased time pressure, conflict between work and non-work demands and lower quality of life have arisen due to recent changes in the gender and age composition of the workforce, alongside a tendency in many occupations, especially among professionals, to demand that employees work longer hours (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Long working hours and managerial cultures are perceived to conflict with parenting (Liff & Ward, 2001).

Another factor in changing work demand is the increasing female labour, resulting in more households where both parents have careers. There is a distinct crisis between households with ample work but little time, and those with more time and less work. Such factors have brought changes in the nature of employment, with greater demand for flexibility, adaptability, team-working and individual responsibility, in both the private and public sectors (Wheatley, 2012).

With the rise in participation of mothers in the workforce and leaving children at home, concerns arise regarding balancing the parenting role with work responsibilities. Parents are required to synchronise their hours between work and their child's day-care provider or school schedule, but again it poses difficulties. In various situations, parents struggle to stay with their children when the latter need extra care, whether paid leave is available to them or not, according to a study of how family friendly policies affect mothers' wages in the USA based on using the Survey of Income and Program Participation (Boushey, 2008). Many workers, especially women, continue to face a dilemma in balancing work and family roles and negotiating the sharing of childcare and domestic responsibilities with partners, while women who do not have children are often viewed by employers as available to work unsociable hours (Prowse & Prowse, 2015).

2.4.2.2 Organisational cultures

One of the factors that can influence the ability of both men and women to achieve work-life balance is the culture of the workplace. Factors such as the degree of flexibility available in hours and conditions of work, the scope for the employee to influence these matters, expectations of employee behaviour and the level of consideration given by employers to employees' other-domain commitments can all facilitate or constrain achievement of work-life balance. Work-family culture has been defined as "the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives" (Thompson et al., 1999: 394). Specifically, work-family culture in an organisation refers to the supportive role of the work environment for work-family balance of employees based on understanding their general well-being, attitude and behaviour towards stress, and how these values are reflected in the organisational norms (Lyness & Kropf, 2005).

Managerial support for work-life balance indicates the extent to which managers are sympathetic towards employees' efforts to balance their work and life and are considerate of their family responsibilities (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2015). According to Poelmans (2005) national conditions (legislative, sociocultural, economic and political) have an impact on organisational involvement in the work-life balance.

However, organisations' willingness to offer work-life balance practices depends on their potential to enhance recruitment and retention, and reduce work-life conflict among employees. Beauregard and Henry (2009) suggest offering work-life balance practices would make a company more attractive to prospective employees and that their availability would result in improved employee attitudes and behaviours within the organisation. In addition, Brummelhuis and Lippe (2010) think that the management of time is a vital point of analysis when defining organisational needs. Meeting family responsibilities sometimes conflicts with the higher levels of engagement increasingly required by business organisations. Moreover, Allen and Russell (1999) found that employees who pursued work-life balance by taking advantage of work life balance practices were perceived by colleagues as having lower levels of organisational commitment, and this in turn could affect the distribution of organisational rewards such as promotion and salary increases.

2.4.2.3 Societal and cultural factors

Countries' and cultures' reactions to work vary, depending on several focal points like economic and social demand. Rapid advancements in technologies, global competition and changes in family values are reshaping the demand for work by family members, which demands more ways of fulfilling work responsibilities to meet organisational goals (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). Women are a core group in this scenario, as they are affected by the decisions of their male counterparts in families, especially in Eastern countries.

Decisions for balancing work and family life in these cases are dependent on specific family members, who make decisions for female members (Chandra, 2012).

Any organisation is influenced by two types of culture, internal and external. The internal culture spreads among its employees, and includes the psychology, attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values. The external culture represents forces coming from outside the organisation, which are out of its control, but may nonetheless affect organisational performance (Kattan et al., 2016).

In many parts of the world, societies are changing rapidly, but traditional views of expected gender roles have not always kept pace with these changes (Pasamar & Cabrera, 2013). Saudi Arabia, for example, is a culture where traditional norms regarding gender roles still prevail. Frone (2003) argued that work-family balance results from high levels of work-family enrichment and low levels of work-family conflict, suggesting that work-family balance may be “formative” rather than “reflective”. The global trend of increased female participation in the workforce has also increased the need to balance work with family commitments (Siddiqui, 2013). However, while men can achieve their employment goals (potentially including expatriation) without necessarily losing a family life, it is not easy for women to do so (Shortland, 2015).

Thus, Lewis et al. (2007) address the issue related to the balance between professional and personal life of women in reference to ‘flexible working’, and argue that although flexible working contributes to gender equality and reduces the gender pay gap, there remains an underlying bias and stigma that it is opposite to ‘the ideal employee’ image, and associated internalised perceptions of men and women regarding their respective gender roles ultimately result in work-life balance challenges on women’s shoulders. While these can be alleviated by flexible work options available, these often target women

specifically, thereby misinterpreting that flexible working is a woman's affair. However, viewpoints regarding work-life balance differ among individuals (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Whilst the literature calls attention to a variety of factors that affect work-life balance, this does not mean that everyone within a particular organisation or cultural context will experience work-life balance in the same way. It is important to be aware that individuals differ concerning their perceived work-life balance, as the same situation can lead to different experiences of work-life balance and different perceptions of time scarcity. Recognition of inter-individual differences is important to understand work-life balance. However, Schilling (2015) points out that not only do personal aims, subjective values and the methods to achieve work-life balance vary within a society, but they can also change for the same individual, at different stages of his/her life. Chandra (2012) makes the same point. In contrast to organisational contexts, as described by Chandra (2012), based on demographic, individual circumstances and other background characteristics as well as individual preferences, people have different attitudes and views related to their expectations of balancing their job responsibilities with their individual life. The ideal 'balance' can vary at different stages of the life cycle. Therefore, people should be enabled to work in different ways (Chandra, 2012).

2.4.3 Impacts of work-life balance

Work/life issues affect everyone, regardless of their education level, gender, financial position, family structure, occupation, race, age, job status, or religion (McMillan et al., 2011). Moreover, work-life imbalance gives rise to several concerns and dissatisfaction as evident from the findings of scholarly studies on work-life balance problems and their connection with societal avoidance behaviours, including substitution rates and fake sick leaves (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007).

According to Haar (2013) work-life balance is associated with job and life satisfaction, and better psychological well-being. Work-life conflict has adverse impact, work-life enrichment is beneficial and work-life balance provides the greatest benefits, particularly in terms of life satisfaction. Boreham et al. (2013) argue that the well-being of individuals and families depends not only on the material resources that influence their standard of living, but also access to personal resources and services that enable them to participate in the sorts of relationships and activities enjoyed by the majority of people in a society; the breadth and depth of social relations, with the concomitant impacts on confidence and reciprocity; and integration into social networks characterized by trust and shared values.

Based on the strong relationship between these measures, they argue for the existence of a complex network of social opportunities that enable people to reap the benefit of their social and human capital and material resources. Achieving work-life balance has benefits for both individuals and organisations. Work-life balance may serve directly or indirectly as a crucial and powerful 'leverage point' which contributes to individual and organisational effectiveness (Gryzwacz & Carlson, 2007). Work-life balance has important implications for both personal well-being and work-related outcomes (Lyness & Judiesch, 2014). Brough et al. (2014) found work-life balance to be negatively associated with work demands, turnover intentions and psychological strain, and positively associated with both family and job satisfaction.

Briscoe et al. (2006:31) illustrate that people with a boundaryless mind-set towards career are more likely to prefer organisational mobility; they are emotionally stable, psychologically flexible, enthusiastic, creative and sustain active relationships beyond organisational boundaries. Such individuals may be more attracted to work with culturally different people, and may be least troubled by interruptions in their non-work social life (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Measuring the outcomes of work-life balance, in terms of matching employee satisfaction and organisational goals, is critical due to the inevitable impacts on the employee or the organisation (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Work-life benefits can improve workers' quality of life and in turn enhance organisational effectiveness (Peters & Heusinkveld, 2010). Work-life balance has advantages for organisations, because their employees tend to have better health and well-being when their work-life balance is satisfactory. This is why organisations may support work-life balance by initiating related policies and programmes to assist employees in achieving well-being and work-life balance, although generally organisations are not legally responsible for their employees' life outside work (Zheng et al., 2016). Work-life balance is, therefore, determined by socio-cultural and organisational goals and programmes, for example, the availability of options for flexible working, wellbeing outcomes, and equality and diversity policies (McDonald et al., 2013). Carless and Wintle (2007) believe that policies on work-life balance can enable employees to accomplish more, allowing all domains of one's life to balance work and lifestyle. In this same context, other scholars have stated that "Work-life balance practices are popular today because of their potential value for both employers and workers." (Sanchez-Vidal et al., 2012:228). Employers benefit because they can increase their organisational results through improved employee outcomes.

Organisations that provide work-life balance practices may be able to save costs by offering lower salaries and attracting greater investment. Productivity may be increased due to employees working harder in order to retain desirable benefits, or simply working at their peak hours. There are suggestions, however, that the link between practice provision and these outcomes may vary with gender and job level, with stronger impact in organisations employing a greater proportion of women and professionals (Beauregard & Henry, 2009). Srivastava (2011) stated that flexibility in the working environment has

a positive outcome on society, organisations and individuals, by reducing work-family conflict, dealing with work-life stability and encouraging planned decisions.

Nevertheless, a criticism has been raised that even in organisations that promotes work-family culture, partially employs authorized and boost the status quo, leaving a the discrepancy between the assurances of work-life balance and its ability to ameliorate conflict and aid employees in achieving balance between the paid work and other life domains (McDonald et al., 2013).

2.4.4 Organisation policies and practices for work-life balance

Work life balance issues are not resolved automatically nor are they not simple issues that can be addressed and resolved by individuals. Stress and work-life imbalance are interrelated, and scholars view the latter as both cause and effect of work stress. Indeed work-life imbalance and work stress have gained more attention recently; in-focus is the understanding of scope and nature of the issues so that decision-makers can craft effective solutions for work-life imbalance. Nevertheless, solutions should challenge the prevalent workplace pressures such as control, performance evaluation and career structures (Ford & Collinson, 2011), that impede the pursuit of work-life balance. Work-life balance can be partially understood in terms of family-friendly work cultures. For example, “family friendly” policies can make it possible for working parents to balance their family and work easily, by providing them flex-time to fulfil the family and work commitments (Boushey, 2008).

A variety of arrangements and practices can potentially be applied by companies to help employees in balancing between work and their personal lives. Some of these include ways of adjusting work hours, such as reduction of hours by job sharing between two employees, or part-time working. Other possibilities include flexible working

arrangements such as flexi-time where employees start and finish work at a time of their choice according to their personal needs, but work certain core hours. There may also be options of tele-working, home-working/e-working, which give employees the opportunity to work from home or some other convenient location.

Nowadays, many companies devote resources to work-life initiatives, whether to adjust to meet the needs of workers or in response to legislation concerning integration, gender equality and protection for families (Kossek & Michel, 2011). The collaborative efforts of the World Bank and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) have formulated social investment policies. These initiatives encouraged the cultivation of social policies in the perception of work-life balance, especially for female employees (Williams, 2012). In Srivastava's (2011) view, it is the fit between the actual number of working hours and working schedule of the employees that actually balances out the work-life. Hence, in order to get the proper working outcome from different kinds of employees, applying various flexible working practices can be useful (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Moreover, Sturges (2012) said that staff should separate personal and official relationships to achieve a work-life balance. Whilst literature provides accounts of various attitudes and practices related to work-life balance, there is still a need for further academic investigation in the light of changes in workforce composition and the competitive market (Jose-Luis Hervás-Oliver et al., 2013).

Malik et al. (2010) highlight the value of a structured and coordinated approach to work-life balance by offering flexible working arrangements or working practices, enabling employees to negotiate time and working arrangements, so they are better able to manage the balance between their work and personal life commitments, which also benefits employees. While part-time work might facilitate achieving a better work-life balance, there are also drawbacks. Women working part-time might, in the worst scenario, find

themselves marginalized in the labour market and may have insufficient income for their needs. This calls attention to the need to investigate the relation between part-time work and gender equality (Jonsson, 2011). Carless and Wintle (2007) state that the need for a balance between work and life, to achieve personal and social recognition, can be met by using selected instruments such as flexible hours, alternative career paths and some other facilities provided by organisations, e.g. vacation care programmes, elder care, child care centres, etc. There may have succeeded in some cultures and countries but may need some encouragement to ensure employees fulfil the organisational goals.

Many scholars disagree with work-life balance policies and have criticised their shortcomings, arguing that there is no guarantee that employers will fulfil the promise of work-life balance practices, although they appear supportive and employee-friendly as long as they meet business needs (Roberts, 2007; Wise et al., 2007; Sánchez-Vidal et al., 2012). Hence, work-life balance initiatives may conclude in stress and conflict, as some employees benefit while others are disadvantaged. This contradicts the claim that work-life balance policy is beneficial to the individual, business and society (Prowse & Prowse, 2015). Such tensions will thrive if work life balance dialogues continue to change work processes with little or no room for accommodation to organisational obligations, practices, cultures or structures (Ford & Collinson, 2011).

According to Ford and Collinson (2011) work life balance policies are inconsistent in assertions and expectations regarding professional excellence and domestic orientation. They further argue that the connection between 'work' and 'home' domains is embedded and conflicted at the same time in routine practices, decreasing the chances of success of attempts made to segment and compartmentalize the domains and may be counter-productive (Ford & Collinson, 2011). In addition, managers persistently shouldering heavy workloads increase complications in re-balancing work and home and reputation

comes first. Improvised organisational practices, structures and cultures are only partially flexible to and adapt inefficiently to such re-balancing (Ford & Collinson, 2011).

Clearly, just as expectations and perceptions of work-life balance differ in different contexts and for different individuals, so will preferences for policies and practices to promote work-life balance. Some possibilities are discussed in more depth in the forthcoming sections on flexible work and job crafting.

2.5 Flexible Work

It is noted in Chapter One that greater flexibility in working arrangements is one means by which employees may be assisted to find an acceptable work-life balance. This may offer ways to accommodate family responsibilities by allowing some degree of choice in hours and place of work. I therefore used flexible work as a key search term in my systematic review, and I explore in this study whether such flexibility is available to Saudi working women.

This section explores the issues around flexible work as presented in extant literature. The review contains five sub-sections. The first presents and discusses definitions of the concept of flexible work. This is followed by a discussion of the rationale for the interest in flexible work in recent years. Ways of implementing flexible work are considered, leading to a typology of flexible work arrangements. The section concludes with a discussion of the impacts of flexible work for employees and organisations.

2.5.1 Defining flexible work

The following terms have been used interchangeably in the literature: flexibility, flexible work, flexible policy, and flexible work arrangement. In this research, the terms “flexible work” and “flexible work arrangement” will be used to describe types of flexible work.

Amongst social researchers, there is no universal definition of flexible work. However, Hill et al. (2008:152) conceptualise flexible working as “the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks”. Maxwell et al. (2007:138) defined flexible work as “any policies and practices, formal or informal, which permit people to vary when and where work is carried out.”, Kelliher and Anderson (2010: 2) define it from employees' perspective, suggesting that “Flexible working policies are normally designed to give employees a degree of choice over how much, when and where they work and to help them achieve a more satisfactory work–life balance”. Other scholars have defined it from different perspectives. “The term flexible working describes a type of working arrangement which gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when employees work. The flexibility can be in terms of working time, working location and the pattern of working” (CIPD, 2013:n.p). In addition, (CIPD, 2005:6) adopts the argument presented by Simonetta Manfredi that “flexibility is a way to help people work, work effectively and for the organisation to meet its goals”. Some definitions suggest specific kinds of flexible arrangements. For example, Kelliher and Anderson (2008: 3) defined flexibility as ‘non-standard’ working practices, such as “part-time work and temporary employment”, as well as remote working, In another way, flexibility at work can be defined from the employer’s perspective as “the ability of the organisation to adapt the size, composition, responsiveness and cost of the person inputs required to achieve organisational objectives” (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2006:104). Pilbeam and Corbridge (2006) definition shows that flexibility refers to the organisation’s ability rather than the type of work itself. In general, all definitions agree that it is a non-standardized working practice that aims to facilitate employees’ working style, i.e. timing, location, and duration of the work.

Gareis and Korte (2002:1104) identify two kinds of flexibility: worker-centred and company-centred. They define worker-centred flexibility as involving “more freedom to

choose working times attuned to personal preferences and family requirements”, whereas company-centred flexibility ‘brings supply of human capital in line with the temporal requirements following from business, e.g. times of customer demand, machine running times, optimal utilisation of capital invested’. Flexible working policies are normally designed to give employees a degree of choice over how much, when and where they work and to help them achieve a more satisfactory work–life balance (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

Another typology developed by Purcell et al. (1999) and subsequently used by Fagan (2004) distinguishes these kinds of strategy for enabling flexibility in working time, which they call unstructured, autonomous, and structured. In the first type, employees have little control over the schedule and numbers of hours that they work, similar to Gareis and Korte’s (2002) employer-oriented flexibility. Autonomous flexibility is more oriented towards employees’ needs rather than those of the company and involves employees having some discretion to modify their working time to enable them to perform other activities, similar to employee-oriented flexibility. Lastly, in structured flexibility, working time differs from the standard arrangement but in a predictable way, which gives employees more control over their working hours than unstructured flexibility, and can enable people to work who, for some reason, cannot work standard hours (Fagan, 2004). This could be viewed as a compromise between the needs of both employers and employees (Chung & Tijdens, 2013).

In this thesis, the definition of CIPD (2013) will be adopted, as it includes different dimensions of flexible work which are; where, when and how long. This illustrates that the scope of “flexible work” encompasses flexibility of employees’ workplace, working period, and hours.

2.5.2 Rationale for flexible work

In recent years, flexible work arrangements have aroused the interest of both employees and employers. A large female workforce and the trend towards dual-career families have posed difficulties for achieving not only work–family balance, but also work–life balance (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011). Differences are observed among countries and cultures in relation to the need to work in the context of family demands, especially for female family members. The rapid growth and change of global societies has drawn attention to the value of involving women in the workplace according to time-money demands, as well as ensuring a balance with family demands and practices (Chandra, 2012). In many countries, the economic and social problem raised by growing numbers of elderly citizen have directed attention towards flexible forms of working as a means of encouraging people to extend their working life and delay retirement (Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2015).

A recent trend is employees seeking flexitime to balance their dual life at home and work, coordinating their daily working hours or working alternate days/unsocial hours, or even working part-time (Shockley & Allen, 2010).

The value of workplace flexibility is recognized and changes are embraced by employees in order to adjust shifts in organisational dynamics, and to strike work/life balance in today's 24/7 global economy (Hill et al., 2008). Hoeven and Zoonen (2015) stated that flexible work designs are positively associated with the well-being of workers through improved work-life balance, autonomy, and effective discourses whereas frequent interruptions are negatively associated. Employees who have more control over their work schedules are reportedly able to craft a good balance between work and other areas of life in an attempt to fulfil both work and domestic responsibilities (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008; Kelly et al., 2011). Being flexible allows employees to assume various life responsibilities in a peaceful manner, and to fulfil their work objectives and

expectations (Hoeven & Zoonen, 2015). It is interesting to note, however, that this discussion has taken place predominantly in Western countries, where organisations are increasingly recognizing the benefits of offering flexibility and have systems in place for this (as shown in the next two subsections). However, the same benefits may not be available in some cultures. Saudi Arabia is a very distinctive culture as shown in Chapter One, on the research context. In such an environment, culture and structural constraints may challenge the view of flexibility held in the West. This is an issue that is under-researched, and where this study can contribute to knowledge.

In general, policy and research on flexible work have focused mainly on parents particularly mothers, who are trying to hold down a paid job while also caring for children (Craig & Powell, 2011; Lyonette et al., 2011). However, some researchers have proposed flexible working may also be pertinent in later life when childcare responsibilities might be expected to be reduced, and that such a view opens the possibility of transcending gender role associated with parenthood and to and exploring in greater depth gender roles the relationships between gender and flexible working (Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2015).

Males and females are different components of the workforce, where females are typically encumbered and males are unencumbered workers. So, in this situation gendered norms of parenting and employment generally function to create career disadvantages for mothers who are continually burdened with the primary social responsibility of home-making, whilst fathers are expected to serve the family economically (Holt & Lewis, 2011). Cross-border research shows that although men's participation in domestic work has increased significantly, women still shoulder the child-care responsibility, even if they are working full-time (Teasdale, 2013). This is very much the case in Saudi Arabia, where women's role is traditionally in the domestic sphere.

The nature of women's working regarding their satisficing behaviour may also vary socially and geographically. This may mean their women expatriates, for example, experience differences in emphasis compared to their own home country societal culture (Shortland, 2015). Many female workers find it very stressful to attempt to adapt their unpaid care responsibilities at home to the demands of the workplace. Indeed self-sacrificing femininity at work can underpin self-sacrifice in the home, including having to depend on other family members and sacrificing time with family, leading to guilt at home (Charlesworth et al., 2015). Zheng et al. (2016) view flexible working arrangements as a solution to an organisation problem, arising from set the increasing numbers of female employees, who combined their careers with childbearing and caring responsibilities.

At the same time, it would be unwise to assume a stereotypical division of gender-based attitudes toward flexible work. However, often, women are prevented by male family members from deciding on the balance between work and family by themselves. This results in a higher number of family responsibilities for women compared to men, even if the women are contributing financially by their career (Chandra, 2012).

Some recent changes in attitudes towards women's work have stimulated researchers' interest in analysing the relationship between family and work. Without defining the family and work domains it is nearly impossible to discover the interconnections to reach conclusions. Comparing work-family conflicts to business interests and needs can help to inform decisions in these domains (Facer & Wadsworth, 2008). Undoubtedly, flexible work options have been introduced as a family-friendly policy which enables (usually) women to balance work and family responsibilities (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011) According to Smithson and Stokoe (2005), flexible working has been used in an endeavour to facilitate balance between family and work demands, especially for women.

Flexible working hours have been perceived as a suitable tool to ease the balance between work and personal life. Flexible working hours enable employees to manage priorities by occasionally prioritising family or personal needs over organisational needs, which Galea et al.(2014) found was essential to maintain a good work–life balance. This finding is pertinent to Saudi culture, where great importance is attached to wide networks of family and social obligations. Also, flexible work hours are reportedly a common component of high performance work systems that enable employers to help meet workload pressures at peak times and to retain employees who might otherwise consider resigning to attend to family needs (Boreham et al., 2016). Individuals who enjoy flexitime at work are emotionally stable and can easily meet expectations. Flexible working hours are designed to reduce stress level in individuals by facilitating fulfilment of professional and domestic obligations simultaneously (Halpern, 2005). Even though provisions for flexible working are limited, publicizing the available options for flexible working (unofficially or through policy), could result in greater transparency about responsibilities which would encourage women to pursue such work arrangements (Shortland, 2015).

However, Charron and Lowe (2005) found that attitudes towards flexible work options vary according to employee characteristics, work environment and prior participation. Moreover, employees benefiting from flexible work arrangements have been found to hold different perceptions towards work flexibility and develop different job attitudes compared to those employees who are not able to take advantage of such work arrangements (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011). In addition, the global economy has challenged working conditions and affected workers' life substantially. Today's global economy often necessitates extensive transnational travelling (although this is not an issue for women in Saudi Arabia) and logging extra working hours, which is hardly conducive to balanced work-family relationships. Many modern organisations impose heavy demands on employees' time. A problem with such work cultures is a blurring of work and leisure

time, so that work impinges on “private time” (Borve & Bungum, 2015). It has been suggested, however, that organisations need to offer flexible work arrangements to attract women to the workforce (Olsen et al., 2016).

Although workplace flexibility can be conceptualized from both organisational and workers’ perspectives, there are both similarities and differences in the purpose behind functional flexibility differs between the two perspectives. The organisational perspective focuses on how flexibility can enable employees to adapt to the organisations in a rapidly changing competitive market, whereas the workers’ perspective focuses on how flexibility will assist them in achieving work-life balance. Thus, the organisational and worker perspectives can be distinguished from each other by considering whether the organisation is structured and managed solely to prioritize its ability to compete in the market and respond to external forces, or to assist workers in self-regulating work-related responsibilities (Hill et al., 2008).

2.5.3 Implementation of flexible work

The concept of flexible work has been used to solve major issues in working sectors including reduced hours, non-standard hours, a variety of remote working, and compressed working (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). However, work–life balance can be seen as an issue for an individual to manage, rather than an organisational responsibility (Toth, 2005). The term flexibility in the work-life equation is generally associated with negative sanctions; the corporate culture must be explicitly supportive of and be responsible for the true use of flexible initiatives to successfully integrate workplace flexibility. Indeed, it is important to foster and support the right kind of corporate culture that truly brings human values to the workplace and ‘the bottom line’ then matters less (Hill et al., 2008). Even when a company formally offers flexible work options and work–family benefits, this does not necessarily mean they will be available in practice

(Thompson et al., 1999; Waters & Bardoel, 2006). Where managers are not convinced about flexible policies or apply them inconsistently, their value is reduced (Eaton, 2003). Managers play a crucial role in determining how organisations view work-life balance. Often the problem is seen as concerned with individual circumstances and choice. Solutions focus on developing specific human resource (HR) policies that provide individuals with options, such as to work flexible or fewer hours. However, to take such a view is to neglect powerful institutional forces that may operate to undermine the purpose of even well-intentioned work-life balance policies. Examples of such systemic factors are work overload-poor work design or heavy workloads, a culture of long hours, adverse career consequences for those who work shorter hours, and gendered role stereotypes (Todd & Binns, 2013).

In this study, therefore, it will be important to investigate, not only the extent to which flexibility is formally available in the Saudi workplace, but also the factors that may influence managers' willingness to offer such arrangements, and women's perceptions of the potential to take advantage of them, in terms of work values and culture.

Flexible work arrangements are now widespread in some cultures as they have become fundamental to the business case for gender diversity (Glover & Kirton, 2006). These call for contemporary theories to reconsider work-life balance and gender diversity policies (Doherty, 2004; Kossek et al., 2010). Özbilgin et al. (2011) demonstrated that the labour market is becoming increasingly heterogeneous, which must be considered in the discussion of work-life balance and flexible work arrangements. Although researchers argue that decisions on flexible work options need to be taken at a strategic level (Thomson, 2008), policies are often only partially implemented, particularly at administrative level (Wise & Bond, 2003). Organisational reluctance to implement such policies fully is due to aspects of organisational culture, such as managerial support, and

other work-life culture elements such as time expectations at work, gender-related perceptions, impact on career, and co-worker support (McDonald et al., 2007).

Organising work to meet demands either through non-standard work or high-labour turnover provides external flexibility to restructure firms, which in turn satisfies employers' need of flexibility. In contrast, core workers in internally flexible firms may work night shifts or overtime, or they may work extra, unpaid non-standard hours to meet deadlines. Externally and internally flexible firms primarily differ in who bears the cost of adjustment; peripheral workers in the case of external flexibility and core workers in the case of internal flexibility. Thus, external flexibility has widened the labour market dualism and segmentation between insider and outsider (Raess & Burgoon, 2015). In addition, non-standard employment contracts may challenge a manager or professional, with negative impacts. The traditional management mind set is reluctant towards flexible work, which may hinder promotions or performance appraisals (Wheatley, 2012). Expecting ever higher levels of performance and commitment towards the organisation, managers may be unwilling to allow employees to reshape their assigned job responsibilities, although by doing so, the organisation may achieve better outcomes (Wheatley, 2012).

Internal flexibility allows organisations to adapt to work demands while buffering their core of full-time employees and thus can be substituted for numerical flexibility. External churning of employees not only renders firms internally flexible but also makes them responsive and competitive in product markets. Not only do flexible work systems involve greater investment in workers; they also assist employers in retaining their existing workforce (Cappelli & Neumark, 2004). In addition, how managers perceive employee characteristics in terms of performance and work commitment is important, specifically because they are more likely to value and support high-performing employees

who are perceived as non-replaceable and suited to the flexible arrangement, i.e. fit for reduced work load and perhaps job customization in suitable jobs.

Cultures differ in the extent to which they embrace flexibility or are ambivalent towards it, and there are variations in managerial rationales across cultures (Kossek et al., 2016), suggesting a need for research in novel contexts such as Saudi Arabia. Flexible work can be seen as part of the debate on the need to recognize and accept a wide variety of work-life balance needs and possible working arrangements rather than specific policies targeting a particular group, such as working mothers (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

In externally constrained working time regimes, companies will probably have more scope to implement flexible working time arrangements, especially those directed towards managerial needs. Comparatively, in fixed working time regimes, regulation may limit the potential for flexible arrangements, especially those intended for the employers' needs, but there may be statutory provisions requiring companies to cater for worker life balance needs. In negotiated work-time regimes many possibilities arise to develop both types of working time flexibility (Chung & Tijdens, 2013). The outcomes of the flexible work policies in use depend on elements such as managerial and colleagues' support, and the perceived career ramifications, because in some cases because flexible workers may be perceived as having low organisational commitment (McDonald et al., 2013).

In many cases, flexibility to meet employees' needs is available through informal arrangements rather than formal arrangements. In such informal arrangements, supervisors and managers may make flexible options accessible, for which there are no formal provisions in the companies. Golden (2009) found that in the United States,, employees of certain companies were more likely to enjoy flexible opportunities through informal arrangements, while in others this was more likely to occur through formal

arrangements. In the case of informal flexible working practices, supervisors have a key role as gatekeepers to flexibility, even more so than with formal practices (McNamara et al., 2012).

Changes in working environments are reflected in the degree of functional flexibility. For example, knowledgeable employees are valued more, in more dynamic environments, where they have to be more adaptable to accommodate the changes and learn new skills and abilities (Bhattacharya et al., 2005). Consequently, hiring well-educated employees will encourage firms to embrace high-trust forms of flexibility. Strategies for adopting various configurations of practices that align HRM to company strategy may also be adopted to gain employee commitment (Croucher & Rizov, 2015). Besides, firms in today's dynamic environment need to frequently restructure the organisation of work in order to operate effectively, and to help employees to cope with the resulting stress. Therefore, functional flexibility moderates the relationship between a rapidly changing competitive environment and firm productivity (Vela-Jimenez et al., 2014). Family friendly policies bridge the gap between the family responsibilities and the work responsibilities of a worker. These policies often necessitate a culture in which the workday or workplace can be adjusted to allow the worker to accommodate time for caring for the family and household responsibilities. Flexible workplaces can take a variety of forms, the common feature being that the policy gives workers a degree of control over their workday. In a flexible regime, workers may be able to: (1) choose their times for starting and finishing work; (2) decide when to take time off, for example, for personal reasons, family care or bereavements or (3) go on a planned vacation (with pay). A flexible workplace should not be confused with a flexible labour market, since the latter generally involves non- traditional schedules or non- standard hours and conditions of work. Therefore, employers gain more from flexibility in the labour market than do

employees. The basic premise in non-standard employment is that workers have little or no control over their workday (Boushey, 2008).

The choice of workplace flexibility policy may depend on the reason for its implementation. Formal agreements are more likely when the main purpose of flexible schedules is to meet performance requirements, to boost workforce productivity or enhance institutional performance in the competitive market. In contrast, when flexibility is introduced as a job amenity, to increase affiliation at work, formal and informal scheduling flexibility might be combined. The third purpose is to provide flexibility either generally on an individual case basis, based on the employer's perception of employees' needs or characteristics, rather than those of their position, and this is often done on a more informal basis (Golden, 2009). Moreover, even in supportive organisations, managers may signal a wrong message indicating that they and the company as a whole find it problematic for employees to make use of flexibility (McDonald et al., 2007). Some other concepts related to flexible working arrangements are hindered by traditional management decisions and views towards the effective use of teleworking from home, flexitime, job sharing and flexible hours. While some organisations can effectively implement such arrangements, others may refuse to do so, stating the reason of business need.

Implementation of the concept of flexible work includes usage of various types of work flexibility including remote working, non-standard hours, reduced working hours, and compressed working. These extensive forms of flexible work allow employees to accomplish the goals of the organisation while working within acceptable boundaries. Moreover, flexible work empowers the organisation members to attain their objectives by refining their job responsibilities through adapted scheduling and positions. However, the evidence from the literature is that the availability of flexible work may depend on

the nature of the job and industry, the workplace culture and, to some degree, managerial discretion. Even where some flexibility exists, it may be difficult for employees to access it, due to the perceived impact on their job performance and career path. The implication for this study is that it is necessary to explore not only the formal existence of policies for flexibility, but also informal arrangements, as well as cultural, institutional and regulatory factors that influence the availability of flexibility. This is all the more important because Saudi Arabia is an under- researched environment with a distinctive culture. Moreover, the study involves women working in different sectors, with different structural arrangements and subject to different levels and kinds of regulatory control.

2.5.4 Types of flexible work

Several types of flexible work have been proposed in previous research. In the table below a brief definition and comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of each type is provided.

Types	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
Compressed Workweek	Reducing the number of days in the week by lengthening the hours of work each day, e.g. 4 days/ 10 hours a day (Bohlander & Snell, 2009)	It may lead to high enthusiasm, better performance, and lower levels of absenteeism (Arbon et al., 2012)	It may cause increased fatigue, stress, and lowered productivity because of the long work schedule (Arbon et al., 2012)

Flexi-time	<p>The worker will be allowed to choose daily starting and finishing hours.</p> <p>(Bohlander & Snell, 2009)</p>	<p>Workers can manage timings between work and families.</p> <p>It may reduce absenteeism tardiness, and turnover, and increase employee motivation</p> <p>(Downes & Koekemoer, 2011)</p>	<p>Time of presence when the employee is needed by the organisation may not be fulfilled.</p> <p>Different organisations have different ways to manage flexitime</p> <p>With work groups and teams there are some difficulties to implement flexitime. (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011)</p>
Job sharing	<p>Two or more than two people sharing the responsibility of one particular job (a category of part-time working practice) (Bohlander & Snell, 2009)</p>	<p>The same job can be done by two or more people at different times of day, making it possible for the purpose to be served throughout the day. In addition It may reduce work overload and</p>	<p>Quality of the outputs provided by several employees may not be similar, as required by business processes.</p> <p>There is potential for unequal treatment in promotion and tenure; employees might be</p>

		pressure (Freeman & Coll, 2009)	viewed as uncommitted (Freeman & Coll, 2009)
Tele-commuting	Performing the job out of the office by using telecommunications equipment (Hill et al., 1998)	Employees can avoid the traffic of traditional commuting, save time and be able to handle other social activities effectively (Hill et al., 1998),	Jobs requiring person to person contacts cannot be performed using this solution. It may lead to feelings of isolation, and lack of support from professionals (Harpaz, 2002)
Part time	Employees involving themselves in a contract that requires working less than the standard or customary hours of full time employment. (CIPD, 2005).	Effective and outstanding outcomes can be achieved by allowing experts to be involved in vertically critical business needs. Less amount of experience interference from	High turnover of employees could be threatening to the organisation as this enables job hoppers to find jobs according to their changing wishes.

		work to family, and better life satisfaction (Higgins et al., 2000)	It may lead to low pay, routine tasks, and limited advancement opportunities (Higgins et al., 2000)
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2.5.5 Impacts of flexible work

Many authors claim positive impacts for flexible work; others are more critical. On the positive side, it has been claimed that employees' perceptions about job quality are said to be enhanced by flexible working practices, which have positive and strong impacts on them (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008). This is because 'flexible work arrangements' offer various options of work under the same role, which allow the members of organisations to modify their jobs to meet organisational goals within the boundaries of their family responsibilities (Greenberg & Landry, 2011). It empowers the members of organisations to achieve their job targets by fine tuning their responsibilities through customised timing and locations (Van Dyne et al., 2007). Those people who benefit from flexible working policies would be able to achieve and feel 'greater autonomy' and enjoy their time with their families (Bacik & Drew, 2006). The advantages of such arrangements can be achieved by modifying tasks and functions, providing which can give employees more scope for development in their jobs. Often such functional arrangements can facilitate control over the work environment (Martens et al., 1999).

Enhanced autonomy is a resource pertinent to flexible work design and is fuelled by individual control over working hours (Kelly et al., 2011; Putnam et al., 2014) A

perception of autonomy is an asset of flexibility, by virtue of which flexibility at work improves the work-family life balance of the worker (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004). An encouraging development resulting from contemporary flexible work schedules in some cultures could be that employees will benefit from maintaining a balance between working hours and non-work hours (Martens et al., 1999). However, Fleetwood (2007) argues that flexible working policy and practice are not necessarily directly linked to work-life or work-family balance.

Innovative management involving internal numerical flexibility increases employees' psychological safety within the firm and protects their psychological contracts. As a result, employees may be more willing to apply their full potential and skills, and reciprocate with greater discretionary effort to meet their organisational commitments, like devoting more time in developing new products (Vela-Jimenez et al., 2014). Additionally, the availability of flexible working options in firms may have added merit of minimizing costs.

Employees who benefit from functional flexibility may innovate more ideas because these practices encourage learning processes in employees, to deploy knowledge and performance and lead to greater innovation at organisational level. Since the hiring and training of temporary employees is more costly than flexible deployment of their permanent counterparts, functional flexibility practices in firms can save costs by utilizing non-standard work arrangements in innovation activities. For instance, multi-skilled employees reduce the need for substitutions like replacing ill employees. Similarly, employees who adopt functional practices like work rotation or re-designing may achieve high performance and satisfaction because these practices expand the job prospects with a great variety of tasks (Vela-Jimenez et al., 2014). Generally, work life balance is associated with a range of objectives, conditions and practices in an organisation, that

enable employees of a firm to feel satisfied in their jobs, have job-security and strengthened growth and development as individual human beings, while employing strategies that focus on different organisation functional areas, including job widening, job arrangements, and active and effective employee participation in shaping organisational environment, methods and outcomes (Ahmad, 2013).

Flexibility in the workplace allows employees to achieve better work–life balance, according to Whyman et al. (2015). The flexibility provisions of a workplace play a central role in managing the work–family interface (Kossek et al., 2006). According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), flexibility of a workplace is an important job resource that promotes work-to-family enrichment. Kossek et al. (2006, 2011) argued that the perception that flexibility in the workplace is possible benefits on the work–family interface, because employees view high perceived control over work issues as a resource. This argument highlights one of the main propositions of the work–family enrichment model, that job resources foster well-being and satisfaction in the family domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Researchers like Facer and Wadsworth (2008), Kelliher and Anderson (2010), and Chandra (2012) report positive effects of “flexible work” on balancing work-life issues.

In contrast, some authors question whether flexibility is sufficient to address the real problems challenging work-life balance, and note that it may not always bring the expected benefits. For example, attention has been drawn to the idea that gendered labour division often places males more than females in jobs with more autonomy, owing to the fact that men have greater flexibility and organisational mobility. Moreover, flexibility and gendered time use seem to reproduce the gendered work division and traditional power relations between women and men (Rafnsdottir & Heijstra, 2013). There has been attention to the work-life balance approach, leading to the adoption of immediate

solutions, such as policies for flexible working, that do not necessarily have the intended effects, because they do not challenge prevailing assumptions about the gendered nature of work or the factors that may constrain personal choice. The introduction of such an approach in ‘developing’ countries should take account of cultural differences (Lewis et al., 2007). Policies that encourage work-life balance for both sexes may have little impact on men’s take-up rates, if social and cultural norms do not encourage men’s family involvement. However, progressive organisations with a sincere desire to enhance the work-life balance of all employees may, it has been suggested, make some contribution towards encouraging men’s greater involvement in caring and perhaps eventually, contributing to wider social change (McDonald et al., 2007).

However, assumptions about individual ‘choice’ within the current work-life balance discourses turn attention away from the root cause of the problems in balancing the two domains. Current flexibility discourses in workplaces have often been used to retain in the workplace those-mainly women, who have work-home commitments that make it difficult for them to conform to traditional inflexible work arrangements. However, these policies do not question prevailing views about how work is structured, the qualities required of employees, or the necessity of standard work hours (Lewis et al., 2007).

Rafnsdottir and Heijstra (2013) challenge the claim that flexible and autonomous working schedules provide a more favourable work-family balance. They suggest the need to reconsider the evidence of work-family and flexibility research, in order to take account of gender power and occupation. Stereotypes and stigmatization regarding the beneficiaries of such policies can reduce their benefits, as well as entrenching gender inequality in the workplace, since such policies are often seen assumed to target women with young children (Wise & Bond, 2003). Rigid notions about the characteristics of ideal workers differentially affect men and women, with women being viewed as less able to

comply with these standards, and consequently being rated lower in performance than male colleagues, even though they report similar levels of involvement in both work and family roles (King, 2008).

Flexible working hours make it easier for employees to cope with stressful situations because they offer employees the opportunity to meet demands in accordance with their own time management preferences. However, the extent to which working arrangements influence individual stress may vary according to individual factors, such as employee personality, and workplace factors, such as organisational culture (Topcic et al., 2016) . For example, female employees who take advantage of flexible work hours have been perceived as being less committed to their jobs, less worthy of promotion, less ambitious, and less interested in advancement, despite no differences in their perceived capability compared to employees not using a flexible schedule (Rogier & Padgett, 2004). Moreover, Bacik and Drew (2006) claim that there are some limitations to a flexible working policy for the employees, as some benefits are restricted by the management. In addition, if the employees are not completely tied to a pre-defined work schedule, this has adverse influence on the chance of advancement and promotion in their job, and relative decrease in earnings. Furthermore, Chung and Tijdens (2013) believe multiple variations of arrangements by organisations sometimes conflict with the concept of work flexibility, due to the complementary and substantive relationship of the arrangements. Also, the application of flexible work arrangements sometimes conflicts with the organisation's way of operating.

Labour market status and mental health are related and several research studies suggest specific types of flexible work schedules are associated with increased health risks, poor well-being, and reduced sleep quality. Employees who make use of access to flexible options, working long, non-standard working hours or a compressed work schedule may

jeopardize their health, well-being, and sleep hours as compared to those working in non-flexible regimes (Martens et al., 1999). The negative relationship between individual differences in need to excel professionally and flexitime indicates that when an individual perceives his/her working environment to value his/her physical presence at work, he/she will be less likely to adopt available flexible policies (Shockley & Allen, 2010). The compromises associated with flexible work practices are increased uncertainties about job tenure, reduced personal control over task and emotional disconnection from the office milieu. In addition, alternating working hours (e.g. shift work) may further affect the health as well as social participation of employees (Martens et al., 1999).

For such reasons, contrary to the prevailing view, Russell et al. (2009) suggest that flexible working schedules might increase work–life conflict and exacerbate work–life imbalance instead. The respective beneficial outcomes might also depend on whether flexibility in the workplace negatively affects employee wages and career prospects, despite enabling a better work–life balance (Whyman et al., 2015). It has been argued by some scholars that implementing flexibility in the work environment may reduce the capacities of the organisation to match managerial and professional provisions (Greenberg & Landry, 2011; Facer & Wadsworth, 2008, and Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

It has been seen from this section that flexible work practices can benefit employees physically and psychologically, in turn enhancing their contribution to the employing organisation. However, such practices are not always beneficial, if they allow or encourage employees to work long or erratic hours. In this study, therefore, it will be of interest to explore how participants perceive the impacts (or potential impact) of flexibility on their work-life balance, their careers and their physical and psychological health, bearing in mind prevailing assumptions about women's work and family roles in the Saudi context.

It has also been seen that flexibility may take various forms, locational, temporal and functional, and that flexible arrangements differ in the degree of autonomy and control allowed to the employee, to shape their work in a way that meets their needs. In Western literature, such autonomy is assumed to be important, and this is reflected in a strand of literature on job crafting as a way to exercise control of work-life balance. This will therefore be reviewed next.

2.6 Job Crafting as a Source of Work-Life Balance

Job crafting was another key search term used in reviewing the literature, since it reflects ways of arranging flexibility and influencing work conditions that are within the control of the employee. It thus appears to have significant potential to contribute in work-life balance, and it was of interest to see whether any such opportunities were available to Saudi women. According to Clark (2000:751), work-life balance is defined as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home”. However, workers always need to make a balance in their life between their working and non-working life. As Sturges et al. (2010) highlights, workers may be able to reconcile the various dimensions of their life in a way that suits them (Kossek et al., 1999). This may be achieved by means of ‘formal’ organisational policies, that is, officially- sanctioned human resource policies in writing (Eaton, 2003), such as part-time working (Gregory & Milner, 2009), flexible hours (Anderson et al., 2002) and teleworking (Kossek et al., 2006). Alternatively, the employee may be able to negotiate a unique arrangement that permits him/her to adapt work arrangements to suit his/her personal needs, such as by flexible scheduling of work hours (Hornung et al., 2008). However, work culture and/or organisation could be double-edged in terms of implementing flexibility in the workplace, and employees might differ in their perspectives as well as attitude toward a specific job design (Hoeven & Zoonen, 2015).

In addition to sanctioned “individually negotiated organisational arrangements” and “formal” contracts, employees engage in many unofficial behaviours which support them in attaining the work life balance, for example, utilizing “time management techniques” in the case of contracted employees (Golden & Geisler, 2007), or working at home (Tietze, 2002). Individuals use these kinds of techniques to attempt to achieve work-life balance for many different reasons. The first reason is to complement the benefits of organisational policies. Secondly, for men in particular (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005) the culture and the environment of some workplaces could be opposed to formal work life balance arrangements (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004; Thompson et al., 1999). Thirdly, some supervisors might be reluctant to offer formal work life policies (Breugh & Frye, 2008), because they suspect it may undermine the employees’ performance (Poelmans & Beham, 2008). Some managers may be opposed to particular practices, as Peters and Heusinkveld (2010) found with regard to teleworking. Another possibility is that organisational work-life balance policies may be inapplicable to some categories of employees; Ryan and Kossek (2008) mentioned young workers as a case in point.

Job crafting entails balancing the demands and resources of the job. Job demands are social, organisational and physical aspects of a job, that require prolonged personal effort from employees, whereas resources are the job characteristics that facilitate goal-achievement, reduce job demands, and enhance personal welfare (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Time pressure and work intensification are common cases of job demands, whereas typical examples of job resources are work-type, job flexibility feedback and social support (Bakker et al., 2014). Recently, Tims et al. (2012) proposed that there are four distinct dimensions of job crafting, out of which two deal with social and structural resources, whereas the other two concern “challenging” and “hindrance” job demands. Structural resources include autonomy, self-control, capabilities and knowledge of the job, whereas elements such as co-workers’ support, feedback and guidance are the social

resources. This distinction helps in focusing on different types of job crafting behaviours. Also, it helps to understand how the employee handles different aspects of the job simultaneously, such as work and task structure on the one hand and social structure on the other (Berdicchia et al., 2016).

As for demands, Crawford et al. (2010) classify job demands into two types, challenge and hindrance demand. The former are demands that offer scope for development of mastery and future advantages, while the latter are those perceived as obstacles to progress. Examples of demands in the challenge category include job complexity, while examples of hindrance demands are role conflict or role ambiguity. Crawford et al. (2010) found that challenge demands are directly associated with employee engagement, whereas hindrance demands have an inverse association with engagement. Van den Broeck et al. (2010) found that while challenging job demands have significant positive outcomes, like increased employee engagement in work, on the other hand, hindering work demands are considered as stressful, since they threaten the employee's well-being, optimal functioning and hinder goal attainment, thus are associated with negative emotions, consequently leading to the employee's withdrawal from work or decreased performance. By job crafting, employees can seek job resources, reduce demands, or pursue challenge demands (Petrou et al., 2012). Reducing job resources is not considered an option in this framework, because it would be counterproductive for employees. Pursuit of job resources can be reflected in adaptive behaviours like eagerness to learn or taking advice, in employees. The pursuit of challenge demand involves behaviours such as being willing to shoulder greater responsibilities or performing challenging tasks (Van den Heuvel et al., 2015). Social job resources of an employee can be enriched by asking a colleague to provide feedback, while structural job resources can be increased by innovating procedures at work; challenge job demands can be pursued by seeking extra

work, while hindrance job demands can be reduced by avoiding conflicts at the workplace with non-cooperative clients (Tims et al., 2012).

In understanding how employees negotiate the balance between demands and resources, the job-crafting typology of Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) can be a beneficial framework that can extend our interpretation of different work-life balance undertakings, including formal vs informal flexible working agreements. This job crafting framework was developed to identify employee behaviour like goal-oriented, self-initiated, and pre-emptive behaviour that can alter the parameters of their job to give them control over their effort and their uniqueness in the workplace. The notion of job crafting reflects the assumption that employees can redesign their job by modifying its aspects to improve the match between the job characteristics and their personal needs, potential and preferences. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001:179) describe job crafting as the physical and cognitive contexts of task or constraints of the work done by individuals, subsequently suggesting that the job boundaries are pliable and can be bent intentionally outside the terms of the job description. This shows that job crafting consists of physical, cognitive and relational elements. To appropriate a sustainable working personality, “relational crafting” among other characteristics influences the quality and quantity of communications among the individuals at the workplace. In relational job crafting, employees are enabled to proactively broaden the horizons of their professional milieu. Another characteristic, “cognitive crafting”, alters perceptions of the work and responsibility; considering one’s job as a single entity, or a collection of various activities, is an example of cognitive job crafting. Physical job crafting is the third characteristic and involves redefining the outlines of the assigned job tasks such as structuring the scope, type or amount of job responsibilities (Sturges, 2012).

Engaging in any of these three types of job crafting allows employees to become job architects, able to shoulder additional responsibilities, foster innovativeness and adaptability, expand social networks, and/or perceptually distinguish desirable and non-undesirable tasks (Berg et al., 2010). Further, job crafting is essentially an employee's function, which may be done with or without the sanction of the organisation. Job crafting is instrumental in cultivating work engagement and job satisfaction to create meaningful experiences for employees (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The objective of job crafting can be summarized as improving employees' perception of the right job fit (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), Organisations might place a premium on proactivity of employees because employees' own interest and attempts in crafting their jobs often foster innovativeness and adaptability as benefits to the organisation. Therefore, organisations are encouraged to provide leeway for knowledgeable employees to job craft. Studies have shown benefits such as initiative, discretionary work effort, and extra-role behaviours, as outcomes of job crafting (Berg et al., 2010).

Bell and Staw (1989) have argued that employees' proactivity refers to exerting personal control over their work lives, which enriches their perceptions of self-efficacy. An employee who breaks a monotonous routine and creatively expands job aspects is likely to achieve high performance and be encouraged to future proactive behaviour. In other words, when given a chance to craft their job, employees perceive a level of self-control over their associated work domain, which helps in building personal resources, for e.g. self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

A job-crafter's mindset is an employee's belief that he/she can proactively shape their job with the discretion to apply of positive (appropriate) or negative (inappropriate) change and therefore, the job crafting process relies heavily on his/her personal initiative in evaluating various aspects of task and relationship components of the job, as well as

creating a framework of significance of the work. Therefore setting and attaining goals are essential features of job crafting, which help to develop the personal resource of hope (Snyder, 2000). This can be well-illustrated by the case of an employee who might realize that she or he would like to incorporate added variety in her or his current job; she or he may first set the objective to alter this situation favourably through seeking more responsibility in order to perform new and challenging tasks. Job crafting may be rewarding in coping with stress at work. For example, an employee who faces some difficulties may find a solution by crafting the situation, drawing on the advice and support of colleagues. This experience of successfully resolving the work issue would motivate the employee to build future resilience (Masten, 2001). Vogt et al. (2016) therefore suggest that crafting job characteristics, whether resources or challenging demands, will boost the personal resources of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. Organisations can enhance employees' careers by allowing them to craft their jobs, and to perform job duties and responsibilities, such as supervisory functions and giving informal leadership, that have meaning for to the organisation, and ultimately, render themselves valuable human resources. Such activities recruit knowledgeable employees as more valuable assets to organisations, while the experiences related to career growth positively influence employees' job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which is likely to reduce turnover (Russell et al., 2015).

Job crafting gives more meaning to one's work and identity. Vogt et al (2015) illustrated this phenomenon by arguing that, by viewing one's job in new dimension, a positive atmosphere with work colleagues may be created which may also be instrumental to experiencing one's work as more purposeful.(Vogt et al., 2016). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) stated that job crafting is not related to the job design perspective. The difference is that the job design perspective assumes that employees work on the job as redesigned by managers, while job crafting implies that employees have the autonomy to

shape and influence their job designs along the course of service. Similarly, Tims et al. (2016) regard the job design perspective as concerned with job characteristics, while they related the term job crafting to the modifications (i.e., increases or decreases) made by employees in their job characteristics. When job characteristics comply with personal needs and abilities, employees experience good person–job fit (Kristof - Brown et al., 2005). By implementing job design policies, organisations may facilitate workers' ways to proactively craft their jobs (increasing social and structural resources) either by promoting a supportive organisational culture or reducing the social costs of job crafting initiatives. Broadening of job prospects is positively related to specific crafting behaviours, notably expanding job characteristics like structural and social resources. Self-competence was not reported to moderate the correlation of job enlargement with increased structural resources; however, it does down-regulate the relationship between job enlargement and social resources increase (Berdicchia et al., 2016).

It has been suggested that managers should act as gateways of motivation for employees to engage in self-management behaviours by providing room and opportunities to grow. Employees should be given flexibility to search for those characteristics in their jobs that suit their own abilities and needs, rather than engaging them in tasks pre-defined by employers. One way to accomplish this motive is through encouraging employees to evaluate their current job as compared to their expectation of their perceived ideal job. This may be followed by allowing them to examine opportunities for shaping their current job characteristics in such a way that the job matches the individual's personal resources, such as strengths, needs, and working preferences (Tims et al., 2016). According to Bakker et al. (2016) the required changes in job demands and job resources are based on personal and colleague vigour, commitment and engagement, although job crafting behaviours do not all have the same effects.

As a conceptual framework, job crafting can be applied in work-life balance behaviour as both share specific and significant similarities, e.g. goal-orientation, meaning it is directed towards the employee's aim of balancing work and other commitments (Parker et al., 2010), self-initiation, because it is based on the employee's own personal effort to achieve his/her aim (Kossek et al., 1999), and pro-activeness, reflecting a wish on the individual's part to take control of their satisfaction (Clark, 2000). Work-life balance does not essentially always require individualistic changes, but focuses more on managing the balance of work and non-work aspects of individuals (Clark, 2000; Emslie & Hunt, 2009). This suggests that job crafting may not necessarily have an impact on the work-life balance. Despite the contradictions among the views of different scholars regarding job crafting and its impact on work life balance, according to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), endorsement of "job crafting" is required for balancing the work-life behaviour. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) have analysed the "goal-oriented", "proactive", and "self-initiated" nature of employees' behaviour to alter their work responsibility to improve their control of the job and their role within the workplace. Thus, the typology of "job crafting" should be carefully incorporated to recognize the different techniques to manage "work-life balance".

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the outcomes of a discursive review of diverse theories with implications for work-life balance, and a systematic review of literature published in the period 1990- 2016 on the subjects of work life balance, flexible work, and job crafting. A significant number of the studies referred specifically to women, the population of interest in this study. However, there were few on work-life balance and related issues in the Middle East, and Saudi Arabia in particular. Thus, the literature reflects a predominantly Western- centric view, and reflects the Western context in terms of employment law, HR

policies, organisation practices, gender roles and so on. It is therefore unclear to what extent the assumptions and conclusions found in this literature would be applicable in the Saudi case, highlighting the need for a context-sensitive exploration of these issues.

Work-life balance is a perceptual feeling of satisfaction with the degree to which the demands of one's roles in work and other areas of life are reconciled. The literature reflects two predominant assumptions: that the 'life' part of work-life balance essentially equates to home and family, and that the 'balance' problem particularly affects women. The issue is said to have come to the fore due to demographic change and increased participation of women in the workforce, and to be influenced by societal and cultural factors. All these observations are potentially pertinent to the present study. Saudi Arabia is an area where women's role has historically been almost exclusively in the domestic sphere; their workforce participation is relatively recent (for example, girls' schools, offering teaching jobs for women, were not established until 1960 and it is only in the last few years that employment law has been relaxed to open more opportunities for women) and still very low by international standards. However, economic pressure and government policies are creating increased opportunity for women, bringing more Saudi women into the workforce, raising questions about how they are negotiating this situation and how their perceptions and experiences may be influenced by traditional cultural values towards women and work.

It is often assumed that work-life balance can be improved by flexible work, meaning a variety of options as to the timing, location, and hours of work. There are a number of studies which emphasise that there is a need to investigate the impact of flexible work on individuals and organisations. Facer and Wadsworth (2008) believe that the relationship between family and work can be understood by taking into account alternative work schedules in most organisations. However, according to Kelliher and Anderson (2010),

different outcomes may result from different practices of flexible work in organisations. Therefore, understanding the most common practices of flexible work is vital, as well as the impact on individuals and organisations involved in the work environment. However, this can be considered as a cultural issue, especially in Eastern countries. For instance, Chandra (2012) believes that Eastern and Western countries do not share the same work life balance issues and suggests that conflicts over family responsibilities are more likely to be associated with women in the East.

If the rationale of flexible work is to recruit or retain employees who might otherwise not be able or willing to enter the work domain, this might be relevant in the Saudi case. Given the new interest in women's employment from the government and Saudi women themselves, it will be of interest to examine whether the rationale of flexible work is accepted and applied in the Saudi case, and what role it may or may not play, relative to other factors, in Saudi women's work-life balance. However, the literature also reveals deeper complexities that suggest reasons why flexible work may not always be to employees' benefit and why, even when well-intentioned policy exists in organisations, flexible arrangements may not be offered by managers or taken up by employees. Company-centred flexible arrangements, designed with the aim of adapting to dynamic competition, rather than promoting employee work-life balance, can result in employees working long, non-standard hours or doing extra unpaid work, and experiencing more, rather than less strain. The literature shows also the impact of organisational culture in terms of the perception that employees' presence is required, perceptions of the low commitment of employees who opt for certain flexible arrangements, and impact on the career path. Thus, it is important in this study to look at the organisation cultures in which the Saudi participants work, their perception of the nature of their jobs and roles, and how they perceive the likely impact of flexible work.

The literature also suggests that job crafting can be a beneficial framework that can extend the interpretation of different work-life balance undertakings, including formal vs informal flexible working agreements. Job crafting emerges in the literature as a proactive behaviour by employees to manipulate job resources (structural and social) and demands (challenges and hindrances) in order to make the job better suited to their needs. It is not clear, however, whether or how this may apply to women in Saudi Arabia. Do they see job resources and demands in the same way as is presented in Western literature? What opportunities, if any, do they have for job crafting, and how do they view such possibilities?

The literature clearly offers important insights into the issue of work-life balance, flexible work and job-crafting, but there are significant gaps with regard to perceptions and experiences of these issues outside the dominant Western context, and this raises the broader question of how far these theories are relevant to other contexts. Study in the Saudi context will not only illuminate that context but may also help to confirm or challenge these theories.

In this respect, having reviewed a number of theoretical perspectives, I draw on Border Theory as a way of exploring the dynamics and interactions between work and home. From this perspective, women are seen as border crossers, moving physically and psychologically between domains, and seeking a balance between the demands of each. Flexible work and job crafting are among the strategies they might use, if available, in order to negotiate this balance. However, the potential to do so is likely to depend on a variety of personal and organisational factors, which in turn are embedded in a particular social and cultural context. This study will explore not only how women negotiate work-life balance in the Saudi context, but also how Border Theory can help in exploring and making sense of their experiences.

This study is a response to the identified need for better understanding of work-life balance, and specifically the need to investigate the situation of women in an Eastern country where circumstances, needs and expectations may differ from those in the West. The focus of this research is on exploring the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia. In the next chapter, the methodology is presented.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Saunders et al. (2009) advise on the need for a clear research strategy (design), to indicate generally how the research questions will be addressed. This strategy should have clear objectives based on the research questions; and should indicate the proposed data source, the time frame, where the study will take place, and ethical issues.

As explained earlier, the aim of this study is to explore the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia. In this chapter I explain how and why I adopted a subjective ontology which acknowledges the reality of people's experience. Epistemologically, this led to a social constructionist stance, suggesting the need to explore how women make sense of their own experiences. Accordingly, I adopted a qualitative approach, which enabled me to explore how participants ascribed meanings to their experiences. Previous studies drawing on Border Theory are approximately equally divided between those using a qualitative approach based on interview (Emslie & Hunt, 2009; Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015; White & Thatcher, 2015) and those relying on quantitative analysis of survey data (e.g. Donald & Linington, 2008; Li et al., 2013). As explained later, I prefer the qualitative approach as more consistent with my social constructionist stance, whereby I viewed women as constructing their own "reality" both individually and through interaction with others, according to their experiences, and needed to explore these different constructions in women's own terms.

This research process involved developing questions and procedures, data collected naturally in the participants' own setting, and data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes (Creswell, 2013). During this process I was part of what was observed and my values and beliefs affect the research. I will reflect both in this chapter

and the conclusion on how my positionality influenced the research and my interactions with the participants

This chapter explains the philosophical assumptions, research approach, and methods used to explore the barriers to work life balance for women in KSA. The chapter starts with a discussion of the philosophical basis of the research, and the choice of an inductive research approach, then the research strategy, use of interview as the data collection method. Sampling is discussed and the procedures of collecting and analysing data are documented in detail. Criteria for assessment of the research quality are discussed. Finally, attention is focused on the ethical considerations of the research.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Research paradigms are sets of assumptions. Guba and Lincoln (1994) propounded that a paradigm is a basic set of first principles that give an insight into the world's nature. Other scholars describe paradigms as relating to a set of guiding principles of action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Paradigms address questions of how best to explore the world (Punch, 2000). The research paradigm is the foundation of the whole research process, as it provides indications for the choice of suitable approaches, techniques and methods of data collection consistent with the adopted philosophical setting or framework. Collis and Hussey (2009: 55) summarised the role of the research paradigm by describing it as a "philosophical framework that guides how scientific research should be conducted". According to Saunders et al. (2009) research philosophy helps to define the logic and circumstantial scenario behind a research. It also helps to define the research approach, knowledge and justification behind it. Cohen et al. (2013:17) stated that a "research paradigm can be defined as the broad framework, which comprises perception, beliefs and understanding of several theories and practices that are used to conduct a research".

Although a variety of research paradigms have been identified, for example, realism, interpretivism, positivism, phenomenology, and pragmatism among others (Moran & Mooney, 2002), the two main research philosophies frequently used in academic research are “positivism” and “interpretivism” (Saunders et al., 2009), sometimes termed constructionism (Guba & Lincoln ,1994). The discussion here focuses on these two, because the contrasts between them help to explain the adoption in this research of the social constructionist paradigm, explained in section 3.3.

Research paradigms are differentiated by their stance in regard to five main assumptions: ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological (Saunders et al., 2009). They concern the nature of the social world, knowledge, the role of values in the research, the authorial voice and choice of methods.

First, ontology addresses the nature of the social world, which can be seen from subjective or objective stances. Subjectivist researchers consider social phenomena to be subjective creations formed through the perceptions, experiences and interpretations of social actors, which influence their behaviour. This is the stance of the social constructionist paradigm, whose adherents see “reality” as relative, since it is subjectively constructed according to the personal understanding and interpretation of the participants. This means there may be multiple valid views of a phenomenon (multiple realities). Accordingly, the researcher's actions and interpretation affect the study. In contrast, objectivist researchers (positivists) regard social entities as having an existence separate from and unaffected by the assumptions, perceptions and interpretations of the various parties involved in the research. In the positivist paradigm, reality is objective and fixed, there is only one true view (a singular reality), and the researcher holds him/ herself at a distance from the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In this study, I adopt the social constructionist perspective, assuming that, as they go about their daily lives, people perceive and engage with a "reality" that is subjectively constructed in their minds and behaviours. In order to understand the social world, it is necessary to explore these subjective accounts and the way processes and meanings are constructed through interactions among members of a society (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). It is a view that considers the nature of reality to be decided by human actors, rather than being determined by objective and external factors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012) In other words, the social world does not lie outside individuals, but is created by them (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

As Cunliffe (2008) points out, the social constructionist perspective looks at how reality is objectified through interactive and discursive processes in which individuals share, exchange and modify their subjective sense making. It is such exchanges, rather than structures, that create and sustain social realities and identities, and in this process, perceptions and knowledge of the social world are influenced by cultural, social, historical and linguistic factors. This in turn implies that social phenomena and their meanings are not static, but are dynamic, being constantly revised and recreated through social interaction (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The second assumption, epistemology, can be defined as “the study of knowledge and justified belief” (Steup, 2011: para. 1). Epistemology is concerned with how one can obtain valid knowledge of the subject of study (Saunders et al., 2009). It focuses on the relationship between the researcher and the research. Epistemology is concerned to address the following questions:

1. What are the important and necessary conditions for knowledge?
2. From where can knowledge be derived?

3. What are its form and limits?
4. How can knowledge be legitimated?
5. Is the justification of beliefs based on internal, subjective constructions or external, objective evidence? (Steup, 2011).

Adherents of the positivist paradigm are concerned to explore reality by observation or experiment, and typically analyse the results in order to find cause-effect relationships between research variables (Creswell, 2012; Collis & Hussey, 2009).

In contrast, for social constructionists, gaining understanding of the complexity of the social world necessitates examination of the world from participants' perspectives (Gummesson, 2003; Bryman & Bell, 2015). They argue that social phenomena cannot be understood in isolation from the beliefs that shape them. Thus, as Creswell (2013:14) explained, research from this perspective "describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants, within the essence of the experiences for several individuals who all experienced the phenomenon". The researcher investigates the structure of human experience, and the subjectively-constructed meanings that social actors assign to it. Patton (2002) describes this approach as one in which researchers focus on the ways in which participants perceive, describe and make sense of their experience.

These contrasting positions have implications for the researcher's role in relation to the participants, the role of values in the research, and the choice of methods. Positivists claim that research can and should be value free, and they maintain a distance between the research and what is being observed. Saunders et al. (2009) comment that the positivist paradigm is concerned with fact, and assumes that the social reality of phenomena can be measured; therefore, positivist researchers tend to favour quantitative methods.

Such a view is challenged by social constructionist inquiry, which is more concerned with exploring the complexity of the social world, by gaining interpretive understanding of phenomena (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Collis & Hussey, 2009; Neuman, 2006). Social constructionist researchers seek to understand the subjectively constructed meanings of social action (Bryman & Bell, 2015), tend to be close to the participants, to view values as an intrinsic part of the social world that cannot be ignored but should be reflected upon, and to favour qualitative methods. The contrasting implications of these two paradigms are summarised in Table 3.1. In the next section, I discuss how these considerations influenced the choice of paradigm for this research.

Table 3-1 Contrasting Implications of Positivism and Social Constructionism

	Positivism	Social Constructionism
The observer	must be independent	is part of what is being observed
Human interests	should be irrelevant	are the main drivers of science
Explanations	must demonstrate causality	aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progresses through	hypotheses and deductions	gathering rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	need to be defined so that they can be measured	should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Units of analysis	should be reduced to simplest terms	may include the complexity of 'whole' situations
Generalization through	statistical probability	theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	large numbers selected randomly	small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:24)

3.3 Justification for Adopting the Social Constructionist Paradigm

The choice of a research paradigm depends on the research aim or what the research is trying to find out. As this research is concerned with exploring the meaning Saudi women give to their experiences of work and family life, a constructionist paradigm was applied for this study. Previous studies are divided between those that take a positivist stance, looking for regular patterns and causal relationships between variables, and others that,

like this study, adopt a social constructionist approach. Such a stance assumes that there may be multiple perceptions or explanations of “reality”, that understanding is mutually created in interaction between the researcher and participants, and that the research takes place in the natural world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to this perspective, social reality cannot be separated from people, because individuals and the social world are mutually influential, shaping each other in day-to-day interactions (Cunliffe, 2008).

From this perspective, knowledge is seen to be obtained from people's memories, individual experiences, and expectations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The reason for adopting the social constructionist paradigm is the belief that the women employees' perceptions of work-life balance and the barriers to achieving it are generated from their interpretations of their experience. Despite sharing similar religious and cultural norms, different women workers have their own individual personality and perceptions derived from several factors, e.g. education level, social status and age. According to Collier (1998), such a perspective allows participants to present themselves, to appraise their stories, and to adopt a dynamic position in research and as researchers. That is how this social constructionist perspective enabled me to recognize how Saudi women make sense of the process of work-life balance in their everyday lives. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Glesne (2006) within the theoretical domain of social constructionism, different groups and individuals perceive reality by experiencing, interpreting and constructing it. For example, in the case of Saudi female workers, culture, religion and other norms affect their workplace behaviour. An example is the social construction of gender, whereby norms and expectations of masculinity and femininity are introduced and defined to children by the gender roles in the family. Social practices are fabricated by collective and cultural beliefs and institutional engagements. Thus, the beliefs and cultural norms of society play a vital role in the workplace environment in Saudi Arabia.

It is assumed that, consistent with Neuman (2006), the social world is mostly what people perceive it to be, and that there are multiple "realities" of work-life balance constructed as individuals attach meaning to their experiences.

Nevertheless, Berger and Luckmann (1991) explain how, although social actors are capable of apprehending multiple realities, there is one, the reality of everyday life that imposes itself as the paramount reality, because of the intensity and urgency with which it imposes itself upon individuals, such that it cannot be ignored or easily challenged. Thus, I view Saudi women's work- life balance as constructed through their engagement with experiences in everyday life, which are themselves shaped by cultural and other factors. Therefore, in order to gain deep insight into this phenomenon, it is necessary to explore women's feelings about their experience of barriers to work-life balance by getting close to individuals where they live and where their experience is generated in the human community and work environment.

To conclude, individual and family experience of the work-life balancing process, including women's experiences in the home and work domains, their central or peripheral status, and the influence of border keepers such as husband and employer are subjectively perceived and interpreted by those concerned. Such perceptions in turn construct the workplace reality for Saudi women workers. This ever-changing powerful and progressive reality depends on the individual situation of women, as perceived and experienced by them and can therefore best be understood from a social constructionist standpoint.

3.4 Research Approach

The social constructionist paradigm is associated with an inductive approach, concerned with theory building. Collis and Hussey (2009:8) describe this approach as one in which

“theory is developed from the observation of empirical reality; thus general inferences are induced from particular instances”. This approach necessitates the researcher’s closeness to participants in order to gain insight into their experience and feelings about the phenomena. For this reason, they enter into the participants’ setting for collection of data, in order to interpret meaning (Creswell, 2013). In this approach, theory is developed after data collection and analysis, rather than assumed *a priori*.

This is an appropriate stance for this research as, although theories about work - life balance exist, little is known about this issue in the Saudi context. Whilst, as explained in an earlier chapter one, such theory; Work-family Border Theory, was selected as potentially useful in exploring some issues of relevance to this research, the way such issues are experienced in a particular context could only be explained by women themselves. The aim, therefore, was to explore Saudi women's experience of balancing family and work in their own words, reflecting their own distinctive situations and so to build, from the ground up, an understanding relevant to the experiences of Saudi working women.

3.5. Choice of Qualitative Methodology

Research in the business and management field is often classified into quantitative and qualitative types associated particularly with the positivist and constructionist paradigms, respectively (Saunders et al., 2009). The former, according to Neuman (2006), follows a deductive logic that proceeds from theory to measurement, sampling, and collection and analysis of data. The reverse process applies to qualitative research, which follows an inductive logic where the starting point is rich-textured deep data from which generalisations or theories may emerge (Neuman, 2006). The two approaches are fundamentally different. One distinction between them concerns the nature of the data (Neuman, 2006). Whereas quantitative data are “hard”, expressed in numerical terms,

qualitative data are “soft”, taking the form of the words and images. There are also typical differences in the sample size. Quantitative research tends to use larger samples than qualitative research and seek generalisation to a wider population based on the representativeness of the sample (Punch, 2000). In qualitative research, in contrast, smaller, often purposive, samples are used, and generalisation is not the main concern, although theoretical generalisation may be possible (Patton, 2002). As regards the kinds of problem addressed, in quantitative research, the research problem is expressed in terms of variables or factors that affect the results and explain the problem. Often the aim is to test a theory or answer questions suggested by a review of literature (Creswell, 2013). In contrast, qualitative research is more concerned with exploring a concept or phenomenon, and often there are no pre-established theories or identified variables (Creswell, 2013). Thus, while “quantitative researchers emphasise precisely measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to general causal explanations” (Neuman, 2006:151), qualitative researchers take an interpretive or critical approach, avoiding a simple linear path and focusing on cases and contexts (Neuman, 2006).

Finally, the two approaches differ in design and analysis. Quantitative research has well developed methods of analysis (Punch, 2000), which are more formalised, more uni-dimensional and include fewer variables than qualitative methods. Thus, it is easier to replicate this type of research than studies following a qualitative procedure (Punch, 2000). In contrast, qualitative research is less rigidly structured than quantitative research and the methods are less formalised. In addition, qualitative research is more multi-dimensional, diverse and flexible, but less replicable than quantitative research (Punch, 2000).

Any research approach has both strengths and shortcomings. Hakim (2000) defines as a major advantage of qualitative research its being thorough, because the rich data provided

should provide a full and trustworthy account of participants' experiences and views, although qualitative research is often criticised for lack of representativeness because of its small samples (Hakim, 2000). Rudestam and Newton (2007) favour the opportunity afforded by qualitative research to enable phenomena to be explored in their natural environment, instead of studies being confined within a relatively narrow scope.

In this research, a qualitative method was used, because it suited the need in this research for detailed information on the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia, as women themselves perceive and make sense of them. This type of information concerns the opinions and lived experiences of respondents, not only of physical barriers, but of socially and culturally - constructed barriers, which would be very difficult to find from a quantitative approach. The need to explore perceptions of the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia and to investigate the antecedents and consequences of these perceptions called for qualitative data, in order to build a clear and comprehensive picture of the dominant realities of everyday life that impose themselves on women's consciousness and influence their behaviours. In doing this, an important role was played by intersubjectivity, that is, the co-construction of understanding through the interaction between myself and participants, each of us having his/her own subjectivity. Intersubjective understandings were accessed in this study by dialogue between myself and the women who participated through an interview technique, discussed in section 3.7. First, however, I explain my overall research strategy.

3.6 Research Strategy

A research strategy can be explained as an overall research orientation employed to fulfil the research objectives (Saunders et al., 2009). Essentially, research strategy is important for structuring of a research study by organising and systemizing all the sections (Kane & Trochim, 2009).

The key consideration in the selection of a strategy is its appropriateness to the research purposes; in other words, it must be guided by the research questions and objectives. Also the nature of the research and the time available should be considered, as should the philosophical assumptions underlying the research; the research strategy should establish clearly what role will be taken by the researcher. Collis and Hussey (2009) asserted the importance of a properly developed research strategy in order to ensure that research meets its objectives.

This research adopted the use of semi-structured interviews, as this is an effective way of exploring a phenomenon within its own context. Interviews are considered superior to questionnaires by Akbayrak (2000) in terms of access to information, flexibility and response rate, although they require time and skill to conduct and analyse, and can raise issues of confidentiality (Akbayrak, 2000).

3.7 Data Collection

This section explains the choice of semi - structured interview as the data collection technique, the preparation and piloting of an interview guide, and the interview procedures.

3.7.1 Choice of data collection technique

The decision to adopt a social constructionist paradigm led to the choice of interview as a suitable data collection technique. This is because social constructionism is concerned with understanding the way people make sense of their experiences, which can be reflected in their speech and body language. It was also consistent with this study's use of Work-family Border Theory, which necessitated exploration of women's experiences and perceptions of domain borders, and of social and psychological factors influencing

their status and strategy options within domains. Interview is an effective way of gaining such insights.

Interview is a verbal discourse wherein questions are asked by the interviewer purposefully, and answered in response by interviewees (Patton, 2002; Collis & Hussey, 2009; Seidman, 2013). Collis and Hussey (2009) viewed interview as a data-collection method in which feedbacks of participants are recorded as a response to specific intended questions to register their actions, thoughts and feelings.

Another viewpoint given by Denscombe (2014) states that interviews are not a mere casual conversation but are superior, relating to their association with sets of perceptions and interpretation of the situation. This attribute of the interview method accounts for its credibility and therefore, it is widely employed by sociologists over other methods (Robson, 2002). In addition to this, interviews provide a medium to study human beings (Collins & Hussey, 2009; Denscombe, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002), which made it a choice for qualitative study such as this research, since it is a powerful method for collecting data which are important for achieving the research objectives (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Moreover, the flexible nature of interviews allows researchers to push their limits and challenge participants to justify their opinions, which is a pre-requisite for collection of comprehensive data pertinent to the research objectives.

Interviews were appropriate for this study, due to their exploratory nature, as they enabled deep investigation of participants' perceptions of work-life balance, their conceptualisation of and attitude toward flexible work and job crafting in the Saudi context, the different ways in which they experienced work-life balance and the barriers they faced. Investigating these matters through interviews helped me to discern the antecedents and consequences of work-life balance, and identify the limitations and the

motives for work-life balance in Saudi Arabia. There are cultural sensitivities, in Saudi Arabia, about interaction between men and women who do not share a blood or marital relationship and as a result, Saudi male researchers often assume that interviewing women is impossible and do not attempt it. I was able in this study to access women's perspectives by showing cultural sensitivity in the interview arrangements and manner of speaking, as discussed more fully in later sections.

In this study, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, since the study was concerned with a wide range of subjective factors which needed to be explored in depth. Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate data technique for this purpose. An advantage of this kind of interview is the potential it offers to investigate complex situations by giving participants freedom to reveal their beliefs and feelings; in the present study, this meant their feeling about their experience of work life balance, flexible work, and job crafting. It also allows the researcher flexibility in asking questions, for example using probing questions, in order to elicit more information. As advised by Patton (2002) the interviews were based on an interview guide or set of topics, with open-ended and probe questions to allow participants to express their feelings and experiences. This provided an opportunity for understanding the world from respondents' perspectives, in line with Alston and Bowles (2003:118) view that this technique allows the researcher to "see the world from the eyes of the respondent as much as possible, to explore with them their thoughts and feelings and to thoroughly understand their point of view".

Collis and Hussey (2009) warn that semi-structured interviews tend to be time consuming, and it can be difficult to control the flow of discussion, keeping it on track, and the large volume of data can be hard to analyse. As explained later, digital recording helped with these issues. There is also the possibility that power relations and concern for social desirability may place the interviewee under pressure to perform as he/she thinks is

required or expected by the interviewer. Against these difficulties, however, are the strength of this method for drawing out the participants' opinions and beliefs about their situation (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

3.7.2 Preparation of interview guide

Before starting the data collection, an intensive literature review (see Chapter Two) was conducted to identify gaps in previous research and refine the research question. This step provided an initial understanding of the issues related to work life balance and flexible work as discussed predominantly in Western organisational contexts.

In view of the research purpose, and insight gained from the literature review, as explained below, questions were formulated about women employees' experience about work-life balance and flexible work and job crafting, with the addition of probes and prompts to be used as needed in order to guide the flow of the conversations and help in clarifying interviewees' answers (see Appendix J for a copy of the interview schedule).

The interview schedule contained four main sections as follows: First, biographical information about the research participants was elicited, including their education, marital status, occupation, position and responsibilities in the organisation. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, such factors might be expected to have a bearing on participants' family and work experiences, such as where they were in their career path, or the kinds of family pressures they faced. Individual characteristics are among the factors that Border Theory suggests influence individuals' perceptions of work and family domains and border crossing behaviour. The second reason was to break the ice by beginning the interview with relatively easy and non- threatening questions. The second section asked respondents about their purposes for working, their experiences of any struggles and difficulties or discomfort at work, and their satisfaction in work. Participants' reasons for

working were of interest because they might be related to what women needed and expected from their job, and the degree of their willingness to compromise on working conditions, and even to stay in the job. The other questions in the section were to get a clear picture of women's current working situation, whether they perceived they had flexibility or not, and the reciprocal impacts between work and home life. The third concerned the possibility of job crafting and autonomy for the participants, whether they would like to control their work, what advantages they perceived might be gained from having such control and the possible implications for their work life balance. The rationale here was that the literature review suggested that flexible working arrangements can help employees to achieve work-life balance, and can benefit both the employee and the employer. Moreover, it suggested that job crafting, being under the employee's control, offers a potential way to improve work-life balance by enabling workers to tailor their working environment (for example, reducing hindrances and seeking resources) to meet their individual needs. The purpose of this section was to move from discussing the status quo, to considering possible alternatives. This would give women an opportunity to voice their needs and wishes, and to look beyond situations that might have been imposed on them by job regulations or family pressures.

The fourth topic was about the difficulties that women faced in achieving a good work-life balance, such as the chores the women did at home, what they did in their leisure time, also whether they had experienced any family or work emergency that might have increased the tension between the two domains, and if so, how they dealt with it. Whether they faced any conflict between their job and family responsibilities and what they saw as the key issues for them in balancing between work and the family, were also addressed. Transportation was also discussed, since I know from experience that this is often problematic for Saudi women, given that they have until recently been prevented from

driving, have few public transport options, and are often reliant on a family member to act as driver and escort.

The interview questions were initially designed in English and then translated into Arabic to minimize any miscommunication or misunderstanding that might happen, as Arabic is the primary language in Saudi Arabia and English is not widely spoken in most areas and workplaces. Since the translation process could affect the outcome of the research, I performed the translation myself, as I am an Arabic native and speak fluent English. Also, I am aware of the importance of technical and colloquial terms in both languages (English and Arabic) that might not be direct translations of the words used. The translated version of the interview questions was cross-checked by two Saudi PhD students from the University of Hull who are fluent in both languages and aware of technical and cultural differences. Both offered suggestions about the interview questions, including cultural appropriateness, and suggested that some questions needed to be modified, such as the question about women's age. The English and the Arabic versions of the interview questions are included in the Appendix.

3.7.3 Pilot study

A pilot study allows the researcher to assess the data-collection instrument to increase its relevance and appropriateness. The data gathered from pilot studies can also give an indication of the depth of the data likely to be generated and whether it will be necessary to add more questions (Saunders et al. 2009). The literature defines a pilot study as “a small-scale version of the real thing, a try-out of what you propose so its feasibility can be checked” (Robson, 2002: 185). Authors assert the importance of piloting interviews, to improve the interview schedule, to facilitate time management and to try out procedures, reducing the possibility of mistakes during interview sessions (Seidman, 2013). Also, it helps researchers to ensure the actual interview is sufficiently focused. As

Marshall and Rossman (2011:96) said, “ Pilot interviews help in understanding oneself as a researcher; also they help researchers to find ways to eliminate barriers”. Pilot interviews help researchers detect unclear and ambiguous questions, and difficult questions that respondents cannot understand (Saunders et al. 2009).

A pilot study is a preliminary study performed in order to assess the accuracy and precision of the data collection tools and procedures before the main study (Kent, 2007). In this study, the semi-structured interview schedule was piloted in order to assess how long the interviews were likely to take, and to judge the clarity of the questions and their ability to generate useful data.

The pilot interview was carried out in two stages. The first stage was to show the interview schedule to the research supervisors and to colleagues in their final year of the PhD programme at the University of Hull who were fluent in both Arabic and English, to obtain their feedback and suggestions regarding the schedule. The second stage involved conducting three interviews with Saudi women; two of these interviewees were conducted via Skype and one face to face with a woman who had previously worked in the Saudi education sector and at the time of this research was a PhD student in Hull University. The pilot interviews were conducted during the period from 10 June to 1 July 2014, before I travelled to KSA to conduct the actual interviews.

The piloting process was useful and helped to reveal any difficult, ambiguous or unclear questions, and provide an indication of how long the interviews would take, and the types of data likely to be generated. Following the pilot interviews, I evaluated the outcomes to check whether this data, which was expected to be similar to the actual data, would achieve the research aim and answer the research questions. Where difficulties were revealed, I amended the interview schedule accordingly. For example, there was a

question about whether participants had any job crafting opportunity in their work. However, none of the participants knew what job crafting meant, so I changed the question to be clearer (see Appendix J).

3.7.4 Data collection procedure

I travelled to KSA, where all actual interviews were conducted. The data of this study were collected from three different sectors (Health, Education and Banking) at three big cities in Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam). These sectors are, as noted in Chapter One, Section 1.5, the three main employers of women in Saudi Arabia, while the cities selected are major concentrations of population and services, where it would be relatively easy to find hospitals, universities and large bank branches employing women.

Where possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face. However, sometimes I had to conduct the interviews via telephone or Skype. Some women expressed a preference for these methods, either because they did not feel comfortable sitting face to face with a male researcher, or because it was difficult to find a time or place when it would be convenient to meet. In all three sectors, prospective interviewees were contacted by email or telephone to arrange for a meeting date, time and place; and to inform the interviewee of the purpose of the interview (i.e., the academic nature of this study), the research objectives, and the fact that my ultimate intention was to find out how women's work-life balance could be improved, but that I did not represent the government or any other employer, and participation would not affect their job. The women were given assurances that the information provided would be anonymous and used for academic purposes only (as per research ethical procedures), and the interview would last for less than 60 minutes. Fifteen employees were interviewed on site and 16 via telephone and Skype at their request, as they indicated a belief that they would be able to express their feelings more freely in this way.

Interviews took place in a variety of locations, chosen to suit the participants' convenience. An official letter identifying me as a PhD student and confirming that the information collected would be used for academic purposes only was obtained from the University of Hull and was presented to participants.

Some places, such as King Saudi Medical City and National Commercial Bank, required permission to be given by senior management before an interview could be conducted; all such necessary permissions were obtained. In most cases, permissions were granted orally after I had shown my ID card and an official letter to confirm that I was a student researcher and had explained the purpose of the research. Other organisations required formal written permission, which was also obtained. Some banks did not allow me to conduct interviews in their office, because some areas were only for the employees, for women only, so I could not gain access, or because they were not comfortable with the idea of employees being interviewed. However, some banks allowed me to meet the women in a meeting room, or to conduct the interview by phone.

Most of the interviews with participants were conducted by phone or face to face in their work meeting room; only a few were conducted with a relative attending (third party), in order to satisfy cultural sensitivities and allow participants to feel more comfortable and this was with interviewees' permission. In addition, before the interview it was made clear that if the participant wanted a female third party to be available during the interviews, she could ask for it.

The presence of a third party is, however, contrary to the usual principle that privacy is a significant aspect of the interview process. It has a potential influence on how the information is conveyed. The impact is even more significant if the information reported is sensitive. Although authors accept that it might not always be possible to achieve privacy in an interview (Mneimneh et al., 2015), it would generally be accepted by

researchers that, other than the interviewer and the respondent, there should not be any other person present in the course of the interview, especially when there is a likelihood of asking sensitive questions. Presence of someone else other than the interviewer and the respondent may cause alterations in the features of the interview setting, thereby influencing the privacy of the interview. As a result, the responses may be affected (Diop et al., 2015).

Alteration of the self-presentation style of the interviewee is the primary element in the presence of a third party and its influence. There is a fundamental assumption that the probability of the interviewee acting differently and answering differently is higher in the presence of a person known to the interviewee than in a private interview with an interviewer that is unfamiliar to the interviewee (Milewski & Otto, 2017).

Qualitative analysis by Boeije (2004) on the consequences of the presence of the partner indicated the presence of shifts in self-presentation styles of the respondents, even though not systematic. Conversely, Boeije claims that there is also a possibility that the third party may play the role of a “lie detector” (Boeije 2004: 5) and suggests that this may encourage the interviewee to provide accurate responses, although such an argument is not in keeping with the social constructionist stance of this research. Nevertheless, Diop et al. (2015) conducted a study on the implications of a third party in an interview, and found that the likelihood of the presence of a third party having an impact on the passing of information is minimal.

Mneimneh et al. (2015) illustrate that the effect of the presence of a third party may depend on the type of information; it affects the passing of sensitive information. However, the reporting of non-sensitive information is usually not affected. More

particularly, the necessity for compliance with the social structures and ethnic setting determines how much interview privacy influences the passing of sensitive information.

In this study, although a potential problem with the presence of a third party was that the interviewee might modify her responses for reasons of social desirability, such a risk, however, is also inherent in the case of a Saudi man interviewing women. Indeed, this might provoke even more constraint, because of perceived power relations between men and women. Moreover, the fact that such interaction is widely regarded in Saudi Arabia as improper would make many women wary and uncomfortable. In Saudi culture, offering a third party's presence establishes the honourable intentions of the researcher. It is also a way to protect both the participant and the researcher from allegations of misconduct.

Although, in this research, I used a social constructionist approach, where subjectivity is inherent in the process, this raises the issue of how to manage the subjectivity. I paid careful attention to the research dynamics, such as self-selection bias (see section 3.8.1) or the impact of a third party in the interview. I did not notice in general any effect on the participants and they did not seem to change how they responded to me. However, that is not to say that there would not be any influence of having a third party there, but it could be quite minimal and does not affect the data quality, because this is inherent in the process of research.

Before the start of each interview, a brief introduction to the aim and objectives of the study was given to the participants and the interview process was explained. Participants were assured that any information they gave would be kept anonymous, no sensitive information about the participants or the organisations where they worked would be collected or mentioned in the data analysis, the data collected would be kept confidential and it would be used for the research purposes only. A consent form was signed by each

interviewee. All participants agreed to the recording of the interview; a digital sound recorder was used for this purpose. The recordings were supplemented by notes in writing, which were later added to the transcript.

During the interview I encouraged the interviewees to answer the questions in depth. This was done by assuring them of the interest and value of their views, that there were no right or wrong answers, that no colleagues or relatives would be informed of or compromised by their disclosures, and that anything they chose to share would help in better understanding women's situation. I allowed them to talk freely without interruptions. I used probes to ensure I understood the participants' experiences and opinions clearly and to give respondents chance to articulate their perceptions. However, probes were kept to a minimum, used only for clarification, or when participants diverted from the question asked and needed to be directed back to the question.

I found most of the interviewees to be open, approachable and keen to talk; they showed transparency, clarity, and great desire to cooperate with the research, because of the importance to them of the research topic. Nevertheless, there were times when responses were limited and I felt that because I am a man, doing an interview with women, there was some reservation in revealing some aspects related to their personal life such as the house, children and husband. I managed to conduct thirty-one interviews, when saturation point was reached, meaning that themes were being repeated and no substantially 'new' information or ideas were emerging. The initial target was eight participants in each sector; however, in the Education and Banking sectors, I conducted two more interviews and in the Health sector, three more, to make sure there was no more new information emerging.

At the end of the interview, the participant was thanked for her time and information and asked if she felt there was anything related to the subject of the interview that she wished

to add. Participants were also informed that if there was a gap in the collected data, it might be necessary to ask for a follow-up interview.

3.8 Sampling

Sekaran and Bougie (2016) defined sampling in qualitative research in its broadest sense as the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives.

Sampling techniques can be broadly classified into scientific sampling (also referred to as probability sampling) and non-scientific sampling (or non-probability sampling). I decided to use non-probability sampling rather than probability sampling for this study, since it is less expensive and time-saving, does not require a sampling frame, and is more efficient (Seidman, 2013). It is also more consistent with the concerns of qualitative research. Sampling in qualitative research can involve various strategies, but in qualitative research, as Neuman (2006:213) indicated, “the primary purpose of sampling is to collect specific cases, events or actions that can clarify and deepen understanding”.

This research employed purposive sampling to select research locations in sectors that are major employers of women. Such a strategy is suitable for exploratory research purposes; it does not allow confident generalisation to the whole population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), but this was not a goal of this study, since my social constructionist stance admitted the possibility of multiple “realities”. My goal, rather, was understanding, and purposive selection of women who had particular experiences and perspectives to contribute, relevant to this study’s focus, was appropriate to such a goal. Sampling is done purposefully when a researcher intends to identify specific case types for in-depth investigation and to gain clear understanding of the cases (Neuman, 2006).

Purposive sampling methods are often used in qualitative studies, especially in selection of units such as individuals, teams or establishment. The technique depends on the criteria necessary to fulfil primary function such as provision of answers to research questions for in a particular area (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Maxwell (2008:87) further defined purposive sampling as a type of sampling in which “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices”.

According to Teddlie and Yu (2007), purposive sampling techniques include four distinct categories that utilize chronological sampling. They are theoretical sampling, opportunistic sampling, confirming and disconfirming cases, and snowball sampling. Merriam (2009) also includes an ongoing sampling type –snowball sampling- as purposeful. Snowball sampling involves the researcher's identification of and approach to informants based on information provided by other informants (Noy, 2008).

Whilst purposive sampling was used in the selection of locations and in setting criteria, within the selected areas, the snowball technique was used in this research to access eligible participants. The initial contacts were friends or relatives who worked in banks, hospitals, and education institutions. When I conducted interviews with them, they suggested other participants to be interviewed.

This process is essentially repetitive; initial informants refer the researcher to others whom he/she contacts and they, in turn, refer her or him to yet other informants, and so on. The procedure is characterized by its accumulative, dynamic features; hence the metaphor of the " snowball" (Noy, 2008). It is a technique that offers the possibility of generating unique social knowledge through interaction (Limb & Dwyer, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005),

3.8.1 Self-selection bias

An important concern in qualitative research is the possibility of bias, which therefore warrants consideration when discussing qualitative research methods (Mehra, 2002).

As I explained, the research explores the dynamic of women's work life balance, so there was some selection bias, because of the types of participants I was looking for, and also general issues of accessibility, which is a very significant issue in any research. It was hard to get participants involved in the research, especially as the target was women in a conservative country with a unique culture. I was aware of this the possibility that these women might have been more attached to certain communities or my social network, but I was open to any woman who was willing to participate in this research. Self-selection bias was a risk inherent in the research, as the purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics and experiences of a specific group (working women in Saudi Arabia) in specific sectors (Health, Banking, Education). The use of snowball sampling, in particular, raises the issue of self-selection bias; that is, the research might have attracted people who had particular interest and concerns in relation to the research topic. This does not invalidate their contributions, as my social constructionist approach recognizes that these are just some of many possible and valid "realities". Moreover, I tried, in analysing and interpreting the data, to recognize the various factors impacting on women's experiences and perceptions, to cite varied data extracts reflecting these, and to report honestly any competing views.

3.8.2 Sample size

The size of sample, according to Neuman (2006) depends on how the data is to be analysed and how heterogeneous or homogeneous the research population is. Quantitative research imposes certain requirements of sample size for application of statistical tests, whereas in qualitative analysis the depth and richness of information is

more important than sample size. However, a more heterogeneous population may require a large sample in order to capture a range of features. Bryman and Bell (2015) made the additional point that sample size is critically determined by availability of time and resources. In this research 31 working women in the health, education, and banking sectors were interviewed, since as noted earlier, these are the most important sectors that employ women in Saudi Arabia (SAMA, 2013; CDSI, 2013). Sector of employment was of interest, due to the possibility that job and industry-specific factors might determine the constraints and opportunities for job flexibility, and hence the issues involved in pursuing work- life balance. Table 3.2 shows the distribution of the participants by sector.

Table 3-2 Distribution of the Sample

Sectors	Health	Education	Banking	Total
participants	11	10	10	31

3.8.3 Participants' general information

The following table shows some of the participants' general information regarding their marital status, the number of children they had, and their professional situation, including sector, job title, and whether they worked in a mixed or segregated environment. It should be noted that the names given are pseudonyms, in order to protect participants' privacy.

Table 3-3 Participants' General Information

No	Name	Sector	Job Detail	Sector Type	Number of Children	Work Environment	Marital Status	Education Level	Interview methods
1	Aisha	Education	Lecturer in Dammam University	Public	2	Women only	Married	Master	Skype
2	Alia	Health	Doctor in King Saud Hospital	Public	2	Mixed	Married	Doctor	Phone
3	Duaa	Education	Lecturer in KAU University	Public	1	Women only	Married	Master	Phone
4	Farah	Education	Teacher in Secondary school	Public	5	Women only	Married	Bachelor	Face to face (with relative attending)
5	Iman	Education	Admin and Teacher in Princess Jawahar Technical training Center	Public	5	Women only	Married	Bachelor	Face to face (with relative attending)
6	Gamila	Education	Vice admin teacher in high school	Private	None	Women only	Married	Bachelor	Phone
7	Khadija	Banking	Business development in Al Riyadh Bank	Private (Domestic)	None	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Phone
8	Layla	Education	Administrative in special need education school	Public	5	Women only	Married	Bachelor	Phone
9	Lina	Health	Doctor in King Saud Hospital	Public	One child	Mixed	Married	Doctor	Face to face (with relative attending)
10	Suzana	Health	Doctor in King Saud Hospital	Public	4	Mixed	Married	Doctor	Face to face (with relative attending)
11	Nahla	Health	Doctor in King Saud Hospital	Public	3	Mixed	Married	Doctor	Face to face (with relative attending)
12	Nawal	Health	Doctor in King Saud Hospital	Public	One Child	Mixed	Married	Doctor	Face to face (with relative attending)
13	Zaina	Health	Administrative in King Saud Hospital	Public	None	Mixed	Single	High School	Face to face (with relative attending)

14	Sabah	Health	Nurse In King Saud Hospital	Public	None	Mixed	Engaged	Diploma	Face to face (with relative attending)
15	Tamara	Health	Administrative King Saud Hospital	Public	4	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Face to face (with relative attending)
16	Fatima	Education	High School Manager	Public	4	Women only	Married	Bachelor	Phone
17	Maysa	Banking	Head Branches Manager in National Commercial Bank	Private (Domestic)	2	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Phone
18	Bisma	Banking	Wealth Manager in National Commercial Bank	Private (Domestic)	None	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Face to face (no relative) at their work meeting room
19	Nuha	Banking	Branch Manager (Female section) In National Commercial Bank	Private (Domestic)	4	Women only	Married	Bachelor	phone
20	Elham	Health	Nutrition specialist in King Abdul-Aziz Hospital	Private	One child	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	phone
21	Samiya	Education	Lecturer in KAU University	Public	4	Women only	Married	Master	Face to face (with relative attending)
22	Maryam	Banking	Business Development Manager In Gulf one Bank	Private (Domestic)	5	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Face to face (no relative) at their work meeting room
23	Bayan	Banking	Employee in Business Development Department at Gulf one Bank	Private (Domestic)	6	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Face to face (no relative) at their work meeting room
24	Shireen	Education	Administrative in Speical need school	Private	None	Women only	Married	Bachelor	Phone
25	Amal	Banking	Insurance consultant in Al Jazeera Bank	Private (Domestic)	None	Mixed	NO	Bachelor	Face to face (no relative) at their work meeting room
26	Maali	Banking	Insurance consultant in Al Jazeera Bank	Private (Domestic)	3	Mixed	Married	High School	Face to face (no relative) at their work meeting room

27	Uhud	Education	Doctor in Ibn Sina Collage		7	Women only	Divorce	Master	phone
28	Rafal	Health	Doctor in King Abdul-Aziz Medical city	Public	2	Mixed	Married	Doctor	Face to face (with relative attending)
29	Riham	Health	Doctor In Saliman Al habib Hospital	Private	3	Mixed	Married	Doctor	Phone
30	Raja	Banking	Senior trade processor In National Commercial Bank	Private (Domestic)	None	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Phone
31	Razan	Banking	Business analysis and corporate customer strategy AL Riyadh Bank	Private (Domestic)	2	Mixed	Married	Bachelor	Phone

3.9 Transcription and Translation

Most of the interviews were conducted in Arabic; 27 interviews out of 31 were conducted in Arabic, while the other four were in English. Transcripts (in Arabic) were made after each interview. A transcript is a written account of what was said in the interview, as well as nonverbal information (Wetherell et al., 2001). Preparing transcripts is an important input to the data analysis phase, as they are the basis on which data is coded, although it is the researcher's responsibility to decide what to take and what to leave (Pope & Mays, 2006). Much effort was exerted to produce full, accurate transcriptions of interviews, although the impossibility of perfectly capturing all verbal and nonverbal features is acknowledged (Wetherell et al. 2001). Silverman (2006:149) claimed that the quality of transcripts depends on the researcher's judgement guided by the research questions, stating, "Transcripts can always be improved and the search for perfection is illusory and time consuming. Rather the aim is to arrive at an agreed transcript, adequate for the task at hand".

After the transcription, I translated all the data into English, to ensure that the meaning was still the same between the original language and the second language. According to Akpaca (2014:1), "Translation is the transfer of meaning from a source language...to a target language". Writers suggest that translation can influence the interpretation of transcripts in various ways. Whilst the potential for distortion or confusion is greater when the researcher is not the translator (Temple & Young, 2004), according to Twinn (1998) translation issues can affect data quality and interpretation, whatever the role of the researcher in the translation.

In this study, one issue encountered was the difficulty in finding expressions in English that would adequately convey the meaning of Arabic idioms, especially when colloquial or figurative expressions were used. The second issue was the grammatical difference

between Arabic and English. These difficulties raised the dilemma of how best to balance between faithfulness to the participants' words and understandability, for English readers, of meaning and context.

Reflecting contextual and cultural nuances of meaning requires skills on the part of the translator (Squires, 2008), especially as social context adds meaning to social action in qualitative research (Neuman, 2006). Failure to explain context can lead to the loss of meaning and significance of the social action, even when a translation is grammatically correct.

Accordingly, the primary focus was to elucidate the interviewees' personal experiences with factors such as flexible work schedule, work-life balance, and job crafting in order to evaluate the degree of influence of the factors on their perceived value of crafting work-life balance. Several considerations were taken into account while deciding the most appropriate translation. First, the collection and analysis of data was done to provide guidance on the equivalence between English and Arabic words and phrases. Secondly, since I, as the interviewer, share the same ethnicity and language as the interviewees, the opportunity was available to contextualize the cross-cultural meanings and the interviewees' expressions and take them into account in translation, and to ensure that the meaning was still the same between the original language and second language. Also, sociolinguistic skills, as pointed out by Squires (2008) enabled me to decipher the meanings of culture related expressions during the translation. Following Silverman's (2006) advice, recordings were played repeatedly in order to improve the initial translations.

Analysing the data in English was convenient, as the transcriptions of the interviews in Arabic were relatively long, but I did not want to lose any ideas while translating the whole interviews.

3.9.1 Checking of translation

I collaborated with a professional translation centre (The Effective Learning Centre) to revise and check the translations of all the interviews. I sent the Arabic and English translation to the centre to check the translation. Kapborg and Berterö (2002) state, “Translating from one language to another can be very complex because of subtle differences in meaning, some languages are similar to the English language but others are not”. This is why I felt it desirable that, in order to ensure that the meaning of the interview dialogue translation was consistent in both languages, the interview dialogue and the English translation should be compared and checked by a professional translator. Since the Arabic and English languages are dissimilar in many ways, and I am not a professional linguist, I considered such professional checking advisable. The centre was asked to compare the Arabic and English versions and comment on their equivalence, and on any errors and ambiguities.

3.10 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a key step in the research process because it provides the link between theory and the fieldwork. Data analysis reasons out the meaningful information embedded in the collected data (Creswell, 2013). It relates the research tools to the context of the research questions and objectives through various steps. The process begins with data preparation, i.e. transcribing and translation, described above, and proceeds with understanding, representing and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2013), as explained below.

The terms, data compilation and analysis of data, are often used as synonyms because data reasoning is a continuum of data collection and might influence the questions or variables under study (Punch, 2013). Creswell (2013:190) defined qualitative data analysis as an “ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions and writing memos throughout the study.” This definition is based on the idea that the context of qualitative research determines the overall orientation of the interview and the participant’s responses govern the data generation, providing new information. In this study, responses from each semi-structured interview generated fresh ideas and prompted new queries to be raised in subsequent interviews.

The stages of data analysis are well documented, but writers lack consensus on a single technique for generating valuable qualitative data. Pope and Mays (2006) proposed three analytic approaches: thematic analysis, grounded theory and the framework approach. Whatever data analysis technique is used, it usually starts with transcription, followed by categorizing and coding, and finally, concludes with logical reasoning to answer the research questions (Punch, 2013).

In my study, I used Braun and Clark’s (2006) technique of thematic analysis to identify, analyse and report themes or schematic patterns within data. The important attributes of thematic analysis are its flexibility, and theoretical and epistemological independence, which allows researchers to assemble valuable detailed and complex data for comprehending the reality and experiences of participants. Moreover, it also enables researchers to develop themes or patterns on the basis of information-type (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) described the six essential steps involved in the thematic analysis method (listed in Table 3.4), which were followed in this study, In the beginning, I familiarized myself with the data by transcribing it and reading it thoroughly several times, followed by careful examination of every aspect of interviews while

listening to the recordings and took notes of important coding ideas. A code is a word or start phrase that captures some aspect of the data, often derived from specific utterances of participants.

Thus, in the next step, initial codes were developed for identifying specific attributes of the data. After codes were developed, the search for patterns among these initial codes began, in order to generate categories and themes. This involved a process of constant comparison among transcripts, in order to identify the meanings with which participants used certain phrases, common experiences, and similarities and differences in the contexts in which codes occurred. As an example, the codes Islamic dress, Prophet's sunnah (words and deeds), segregation and rules were linked to form the category (a set of codes constituting a sub-theme), Religion, which in turn formed part of the theme of barriers to work life balance. Once the patterns were selected, they were interlinked to synthesize a thematic map and every associative particular was refined via assessment. The process ends with preparation of the final report.

Table 3-4 Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006:87)

3.10.1 Data reduction

Data reduction is an on-going process which is followed throughout the investigation by the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Various techniques are employed for reducing qualitative data, and there are many similarities among them. Ryan et al. (2007) suggested that small cards can be used to note down quotations or cut up transcripts and details or references such as source and content of these extracts. In this study, for example, data extracts were labelled with the sector and serial number of the participant. This was followed by grouping of similar quotations under a single theme. In this way, several themes were developed. Reading and re-reading of transcripts familiarised me with the data and this continued until I had grasped all the information. Finally, I employed the NVIVO program for queuing data of each interview to facilitate its availability and retrieval for highlighting key words and important phrases.

3.10.2 The Nvivo program

Researchers may opt for unstructured or semi-structured ways of interpreting data in exploratory projects that entail illustration, differentiation, structure analysis, hypothesis testing, developing theory or validation. Therefore, it is essential to decide which method is suitable for serving the research purpose; approach selection should be based on the type of the research question and purpose. Qualitative data necessitates intensive as well as extensive information collection from interviews, and thus is time consuming (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). As a large volume of data needed to be handled, I used the Nvivo program to facilitate data analysis.

Application of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) in the qualitative data analysis had several advantages. Nvivo was designed specifically for analysing qualitative data, and enabled me to compile all the data (text, transcripts, documents, pictures, and audio files) in folder(s) and to develop an analytic framework

within which similar data from various case-types could be grouped. In addition, it was possible to create strings of words or phrases in context, or recognize and extend themes into superior concepts or categories, as in the example given earlier when explaining the stages of thematic analysis. Creswell (2012) argued that such software produces an inferior quality of coding, perhaps because, as David and Sutton (2004) noted, these programs cannot themselves draw logic-based meaningful conclusions from data. Hence, the researcher still has a crucial role in the data analysis procedure. Indeed, the process of data analysis, including selecting codes relevant to the research questions, linking the codes together or relating inferential codes to a well-tested and well-documented theory, depends on the researcher, as noted by Bryman and Bell (2015). Employing CAQDAS made it easier to manage a large data volume, maintaining a more consistent approach as compared to manual methods (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Nvivo software was used to extract codes and link them together in abstract categories. The parts of the research which had to be operated manually were searching, extracting, reasoning, analysing, and interpreting the findings, whereas activities related to data processing, like managing, organising, query visualization, and classification, could be done conveniently with the help of Nvivo software.

3.10.3 Overview of the coding process

Coding involved the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data (Gilbert, 2008; Creswell, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015), and was essentially a sorting task (Gilbert, 2008). It involved a process of data reduction, conceptualization and regrouping consistent with Strauss and Corbin (2015), so in this sense it bridged between the data reduction process and analytic categorisation (Punch, 2013). As illustrated earlier, it involved categorising raw data on a conceptual basis, developing patterns and creating themes (Punch, 2013).

Nvivo was used in three stages. First, I imported the data for all the participants into the Nvivo program. Then I coded the data, bearing in mind the interview questions. At this stage, I did not use code labels driven by theory, as I did not want to impose on the data a specific understanding assumed *a priori*. Rather, codes were data-driven. Only later were they interpreted in relation to Border Theory, revealing both the strengths and limitations of that theory for making sense of Saudi women's experiences and leading to the developments of the theory I suggest in Chapter Five . In the coding process, themes started to emerge, in the light of similarities in the participant answers to the interview questions. This led to the generation of themes, which I grouped based on the research questions.

When searching for themes, I looked for repetitions, unfamiliar metaphors and analogies that participants used in their responses, natural shifts or transitions in content, comparative statements, linguistic connectors, unmentioned data and material related to the theories used in the research framework, as suggested by Ryan et al. (2007). This required me to use my insights in building valuable concepts from data and linking them together, taking account of the research questions, data quality and research motives (Punch, 2013). The outcome was four major themes, each divided into sub-themes and encompassing a number of codes (these are further defined in the relevant section in Chapter Four). An illustrative sample is shown in the following table, with a small number of typical quotations.

Table 3-5 Sample of Data Analysis Process

Quote	Subtheme	Theme
<p>“I think mothers will go into paradise without question. Many of my friends are teachers and doctors and some work in banks, I believe they are such fighters, most of them working for the money as the first priority because life is becoming so demanding and mums have to contribute with their work so they can help their children go to private schools. If they don't work they may need to send their kids to public schools because men either can't afford private schools or don't care or don't want their children to go to the best schools, so women are forced to work” (Samiya, EPS).</p>	<p>Financial</p>	<p>Reasons for Work</p>
<p>“We are suffering a lot [due to long working hours] and no one is considering this, No one is paying attention to it. My salary is not enough, Imagine if I looked for another job till 12 pm or 2 pm, [so I could] pass the rest of the time with my children, how I would cover their expenses or the living costs” (Maryam, BS).</p>		
<p>“It is self-satisfaction, and self-worth I think, I really want to work, and apply what I studied, because my degree is in design education, it's not something financial, in general I can't stay at home”. ”(Aish, EPS).</p>	<p>Lack of policy</p>	<p>Availability of Work Autonomy</p>

<p>“I’d like to [make some change], yet routine doesn’t allow you to change a thing. Your manager always says ‘we have nothing’. If your boss is not convinced then what can you do? I only could change something if I were a manager, you know even employees need to develop themselves and take some courses. Change is great, it gives you the space for creativity” (Nahla, HPS).</p>	<p>Lack of opportunities</p>	<p>& Flexibility</p>
<p>“If they gave me the right and allowed me to, I am willing to control my work in terms of where and when I work” (Shireen, EP1S).</p>	<p>Desire for Job crafting & Flexible work</p>	<p>Desire for</p>
<p>“I am willing if I have the option to work part-time or from 7 to 12 or maybe if I could do my work from home, that would make my life easier and I would be relaxed and it would make life easy and interesting with more free hours” (Lina, HPS).</p>	<p>Benefits of Job crafting & Flexible work</p>	<p>Work Autonomy & Flexibility</p>
<p>“It would be beneficial to my school, I would make those working with me feel more comfortable. Productivity may be better without work stress, but I can [only] change the working system if employees take responsibility and don't use change badly, because if employees use this change badly, it will not carry any benefit for the institution” (Shireen, EP1S).</p>	<p>Benefits of Job crafting & Flexible work</p>	
<p>“Traditions and domestic rules come in the first place. My husband always says, ‘How can you go out and leave your kids and house?’ and so on” (Tamara, HPS).</p>	<p>Culture</p>	
<p>“Everyone understands religion or tradition in their own way, everyone has their own thought. Some people are conservative, and some people are more flexible. Some people are quite conservative but also keep an open mind about women going to work even if they are</p>	<p>Religion</p>	

<p>conservative, while some people link religious women to women not working" (Bisma, BS).</p>		
<p>"Sure, transportation is a must, one of the things we should discuss. Sometimes there is a shortage of drivers. What can we do? It a risk to do some things. One may have fifty ideas to find a solution. I mean, between us, the job managements must think of that a little and provide internal transportation means" (Nuha, BS).</p>	<p>Transportation</p>	<p>Barriers to work life Balance</p>
<p>" It's really important to have day care, but even if there is day-care (nursery) not all are good, only some and over priced for nothing, but we figure that if we do our day care in our building it is cheaper for us and more relaxing, and we control the hours, and control whether to be there or not. Because some nurseries are closed in the summer and work only in daytime. They close early, at 2: pm usually, and not all parents can go out to pick up their kids and not all mothers work in teaching, some are doctors. Therefore it's important to have a nursery, but we find there's a shortage and inconvenient regulations and not good facilities" (Aisha, EPS).</p>	<p>Childcare</p>	
<p>"Many daily routine tasks, preparing kids for school, breakfast, waking them up, dressing the; even if there is a servant, I do such things myself. Once they get back from school, they eat, study, shower; all such issues are my responsibility. Getting them to bed may take two hours, then I have to cook and organise my home. Even if there is a servant, the final touches have to be mine" (Nahla, HPS).</p>	<p>Family responsibility</p>	
<p>"Organisation, time for work is only for work, time for home is only for home. For example, if I am a housewife and I have kids I have to help them to depend on themselves. Not only working women have to do that; every kid has to depend on himself. The point is about managing people, whether at work or at home; even the babysitter at</p>		

<p>home needs to be managed, it's a kind of organisation and coordination too" (Iman, EPS).</p>	<p>Work responsibility</p>	
<p>"All what you said, sometimes we work such long hours here, we spend more time working than we spend with our kids so when we go home we just get into the kitchen then there's the Maghreb prayer, no time, then time for kids' study, then dinner and sleep, no time at all" (Tamara, HPS).</p>		

3.11 Data Quality

Since this was a qualitative study, underpinned by a social constructionist stance, the traditional positivist orientated criteria of validity and reliability were problematic. Reliability is often interpreted as meaning that other researchers carrying out the research under the same conditions, and with the same methods and instruments, would obtain the same results (Kent, 2007), and any inconsistencies would point to existence of error and bias (Robson, 2002). However, this approach to reliability is rejected in the constructionist paradigm, as it rejects a single "true" reality. Participants' lived experience was not expected to be the same across the population or over time. Nor was validity in the sense of generalisability relevant, as the study was context-specific.

Since the notions of validity and reliability have their origins in the positivist paradigm, their meaning has to be reconceptualised in a manner appropriate to qualitative studies (Golafshani, 2003). Although qualitative validity and reliability contribute to maximising the "truth" by reducing the likelihood of receiving wrong answers and asking irrelevant questions, they are very different from quantitative validity and reliability (Neuman, 2006). Consequently, reliability is replaced by the notion of dependability, while validity

is discussed in terms of confirmability, trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability, alternatives to what are known in quantitative research as objectivity, validity, internal validity, and external validity, respectively.

3.11.1 Dependability

According to Saunders et al. (2009) the dependability of the research can be established by choosing neutral times for the interview, its structure and an act of defining formality. To increase the dependability of this study, I approached interviewees in the morning and conducted interviews prior to their office hours, when they appeared focused and full of energy, judging by in their body language and animated facial expressions. After a brief introduction, the interviewees were given business cards to keep the meeting formal. The research objectives were explained to the interviewees and the willing consent of the participant was sought. Throughout the data collection process and research, transparency to readers was assured by clearly explaining the process in order to increase the dependability. A clear account was given of how participants were selected, piloting, translation and transcription, and the coding process. Finally, I avoided unduly reducing the data, in order to include maximum data, which further increases dependability, as the data collection process is usually very subjective. For example, while broad categories were created (such as “lack of formal policy” and “lack of opportunity for autonomy”) care was taken to retain as many of the original codes as possible. Although these were not always emphasised, they were reflected in the inclusion of as many illustrative quotations as possible, and ensuring that every woman’s voice was represented.

3.11.2 Confirmability

Subjectivity is preferred over objectivity in a qualitative research because subjective meanings encompass contextual influences which are inseparable from the phenomena being studied (Merriam, 2007). The key consideration in a qualitative research is

confirmability. Confirmability refers to the amount of effort invested to ensure that research findings are the true reflection of the respondents' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure confirmability and to reduce error in how respondents' viewpoints are represented, the choices were carefully examined, clarified and justified while collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was deeply involved in the process of data generation and analysis, development of themes and categories from the data. My supervisor guided me throughout the research, by suggesting various approaches for data analysis; making necessary remarks on the proposed codes, themes and categories; and recommending certain refinements of the codes. Thus, in discussion with my supervisor, I finalised sets of codes, themes and categories and assigned them to the transcripts. Thus, the analysis from the respondents' accounts was developed with the combined efforts of myself and my supervisor.

3.11.3 Trustworthiness

According to Neuman (2006), trustworthiness is another term for validity in qualitative research and refers to the ethics, transparency and accountability of the research in proper elucidation of the viewpoints of the participants. The notion of trustworthiness necessitates various steps to check for the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2013). To increase the trustworthiness of the reported findings on the barriers to work life balance for women in Saudi Arabia, I took care when conducting the interviews to give participants sufficient time to express themselves freely and fully, by avoiding interruption, keeping probing to a minimum and allowing natural pauses when women appeared to want to collect their thoughts.

To ensure accuracy, when necessary, I used probing questions, such as "Can you give me an example?" to explore the respondents' views without leading them or communicating a 'desired' or 'expected' response. Where necessary, questions were rephrased to ensure

they were understandable to the participants. Moreover, every effort was made to maintain consistency in procedure in order to ensure equitable treatment of participants and integrity in handling the data, for example, in this study the pilot study, contacting the interviewees, conducting the interviews, translation, transcription, and data reduction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

3.11.4 Credibility

Credibility is a distinctive feature of qualitative research, referring to the extent to which the research provides a comprehensive understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For the current research, this was achieved through prolonged engagement with the data. To achieve this, first, I read each transcript several times before starting to extract the codes. In this way I became immersed in the data. Second, I entered the answers into the Nvivo program and organised the extracts from the transcripts under the interview questions, to represent the interviews and view the different answers from the participants.

3.11.5 Transferability

The term "transferability" is an alternative to the idea of generalisability of the findings to different settings, which is a common characteristic of positivist research. Rather than claim generalisability based on representativeness, it aims to clarify the research setting and make it transparent to the readers, and to thoroughly explain the process undertaken in the study (Saunders et al., 2009), enabling readers to make an informed judgement on the relevance of the conclusions to their own context. The current qualitative research does not aim to generalise the Saudi perception of work life balance, flexible work and job crafting to different settings, or to confirm that the perception is equally applicable in different contexts. Transferability is established by detailed explanation of the research

context and of the research procedures and decisions involved, allowing the readers to judge the appropriateness of transfer of the findings to their own context.

3.11.6 Reflexivity

Lamb and Huttlinger (1989:766) defined reflexivity as “a self-awareness and an awareness of the relationship between the investigator and the research environment”. In addition, Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009:245) stated, “Reflection means thinking about all the conditions for what one is doing, investigating the way in which the theoretical, cultural and political context of individual and intellectual involvement affects interaction with whatever is being researched”. In studies that involve participants’ beliefs, attitudes and feelings, the researcher as a social actor inevitably brings his background, values and subjectivity into the research, necessitating acknowledgement of these factors and their impact. Therefore, this part of the quality assessment entails reflection on the researcher’s beliefs and assumptions, and an acknowledgment of the role of the interactions between various actors within the research process, including respondents, supervisors and the general public. In this research, for example, it was important to be sensitive to the dynamics and implications of a Saudi man interviewing women in a very gender – sensitive society. This entailed respecting women’s preferences regarding interview conditions (for example use of telephone or Skype), establishing my academic credentials and intentions, and taking care to safeguard participants’ identity, so they would not face censure from colleagues, family and members of their social circle.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Following ethical rules and regulations is considered to be an essential factor for a research study. Ethics can be defined as “norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour” (Resnik, 2011:para 1). In this study, there are specific issues unique to the Saudi context, as well as more general principles of ethical

research practice. Coming from Saudi Arabia, I had the advantage of understanding the society, the culture, and the challenges which women face in KSA. However, an ethical dilemma in this research is that in Saudi Arabia, a woman, under culturally conservative influences and restrictive interpretations of Islamic Sharia law, is not allowed to meet a man if he is not related to her. This raises questions about how a researcher can conduct interviews comfortably and create a relaxed atmosphere when asking women very detailed questions about their life and work. A possible way to overcome these obstacles is by using technology such as Skype to conduct the interviews, a strategy I employed in several cases to alleviate qualms about meeting in person. In addition, the researcher could arrange for a female relative to accompany him as a chaperone. In this study, I used this strategy in a few cases when meeting women outside the workplace or when they asked for it. (I have discussed the rationale for this, and its implications, in section 3.7.4)

In accordance with general principles of research ethics, participants were assured of the confidentiality of the data they provided and that it would be used only for this study. During the interview process appropriate documentation was shown to the participants to assure them of data usage policy and the purpose of the research. In addition, the privacy of participants, i.e. the doctors, nurses, teachers, and workers in banks in Saudi Arabia, was carefully safeguarded. All information has been kept in a secure place and not disclosed to any unauthorised persons. The collected data was available only to myself and no one else had access to it without official permission. Moreover, any personal details disclosed by participants, including factual information, as well as their opinions on the topics discussed, have been processed lawfully and fairly. In reporting the study, participants are referred to by pseudonyms, and no information is reported that would enable individuals to be identified.

In conducting the research, care was taken to conform to the code of conduct set by the university. The University of Hull issues the following statement in its website:

As an academic community, The University of Hull has a responsibility to encourage the highest possible standards of care, consideration and integrity within all research. Research integrity extends to accountability for the ethical basis of all aspects of research; for the protection of both the participants and the researchers; for the probity of the financial management of the project; for the reliability of results; and for making every best effort to provide value for public or private funds invested in research projects (University of Hull website, 2014: para. 4).

In addition, the Hull University Business School (HUBS) policy and procedures on ethical research were followed.

Consistent with these principles. I tried to avoid any doubts as to ethical standards observed in the research by obtaining an official letter from the University of Hull and from the Ministry of Higher Education in KSA, stating that I was a Ph.D. student and that I would be collecting information to be used for study purposes only. Whenever possible I met participants at their workplace, where they would be visible (though not overheard) or spoke to them by Skype or phone. Care was taken not to commit any unacceptable behaviour or ask embarrassing questions or prejudice the privacy of women. The real names of participants are not disclosed in the thesis; those who participated in this study have been referred to by pseudonyms. No personal information about any participant or employer is revealed in the data analysis.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research philosophy and methods appropriate to the research paradigm. The research adopted the social constructionist paradigm as a main philosophy and an inductive approach, as these were appropriate to achieve the research aim of understanding a social phenomenon through the perceptions and constructions of the participants. As the aim of the study was to explore the barriers to work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia, data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, with thirty-one women employed in three major sectors in KSA: education, health and banking. In this way, insights were gained into their reasons for working, whether they had flexibility and autonomy, the mutual impacts of work and home, possible solutions for improving work-life balance, and the challenges in the way of this goal. The findings obtained from the data collected from the field are interpreted and analysed in the next chapter.

Table 3-6 Summary of the Research Methodology

Research Paradigm	Social constructionism
Purpose of the Research	Explore the barriers to work life balance for women in Saudi Arabia
Research Approach	Qualitative, Subjective and Inductive
Data Type	Primary
Target	Working women in big three sectors in KSA (Education, Health, and Banking)
DataCollection Techniques	Semi-Structured Interviews
Type of Questions	Open –Ended Questions

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of my study in relation to the research questions through data sought from thirty-one women working in three sectors in Saudi Arabia: Education, Health, and Banking. (See Chapter 3, Table 3.3 for a description of the sample by sector, job description and family situation. As shown in that section, participants are referred to by pseudonyms). The focus of the research questions is to examine the interview respondents' understanding of work-life balance and their perceptions of the availability of flexible work, autonomy and job crafting, whether they are interested in such opportunities and what they perceive as the potential benefits, as well as to explore the barriers to achieving the best work-life balance. In so doing, I will use Work-family Border Theory (introduced in Chapter One and discussed more fully in Chapter Two) as a theoretical lens to assist in interpreting the findings. This involves looking at the strength, permeability and flexibility of the borders between work and home domains, the nature of women's identification, membership (central or peripheral) and influence in each domain, and the role of 'border keepers', such as spouse or supervisor, in facilitating or hindering participants' negotiation of the borders between domains.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the participants' motivations for working outside the home, since it is this relatively new phenomenon of Saudi women needing, desiring and increasingly attaining paid employment that gives rise to the question of whether or how they can combine such work with their household roles in a balanced way. Whilst motivation for working is not explicitly addressed in Border Theory, it has implicit relevance as a factor that could influence the degree of identification with one or other domain and the extent to which women are able or willing to compromise on their needs and wishes in one domain in order to meet their needs in the other. Then, in the

three sections that follow, the research questions set out in Chapter One, section 1.4 are used to structure the presentation of the participants' views and experiences with regard to work flexibility and autonomy, the potential benefits of work-life balance, and the barriers to women's attaining such conditions. The responses to the semi-structured interviews are presented according to the themes emerging from my analysis and points that emerged are illustrated by example quotations. The anonymity of respondents is maintained by giving pseudonyms, which has the advantage of sounding more natural and personal than a numerical code, and might make it easier to track the women's stories from their various contributions. Responses from all participants have been quoted to ensure an appropriate representation of views. For each theme, quotations, whether contrasting or complementary, have been selected to capture as fully as possible the range of responses and points ranked under that theme. The findings of the study are discussed at the end of every theme in relation to previous literature, and Work-family Border Theory. In this way it is shown to what extent Border Theory can be developed as a productive theoretical lens in the new research context of Saudi Arabia. Not only is Saudi Arabia a context in which Border Theory has not previously been applied for exploring work-life balance, but it is also a very distinctive context in which to test whether Border Theory remains valid. Distinctive features include the norm of gender segregation, the particular structure of Saudi society (as reflected, for example, in the guardianship law), and the increasing trend of employing domestic workers, which frees women to pursue careers. The application of Work-family Border Theory may shed new light on the strengths and limitations of the theory, which will be discussed in the thesis conclusion as contributions of the study.

4.2 Reasons for Working

Although women's reasons for working were not the focus of the research questions, they are important for contextualization of the later discussion. As noted above, Saudi women's participation in the workforce is a relatively recent phenomenon. Their rate of participation is still comparatively low, although growing. It is thus of interest to explore how participants made sense of and talked about the particular motives that drove them to seek employment outside the home. These are salient to this study, because women's reasons for working may influence their needs and expectations from the job and hence their views of what would constitute an acceptable work-life balance. A woman working from financial necessity, for example, might be willing or forced to compromise on hours and conditions of work for the sake of the job. One who is working primarily for self-fulfilment may seek opportunities for autonomy in order to use her talents to the full. This section, therefore, explores the motivations expressed by the women participating in this study. Two broad categories of motivation emerged: financial needs, and self-satisfaction and independence.

4.2.1 Financial needs

The category, financial needs, refers to the motivation to work solely or to a significant degree in order to generate income in order to meet perceived material needs, whether subsistence needs or those generated by the consumer lifestyle. The category was formed from codes such as "money", "expenses", "costs", and "financial", explicitly mentioned in various women's narratives.

As noted above, motivation for working is not explicitly addressed in Border Theory. However, the findings of this study suggest that it played an important part in women's thinking about their jobs, their home life, and the balance between them. In particular, women who worked solely or mainly for financial necessity often exhibited difficulty in

identifying with the work domain compared to the home domain, and even showed some resentment towards it, yet accepted uncomfortable or unbalanced situations in order to meet their needs in the home domain, as the findings in this section illustrate. Financial need was the first motivation for most of the participants, because family needs and lifestyles have changed in recent years. The cost of living has increased and the husband's income alone could not cover the family's consumerist or sometimes even basic needs. Therefore, women have to work to help themselves and their family. Participant Samiya, to some extent reflecting traditional gender roles that require women's prioritization of home and family, clearly saw women's entry into the workforce as a sacrifice made for the sake of their children, and meriting reward in the afterlife. This response reflects the centrality of Islamic values in Saudi society. In Islam, every action has a status (ranging from forbidden to required) and this is connected with ideas about reward and punishment in the afterlife. For example, if a person does something that is preferred/favourable, although not required, it will be rewarded. However, with the exception of a few behaviours for which there are unequivocal rules in the Quran, this is a matter of interpretation between different schools of Islamic thought, or even at the family levels. This participant suggested, too, that mothers' aspirations for their children might not be met, or even shared, by fathers, forcing women to be proactive in order to secure their children's prospects. In this sense, her narrative reflects a departure from traditional roles, illustrating that women may not only be assertive but also take a leading role in decision making within the family.

“I think mothers will go into paradise without question. Many of my friends are teachers and doctors and some work in banks. I believe they are such fighters, most of them working for the money as the first priority because life is becoming so demanding and mums have to contribute with their work so they can help their children go to private schools. If they don't work they may need to send their kids to public schools because men either can't afford private schools or don't care or don't want their children to go to the best schools, so women are forced to work” (Samiya, EPS).

In the above quotation, the participant shows the priority she gives to the home domain where she has a central role, crossing the border into the work domain to fulfil her aspiration of private education for her children. In Saudi Arabia, private schooling is often thought to confer an advantage over public (state) schooling, because private schools often have more resources, and many offer curriculum “extras” such as more English lessons, or a greater focus on information and communication technologies, opening up more opportunities for higher education and employment. In order to send her children to what she saw as the “best” schools, this woman felt “forced” to work.

Another participant expressed her financial need, which not only pushed her into the workforce but also forced her to work longer hours than she might otherwise have liked. Like Samiya, she saw herself as making a sacrifice for the sake of her priority, the family, entering a sphere where she had little power and was at the mercy of border keepers who showed no awareness of or sensitivity to her situation.

“We are suffering a lot [due to long working hours] and no one is considering this, No one is paying attention to it. My salary is not enough, Imagine if I looked for another job till 12 pm or 2 pm, [so I could] pass the rest of the time with my children, how I would cover their expenses or the living costs” (Maryam, BS).

Fatima noted that for many women, the children and home have first priority, to the extent of keeping them out of the workforce, but for others, like herself, this consideration was outweighed by sheer financial necessity:

“A lot of my friends and workmates, although they can work, yet their kids are their first priorities, home is more important. Maybe if they had the option to work fewer hours they would have worked, they just couldn’t survive all that. The financial issue is such a significant issue that pushes you all the time. Up to now I don’t have my own home, banks won’t give me the loan I need, and houses have become so expensive, no loan is enough for it. If I just depended on retirement salary then I would have nothing” (Fatima, EPS).

The importance of the financial motive varied according to women's circumstances. Some were not particularly in need, but appreciated the additional comfort provided by a second income. For example, participant Suzana said that she was working in order to contribute alongside her husband, not only to support herself but also in supporting the family. Suzana did not show the same reluctance and resentment towards work as Samiya and Maryam, and appeared happy to work in order to afford a better standard of living.

“The second reason to work is financial, of course the income is good to enable a woman to support her husband and support her family. My husband is working but you know, two working are better than one” (Suzana, HPS).

Others had more pressing need to work, because of difficult family circumstances. One such was Zaina, a single woman who explained how she had sacrificed her own employment preferences in order to help care for her sick father:

“I wanted to leave nursing although when my dad passed away my sister worked as a nurse and I changed my work to be a clerk for patient records, as my dad was sick at that time and things were difficult financially . Now things are way better, I work in the hospital” (Zaina, HPS).

Another participant, Tamara, had been in financial difficulty, and she worked and studied at the same time, to help her husband and to put her family on a more secure financial footing, and she clearly took pride in her contribution:

“Our financial position at that time wasn't good. I wanted to help my husband and thank Allah I could and I finished my study. It was great for me and for my kids. I like to be a good role model for them” (Tamara, HPS).

For some women, financial motivation existed alongside other reasons for working, although they commented on how financial issues had become important under the pressures of life. For example, to support the family financially, and to improve herself, were Nuha's reasons for working. She explained how her job met these two-fold needs.

“One wants to develop oneself, apply in reality what is learned, and at the same time it is support for the family. It is frankly a financial support. [Given] The [insufficient] income of one person in these situations we live in, it’s a must” (Nuha, BS).

Another participant showed how priorities could change over time, along with family responsibilities. She pointed out that the financial situation was not originally her major reason for working; her love and passion for her specialism was the reason. However, as her children grew up, financial needs took precedence. The quotation below illustrates this view:

“The major reason for my work is my passion for teaching. In the beginning the financial point had no effect or significance; over time as my kids grew up, many responsibilities have increased and we have more priorities” (Farah, EPS).

Farah's example illustrates the changing aspirations of Saudi women, in the sense that she had originally embarked on a career for intellectual and professional fulfilment. However, Saudi women are expected to prioritize family, and a career woman may nevertheless, have several children. Farah, with five children, had one of the larger families among the women interviewed, which imposed increasing pressure on her working life.

4.2.2 Self-satisfaction and independence

The category, self- satisfaction and independence, was created to reflect intrinsic motivation for working, mentioned by women in their responses. It encompasses codes such as “self –satisfaction”, “ambition”, and “independence”. Responses related to enjoyment of the job, using the knowledge and skills gained in study, and contributing to society were also subsumed within this category.

Some of the participants wanted to work for their own personal satisfaction and self-esteem. Aisha said:

“It is self-satisfaction, and self-worth I think, I really want to work, and apply what I studied, because my degree is in design education, it’s not something financial, in general I can’t stay at home”(Aisha, EPS).

Duaa agreed; explaining her need for fulfilment beyond or additional to material gain, she commented,

“I work for self-satisfaction. Life is boring when you do nothing for others; maybe for money too, but not mainly” (Duaa, EPS).

Others whose desire for self-fulfilment was combined with but prioritised over financial considerations were Amal and Maali. The former was unmarried, and so could have remained dependent on her parents, but had chosen not to do so:

“The two things in order for me are to make myself and achieve my ambition and at the same time, when I need something I can have it. My parents do not refrain from paying, but it is an additional income” (Amal, BS).

Maali had a similar double motivation:

“I wanted to work to achieve myself [to achieve my potential], and the other point is to have a good income” (Maali, BS).

For several women, such satisfaction came from self-reliance and independence, as in the case of Bisma:

“I like the feeling of being independent, I don’t like the feeling of just waiting around, and asking someone for something. Humans are born to work, and if I got free I would go crazy to my family and my husband” (Bisma, BS).

Two women attributed their need for independence to their upbringing and parental encouragement. Nahla explained that she worked to be more self-reliant, not depending on her family or her husband, and this was the culture in her family:

“In addition to my love of medicine, I didn’t take my certificate to stay at home. We as a family are used to work, no one stays at home. Our family are

used to depending on themselves, whether girls or boys, both start to work from an early age so they can depend on themselves. My mom and dad are the same, everyone has to work to be updated with life” (Nahla, HPS).

Similarly, Rafal expressed that the culture in her childhood home had encouraged her to be completely independent, not reliant on anyone. She described how her parents’ example and expectations had stimulated her own ambitions:

“Well first, I got a medical degree, right? So that’s enough reason for me. It was the way I was brought up at home. My father is a college professor and my mother finished university and she used to work here in this hospital as an interpreter, so I think it is our culture at home. It is my mother, it is basically the way they taught us to do things, You know, you have to work, you have to get a degree, you have to be completely independent from anybody in this world” (Rafal, HPS).

Such experiences of working mothers and supportive fathers can be seen as reflecting a gradual process of social change, although, as will be seen in later sections, this is by no means universal, and many women still face constraints on their participation in the workforce.

For several women, employment was a way of using their education and talents, reflecting the role of education in broadening women's horizons and increasing their aspirations. For example, Samiya enthused about her work as teacher; she believed that teaching fulfilled her innate talents and abilities, and so was a source of pleasure and satisfaction:

“I feel that I was created to be a teacher. I think it started with me since I was 4 years old and I enjoy the ability to make people understand and have the required charisma besides convincing people and so on, so I love teaching. Even when I was in the faculty I used to always try to be a teacher” (Samiya, EPS).

Other women did not want to stay unemployed after gaining a university degree, and wanted to apply what they had learned and also to get new experience, as in the case of Shireen:

“I cannot be home jobless after having a bachelor degree. I have to make the best use of what I learnt and I’m getting new experiences from my work as well” (Shireen, EP1S).

Riham similarly expressed that, in addition to the internal desire to work, she thought remaining jobless would be a waste of her education. She explained:

“It is an internal desire and at the same time it is not fair to study 7 years and then you stay at home. I experienced this situation when after I have finished my fellowship I stayed at home for 6 months. I felt it was stressful as I naturally like to study and work in shifts” (Riham, HP1S).

These participants recognized that higher education had prepared them for a more active role in society, and instilled a wish to invest their time in something valuable and worthwhile. Participant Raja encapsulated this view:

“It’s not good to be at home; when you finish your university it’s better to work and take responsibilities. It’s good to be responsible for yourself, mostly it’s great to find something to spend your time in” (Raja, BS).

Other women expressed, not only love of their work, but also a feeling that by working they were making a contribution to society; as Alia explained:

“Because I have to present myself and spend too many years in medical years and because I love this subspecialty (paediatrics) I am working because I love that, also to help my community, and to improve my level of living”(Alia, HPS).

Another participant whose work contributed to her sense of self-efficacy as a useful member of society was Maryam, who also expressed a similar sense of obligation regarding her household role.

“Personally I like working. I want to be an effective member of society; I don’t want to be a burden on society for a specified time. I mean that I must have enough time to do motherhood responsibilities and take care of my children” (Maryam, BS).

Summary of participants' reasons for working

Women expressed a variety of motivations for entering the workforce. Financial need was the first priority for most working women. Women who expressed this motivation worked to contribute to the family income, to support their husbands, and to give their children better prospects, especially as the cost of living is rising. Sometimes, however, this induced a degree of resentment of the work domain. Others expressed more intrinsic motivations related to self-fulfilment, whether through being independent, using their education, having a sense of being effective citizens, or a desire to contribute in building their society. To varying degrees, they enjoyed and took pride in their work. Nevertheless, a recurring theme for all the women was the importance of their role in caring for the home and family.

4.2.3 Discussion

Based on the findings, the first priority for most of the participants was financial need, even in such a wealthy country as KSA, and with a culture in which, traditionally, women's work outside the home was viewed unfavourably. However, social changes such as the higher level of education in many different areas, in addition to economic change, have been influential in creating new challenges and aspirations for women, with the demands of modern life. One income is not enough to meet these needs, especially as Saudi Arabia has a very high birth rate and large families. Several of the women interviewed, for example, had four or five children; Fatimah, quoted earlier, was one such case, whose large and growing family created financial needs which had gradually overtaken her original reasons for working. Pressing economic conditions require couples to make a common effort to provide a better standard of living for the family, especially in the major cities. As well as paying for necessities, women worked in order, for example, to enhance their children's prospects by paying for what they perceived as better education,

as in the case of Samiya. In addition, many women, especially unmarried women or widows, need to work for economic independence and security, or to care for elderly parents, as in the case of Zaina. Perceived financial need was a major motivator in the sense that a woman's financial contribution was becoming essential, because of the demands of modern life.

Association of the work domain with economic purposes has been indicated in Western Border Theory literature: “Work and home became separate domains following the industrial revolution and developed contrasting cultures and purposes because work and family responsibilities were now carried out in two different times and places” (Clark,2000: 753). Thus, in Saudi Arabia as in the West, albeit somewhat later, there has been a change from the traditional cultural view, whereby the husband had financial responsibilities and women's income, if any, was supplemental or for their personal use. Some responses, such as those of Samiya, convey a sense of duress and resentment at being “forced” to work. Women who are predominantly financially motivated to work, even if they choose to do so as a way of fulfilling their traditional role of care for the family, such as Maryam, may feel less identification with the work domain, and such low identification is associated with frustration and lack of commitment. According to Clark (2000) an individual may spend great amounts of time and energy within a domain without identifying with it, identification being concerned with whether individuals find meaning in their responsibilities and find that their responsibilities mesh with their self-concept. In this study, women such as Samiya, Maryam and Fatima, who all had large families, clearly identified predominantly with the home domain and somewhat reluctantly accepted workforce participation as a sacrifice, made in order to fulfil their needs and aspirations in the home domain. As Maryam’s example illustrates, this might mean suffering unfavourable working conditions (such as long hours), indicating that the woman’s status in the work domain was not sufficient to allow her to shape her working

environment. In this sense, it can be seen that women's centrality in the home domain in itself might force them to accept a weak position in the work domain. Similar to the situation pointed out by Essers and Benschop (2009) although these women were able to exercise agency in the construction of their identities, they were nevertheless constrained by social structures and discourses; in this case, constructions of womanhood and family responsibilities, conflicting with the structure of the work environment. If identification does not occur or is lost over time (as seemed to be the case for Fatima) people feel frustration. Eventually, in this situation, people lose balance and frequently end their relationships with others in the domain. It will be seen in a later section, to what extent this was the case for women in this study.

In order to understand Saudi women's position in relation to work, it is worth considering Moghadam (2003) view that each society is located within and subject to the influences of a national class structure, a regional context, and a global system of states and markets. Thus, the roles and status of women, and changes in the structure of the family, cannot be properly understood without considering economic and political factors in society - which themselves reflect the impact of regional and global developments. The structure of the world system and location, social class, state legal policy, and development strategy combine to influence the rate and extent of women's participation in the labour force and their access to economic resources (Moghadam, 2003). Such forces in Saudi Arabia, for example, include the "Vision 2030" plan for the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, including Saudi Arabia, to achieve developed world status by 2030 (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016), policies on localization of employment (to reduce dependence on expatriates) (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2014), and new laws to allow and encourage women to play a greater role in the workforce, in order to contribute to national development (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Ministry of Labour, 2013).

In Saudi Arabia, national, regional and international pressures led to the development of infrastructure and services and hence to the need for the contribution of individual men and women alike to drive the development through work, especially with the spread of education and women's access to higher levels of education. Responses quoted in the second part of this section, such as those of Shireen, Raham, Raja, and Alia, illustrate the effect of advances in women's access to education, in terms of their aspirations for independence and self-satisfaction, as well as their desire to contribute to society. Such women did not entirely reject the traditional caring role (Bisma, for instance, revealed a concern that if she became frustrated, it would affect her husband and children), but they wanted more, challenging prevailing (essentialist and/or constructed) views of womanhood. In addition, cultural and social changes accompanying globalization have swept many communities and led to a lifestyle change (Shoult, 2006), so that people's expectations for housing, consumption and leisure are greater than before. Women's work is becoming a well-established fact in some communities, reflected in the examples of Nahla and Rafal, who both came from homes where mothers worked, fathers were supportive of women's education and careers, and girls as well as boys were encouraged and expected to pursue independence through work.

Women's participation in the labour market is part of the quest for economic growth and prosperity. Their economic role has become active and influential in the national income and the volume of the workforce.

This to some extent challenges the gender ideologies rooted in the socio-economic traditions of Saudi Arabia, which have dictated that women are dependent homemakers. At the same time, the continued primacy of home and family in many women's priorities was notable in their responses. Women such as Samiya, Zaina and Tamara made it clear that they saw their financial contribution as a support for their families (whether children

or elderly parents, as in Zaina's case) and, as noted earlier, saw working as a sacrifice. It is interesting to note that women who professed intrinsic motivations for working tended to be those who had no or few children; Amal, Maali, Bisma, and Shireen, for example, had no children, while Duaa had one child and Aisha had two. There were exceptions to this general trend; for example, Suzana, with four children, claimed to work in order to gain pleasure and fulfilment from using her abilities, but generally it appeared that women with larger families expressed more financial motivation for working; indeed, Farah, quoted earlier, acknowledged the change in her motivation as her family grew. Thus, although, especially for some of the younger, still childless women, their careers may be seen as reflections of new opportunities and roles available to women, through education and social change, for others, such as Bisma and Maryam, this change was driven by their continued identification with the home domain, and the desire for a better standard of living for themselves and their families, rather than the pursuit of a career for its own sake. The next section addresses how these twin priorities played out in women's working life, specifically with regard to the availability (or not) of autonomy and flexibility in work and how this affected women's ability to negotiate the borders between domains.

4.3 Question 1: Do women in KSA have autonomy and flexibility in their work?

In order to examine this question I asked the participants whether the organisation they worked for offered any kind of flexible working arrangement, and about opportunities for autonomy to solve some work related problems, and the freedom to explore new ways to improve the work process. Respondents were asked to relate their own understanding of flexibility, in terms of whether they had any choice in where, when, and how long to work. They also explained whether flexibility emerged as an issue in their work, whether it was an issue personally, whether it had an impact on their professional life, personal life, morale or job satisfaction, the work hours and days, any difficulties they encountered, and if they were planning to leave the job in the future.

This theme is important in terms of Border Theory. The strength of borders (lines of demarcation between home and work domains) depends in part on their flexibility - the ability of borders to expand or contract according to need; the potential to choose one's working hours and location are examples of flexibility of temporal and physical borders. According to Clark (2000: 756) "borders are line of demarcation between domains, defining the point at which domain-relevant behaviour begins or ends, and these borders are in three main forms: physical, temporal and psychological". The degree of border strength individuals find most conducive to work- life balance can differ according to the degree of similarity or difference between the two domains. Borders will be stronger in the direction of the more powerful domain, and weaker in the direction of the less powerful domain (Clark, 2000). These considerations give importance to the question of whether women have autonomy and flexibility in their work. The data collected in relation to this question are presented under the following headings: lack of formal policy on flexible work, and lack of opportunity to have autonomy.

4.3.1 Lack of formal policy on flexible work

Flexible work is construed in this thesis in terms of the opportunity for women to exercise some choice in relation to where they work (for example, working from home) or when and for how long (for example, flex-time or part-time work). This theme reflects women's perceptions as to whether such arrangements were officially sanctioned in their workplaces, as reflected in specific written organisation policy.

A key theme emerging from participants' discussion of the opportunity - or lack of it- for flexible work, was the absence of a formal policy to allow and organise such opportunity. The prevailing view in all three sectors was that there was little or no opportunity for flexibility in such matters as working hours, or the possibility of part - time work. Participants explained why they thought this was the case and described the implications

for them personally. Some differences, however, emerged between the three sectors and, in the case of health and education, some differences, albeit not clear-cut or systematic, between public and private institutions.

To begin with the banking sector, it was generally agreed that there was no possibility, within written or formal policy, of flexible or part time work. Working hours are fixed and no variation is possible. The following quotations encapsulate the views expressed:

“In our job it is not possible to work part time or anything of the sort in the system, I must work from 8am to 4pm” (Amal, BS).

“We don't have the option to work part time. I would do that if it was available” (Razan, BS).

“Unfortunately, there's no part time work [I know] because I am one of the people who tried to arrange this. I wanted to do my house duties as there is a definite time for home. It needs the mother to be there. In my opinion it would be better surely and more flexible if I could work one hour less. But we in our system have no such things. It must be 8 hours” (Nuha, BS).

It is interesting to note that with the exception of Nuha (who managed a women-only section in her bank branch), the women in this sector worked in a mixed environment, but the policy on working hours seemed to reflect the traditional male work pattern of a standard eight-hour day. There was no provision for flexibility to suit individual needs, whether based on gender or any other consideration.

Several participants suggested that such flexibilities might not be feasible in the banking sector, due to the nature of the work. The participants working in the banking sector expressed that the sector is very competitive, as all banks sell almost the same products, and the employees in banks have to give a high quality service in order to retain customers. They need to build trust and good relations with clients, which requires employees to work effectively and be available at all times in the branch, to provide services to the

clients. Maryam was among those who thought that the quality of service demanded was not compatible with flexible hours, although she admitted to some flexibility in arranging appointments with clients:

“Some positions give you flexibility, in the bank; there were some clients that this branch didn't serve. I knew them and they didn't want to come to the branch so I delivered services by chauffeur because all banks sell the same products, I'm talking about chasing commission. All the banks provide the same products, like Visa, opening accounts, so what makes you different is the service that keeps your clients. I left the French bank four years ago, but there are some clients who are still asking about me when they go to the bank, thank Allah. There was trust between me and the client .For example if a client could not come and he had to sign a document, I would send this document to him with the chauffeur, but only when I was sure about his signature and his identification” (Maryam, BS).

It can be argued that the flexibility Maryam describes was actually more for the benefit of the customer than herself; her own hours and location of work were essentially unchanged. The alternative arrangement she described would still require the assistance of a chauffeur, and would be doubly difficult if the client were male. Thus, the limited flexibility she describes was constrained by cultural sensitivities pertaining to women's activities, balanced with role expectations pertaining to the nature of the job itself.

Maysa, quoted below, similarly commented upon her experience in working in a bank where flexible work was not provided for, because clients would be dissatisfied if they did not get the level of service they expected. Most of the work, she argued, is practical and built on the relationship between the employee and the client. She was of the opinion that even call centre staff should be at the office, not work at home, in order to protect client confidentiality and in order to be able to provide the appropriate information and service to all clients on demand.

“In the banks sector, I don't think [we can have flexible work] so; clients would be bothered. Functional coordination is important because we are trying to develop relations with clients. Even if women worked from home as

call centre customer service[staff], it would not work, since there has to be a system and they have to be prepared to answer anytime with any answer, and in the banks sector there has to be confidential information” (Maysa, BS).

Another participant stated that she would like to work fewer hours, but because of the nature of the work in an investment bank, staff could not work part time, but had to work full time, which is until 5pm:

“I wish the working day could be finished at 3pm. It would be perfect, but to do all my working duties I have to work to 5 pm. Because I am working in an investment bank so they don’t allow it” (Bayan, BS).

Maryam, who was also working in an investment bank, described the nature of work in the bank and the importance of staff being available to provide service at clients’ convenience, even at night or at weekends; work thus crossed the physical and temporal borders between the woman’s job and the home domain.

“Sometimes we work more than 8 hours. For example, if an investor is coming from Riyadh city and he can meet us only at weekends, we have to meet him on the date specified. We are flexible with customers. Sometimes a client calls us and says he will be present at 8 pm; I have to be able to meet him and handle the work pressure” (Maryam, BS).

While the above participant was confident in her ability to cope with a demanding schedule, others felt that the lack of flexibility was a source of strain, impinging on the psychological border between her two domains. For example, one participant explained that work in banking is exhausting and difficult, especially for married women, given their other significant responsibilities for home and children. In her view, if the bank could reduce the work hours to six hours a day instead of eight hours it would significantly reduce the pressure on her, and facilitate an improved balance between work and home. Her view reflected traditional expectations of women's household responsibilities:

“There is no part time or this kind of flexible work, there’s no such system, and it’s exhausting for the married woman since we have other important

responsibilities such as the kids' schools and study and so on, It would be better if we could work from 8 to 2 for example. At least I would get to eat with my kids" (Maali, BS).

Another participant commented that working hours can be problematic for women working in banks, as even the normal working day is long, and women do not like to work late:

"There's no flexible work and short hours like four hours a day are not available. You work from 8 to 5 and it's not preferred to stay more time, especially for ladies, it's not allowed to stay late at the bank" (Raja, BS).

Indeed, some participants found working in the bank so exhausting and stressful that they declared their intention to leave, focusing their lives in the home domain and avoiding the difficulties of border – crossing, or at least seeking a less stressful environment, so that they could more easily manage their dual roles. Maali, for example, commented that although she had taken the job knowing the nature of the work is exhausting, if she could find a better job, she would leave:

"No, it was the nature of the job and we already knew that before we started working. It's exhausting, sometimes difficult and a lot of work pressure. I have been working for 6 months so far. I am satisfied overall, but I don't like how it's exhausting. I will leave the work in the future only if I get a better offer" (Maali, BS).

Another participant declared that due to the demands of her job, she was planning to leave the bank in favour of self-employment in an attempt to create working conditions that suited her needs. In this case, the woman would still be belonging to two domains, but through self – employment she would presumably gain central status and influence in the work domain, which would enable her to shape it as she wished.

"Yes, I have a lot of pressures lately which makes me think about having my own business. I don't like the nature of my work, which forces me to travel a lot" (Maysa, BS).

It appeared, however, that the demands of bank work, and the consequent pressure, varied according to women's position and role. Maryam, a business development manager, for example, pointed out that working in the business development (sales) department in the bank is very exhausting, as staff have targets, which they must reach by the end of the month, so they are always under stress and thinking about how to get new customers. She also added that she would have no problem about working full time, if it was administrative work, where employees were responsible to do their work in office hours only, without any stress or having to think about work in their free time; however, the pressures of her sales position made her wish she could vary her work hours, in order to have more time to relax at home.

“Sales are about using your brain and nerves all the time, so you pass the whole time thinking about new ideas and marketing to new people to get money, because the bank is demanding that you achieve your target, they always ask for more and more and I have to keep the same level. We as women cannot separate our work from our home and this stress even follows me home. Sometimes when I'm at home, my friends are talking in front of me and I'm distracted thinking of work, my mind is distracted but if I had a paperwork job or management job, I would go to the office, finish the job and then go back home. I'm okay with working hours, for example if I will finish my shift at 3:00 pm or 3:30, I can start from 8:00 am, just to get more time at home. I could finish at 5:00 pm if only I had a management job [so I could] come back home with no stress and have time to study with my children.” (Maryam, BS).

Another participant added that those working in the sales department have to work outside the bank and visit clients. Not only this, but the mentally demanding nature of the work and the constant pressure to achieve sales targets made it difficult to relax at home.

“No. [There's no flexibility] Our work is not only in the offices. It's field work too; we go to the customers sometimes. It is normal. We go to customers where they work. If a woman [is a teacher] we go to her at school. It is the same if in a company. They provide us with transportation. The work is the target and the sales and these things cause stress on humans. As I am far from the family I may go back home and find all my family gathering. I don't feel I can sit with anyone. I sit to have some rest. It consumes my time and needs stressful thinking. It needs effort and makes you psychologically stressed.

Even when I'm at home I'm thinking about what I have to do. Even after work. It is not stressful because of the work; it is stressful because I'm thinking about how to reach the target" (Amal, BS).

Whilst the general view was that flexible work is not available in the banking sector, at least officially, there were one or two participants who perceived that some informal flexibility might be possible, but it was not allowed or accessible consistently; it depended on the individual and the circumstances. A key factor, moreover, was the individual's relationship with her manager, as a border controller, on whose discretion any flexibility would depend. The following quotations express these perceptions:

"There is no kind of flexible work here at all, however, sometimes there is some degree of flexibility depending on the situation and the person, but not all the time" (Tamara, BS).

"Here there is some flexibility just like our manager, when we have some personal circumstances, we ask her and she gives us the permission, whereas other managers start to ask, Why? And for what? Probably [she is supportive] because we are the same age. I know that there is no perfect person but there is so much flexibility and harmony between me and my manager. This is the first time I have worked with a person so efficient like that." (Maryam, BS)

As Maryam indicates, such discretionary exercise of flexibility towards employees was rare, and not only did it depend on the quality of the manager-subordinate relationship, but also had to be exercised with caution because of normative pressure from managers more tied to formal policy. It was surprising, therefore, that contrary to the prevailing trend of responses, one participant declared that wide flexibility and consideration were given to female employees at the bank where she worked:

"The work policy is actually is very flexible; our company understands women working and supports women working in every single aspect" (Bisma, BS).

This may reflect differences of policy from one bank to another, since there are 24 banks operating in Saudi Arabia, including several foreign banks. All these are considered

private sector organisations, so they apply their own individual policies rather than being subject to government employment regulations, so there is potentially scope for differences in working terms and conditions from one bank to another. Nevertheless, the fact that this participant's assertion stands out as exceptional among the banking sector interviewees attests to the general impression that the sector on the whole does not have formal policies in place that would facilitate flexible work for Saudi women.

In the health sector, too, the general perception was that flexible work was not available, nor was there a possibility of working part time. The following quotations reflect the situation as described by participants (a doctor and a nurse) working in the public sector:

“No I can't work part time; the work system does not offer that”(Lina, HPS).

“We don't always have flexibility. If I need to leave for an emergency, I have to get official permission, and they don't agree all the time” (Sabah, HPS).

“No, [there's no flexibility], we work on a shift basis, we have a shift and clinics have other shifts, other departments have night shift. It's only us who don't have night shifts. We have no option to choose shift time or work 4 hours instead of 8 hours” (Sabah, HPS).

Another participant, Rafal, added that she had not had the opportunity to ask about working part time, and all the employees in her department were working full time.

“I am not sure because I have not actually asked the administration yet but I have asked a couple of people around me in my department and they say there is no chance of part time and I think again in this stage if I have to ask for part time it will be refused because we are still under- staffed, and working under-staffed is a full time job” (Rafal, HPS).

Indeed, some women worked even longer than a standard eight-hour day. One participant, who worked as a consultant in a hospital in Riyadh city, expressed that the workload was very high, and in addition she had to be on call ten times a month, which was very difficult to handle:

“I work full time five days a week, but the on calls are extra, so in our specialty, genetics, we have to cover 10 calls a month, Actually, the working hours are finished and the work is still there, you know the working hours are not enough to cover it”(Suzana, HPS).

A similar situation was said to prevail in the private health sector, as reflected in this comment:

“No it is not possible in our hospital to work part time, I can't choose my work time, I work as a nutrition specialist and I have to work eight hours, from 5:30 am to 1pm for six days a week” (Elham, HP1S).

Indeed, it was suggested by two participants who had experience of working in both public and private institutions, that the inflexibility and pressure of work were even greater in the private than in the public sector. For example, Riham, who at the time of interview worked as a doctor in the private sector, explained that the workload and pressure are less in the public health sector than the private sector, where they have clinics every day, both in the morning and in the evening too, which is very exhausting for staff.

“This has an impact on my life. I don't have a problem with the working hours, if it's a little hard or not. It differs from working in the public sector. It is more comfortable there, even if it is eight hours. You are not tired all the time and don't have clinics every day. You may have two or three clinics per week, then, you finish. Here [in the private sector] there may be clinics morning and evening or a clinic for eight hours day. This is also exhausting. I wouldn't consider continuing with them if I could get another job. It is my right. I work temporarily up to date” (Riham, HP1S).

Another participant explained that she had experienced some degree of flexibility working in the public sector but now, working in the private sector, she experienced less flexibility. The work was the first priority; even in emergency situations, she had to finish her duties.

“In private hospitals if an emergency or such a case happened [to you], they tell you to finish your work first and then leave. It happened one time that my husband had to pick the children up from their school and he had an accident. He called me and told me, 'There has been an accident and I can't pick up the

kids'. The consultant who was working with me heard me talking to my husband on the phone and I told him that I had to go leave. He said, 'Finish your work first and then go, Hand your colleague your mobile or your pager and then leave'. By the time I would be done with all such issues it would be about two hours. When I left I couldn't find any car, I called [my friend] Nada and asked her to pick up the kids. After that I quit the work there. Screw the work, my kids are my priorities Then one day when I was working here [King Saud Hospital], my mom was sick and I had to go to her, I called them [Management] to get permission and they said no problem, it's okay to leave "(Nahla, HPS).

The experience recounted by Nahla supports a suggestion made by another public sector participant, that while there is no provision for flexibility in formal working policy, there may be some exercise of discretionary flexibility:

"There is no kind of flexible work here at all. However, sometimes there is flexibility, depending on the situation and the person" (Tamara, HPS).

The lack of formal flexibility would apply to men also. However, perhaps women feel the effects more, because culture assigns them the primary responsibility for home and children, even if they have a job (as further indicated in other sections, particularly 4.5.5).

It was generally agreed among both public and private sector participants that the absence of formal provision for flexible or part time work was attributable to the nature of health care, especially in hospitals, where employees must provide a high quality of service with no mistakes, as their work concerns the health and even the life of the patients. Rafal expressed the view that a doctor is required to be available in the hospital full time, responding to medical health problems presented by patients, including history taking, diagnosis and treating patients, performing operations and specialist investigations. Therefore, most hospitals in KSA do not have part time jobs or any kind of flexible work. For example, one participant mentioned working 12 hours a day with a very high workload. Nevertheless, she seemed to identify with the values in the work domain that imposed these requirements; because of considerations of patient service and concern for

their health, she thought full time work was necessary in order to do the work properly and it would be difficult and inhuman to leave patients untreated. This quotation illustrates this view:

“Well the working hours, I come here at seven am and I hardly leave before seven pm. The shift ends at five but you know I still have work to do, I am still not done with the working day and I do not feel comfortable going home without, you know, having done my work. Let’s put it this way, if I want my work to be done properly I have to be here, you know, if you want your work to be done whatever. It is a very personal thing, it is not like a forced thing, our department is very friendly, and our working environment is very healthy. I have worked for those people for a long period of time and due to the nature of our work you spend more time with them than your family, so they become your work family, right?. You know a lot about their family, about their social status, what challenges they have” (Rafal, HPS).

Another participant, Suzana, pointed out that the diagnosis of a new patient takes at least one hour, and in her department there were between 13 and 16 patients per clinic, of which about half were new patients; with such a large number of patients, there was not enough time to treat them all even in a full working day, so she did not think it would be possible to shorten the working day, or work part time.

“You know, one new case should take at least one hour because you have to know the details; you have to know the patient and his problems in details. You have to examine him, then you have to put a list of diagnosis of what you are thinking of, then you have to put a plan of what you will do and what investigation you have to send for too, or if there is any treatment you have. And it is nine cases per day, per clinic; the range is almost 13 to 16 patients per clinic. More than 50% of it is new. It happened once that nine cases were new, and I got seven of them. Imagine if you have seven new cases, you spend seven hours finishing them but you are trying to do the new cases with the follow up in three hours because the clinic is scheduled from 8.30 to 12.30 and there is another clinic after” (Suzana, HPS).

Similar considerations were expressed by participants employed in the private sector, although they also suggested that the profit-seeking motive of private healthcare institutions also contributed to their unwillingness to provide more flexible work arrangements. The following quotation reflects the views expressed:

“No, it does not have flexibility. When 20 or 15 patients come to you on a day you have to do your work for all of them. No one else can do that. Unfortunately, the private hospitals do not have such a thing [as flexible work]. They are concerned with having the patients feel comfortable, but not the consultant. Satisfaction of patients is the priority. Do you understand me? They [the hospital] earn money from patients, but you do not earn anything other than your salary that you receive at the end of the month. For example, if you face some unexpected circumstances and you cannot make the clinics you have to tell them two weeks in advance, “Close the clinic, I cannot be present”. But to tell them one day or two days before, they would make a problem for you. They may deduct from your salary the wages of the day on which you are absent from work. You have to tell them of your absence long before, in order for them to make a schedule for the patients, to allocate them to other doctors. If you tell them close to the date of absence this would negatively affect the reputation of the hospital. So, the patients would look for another, better, hospital” (Riham. HP1 S).

Whatever the reason for the rigidity of work policy, one participant perceived it as inevitable and disadvantageous to women specifically, because it was not responsive to their circumstances. Expressing thus view, participant Alia argued that the work policy in the hospital is not appropriate and not fair for women; men and women work under the same terms and conditions, but women have more responsibilities than men, because of their additional home responsibilities, so should be given special consideration. She said:

“Yes, we are working together. we have the same working hours, the same salary, and the same promotions, all organised in schedule, we are in groups (A, B,C,D), and it's divided equally, which is not fair; we as women have too many responsibilities, not like men”(Alia, HPS).

Finally, another dimension to the issue of work policy was expressed by Lina: an enforced peripheral status. Whereas the general assumption among health sector participants was that it would be preferable for women to work shorter hours and have fewer responsibilities, Lina expressed the reverse problem: being denied additional development. She perceived this as a form of discrimination practised as a result of social norms that place constraints on women's freedom of decision- making and movement:

“Actually the thing I want to tell you for us as females is that still we are male dominant. We are working here but when there are some symposiums or some

shows, only men go. Women are rarely selected for such occasions. Men find it a lot easier because they can just go. At least tell me and give me the chance to improve myself. Not only men work here and it is some kind of reward to go to a symposium. Maybe I will arrange it myself, maybe I will go with my husband” (Lina, HPS).

Whereas in the banking and health sectors there was almost universal agreement that there was no flexibility within the formal policy, no part time work, and even discretionary flexibility was quite rare, the situation in the education sector appeared to be somewhat different. Neither public nor private sector was homogeneous. While a number of participants perceived a lack of flexibility, others reported a greater degree of flexibility compared to other sectors, although it differed according to the type and stage of education concerned, and to the participant’s specific job position. Fatima was one of those who perceived that her job offered no flexibility:

“Schools need entertainment places, to be an attractive educational environment. Now, it’s not only about listening or giving advice that would be just papers and useless certificates. The main reason for enjoyment [in one’s job] is the environment. Who seeks for a job only for a salary and position? Values and morals have changed a lot, only very few people didn’t change. We have a lot of problems at work, students’ problems and so on. Teachers are the leaders and idols, they have to teach the kids all the good values. The work system has a big role in making the students not like school and causing teachers to retire early, there’s no flexibility and no understanding teachers’ needs” (Fatima, EPS).

Similarly, a private- sector participant, an administrator, explained that she did not have any flexibility in her work, as exemplified by the difficulty of getting permission from her manager to take time off, the more so as those above her in the education hierarchy were not accessible:

“There is no flexibility over my work, like work from home or in a different office nearer my home, and there are some specific procedures. If I want to take a day off then I have to talk to the manager of Eastern Dammam city, a person who I only contact on official occasions. If I wanted to go on a visit for two hours or do some private work or give a lecture, I have to call the managerial supervisor who works outside my building. I tell my employees how lucky they are because I am their direct manager; it’s so great to have

your manager in the same building, not a person who knows nothing about you, it's a difficulty" (Layla, EP1S).

In contrast, two other participants, one a lecturer also working in a private institution, the other an administrator in a public institution, expressed that they had a limited degree of flexibility in their work. The former reported:

"There's some kind of flexibility. For example, we should work from 8 to 4 but our lectures start at nine, so they told us it's okay to come at 8:30 or 9, Official time ends at four but I can leave at 3:15 or 3:30. We sign by fingerprint, so they know when we go to work and leave; it's a kind of flexibility. If I have to visit the hospital I can go to work and sign in, then I can make an excuse and go to the hospital then go back to work. If I can't come back to work then there will be my entrance signature, but no exit signature, then I talk to the person responsible to let her know. We have the dean and then the vice dean, she's the one who we should talk to; she makes me an excuse for that day" (Uhud, EP1S).

Shireen agreed, giving the following illustration:

"Yes, there is flexibility in my work; they allow us twice a month to leave work before the end of the working day, if I have an urgent situation or something like that. It depends on the situation or case, if there are urgent situations so I have to leave work"(Shireen, EP1S).

Both the above participants worked in Higher Education, and it was evident in participants' responses that Higher Education, whether private or public, offered more opportunities for flexibility than other education stages. This is illustrated by the responses of certain participants working in the public education sector, who explained that they had more flexibility in their work compared to other sectors, and that working in a university was much more flexible than working in a school, although the formal system or work policy was based on full time work. The following response illustrates this view:

"I am generally satisfied, because in my department, the way we work requires me to be there (physically) only for the lectures and meetings and other work I can do at home, it gives me time. Also it's not long working

hours, it's only from 8 to 2, and I can leave early if want, and I don't have to sign, I don't have to get permission from anybody. Also, it's good pay compared to my previous work in architecture and design, and less responsibility, and I get summer off, and every school vacation off. In general, it's a good job for a mother" (Aisha, EPS).

The response from the participant above suggests a relatively high level of flexibility in her work as lecturer in a university. Another respondent, Samiya, quoted below, also commented on working in a university and she expressed that the workload could be done in two days, which can be considered as one kind of flexible work, a 'compressed work week', strengthening the temporal border between work and home. This quotation is illustrative of her view:

"Maybe because I am a professor in the university and I don't have to work from morning till afternoon, I only go two days from 8 until 3 pm, but those two days are really so exhausting and very busy"(Samiya, EPS).

The same participant explained that there was a disadvantage of working fewer hours, as she lost teaching compensation, which decreased her salary, but she preferred to accept a lower salary in order to work fewer days, because she did not like administrative work. In Border Theory terms, she did not identify with that area of work. Also, working two days gave her free time for her home responsibilities and her family too:

"The reason I am working less now is that there are more lecturers and that has reduced my work load, but due to the work nature, when my working hours became less, they took from me something called teaching compensation, which was about 25% of my salary but, I am okay with that, I like it that way more, I always disappoint them when they give me an administrative job or such. I am perfect in the academic career but I do very badly in administrative issues. I always take very good care of cooking, I don't leave it to the servant, so going to work for two days made it easier for me, I can cook for a week, I can see my friends, in the morning, sure, and have more time to take care of my kids "(Samiya, EPS).

The level of flexibility possible, moreover, depended on the job position and duties of the individual member of staff. This was illustrated by Duaa, who found life easier as a junior

lecturer, when she had only academic duties, but in a more senior position, the possibility of flexibility was curtailed by her additional administrative responsibilities:

“I didn’t think about that when I first worked, I was only working in the academic field so I only came to give lectures and left, but with administrative work I have to attend from morning time, such as committees and supervision committee and lecturers’ testing committee. That’s considered as part time, most people have to participate. In university it’s divided into committees” (Duaa, EPS).

She went on to elaborate on how administrative responsibilities increased the workload, which could be an issue for workers in the academic field. She explained:

“I can give you an example to know the answer. It was the last year before my pregnancy, then when I got pregnant I took leave. At that time the procedures for the scholarships were done; I used to go in the morning and get done with my work, then I had nothing, no lectures and nothing after 2 pm, but I had to stay until 5 pm. There used to be many faculties and they were separated; now it’s one building. The vice president was from Jeddah and sometimes she couldn’t come so she used to tell me to deal with certain issues, so I had to stay with students who had lectures until 6. I am responsible so I had to stay. In the academic field, I only come to give lectures and leave, but with administrative work I have to attend from morning time. If I was working only as a lecturer with no administrative work that would be okay, only give lectures and leave”(Duaa, EPS).

Uhud, who worked as a college lecturer in the private sector, perceived that she had less flexibility than is available in the public sector, since she had to be present in the faculty, whether or not she was actually lecturing:

“In the faculty we go from 8am to 4pm because in the medicine faculty you know the students finish by 3 or 3:30. The working hours of the public sector are better, if I could take the same hours in the faculty I would, but I can’t because it’s faculty, I have to go in a full time job. It’s different here, it’s a full time job; even if I have no lectures I have to go to work” (Uhud, EP1S).

In contrast to those in higher education, employees in schools did not have any kind of flexible work; they usually worked from 7am to 2pm. Participants explained how the responsibilities made the work more difficult for administrators (i.e. principals) in school,

and it might be necessary to do some work during the weekends, an infringement of the border between domains. The following comment illustrates this view:

“No, there’s no such thing as part time or working from home. Sometimes we can go to work even at the weekends, and for me as a vice principal in a preparatory school, I am responsible for the school, just like the manager. Both of us have the same responsibilities. For me, the administrative work was hard at the beginning, but once I understood my tasks then it became easy, especially as my group was so cooperative, it was great” (Gamila, EPS).

Fatima, who worked as a public school manager, expressed that the work was exhausting and that as a manager she had full responsibility for the school, even the cleaning and maintenance, and for that reason she worked more hours to meet all these responsibilities within a specific budget and she was evaluated based on this extra work that she felt she should not be responsible for. Although she did not identify with these requirements of the job, and despite her central position within the school, she could not influence her role, as this was determined by central authority. She said:

“The nature of the systems for the school principal is so exhausting; it makes you feel limited and helpless. For example, I am a woman; I have no idea about how to get cleaning people to clean the school. My husband is not responsible for taking care of such things in my work, neither am I. They assign me a budget for that, yet I should not be responsible, I should be limited to certain responsibilities as a woman. They asked me to be responsible for air conditioning maintenance, school cleaning, cleaning people and they evaluate me for that, they give me a budget and they never ask me to come to work for extra hours, yet as I am a responsible person I feel that I have to put in extra hours to be able to do my work as well as it could be and to make the school the best possible. It’s all exhausting for a woman as a principal” (Fatima, EPS).

Participant Gamila also explained that school administration is exhausting and imposes heavy pressures and there is no flexibility. Moreover, as a vice-principal, she did not receive incentives over and beyond those given to regular employees, who had less responsibility. The quotation below illustrates this view:

“For me as vice-principal in a preparatory school, sometimes I have a lot of work pressures, yet I am being treated as a regular employee. Although I am responsible for more than one task, yet I have the same rank, same work, same evaluation, same thanks, same everything. Some people I’ve worked with till now, say that I was very good at my job. Others said, ‘It’s her job, she had to do that’. Even if I have taken extra steps they never notice, no promotions, no anything, they can only say thanks sometimes, and it was only my desire. Indeed, sometimes they assign me some work that I like to do, and my work in general is good, but it lacks flexibility. Sometimes if I have a sick kid and I need to be late, I ask the servant [housemaid] to take care of my kid because I have responsibilities in the school” (Gamila, EPS).

She also explained that the work environment varies from one school to another; in previous appointments; she had experienced situations when some school staff did not cooperate with her, and all school responsibilities were left to the school manager, which increased her workload.

“I have worked in more than one school. Sometimes I am lucky to have cooperative staff in the school, other times I am not lucky enough. The work nature is different. Sometimes the Department of Education only focus on teachers and put the load on the school directors, with all the work” (Gamila, EPS)

Another participant, a teacher, explained how she had previously benefitted from being delegated to work as a supplementary teacher in an understaffed school for a few working hours teaching classes only, without any administrative responsibility, which made it easier for her to take care of her children. However, this opportunity to teach in another school under the delegate system is no longer available in all schools. Thus, one way in which teachers could at one time exercise choices that made negotiating the work-home border easier, had been removed. She said:

“Actually when my kids were young, our school was full [i.e. fully-staffed] and there were other schools in need of teachers. [At those schools] I used to give my classes and leave, that was the good thing about working as a delegated teacher, that’s why people loved to be delegated, so I used to leave with my kids at the same time. I lived for years like that, it was a great advantage. Delegation means that you go to a school from those that have a high share of classes, such as 15 classes per week and I accepted 20 classes [in exchange] for this advantage, since I could leave early, just give my

classes and leave. If the classes ended at 9:30 or 10:00, I could leave at 11. Now delegation has become mandatory, we can't refuse. Besides, this advantage is no longer available in all schools" (Farah, EPS).

It was also noted that there were different policies and practices in different types of education. In special education, for example, there was less scope for flexibility, because it was perceived that students with special needs require constant attention and continuity of relationships:

"In this section they focus very much on the teachers because - - - they work all the time with people with special needs and in the diagnosis centre you could find people with special needs and people with disabilities. A specialized teacher should absorb all that, not like any teacher that only deals with normal [sick] children. They deal with parents' complaints and sick people and new cases all the time. As a manager I should consider all that and provide them with a good environment - - - I provide them enough flexibility within the available limits that don't affect the work quality" (Layla, EP1S).

On the other hand, vocational education was thought to require high flexibility with the workers to increase productivity. This was a work value with which participants in this setting identified. Iman, who worked as teacher and manager in a vocational education centre, explained that she had to be very flexible with her fellow teachers to achieve the highest possible productivity, because they were teaching students but at the same time, as professionals in their fields, they were dealing with customers, and had to deliver orders by a specific time. This quotation illustrates this view:

"The nature of vocational work is different than any other. Vocational work requires high flexibility because it depends on the effectiveness of the worker and the others that work. Some people say, 'I can't stand at a table all day; I need to come in at 10', so I say, "Ok no problem but you have to give me high productivity". I don't want to give them too many work hours with low productivity" (Iman, EPS).

Thus, the responses from participants working in the education sector reflect a more varied and in many ways more flexible picture than in the other two sectors investigated. However, the degree and kind of flexibility available differed from one institution to

another, depending on the type and stage of education provided. Moreover, women in senior positions carrying administrative responsibilities have less flexibility and might in fact be required to work beyond standard hours in order to complete their duties, at considerable cost to their personal lives.

4.3.2 Lack of opportunities to have autonomy

Whereas the previous theme concerned women's freedom to choose or vary the location and hours of their work, this theme reflects women's independence and decision-making power within the job, for example the degree of their control over working procedures and relationships.

The interviews showed that most women were interested and desired to craft their jobs, that is, to be able to choose, influence or modify certain aspects of their jobs, in order better to meet their practical and psychological needs, especially those related to work-life balance. In Border Theory terms, they wanted to have a more central role in which they would have more influence to negotiate and make changes to the domain and its borders. However, there were only limited opportunities to do so. A variety of reasons emerged for limitations of job crafting implementation in Saudi Arabia.

In the health sector, one participant expressed a concern that job crafting or giving the employees the power to change or control their work might be used in the wrong way, and some employees may seek their own personal benefit, at the expense of work quality, so she thought autonomy should only be given to responsible people who are trying to benefit the work. The quotation below illustrates this view:

“Such an issue has to be in the hands of responsible people since some could take an advantage of this issue for the sake of their personal benefit, so it has to be in the hands of responsible people. For example, I come at 9 am and I do all my rounds. Other people don't do that. I'd like to be free, for sure” (Nahla, HPS).

Another participant, Rafal, expressed that in the health sector, doctors especially control their own work time. For example, in some hospitals there is no check in and check out. At the same time, since a doctor is responsible for patients' health and life, their exercise of autonomy will be constrained by the demands of their work. She said:

“Well I do have control, believe it or not, we do not check in or check out here and you know if you do not show up the entire day it is fully individual responsibility here, nobody is going to come and look for you, but the patients' list is going to be waiting for you today, tomorrow or after tomorrow, right? And the more you delay, like, in a few days you have 200 patients waiting for you. So that's what I am telling you, it is pretty healthy here as they treat you as a senior, they treat you as a responsible person, they assume everybody will fulfil their own responsibilities” (Rafal, HPS).

Rafal's response shows that her level of autonomy, or the way she exercised it, was constrained not so much by imposed pressure, but by her own internalized work values, as well as a pragmatic recognition that, sooner or later, she would have to fulfil her duties, so maintaining a sense of responsibility in fulfilling them promptly was also a way of avoiding future problems. In general, given these values, she seemed to be relatively satisfied with the degree of control she had.

In contrast to Rafal's perception, other participations expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with regard to their inability to exercise autonomy in certain aspects of their work. Participant Suzana expressed that when staff are dissatisfied with things, their employers do not try to satisfy them, so there is no opportunity to change or craft one's job, and she attributed this to unbalanced gender relations.

“You know, we have a problem, I think it's all over the place, when you are dissatisfied with things, they don't try to satisfy you, they say, 'Do as I told you'. The problem is the men's power at work. It's not the budget, the budget is there, but the men have power in the place for the time being” (Suzana, HPS).

Suzana, as a doctor, might be expected to have a central position at work, based on her qualifications and expertise, but her perception was that such considerations were overridden by gender-based power-relations, which made it difficult for her to get her ideas and concerns taken seriously.

Another participant explained that, in addition to the existence of work routines, the control exercised by the administration made it hard for employees to experiment with new techniques to improve the work process. The quotation below illustrates this view:

“I’d like to [make some change], yet routine doesn’t allow you to change a thing. Your manager always says, ‘We have nothing’. If your boss is not convinced, then what can you do? I only could change something if I were a manager. You know even employees need to develop themselves and take some courses. Change is great, it gives you the space for creativity” (Nahla, HPS).

Nahla was clearly ambitious and had aspirations to challenge herself and improve her skills, but felt frustrated by lack of opportunity. In addition, Nahla saw bureaucratic controls as preventing employees' autonomy:

“It’s impossible to happen, there is a lot of routine and rules, you can do nothing by yourself, even when you are in need of something and you fill forms and so on, yet nothing is resolved, nothing can be done in a friendly way”(Nahla, HPS).

A number of interviewees did not confine their discussion to job crafting as such, but expressed their frustration over the wider problem of employees’ disempowerment in the workplace. They explained how, even in their own areas of expertise, their decision making autonomy was constrained by procedural regulations and bureaucracy, although it was clear (as shown in the following extracts) that they were striving to exert their influence where possible. It was suggested that the nature of some problems did not allow

the doctor to change or fix them without permission from the administration, especially in the private sector. For example:

“It depends on the nature of the problems. Some problems you can solve them with patients. I mean you can solve most of the problems, but if they are beyond your ability as a doctor you refer them to the management. For example, some patients have medical insurance and in some cases the insurance does not cover all costs and examinations that it is necessary to perform on them. What can you do in such a case? You refer them to the management and reach an agreement with them” (Riham, HP1S).

The same participant elaborated further on her efforts to influence matters affecting her work, and to introduce innovations which she felt would benefit patients, despite management opposition.

“I don’t have a problem. For me, I suggested some things that had not existed in the hospital. We have [patients with impaired] endocrine glands and diabetes. They for example have an insulin pump which is costly. We conflicted with the insurance for not covering it for all patients. There should be certain criteria and rooms prepared and equipped with medical staff of different specialties: health educator, nutrition specialist, diabetes specialist. I discussed this point with them to develop that, as there was no integral staff. They did not welcome the idea. They are now working on this issue because in the end it will be for their benefit” (Riham, HP1S).

Another participant similarly pointed to problems with the availability of space, medicines, and equipment to treat patients, and noted that sometimes staff do not have the authority or the opportunity to solve such problems or discover new techniques, saying:

“I used to love such [problem-solving and innovation] issues so much, but there is no space for such issues in governmental entities. Whenever you ask for something it can never be done, no matter how simple it is.” (Nahla, HPS).

Although not specifically about job crafting, such experiences reflect a problem of power distance in the institutional culture which helps to explain the lack of opportunity for employees generally -not necessarily only women- to exercise autonomy, even in matters

that affect their work. Similarly, participants working in the banking sector explained that it is difficult for an employee to introduce a new technique and start working on it; they are constrained by management requirements. Nuha was one of those who highlighted this situation.

“We in the banks, as private sector banks, it is difficult to bring something and start working on it yourself. You have to do as the management wants you to do” (Nuha, BS).

Bisma, however, perceived more opportunity to contribute new ideas. Although, if she had an idea or would like to change or improve the work processes, she had to first tell her manager, then he would at least forward these ideas for consideration:

“No, but I can go to my manager, I can tell him, Our manager is very supportive , he always like our ideas, he always makes sure our ideas go to management above, he is always willing to help and support us” (Bisma, BS).

Another participant who worked in the banking sector attributed lack of autonomy to the fact that the regulations and rules in banking are governed by an international system, which employees in this sector had to follow. This created huge difficulties in introducing new practices in banking without permission, or departing from the bank’s regulations:

“No it's not easy because I follow rules and regulations in the bank and they follow the international rules and regulations so it's not up to me to create something new. Like, the job I am in right now is mainly process, so when I process something, I have to follow, I have to be careful when I follow certain rules and regulations, I can't just go out of these rules”(Khadija,BS).

Another factor mentioned by a fellow participant in the banking sector as a reason for procedural rigidity was the concern that employees might make errors, which might have serious consequences for clients. She gave this illustration:

“No, the processes are closed and we have to stick to them. Let me tell you briefly, a new short technique in my work is that clients should bring the

applications, I don't deal with clients, I deal with applications. For example, one client is importing products from abroad. How can he guarantee that his products are going to arrive and he will receive his money? He lets the banks in both countries deal together, so in the application he writes down his name and the other client's name, he describes the products and the sum and other items related to the products, such as the port or if the products are going to arrive by plane. Such critical issues are very important and should have no mistake" (Raja, BS).

Such comments suggest a narrow view of job crafting or workplace autonomy, confined to introducing new procedures, and in such areas, there was little or no opportunity for employees to exert influence. However, in some banks there is a Complaints function, whereby the employees can share their ideas or any problems which they face with the Human Resource department, to be raised to higher management. Also there are initiative programmes to elicit employees' ideas, with the aim of making them more engaged in their work, and with a view to implementing their ideas in the work, if possible. The quotation below explains such a scheme, implemented by a female branch manager, Maysa, who showed her own willingness to listen to employees and encourage their creative thinking.

"Yes, we have a complaints department, it's called "Yammer contacts" I encourage them to put their ideas or positive criticisms and follow up what they say and handle the problems. Also, once there was an employee who had been moved from another bank and she told us about a great idea that we have applied and it was great. We have an initiative called "Let's Think"; there are many people with great ideas, so why can't we make use of them and apply such ideas?" (Maysa, BS).

As this example shows, some managers encourage their employees to be more creative. Such encouragement might extend to allowing employees to take part in making decisions at work, even if they do not have the authority to alter established procedures or craft their job, as participant Razan explained:

" If I feel that I can't control matters with my authority I raise it [to higher management]. So first I try to fix the issue by myself then if I cannot or if it's not under my authority I can raise it then. Our manager is great, He always

tells us,” You have to be a decision maker”, He always says, ‘To be above the expectations you have to wow me, you have to come up with new stuff, you have to think, you have to create things, to be creative, make creative work’, but we don’t have that option to edit the work process or working hours”(Razan, BS).

Slightly more opportunity for autonomy was reported in the education sector than in the other sectors. For example, participant Samiya, a university lecturer, explained that she had freedom in her choice of teaching methods and to create her own work environment in class without any support or assistance from the department. She described her departure from the traditional teacher-centred, didactic approach as follows:

“Yes I have the freedom to explore new techniques in my work. I don't like the traditional way of teaching, I always divide [students] into groups and ask them to make essays and logos and heads. Their leaders talk on their behalf then we have a debate about points of view using PowerPoint presentations. They represent ideas in their movies, we have workshops. We have a very good atmosphere, I never have to go to the department for help” (Samiya, EPS).

Similarly, Gamila, also working in the education sector, explained that she had some freedom to vary the teaching environment, in order to make classes more interesting for both teachers and students:

“We try to provide a suitable environment for students and teachers. Sometimes we change the classes’ places; sometimes we can let them teach outside their classes. Sometimes teachers like to go out with their students and so on. All that is okay for us” (Gamila, EPS).

However, another participant who was also working in the education sector, as a school manager, expressed that the freedom to improve or make change or develop new techniques was restricted by the need to obtain permission and to work within the system, and in the event of any fault in the work or breach of the system boundaries, the teacher would be held accountable. She described the constraints she faced with the following illustrations:

“I am very free to do that, yet it has to be within the system limits. For example, today I made a barbeque party for the girls; they had a lot of fun. I also plan to get them some food and do some camping and so on. All such issues can break the routine. Yet I can’t take them on a journey, for example, it’s impossible and it’s also impossible to stop the classes for a day and make it a fun day. Even if I wanted to get a guest speaker I have to get permission, it’s so limited. Flexibility is available within the system boundaries with very simple things and reports [but it’s a] limited freedom and the smallest mistake you may ever make will be a disaster that may cause you huge problems” (Fatima, EPS).

Moreover, as Samiya, a university lecturer, explained, employees’ freedom to improve the work or change the work process or technique only applies to teaching itself. There is no opportunity to improve or change the management plan or work process as a whole, or to be involved in the strategic planning for the department, which is bound by bureaucracy. As she explained:

“[You can change]only lectures, but you don't get to change administrative issues, that’s one of the reasons I took myself away because they only deal with papers, even their strategic plans are only papers and files, no practical application. I don’t like this way, I’m for the practical side” (Samiya, EPS).

Participant Shireen, who was working in a private education institute, similarly indicated the limited opportunity or freedom to introduce change, since teachers are required to adhere to specific procedures and are subject to administrative supervision. Autonomy was only possible in certain peripheral activities:

“The problem is that they ask us to achieve the work within certain templates/modules, I can make changes in the entertainment programme only, but for the management system I can’t” (Shireen, EP1S).

Another teacher, Uhud, added that teachers in her private college did not have chance to craft or change their work; freedom was restricted, and another difficulty was that permission for any change had to be obtained from the college dean. As in the case of her public sector counterparts, she described having scope for autonomy only in certain aspects of teaching methods and variation in the classroom environment.

“We don’t have such a system. Assuming we had such a system I don’t see how to use it; if we had it, we would need to ask for the dean’s approval first, and the freedom to develop is not in everything, I can use Power Point, and I can take the students outside to teach them”(Uhud, EP1S).

Thus, although teachers had a degree of autonomy in their work, which those in other sectors lacked, even their freedom of action was strictly limited, confined to their classroom activities. Ever administrators/ managers (e.g. school principals) had no role in influencing working terms and conditions, or wider policies and procedures of the institutions where they worked.

Summary of the findings for the first research question: Do women in Saudi

Arabia have autonomy and flexibility in their work?

The situation with regard to flexibility and autonomy was similar in all three sectors, and with similar constraints generally applying in both public and private organisations, although the latter were less homogeneous. There was little or no opportunity for flexibility in such matters as working hours. Any concessions to employees' personal circumstances, for example, permission to leave early in an emergency, depended very much on the discretion of the individual manager as border keeper and the personal relationship between manager and employee. Autonomy to make decisions at work or to introduce new procedures was similarly constrained by the prevailing bureaucratic system, which in a sense constituted a micro-domain within the larger institutional domain, which placed women in peripheral positions with little influence to shape their domains. Teachers, more than other employees, had some influence within their domain of competence, such as a degree of freedom in their choice of working methods, but only in the classroom. In other matters they were still subject to rigid institutional policies. Thus, overall, the participants' experiences suggest that women in Saudi Arabia do not have autonomy and flexibility in work. The problems described were largely about how work

is organised, and these factors would affect men too. However, perhaps there is a differential impact on women, because society assigns women responsibility for home and children, and this remains the case even if they are working; home responsibilities are expected to take priority, in a way that is not the case for men. It is also important to recognize that in Saudi Arabia, even where women have some degree of autonomy and discretion in work (as in girls' and women's' education institutions), ultimate decision-making power is located higher in the institutional or sectoral hierarchy, which is controlled by men.

4.3.3 Discussion

It emerges clearly from the above findings that generally, the participating women had peripheral status, regardless of their competence, and little or no flexibility or autonomy in their work. This was the broad picture in all three sectors, although the precise details of the constraints in operation and the rationale for them differed somewhat from one sector to another, as did the degree of women's internalization of the domain values.

All ten participants from the banking sector pointed out that there was no provision in bank policy for part-time work or any flexibility of work hours or location. Banks had rigid hours of opening, to which all staff were required to adhere, as indicated, for example by Amal and Nuha. The inflexibility of operating hours in this sector is confirmed by Munusamy et al. (2010). A few participants, such as Tamara and Maryam, indicated that they had some degree of flexibility; for example, a request to leave early due to personal circumstances, might be granted, but being informal and discretionary, it was not available to all, or in all situations. It depended on the individual and the circumstances and on the employee's relationship with her manager, as the border keeper. Only Bisma reported a generally supportive attitude towards such needs. This situation was rationalized by women such as Maysa, who identified with work domain values, in

terms of the level of service that needed to be provided in a highly competitive sector, and concerns about confidentiality, perceived to preclude location flexibility. Thus, the temporal and physical borders between home and work appeared to be strong. However, it seemed that the strength and permeability of borders did not apply equally to both domains. As indicated by the lack of flexibility in working hours and locations, and the highly discretionary response to requests for time off in emergency, home needs were generally not allowed to enter or interfere with the work domain. In contrast, work could and did enter into the home domain. This was shown, for example, by Maryam's reference to working overtime, in the evening and at weekends; times when women might otherwise expect to be involved in the home domain.

In a Western context, it has similarly been reported that women in banking find it difficult to make "family-friendly" working arrangements, and this has been related to dominance of men in the organisational structure (Crompton & Harris, 1998). However, these authors suggest that on an individual level, women accommodate their work situation by having fewer children and a less stereotyped division of labour in the home. The Saudi situation, however, is not consistent with such division. Although some of the younger women interviewed in this sector did not have children, such as Khadija and Bisma, others, such as Maryam and Bayan, had as many as four, five or six. Moreover, Saudi cultural expectations of women's roles (to be discussed further in a later section) suggest that it may be more difficult for these women than for their Western counterparts to improve work-life balance by adjusting roles in the home domain. Maali, for example, referred to women's responsibilities for their children's schools and study. This recalls evidence from Samiya, in section 4.1, of women taking steps to get their children into "good" schools. Moreover, in the case of daughters, who would by law and culture be attending all-female schools, liaison with the school and discussion with teachers (who would not be allowed to have meetings with fathers) would be left to the mothers. For both male and

female children, supervising their homework would be mothers' role, as part of their socially assigned responsibility for all aspects of childcare.

This double burden of work and family responsibilities was all the more problematic for some women, such as Maryam and Amal, due to the relative permeability of the psychological border between the two domains, with spillover of the negative emotions caused by work stress, as well as work duties themselves, impinging on their home life.

Spillover of negative emotions and attitudes from work to home life is commonly documented (Clark, 2000). In these cases, as noted above, it seems that the border protecting the work domain was stronger than that protecting the home domain (i.e. work could impinge on home, but not vice versa). Given Saudi women's strong identification with the home domain (it was seen in section 4.1 that even women who were intrinsically motivated to work still prioritized family and home, consistent with Saudi culture) this is likely to cause stress and a sense of poor work/family balance. If flexibility is not possible, it is better for employees to have strong borders protecting both domains. According to Border Theory, if it is not possible or desirable for an organisation to change its culture, then borders should be kept strong in both directions so that employees can maintain balance (Clark, 2000). In the Saudi banking sector, however, this principle appeared not to be applied.

In the health sector, too, it appeared that official policies made no provision for part time or flexible work, and there was very little autonomy; as expressed, for example, by Sabah, Suzana and Elham, women were bound by clinic hours, on- call rotations, and standard procedures. Participants such as Rafal, Suzana and Riham explained this situation in terms of both practical requirements (for example, not leaving work to build up -Rafal) and ethical obligations. They noted that the nature of working in the health sector,

especially in hospitals, requires employees to provide a high quality of service with no mistakes, as their work concerns the health and the life of the patient. A doctor is required to be available in the hospital full time, responding to medical health problems presented by patients, including history taking, diagnosis and treating patients, performing operations and specialist investigations. It can be suggested that these women had strongly internalized the values associated with their work, and this tendency may have been increased by their identification with the caring aspect of their work, which in Saudi culture is one of the reasons why women are directed into medicine as a career considered suitable to what is supposedly their nature. Similarly, Eamslie and Hunt (2009) found that women working in caring roles identified similarly with this aspect of both their work and home roles, resulting in their having relatively weak borders between the two domains. As these authors note, this can be seen as an example of the ways in which people position themselves in relation to social structures.

It could be argued that the problem of women's perceived obligation of continued presence and care in the health sector is actually related to structural issues, such as staffing levels and the balance among specialisms. Suzana, for example, viewed part-time work as unfeasible because she assumed that even if she worked part-time, she would still have the same number of patients and the same responsibilities as at present. She showed no conception of the notion of working as part of a team, such that other members would fulfil those responsibilities when she was absent; indeed, the current situation would appear not to allow such a possibility. As Zurn et al. (2004) point out, economic, socio-demographic, cultural, and geographical factors play a part in shaping and changing societies and hence have a direct or indirect impact on health workforce issues. According to Al-Homayan et al. (2013) Saudi Arabia has been continuously suffering from lack of Saudi healthcare workers up until today. Statistics by the Ministry of Health show that foreign health workers make up about 45.80% of the total health care workers. Thus, staff

shortages are one of the reasons which affect the lack of autonomy and flexibility, although women working in the sector, as noted above, appeared to have internalized the values that limited their influence in the work domain.

Another issue that emerged from the interviews was disempowerment in the workplace for women in the health sector; even in their areas of expertise, their decision making autonomy was constrained by bureaucracy and procedural regulations. This was reflected, for example, in Suzana's complaints that managers did not listen to employees' needs and concerns, and Nahla and Riham's experiences of meeting resistance to their ideas for improvement. While the latter expressed such issues solely in terms of the structural hierarchy of the organisation, Suzana specifically added a gender dimension, pointing out that decision-making power lay mostly in the hands of men.

This raises the question of these women's central or peripheral status in the work domain. According to Border Theory, expertise should be a factor contributing to central status, which in turn should increase the individual's power to negotiate borders to meet their needs. For Saudi female healthcare workers, however, it seems that this applied, if at all, only to a very limited extent. Any negotiating power derived from their expertise seemed to be outweighed by structural constraints, and by their gender, both of which acted to distance them from decision-making power. In this respect, the findings confirm literature attesting to the part played by organisational culture in facilitating work – life balance (Thompson et al, 1999).

Compared to their counterparts in banking and health, interviewees in the education sector reported more varied experiences. On the one hand, as exemplified by Layla, they agreed that there was no explicit policy of part time or flexible work. Moreover, as shown by the experiences of Gamila and Fatima, those in leadership roles (e.g. vice principal, school

manager), in particular could face the strain of spillover from the work domain to the home domain when they had to work extra hours, or during weekends, although this was partly driven by their own internalized work values, rather than any formal requirement. On the other hand, teachers and lecturers such as Samiya reported a degree of autonomy, albeit limited to their practices within the classroom. As for flexibility, this was available more in universities than schools, and as noted in relation to the banking sector, it appeared to depend on the discretion of individual managers. Uhud, Shireen, and Aisha, for example, who worked in universities, had some freedom to leave early, if they were not actually teaching, although Uhud also noted that administrative responsibilities might keep her at university for the full working day. Farah, a school teacher, however, enjoyed less flexibility, especially with the change in policy related to working as a “delegated teacher”. However, two managers, Layla from a special needs school, and Iman from a vocational institute, spoke of their own efforts to provide subordinates with some flexibility; in their managerial roles, these women were not only border crossers but also border keepers, and their efforts to support subordinates in this way reflects the other-domain awareness they had acquired as a result of their own experiences as wives and mothers.

It is interesting that, of the three sectors investigated, education, the only completely gender segregated environment, appeared to offer more flexibility and autonomy for working women than either banking or health, where decision making is male dominated. Although central (ministry level) decision-making is male-dominated, within schools and universities, women had some degree of autonomy in day-to-day arrangements.

This may, in Border Theory terms, relate to the notion of other - domain awareness on the part of border keepers (a rare example in the banking sector was found in the claim of participant Bisma, who perceived her employers as sensitive to employees’ circumstances.

According to Clark (2000) border keepers such as supervisors and spouses have their own definitions of the contents of the 'work' and 'family' constraints, based on their limited experience, and may accordingly control the domains and the borders in such a way that border crossers are denied flexibility to deal with conflicting demands. However, negotiation of such issues by border keepers and crossers can be facilitated by frequent communication, enhancing understanding. The extent to which domain members are aware of and respond to an individual's situation in the other domain (such as a supervisor at work being aware of employees' family situation) is a factor that can affect the border crosser's ability to comfortably negotiate the bridging of the domains. A related factor is domain members' commitment to the individual, and their care for her as a whole person, beyond immediate needs, and their willingness to support her in her other - domain responsibilities. "Commitment is manifested by caring about the border - crosser as a total person, not just in terms of how the border - crosser fills one's immediate needs. Commitment is manifested when domain members support the border - crossers in their other domain responsibilities" (Clark, 2000: 763). It may be that in the education sector, where employees reported to other women, managers (such as school principals or university department heads) were more aware of employees' home responsibilities, as appears to be the case for Layla and Iman, referred to earlier.

Looking over the findings in this section as a whole, based on the Border Theory, the findings clearly show that physical and temporal barriers between domains were strong in all sectors, in the sense that there was little flexibility of work hours and area of work location. Women experienced to different degrees the spillover of work to home. However, this depended to some extent on the sector, and on specific posts within the sector (e.g. sales in the banking sector, administrative jobs in education). Moreover, any flexibility depended on supervisors' other domain awareness and commitment to employees (whether individually, or in institutional policy). Another factor is central or

peripheral status in the work domain, which determines employees' ability to alter domains and borders to suit their needs. Contrary to Border Theory (or amending it) some of these women had a hybrid position. They had internalized work values and were competent in their fields, which should give them influence, but in terms of interaction with other domain members (especially decision - making) they were peripheral, more so in sectors involving men and women, where men still dominate decision making.

4.4 Question 2: Do women in KSA desire to have autonomy and flexibility in their work? What might be the benefits for their work-life balance?

In order to examine this question, I asked the participants if they would like to control their work, and what benefits they thought they would get from having such control. The data collected in relation to this question are therefore presented under two headings: desire for job crafting and flexible work, and benefits of job crafting and flexible work.

4.4.1 Desire for job crafting and flexible work

Job crafting and flexible work can be seen as techniques for exercising influence over a domain and its borders, shaping roles and conditions within the domain and making it easier to negotiate border – crossing. The most direct and obvious impact of these techniques would be in the work domain. However, they might also - through adjustment of physical, temporal or psychological borders – influence women's comfort and opportunity for influence within the home domain. The interviews illustrate that most women had an interest in crafting their jobs, even though they did not have autonomy to do so. The following typical quotation illustrates their interest.

“If they gave me the right and allowed me to, I would like to control my work in terms of where and when I work” (Shireen, EP1S).

In some cases, the desire for autonomy and job crafting were related to women's ambitions and desire to work more effectively. For example, Suzana explained that having

autonomy and solving problems by herself was in her nature. She preferred to be independent in her work and to pursue success in her career, relying on her own competence and sense of purpose, but found herself constrained by bureaucracy:

“Actually, this is part of my personality, I am an independent person, so whenever I have to face any problem, I try to solve it myself but you know some rules and regulations push you to follow them”(Suzana, HPS).

A banking- sector participant who occupied a senior position as section manager similarly commented that if she had the opportunity to craft her job as she wished, she would welcome it, and would be able and willing to put in whatever hours were needed to do her work effectively:

“This idea is valuable, it would organise my life more than now. I tell you if they allowed me, I could work till 7, I have no problem” (Nuha, BS).

Participant Raja was similarly motivated by work-related ambitions. She expressed a desire for job crafting and changing some work relations in order to improve her productivity at work:

“Yes, sure I would like it, I could do my work better, also change the relations and the functional hierarchy, but right now I can't step over the other people” (Raja, BS).

Other participants, in contrast, favoured flexibility for family reasons. For example, Khadija anticipated a future need for flexible or part time work so she could manage other duties like taking care of children (although she had none yet) and home responsibilities, as that would help her to achieve a balance between work and home. The following comment illustrates her views.

“No we don't have part time jobs, but if it was an option, then I would have taken it. It's okay for me now since I don't have children. It's not too much but I don't think it'll be easy for me once I have children, to enable for me to

take care of my kids and work only 8 hours, it's not flexible. If I had children, I don't think that I would be working for several hours. I want to find a job that works for me" (Khadija, BS).

For Tamara, the desire to craft her work was due to the of strain caused by impaired health, alongside dissatisfaction with the work, on her growing family responsibilities (she had four children):

"Yes, I would like to decrease my working hours; the routine is boring, my responsibilities have got bigger and my health is not as it used to be before" (Tamara, HPS).

Another participant, Rafal, said that due to the nature of the work, which required working for long hours and a high workload, she was planning to work for a number of years, then in the future work part time or fewer hours, if possible:

"Well it is in my future plan, to be honest. I plan to work a certain number of years in my position and probably at some point I might work part time. I am aware now that they do not give part time but they may make some exceptions if, you know, you have issues" (Rafal, HPS).

One participant who worked as a lecturer perceived that she already exercised autonomy to some extent, because she did what she perceived to be necessary, without waiting to be asked, and indicated clearly that she would welcome further opportunities of this kind.

"It's [Flexible work is] a sweet deal if I could get it. Basically I do it right now because I do my work when nobody has asked me to do it" (Aisha, EPS).

Some women desired to craft their work because they did not want to be constrained by boring routine. They felt that job crafting would give them the power to change or improve their work process, which might decrease their responsibilities and break the work routine, or offer them new opportunities. An education administrator, Layla, expressed that:

“Every stage of your life has its own nature and needs, I like not to be committed to a certain routine work after a while, I feel that after I finish my doctorate I won’t be looking for routine work since I like to develop”(Layla, EPS).

Not all employees, however, wished to change the workplace or the work routine; some preferred to retain the status quo because they were used to it and used to the people with whom they worked. Zaina explained,

“I don’t want to go to another place or change the nature of the work process, or working times, I already knew the people here and we’ve adapted together very well. It’s true that there are new things happened such as computers which was very normal to happen, it’s routine, but to change the place and see new people, doctors, patients.. I don’t think so, I believe that’s difficult to do” (Zaina, HPS).

Bisma agreed; she actually felt comfortable with the certainty produced by rules and instructions:

“I don’t want to change or control my work, I like someone to tell me to work from this time to this time” (Bisma, BS).

Similarly, while some participants who felt a need for flexibility favoured part time work, not all agreed. Two participants expressed that part time work was not convenient for them, as they felt that if they had free time they should be at work, not at home, and part time work would make them unproductive. One of these women based her view on past experience of such a situation:

I used to work part time, when I first came here, I worked 4 hours a day for 3 to 4 months. I don’t like it, it made me unproductive. I don’t know why, but when I work full time, I can go home and be more productive, because I come back home feeling I finished half of the day and I feel I’m still empty. What am I going to do? I say, Oh I have time’ but actually that free time I didn’t do anything, but when I work full time I go back home and I can do everything (Bisma, BS).

The other participant referred to her workload, which was barely manageable in full time work; she thought if the work hours were shorter, she would not be able to perform all

her duties, and it would be counter-productive:

“I don’t like this way, the problem is about how to define part time work. For example I work full time and I can’t get done with my work. If I had less time then what would be the situation? It will never be enough and you will end up working all the time, I feel it’s better to work full time in one shift”(Maysa, BS).

Another reason for favouring the status quo was that some women thrive on pressure.

Raja was one such:

“I like to be stressed; this way makes me able to produce more work. Up to now I feel that eight hours are great, so far I am okay with that”(Raja, BS)

4.4.2 Benefits of job crafting and flexible work

Participants perceived a variety of potential benefits from having autonomy and flexibility at work, for their psychological well-being, work-life balance, and effectiveness in their work. Some women expressed that having more freedom would allow employees to be more creative and to enjoy their work more. Participant Nahla was one of those who expressed this view.

“Leaving a space of freedom helps you to be creative and enjoy your work, yet cooperation is the most significant issue. In Arab countries women hold responsibilities for everything while men have nothing to do, they do nothing to help. If it was fair, we could be more comfortable, if they cancelled “on call” for women it would be better for us, yet without deducting a lot of our salary” (Nahla, HPS).

A participant working in the public health sector expressed that she liked the idea of flexible work, and in particular would like to work part time, as she would have enough time to maintain a balance and be productive in both areas; she could concentrate on and give her full attention to her patients and her children as well. The following comment illustrates her views:

“I have not tried part time. I would like it in theory because I think it would give me more time to focus on my children, which is what I want. You know if I was working four or five hours, I would work to fit the five hours right, but I would not be able to finish it at part time, but if I work all day I will do all day service, so I think that if I did work part time I think I would be happy with it because it will give me the time to focus on my group of patients as well as go back early to my kids and focus on them” (Rafal, HPS).

Several women particularly wished for a small reduction in working hours, which they felt could improve employees’ work life balance. Sabah, for example, expressed the view that she would benefit from having more time to pursue other interests.

“Time management depends on my work. If my working hours were fewer I would do many things, I would change things, it would be different. I have many things on my to do list but I have no time. I would like to go to the gym but I have no time”(Sabah, HPS).

Other participants thought that a reduction of working hours for women might help to achieve or improve the balance between their home and work responsibilities:

“Thanks to Allah I can balance between my family and work, but actually it would be better if, for example, the working day’s hours were reduced” (Maryam, BS).

Nahla agreed, suggesting:

“It’s better to decrease working hours for women, an hour less, they should give us flexibility so things would be better” (Nahla. HPS).

Even a small reduction in working hours might make a significant difference to a woman, according to Nuha:

“An hour for me is excellent. I can achieve work at least. If I start my work at 10am, it is better as it gives me space. I can do something in that one hour” (Nuha, BS).

Whilst some women would be satisfied with a slight change in working hours, others, such as Lina, suggested that the option to work part time or from home might make life

easier, with less stress, and less workload. Lina thought that in such a situation, she would be more relaxed, benefiting her mental and emotional well-being. As she explained:

“I am willing if I have the option to work part-time or from 7 to 12 or maybe if I could do my work from home, that would make my life easier and I would be relaxed and it would make life easy and interesting with more free hours”(Lina, HPS).

Another benefit of job crafting is that the employee is empowered to be a decision maker, as Aisha commented:

“I would like to change in terms of relations; because in terms of decision making I am not empowered to make decisions. Everything takes a million signatures, then they might say no!!”(Aisha, EPS).

Job crafting was also perceived as likely to decrease the work stress and make it more comfortable psychologically, which would help to improve the quality of work, as one health sector employee suggested:

“ [It would help] A lot, at least, you will not lose your nerve when you are stressed so you will be relaxed in your work, this is one [benefit]. If you are relaxed in your work, you will feel comfortable and psychological, this will improve the quality of work and the quality of taking care of patients; a stressed doctor will reflect her stress on the patient” (Suzana, HPS).

In addition to decreasing the work pressure, job crafting may increase employee productivity, but only if they shape their tasks, in terms of the content and the duration in the right way without affecting the work in an unacceptable way, as one education sector participant argued:

“It would be beneficial to my school. It would make those working with me feel more comfortable, Productivity may be better without work stress, but I can [only] change the working system if employees take responsibility and don't use change badly, because if employees use this change badly, it will not carry any benefit for the institution” (Shireen, EP1S).

Another participant, Raja, similarly saw the potential of job crafting to enhance productivity:

“I would be more comfortable, more productive, I could organise the way I receive applications, I could manage myself and others, I could organise my work more. For now it's more like randomly working, but if that happened I could organise better and give better work” (Raja, BS).

Summary of the findings for the second research question: Do women in KSA desire to have autonomy and flexibility in their work? What might be the benefits for their work-life balance?

The majority of women participants were keen to have more flexibility in their work, for example to work shorter hours or even part time (as in the cases of Khadija and Rafal), thereby strengthening the temporal border between the work and home domains. They also welcomed the idea of having more autonomy, i.e influence to use their competence to work in the way they deemed appropriate, and to introduce new ideas (see, for example, Suzana and Raja). Only a few, in contrast, expressed satisfaction with the status quo, either because they had internalized the values of the work domain (Bisma) or because they feared that change might actually increase pressure; for example, that they would be required to fulfil a full day's workload within a shorter working day (Maysa). They saw flexible work as affecting the nature of the borders between domains, but not the role demands within domains. Most perceived that such opportunities would benefit them practically and psychologically, by alleviating the stress of multiple responsibilities and allowing time for leisure (as in the cases of Lina and Sabah, quoted earlier). It was also expected to benefit the work and the employer, as women would be empowered with more central status and influence as decision makers (Aisha), and this would release their creativity and allow them to be more productive in their work (see for example, Nahla and Raja).

4.4.3 Discussion

It appears clear that Saudi women had limited flexibility or control and a lack of opportunity to control their work or apply the concept of job crafting in all three sectors. Consistent with the views expressed in response to Q1(section 4.2), Khadija, a bank employee stated clearly. “No, we don’t have part time jobs”, for example, while other women spoke of flexible work as only a hypothetical possibility, rather than a current option, using expressions such as “ If they allowed me” (Shireen, Nuha), “ If it was an option” (Khadija), and “ If I could get it” (Aisha).

Nevertheless, there was a strong desire among most participants for more autonomy and ability to craft their work, as well as to have more flexibility in matters such as working hours. The strength of such feelings differed from one woman to another, however, depending on participants’ personalities, as well as their family circumstances and the nature of the job. The influencing factors seemed to interact in complex ways, with no single circumstance producing a consistent pattern of responses; the same factor could affect different women in different ways. For example, among those who favoured flexibility, there were women such as Suzana, Nuha, and Raja, who were career-oriented and ambitious, who saw flexibility as an opportunity to be more active and productive, while others saw it as offering the potential to reduce their working hours in order to alleviate strain (Rafal), or as release from a boring routine. Interestingly, those who talked of boring routine, Tamara and Layla, were both administrators, but other women’s wish for flexibility cut across sectors and job seniority.

Number of children, likewise, seemed to provide no clear explanation of women’s attitudes towards the possibility of flexible work. On the one hand, those who favoured the status quo, or at least did not want to work part-time, tended to be women with no children (Bisma, Raja, Zaina) or have small families (Maysa), which might make it easier

to balance work and home life. On the other hand, those who favoured flexibility were more diverse in their family circumstances ranging, for example, from Khadija, who had no children but envisaged difficulty balancing home and work in future, when she had a family, to Layla, who despite having five children, had embarked on a PhD and was looking for future challenges. Thus, what appeared to be important for these women was not necessarily any individual factor per se, but how the woman responded to it, which was related in part to her own personality traits. For example, Maysa explained that the pursuit of autonomy in her work and solving problems by herself was in her nature. On the other hand, some participants (Zaina HPS, Bisma BS, Raja BS) did not seek autonomy or greater flexibility; they were comfortable with the current working hours and work environment. Clearly, individual desires and personality affect the extent to which women wish to control and recast their work and see this as necessary for achievement and enjoyment of work. In this respect, the findings are in line with the findings of Tims and Bakker (2010), who argued that job crafting that enables employees to fit their jobs to their personal knowledge, skills and abilities on the one hand and to their preferences and needs on the other hand, may be facilitated by job and individual characteristics. However, the desire for autonomy and job crafting for women may conflict with the nature of the work, and employees' responsibilities and duties, and was difficult to achieve in a way that did not conflict with work policy.

The negative relationships reported between individual differences in need to excel professionally and flexitime indicate that when someone perceives their working environment to value their physical presence at work, they will be less likely to adopt available flexible policies (Shockley & Allen, 2010). Moreover, according to the same source, flexible work practices increase the uncertainties of a fixed job, reduce personal control over task and can lead to emotional disconnection from the milieu in the workplace. Participants, however, did not voice such reservations, but elaborated on the

benefits they expected would occur if they had more flexibility and autonomy. Most participants explained a variety of benefits they expected to gain by implementing job crafting or having flexibility in their work, such as reduced stress (e.g. Lina and Suzana), and more opportunity for decision making (e.g. Aisha). However, since they did not yet experience such conditions, it is difficult to judge at this stage what the actual impacts might be.

The benefits they anticipated were consistent with those reported in the literature, in terms of a reduced burden and strain at home (Rafal, Maryam, and Nahla, for example), and ability to be more creative and productive at work (Shireen and Raja are examples). The views expressed echo the claims of, for example, Hill et al. (2001), who argue that perceived flexibility in the timing and location of work is related to benefits in both personal and family and business terms. The feeling of having job flexibility, provided the workweek is reasonable, helps employees to balance personal and family benefit more effectively and also means employees can be more productive, as they can work longer hours before work-family balance is adversely affected (Hill et al., 2001). Hoeven and Zoonen (2015) stated that flexible work designs are positively associated with well-being of workers through improved work-life balance, autonomy, and effective discourses.

In addition to flexibility in working hours, women also showed a keen interest in job crafting, in the sense of having the power to control certain aspects of their jobs, including changing procedures and relationships. Raja was one such participant, whose perceptions in this respect appear to support the suggestions of Berg et al. (2008) who propose various positive outcomes of job crafting for the individual, including fulfilment of value identities, achievement, enjoyment, and meaningful interactions with the people who benefit from one's work. Job crafting is reportedly a good remedy for employees to enhance their work motivation and well-being. According to Tims and Bakker (2010),

when employees are able to shape their work environment in a way that provides an appropriate degree of challenge and opportunity to explore their abilities, they experience a variety of health and psychological benefits. For this reason, they and other writers such as Vogt et al. (2016) advocate such opportunities. According to Niessen et al. (2016) job crafting is self-oriented behaviour related positively to person-job fit. In contrast, when individuals perceive a lack of autonomy associated with extrinsic motivation, this can lead to feelings of being pressured to think and behave in ways that are determined by others (McKenna et al., 2016), a feeling that permeated the responses of several interviewees (such as Raja, who noted that she could not step over people). It has been suggested by some Western writers that a key technique for negotiating borders between domains is employees 'managing expectations' by communicating clearly to border keepers what can be expected of them, and what they expect in return (McDowall & Lindsay, 2014). However, such an approach seems, at present, structurally and culturally out of reach for the Saudi women participating in this study. Structurally, for example, participants were constrained by organisational hierarchies and exclusion from decision-making, Suzana, for example, spoke of being forced to follow certain rules and regulations, while Aisha complained of lack of empowerment and the need to go through extensive procedures to obtain approval for any idea or request. Culturally, the main constraint is stereotyped gender roles, which, as Nahla pointed out, place all household responsibilities on women's shoulders, a situation that led Khadija to doubt her ability to continue with her current working arrangements, once she had children. In this sense it could be suggested that there is a limitation of Border Theory as applied in a culture such as Saudi Arabia, since it does not sufficiently account for the structural and cultural constraints that limit the ability to negotiate borders, especially for women. This issue will be explored in further detail in the next section.

4.5 Question 3: What barriers do women in Saudi Arabia face to achieving work-life balance?

The question of the barriers women in Saudi Arabia face in achieving work-life balance is essentially concerned with factors that constrain their ability to negotiate the border between the two domains. In order to examine this question, I asked the participants about difficulties that women face in achieving a good work-life balance. This included discussion about the chores the women do at home, what they do in their leisure time, also whether they had experienced any family or work emergency and if so, how they dealt with it. Moreover, participants were asked if they faced any conflict between their job and family responsibilities and what they saw as the key issues for them in balancing between work and the family. Women were asked about the extent of the effect of such factors on their life and work, why they occurred, and how they dealt with them, as well as about other barriers they faced. Factors that emerged included culture, religion, transportation, the stress of work responsibilities, family roles and responsibilities, and the lack of childcare facilities. As will be seen, these structural and cultural factors influence whether women can enter the work domain at all, and if so, on what terms. They influence women's behaviours and roles in each domain, the extent of their engagement with domain values, and the power of the border keepers in influencing or even controlling such matters.

4.5.1 Culture

This category reflects women's perceptions that certain deeply-rooted social norms and values constrain their ability to negotiate a comfortable work-life balance. It should be noted that this category is distinct from the "Religion" category, presented in section 4.5.2, because the participants did not explicitly link these issues to religion in the responses cited. Rather, they reflect the tribal, patriarchal origins of Saudi society. The category comprises codes such as men's control/authority, conservatism, shame, and social change.

Most of the participants perceived cultural attitudes and norms as posing barriers to women's work-life balance, particularly traditional expectations of women's roles, and cultural attitudes toward certain occupations. Such attitudes can create cultural pressures that may, through the actions of border keepers such as spouse, employers, and even the government, prevent women entering the work domain, or restrict them to certain occupations. A common problem reported was the traditional view that a woman's place is essentially in the home, so that families disapproved of women working and were unsupportive. Some participants said that although they had not personally experienced culture as a problem, as their families supported them to work, they knew of challenges faced by work colleagues who left work within a few months of getting married, because their husbands were unsupportive. Participant Maysa reported the experience of former colleagues:

“I haven't faced a problem, I knew what I was going to do and I was prepared. Some people leave work when they get married since their husbands refuse to allow them to work. Some keep their job, and the family knows my work situation, I remember once or twice, some left their jobs only months after marriage” (Maysa, BS).

Tamara expressed that traditional views of domestic roles take first priority for married women in KSA, because their husbands view work outside the home as a dereliction of domestic duties, particularly once the couple have children (Tamara had four). Thus, even if women are allowed to work, they will be made to feel guilty for doing so:

“Traditions and domestic roles come in the first place. My husband always says, ‘How can you go out and leave your kids and house?’ and so on” (Tamara, H PS).

Sabah, drawing on friends' experiences, elaborated on the reasons for husbands' lack of support for their wives' careers for various reasons, like objecting to their working in a mixed environment where men and women work together, or inconvenient working hours,

(for example, shift work, as in the health sector, might mean that a woman was not at home when her husband or children returned home and expected her attention), and some were simply forbidden to work by their husbands, with no clear rationale:

“Sure there are obstacles. My friends worked easily before marriage then things got difficult after marriage and their husbands stopped them from working, because of transportation, or working with males is forbidden, or they rejected the shift. Some people have problems because of the shift, or their husbands refuse to let them go to work just for no reason”(Sabah, HPS).

Moreover, Duaa explained how her sister’s career was curtailed by her husband, who forced her to leave work even though she was highly skilled in her specialism and she had been awarded a scholarship to study. Her husband demanded that she put the home and childcare responsibilities first, and also was sensitive to the implication that he was unable to provide adequately for the family, which would contravene social norms attached to masculinity

“My sister got 4.30 GPA in her specialization and she had a scholarship that her husband refused. She worked for two years and then her husband made her leave her work. At first he complained about her going out all the time for work and so, then the scholarship came and he said no, the work was a problem and the children came, so he asked her to stop working, and he said, ‘We don’t need the salary’. That’s what I am talking about, how do they feel about work?” (Duaa, EPS).

Another participant, Samiya, added that some men are afraid of women asserting themselves and being more independent, thereby eroding the man's control and authority, which is why they did not allow to their wives to work:

“Some men don’t allow their women to work. They think that women who work will always take control and they feel afraid of that, so they don’t allow them to work in general”(Samiya, EPS).

Also, she recalled instances when the husband did not allow his wife to keep her salary, but claimed some or all of it for the household:

“Sometimes women work and husbands take their salary or she has to get certain items with her salary. These are real cases around us” (Samiya, EPS).

Uhud, also, noted men's attempt to control their wives' salaries, so there was no benefit for them in continuing to work:

“Some women leave their work because their husbands always annoy them and ask to take their salaries” (Uhud, EP1S).

Despite these negative experiences, there were also indications of social change, manifested in husbands' more liberal, understanding attitude. For example, another participant, who worked in the banking sector, explained that if the husband is flexible and he understands women's work and needs, and particularly if he is educated, then women will not face such difficulties. However, if a man is very conservative and opposes his wife when she wants to go out, then it is hard for her to work. A husband's support and understanding is very important, she explained:

“[I asked about barriers that women face] As a general rule I would say yes, there are problems and challenges for women to work here, I think all of those who work, you know in banking they have, you know a very strict culture and domestic rules. It depends on who you married, right? If you're married to a happy, flexible guy and at the same level of education as you, then you are ok, but if you are married to this person where every day is a challenge for him to let you out of the door, then it is a challenge” (Rafal, HPS).

On the other hand, some men did not object to women working as such but they imposed restrictions, such as not allowing them to be taken to work by a hired driver. The husband would take his wife and to and from work, but this meant she would have to wait for him until he finished his work. Uhud thought this was demeaning to women:

“Some people say, “If you don't want a driver then I will drive you”, then she is subject to her husband's times, she can't leave even if she has finished with her work, she has to wait for her husband. I believe such traditions are wrong. Why can't women just leave? We are big enough to move by ourselves” (Uhud, EP1S).

As the participants' experiences show, the way roles within the family are construed is a key determinant of women's ability to enjoy some flexibility as border crossers. Because the Saudi socio-cultural setting gives men (father, husband or guardian) power over women's choice, a woman's ability to negotiate borders will depend very much on how these border-keepers choose to exert their power. Those who maintain traditional assumptions about women's role (whether on an essentialist rationale or through social construction) may directly forbid them to work outside the home, or may impose other restrictions that reduce women's power of negotiation. Such actions may constrain women practically (for example through the double burden of career and domestic work) or psychologically by inducing feelings of guilt about the wife's engagement with the work domain. Some women, however, perceived a gradual change in men's attitude, under the pressure of modern life. Some men used to refuse to allow women to work, but now they have changed their minds, and accept women working because of the change in the way of life and the rising cost of living, such as children's and school demands, which the husband alone cannot afford. Therefore, they accepted the need for their wives to work. This quotation illustrates this view:

“There are some people who have no culture, they refuse to let women work, but generally, most of them now allow women to work, since the life conditions are different now. There are increasing demands, the demands are more than what's available. This new generation has a million demands that no man can afford alone, so if you want a certain good level for your kids then you have to work harder” (Gamila, EPS).

However, Gamila added that this financial pressure does not apply to everyone; some people are satisfied with their income, and they are not willing to change their life, which is their personal choice, but, if the husband has a good income where he can meet the family's needs, then there is no pressure for women to work:

“But some people just are satisfied with their levels and not willing to work harder or get more money, but if he has a great position and enough money to fulfil the needs of his wife and kids, why not?” (Gamila, EPS).

Another group of responses focused on traditional attitudes towards some kinds of work as unacceptable for women, because they brought them into contact with men, or with the public domain traditionally reserved for men. For example, one woman said it was considered shameful for a woman to work as a doctor, and for this reason a woman would accept any person who asked to marry her, because she had no prospect of better options:

“ People used to say, “Who would like to marry a female doctor? ”, as if it’s a shame to be a doctor and the fact of being a doctor forces you to accept anything just because you have no choice”(Nahla, HPS).

A bank employee, Nuha, expressed that for women to work in a bank used to be regarded as shameful. However, she thought views were changing and opportunities opening for women:

“Presently I can say, we considered that shameful... I mean as long as we know what it we are doing, and we respect the way of thinking and the way ahead of it is clear I don’t think there will be anything that stops it or hinders it” (Nuha, BS).

She saw this as part of a wider culture change, with more open attitudes, which made it easier for women to have successful careers:

“Even our culture now has become much wider and the woman’s role exists in relation to the position she is in. You may see her in any position. The situation has become easier and wider” (Nuha, BS).

It is notable, however, that Nuha, alone among the banking sector interviewees, worked in an all-female environment, in a branch specifically dedicated to providing a segregated environment for female customers and employees. Thus, in her own case, the more

tolerant altitude she describes extended only as far as acceptance of her working, but in practice, she was still somewhat restricted by the traditional norm of segregation.

Another participant, however, noted that the effects of culture differed from one family to another; some families retained traditional negative views towards women working, whereas others were more understanding. This quotation illustrates this view:

“The culture depends, because every family is different, because some people don’t believe in women going to work, some girls have to struggle to make their family understand that they have to work. I am one who feel I am blessed, thank God”(Bisma, BS).

Another participant, Farah, emphasised the effect of family role models and expectations, illustrating the point by commenting on her expectations for her own daughter:

“Sure, culture as a society has an effect, it has a role. For example I would like my daughter to be a teacher too and so on” (Farah, EPS).

Farah, a teacher herself, worked in a segregated environment, as do all teachers in Saudi Arabia. This may have contributed to the acceptability (to herself and her family) of her working, and in turn, to her comfort in contemplating her daughter following suit.

4.5.1.1 Discussion

One of the impacts of culture, as Essers and Benschop (2009) note, is to influence how gender is ‘ done’ , meaning the way people present their femininity and masculinity in particular contexts (Tordo,1996). In the Saudi context, this traditionally means a clear division of gender roles, which assigns men primacy in the public sphere and gives women responsibility for the home sphere. This gender discourse required women to maintain honour and avoid uncaring shame by the preservation of chastity, purity and modesty (Essers & Benschop, 2009) by restraint from public participation and submissiveness to male authority. Although, as the above-cited extracts have shown, the

women participating in this study experienced pressures arising from these socio-cultural norms, the extent and nature of such effects depended on each individual women's personal circumstances.

The findings showed that, consistent with literature on job crafting, the potential and desire for autonomy and flexibility depend to some extent on the individual's characteristics. This personal dimension is an area which is neglected by Border Theory, which focuses on the approaches individuals use to manage the work and family domains and the borders between them. It does not take account of the personal status of individuals, which may generate different perspectives on the balance between work and life. In the Saudi context, salient aspects of the personal status of a woman include education level, financial income, age, the social level of the family, whether her family are open minded or conservative, her perspective towards home and work responsibility, and her perspective towards flexible work.

An issue that emerges from this study as very important for Saudi working women is the way such personal status factors influence and are influenced by border keepers. This was reflected in the narratives of the majority of women in this study. Some, like Tamara, had been directly constrained by pressure from border keepers, specifically husbands; but even those who did not report constraints in their own lives recalled the experiences of friends and relatives who had faced stronger pressures, as described by Sabah and Duaa, for example. Spouses are border keepers at home, and supervisors are border keepers at work; other domain members may be influential in defining the domain and border, but do not have direct power over the border-crosser (Clark, 2000). Border keepers influence the definition of domains and borders, which in turn affects border crossers' ability to negotiate their roles in the two domains, and the balance between them. It could be suggested that in the Saudi context, because of the primacy given to family, the spouse

(as keeper of the home border) is more powerful than the supervisor (as keeper of the work border). Whilst the work supervisor can control women's terms and conditions of work, the husband can forbid his wife to do a particular job, or even work at all. This was demonstrated in the findings in the quotation by Duaa, in the education sector, who described how her sister's career was constrained by her husband as a border keeper, who defined the border for his wife in a way that reflected and tried to preserve his feeling about his own roles in the work and family domains. Tamara, in the health sector, whose husband made her feel guilty for leaving her children, is another example of the spouse as border keeper. Family and work dynamics work differently across different cultures, although many variables in the work–family interface may be found to be transferrable cross-culturally (Aryee et al., 1999).

Compared to the work-life balance issue that was the focus of the literature discussed in Chapter Two, culture raises certain issues unique to Saudi women, as noted by Vidyasagar and Rea (2004). Although many participants in the three sectors reported that education has opened up opportunities for women to develop their careers, they also noted that some women are still constrained by traditional restrictions from joining the workforce. Gender inequality remains characteristic of Saudi working culture, where women's activities are limited by constraints (Vidyasagar & Rea, 2004). In this study, for example, such constraints included insistence that women do not work in a mixed environment, restrictions on women's working hours (both mentioned by Sabah) and the requirement to be taken to and from work by the husband (as mentioned by Uhud). The latter constraint is an example of a structural inequality facing Saudi women until very recently; the ban on their driving. In this respect, the government can be seen as playing the role of border keeper (although not itself present within either work or home domain) by institutionalizing certain views of womanhood and thereby setting the 'rules of the game' that shape women's opportunities in life and work.

Attitudes towards women are influenced and defined by the social-cultural structure of Saudi Arabia (Elamin & Omair, 2010), which has constructed views of women as nurturing, home-bound, submissive and in need of men's guidance, protection and control. Saudi women who work outside the home depend on male members of the family for career support at the workplace (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015). This is shown by the experience of women in this study, such as Rafal, who spoke of how low education and social conservatism might make a husband more inclined to try to control his wife, and the many reports of such controls recounted by participants such as Sabah, Duaa, and Samiya. It is paradoxical that married couples live contemporary lives involving challenging requirements of study and work, social and political participation, yet some husbands still maintain the spirit of tribal social norms from the past and expect women, while working outside the home to contribute to the family well-being, still to provide all domestic services.

Given that a Saudi woman seeking to work outside the home must have the permission of her husband, father, or male guardian, the perceptions of these border keepers of women's work are crucial. In this respect, some participants such as Nuha, Bisma and Farah, seemed to benefit from cultural change in KSA, and noted that a woman's role depends on the position she is in. Women can be found in a great variety of positions. The situation for them has become easier and wider, and the impact of culture varies, because every family is different. Several participants agreed that their families were actually supporting them to pursue development in their working careers. Given this role, Rafal, in the health sector, illustrated the importance of other-domain awareness when she explained that the understanding and support of a woman's husband is important. This is consistent with Clark's (2000:765) suggestion that "Border crossers whose domain members have high other-domain awareness will have higher work-family balance than border-crossers whose domain members have low other-domain awareness".

In the Saudi context, however, the other-domain awareness of a husband or other keeper of the home domain border is a complex issue, as their perceptions may be influenced by cultural stereotypes of gender roles. This was illustrated in the experiences reported by Tamara, Sabah and Duaa, where men invoked the values and norms traditionally confining women's role to the domestic sphere, to object to their wives working, and even prevent them from doing so. Another dimension of such social pressures, however, is shown by Samiya's comment about men being challenged by women's assertion of independence, because this in turn also threatened their self-image, based on constructions of masculinity involving control and authority. Similarly, a participant in Essers and Benschop (2009) study of Turkish and Moroccan female businesswomen reported opposition to her business activity based on fear that she would 'play the boss' and leave her husband. Also, Saudi society is only supportive of women's employment in a limited range of occupations deemed socially acceptable. Such views depend on conformity with gender stereotypes about feminine characteristics. Women are supposed to be caring and nurturing; hence, jobs such as teaching and nursing are considered appropriate for women. However, in this study, Nahla and Nuha noted social objection to women working as doctors or bank employees, both of which are 'public' roles and, moreover, often entail working in mixed settings.

In Islamic law (as discussed further in the next section), women and men are not encouraged to interact closely in public, including at work. Concerns for women's modesty and chastity require a degree of distance and encourage segregated environments. In this study, all the participants employed in the education sector perceived their work as culturally acceptable because the sector is gender-segregated. They saw teaching as a respectable profession for a woman, because it is consistent with women's supposedly inherently nurturing characteristics. They expressed a sense of being comfortable working in an all-female environment, which freed them from the obligation to wear hijab.

Participants in the health sector, too, perceived their jobs as consistent with their understanding of feminine characteristics. Compared with women in the education field, however, they reported feeling less comfortable in their work environment, because of the presence of men.

As intimated above, the cultural values that shape definitions and expectations of women's roles, and thereby influence family priorities and perceptions of work - life balance, are derived from religion. This factor is considered more specifically in the next section.

4.5.2 Religion

The category 'religion' refers to attitudes, principles and observances specifically derived from Islam, which women perceived as either constraining or facilitating women's opportunities and behaviour in the work and home domains, thereby affecting their work-life balance, either practically or psychologically. Responses were assigned to this category, rather than culture', if women explicitly invoked religion, for example using the words 'religion' or 'Islam', or specific religious terminology (e.g. describing a practice as haram, meaning proscribed by religion), or referring to religious observances such as wearing hijab, and maintaining gender segregation.

Religion was seen as a potential barrier to women's work life balance, because some interpretations of what religion required of women resulted in constraints being imposed, which could curtail women's opportunities. If not confined to the home altogether, they might be restricted in their choice of work, or their workplace behaviour and relations controlled, in the name of religion.

Whether religion allows women to work outside the home is controversial. Some people use religion to justify cultural norms. However, some participants challenged the view that for women to have careers was contrary to their religion.

Participant Shireen insisted that religion did not prevent women from working, and challenged the view that it is forbidden:

“Regarding work, no one can dare to say that work is haram [prohibited by religion]” (Shireen, EP1S).

Moreover, Maryam gave several reasons why she thought women's work was acceptable, subject to compliance with norms of modesty and decency. She expressed that she wore customary Islamic dress and respected other workers, so was not contravening the religious code of conduct, and she was getting an income from her job. Moreover, in the past, she argued, women used to converse and do business with Prophet Mohammed, whose deeds and words (reported in the hadith) are a major source of Islamic doctrine. So, for these reasons, she thought, religion did not prohibit women from working:

“I think that religion doesn't prevent women from working. [As long as you're] Wearing Hijab and being respectful. Religion does not prevent [women] from asking others about their concerns. Women dealt with Prophet Mohammed (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). It depends on personal convictions. Some people claim that religion prevents it [women's work] and it's haram [forbidden], but it isn't right. I earn money through work and at the same time I wear my hijab, am respectable, follow the teachings of Islam and I didn't neglect anything [in Islamic observance]” (Maryam, BS).

Maali, too, thought that religion is not a barrier for women working, as long as they do not do anything that is forbidden, but keep to accepted norms of behaviour.

“Religion, I don't think [it's an obstacle] so, as long as I don't do something forbidden, I am only committed to work within allowed limits” (Maali, BS).

Another issue in which religion is involved is the question whether it is acceptable for women to interact with men, other than their relatives. This concern is related to notions about women's chastity, which some fear will be threatened if they are allowed contact with men. This is one of the reasons why some people object to women working, and in some occupations men and women are segregated. Participant Suzana, who worked in the health sector, worked in a mixed working environment. However, she explained that working relations between women and men need not be problematic if they follow religious rules in the workplace. She said:

“The religion, no, [it’s not a barrier] since you know the woman is following the religious rules and the people around are religious too and following the rules, nothing will happen. You will never face any problems regarding this issue” (Suzana, HPS).

However, Bisma explained that people understand and interpret traditions and religion in their own way. Some accept that women should work, and some do not allow it, and some equate women’s piety with their not working, so whether women face opposition and constraints in their work depends on the individual and their understanding of the religion. She said:

“Everyone understands religion or tradition in their own way, everyone has their own thought. Some people are conservative, and some people are more flexible. Some people are quite conservative but also keep an open mind about women going to work even if they are conservative, while some people link religious women to women not working” (Bisma, BS).

Nuha argued that as Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country, it is impossible to avoid religion’s influence, which imbues legislation, as Islamic law is applied in all aspects of life in Saudi Arabia, but when someone takes a job in a bank they make an agreement. She wondered why some people, after working for a time in a bank say, “This is forbidden and we should quit our working here”.

“Look! There’s nothing to do about it as we are an Islamic country, and many things in the legislation are applied in it, and we can’t evade them. In banks it is also the same. However, we are acting according to our system and we don’t change it. In conclusion it depends on the conviction of the person. Some people, half of the way, they come to say, “I feel that is wrong” or say, “It is forbidden as it is special for Banks, it says that it is forbidden, I will walk out,” as those people have gone through another matter” (Nuha, BS).

Nevertheless, as Rafal explained, many men would not accept their female relatives working in a mixed environment, but only in a separate work section where women did not meet or deal with men; they also expected them to finish work early, as home life was expected to take priority:

“I know some people [who think that]if you go to work you must be in a segregated community, because I have an aunt whose husband refuses to let her work at any place with males, and she had to come back early, like her work hours finished at 2.00 pm”(Rafal, HPS).

Samiya similarly pointed out that many highly qualified women were prevented from working in occupations with a mixed environment, which restrained their abilities and wasted the skills and knowledge they might otherwise use to improve their community:

“There are many specialisations [in which] when [women] come back from the USA, their families prevent them from working in a mixed environment which really hinders their abilities; they have a lot of unused abilities. International schools may have mixed environments” (Samiya, EPS).

In some sectors, it was reported, attitudes and practice were changing in this respect. Nahla explained that in the past, it was very difficult for women to work with men in hospitals, and they were always under focus and control; even their manner of dress was subject to restrictions. Also they were marginalized and not given responsibilities and promotions or did not even know their rights and duties, reflecting women’s subordination. However, this situation has been changed now. She said:

“Previously, it was different, men didn’t accept women working with them, they avoided us, it was so hard for women to work. Besides we had to wear

specific uniforms and many clothes weren't allowed, although that wasn't official. They focused on us all the time. Besides we had no promotions or responsibilities, we never knew our rights or our responsibilities. Yet the situation has changed totally in the last five years in the whole country" (Nahla, HPS).

Unlike the participant quoted above. Maryam expressed that working in a mixed environment was not an issue, and she had experience of working with men. In fact, she felt more comfortable when working with men, because when she worked with women, she said she had faced many problems. This was, she claimed, because women are talkative, jealous and affected by passion and emotions. She said:

"In our country, we women feel more comfortable when we work with males more than females. There are always problems when we have women as a manager. When I started working in the hospital, we were so happy with no problems because the manager was a man. When I moved to the banks, my managers were women and in that time we had problems because women are talkative and always interfere. We usually envy each other, some women are married, others not. Some women have kids, others not, so we are not able to be neutral. We should know that our situations are not supposed to be similar. There are different abilities so you are not supposed to do what I'm able to do and I don't have to expect you to do it, so I'm talking about me and my situation, not about your friend's situation. Emotions have such an influence" (Maryam, BS).

Duaa agreed. She said:

"The main issue is about the female employees' envy and jealous people; they always think like, "Why did that one get a better position?" and so there are work conflicts and fights" (Duaa, EPS).

Not all participants were so comfortable working with men. Sabah expressed that at first it was difficult for her to work beside men, as she was not accustomed to it, but with the passage of time, she had adapted to it. She said:

"At first it wasn't normal for me to work with men in the same place, you know we are a conservative community here. Over time I got used to it" (Sabah, HPS).

Some workplaces had offered a compromise on the issue of segregation. Rafal, who worked in the health public sector, explained that in the hospital where she worked, women's and men's offices were next to each other, and generally meetings, parties, and social gatherings were mixed, but there were some areas for women who preferred privacy, and also some events only for women. She said:

“There is no separation here in meetings, or in parties or social gatherings, and we usually, you know, get together side by side and in offices next to each other's and we talk freely with each other. I think in the cafeteria there is separation where they separate males and females but even the males' section it is not really [separate] it is like a general sitting area where females can sit if they choose to, but you know there are women who choose privacy so they sit in a different area, and the third thing is that some of the social events that take place in the hospital, like the religious committee meeting, some of the events only target females” (Rafal, HPS).

Banking was another area where objections to women's work might arise because of the contact between men and women. Maryam explained that it is the nature of the work in an investment bank for men and women to work together, and most of the clients are men, since it is generally men who deal in large-scale finance, but she observed Islamic standards of decency by wearing hijab during the work hours.

“Yes, men and women work together; women wear hijab, although there are some [who do] not. Most of my customers are men. The minimum volume of capital investment market is a million riyals in investment, and most investors are men” (Maryam, BS).

Not all banks offered a mixed environment, however; some practised a level of segregation that may be more comfortable for some women, and more acceptable to society. Nuha, who also worked in the banking sector, clarified that in her branch the work was not mixed, but women and men coordinated their work through the operation manager, and contact was usually via phone or email.

“We are a separate branch, a women’s section, not mixed, but the operation is joint. The operation manager is between us and there are responsibilities for our work. We, the ladies, are basically the contact. All is done through telephones and emails and other things like this” (Nuha, BS).

In colleges and universities, men and women work in separate sections. If it sometimes happens that a male professor needs to give a lecture to female students (due to a lack of women lectures in a particular specialism), for that situation there are specific rules. He has a special door by which to enter and leave, and security staff are present, so there is no direct interaction. Also, female academics from foreign countries are required to wear hijab while they teach. Uhud explained this, saying:

“We are separated in study. Girls take their lectures alone and boys take their lectures alone. Sometimes I go to lectures where students need the[male] doctors [meaning staff with a PhD] to teach them certain issues, so the doctor goes and we don’t get to see him and there is a security woman who says, ‘The doctor is coming’ and he comes from a private door and he gives the lecture then leaves from the same door and that’s it, so we are separated in the study. There are some female doctors from Canada, from Saudi Arabia, from India, Palestine, and we have many nationalities, maybe up to 12 nationalities. Such doctors wear their lab coat and teach, yet they are veiled” (Uhud, EP1S).

Uhud describes a situation where there is a pragmatic acceptance that sometimes, women may be disadvantaged academically if they cannot have access to subject matter for which only a male lecturer is available. In such cases, however, elaborate mechanisms are created to "police" the setting in order to prevent "mixing" between the sexes. This can be seen as a reflection of Saudi education policy, which places strong emphasis on Islamic rules as the foundation for the education system.

4.5.2.1 Discussion

Based on the findings, religion per se was argued not to prevent women from working (as noted by Shireen and Mariam, for example). However, the culture and domestic roles may affect women’s ability to work. Moreover, as Bisma argued, people interpret

traditions and religion in their own way. The nuances of interpretation reported by participants (for example in terms of dress code and relations with colleagues) in relation to both their own beliefs and the pressures they reported facing from other members of society, demonstrate the appropriateness of the subjectivist ontology adopted in this research. In Saudi Arabia, religion is regarded as a “given”, that is central to the whole society. This is demonstrated, for example, in the way Islamic principles are institutionalised throughout the education system (see Chapter One, section 1.5.3). Nevertheless, it is perceived and experienced in different ways for each woman. It was noted that the Islamic background of participants affected their perceptions regarding the concept of work; this supports the view that “Islam is not only a religion, but is also a guideline for the complete way of life” (Ketola et al., 2009:290). However, it is interpreted in a variety of ways, and different interpretations assign different powers to men and women.

This idea that religious doctrine is interpreted, rather than absolute, was similarly raised by the participants in Essers and Benschop (2009) study. They pointed out that Quranic guidelines have been interpreted both dogmatically and progressively and claimed that restrictive interpretations (by men) came from power relations and the desire for control. These authors found that, like Maryam in this study, participants used their knowledge of the Quran and hadith to reject restrictive interpretations and legitimize their lifestyle choices.

From such a perspective, it is argued that Islam assigns men and women equal religious, ethical and civil rights, duties and responsibilities (Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011). From a cultural and religious perspective, it is allowed for a Saudi Muslim woman to work outside the home if she wishes; Islamic doctrine does not forbid women having careers.

Interviewees in this research saw no contradiction between their job and their religious convictions.

However, national policy is shaped by social norms and in KSA, as a Shari'a law based country, such policy is determined by a conservative interpretation of Islamic rules and regulations (Sidani, 2005), on such matters as segregation, and whether a woman is free to travel in connection with her job. Based on the Border Theory, in effect, religion acts as a border keeper (or at least, frames the values of domain members) by defining what constitutes acceptable behaviour in each domain. Religion shapes the view that a woman's primary responsibility is in the home, and that her outside work should not conflict with this. This influences family domain members' views of women's careers, and encourages them to maintain traditional expectations of women's role as homemakers and caregivers, as indicated in the previous section. These values are internalized by women themselves, so even if they have intrinsic motivation to work for self-fulfilment, they are constantly pulled by family duties. Religion also shapes perceptions of what are suitable careers, what women wear and how they relate to others in the workplace.

Such factors influence how comfortable women feel at work and in Border Theory terms, are likely to influence the extent to which they internalize the values of their profession. The ability of the workplace to accommodate religious values (such as a hospital providing a separate seating area for women) will also be significant. Having seen this, it is interesting to note that the stance adopted by these participants was in some ways very different from that taken by the Muslim women participating in the study by Essers and Benschop (2009), of women of Moroccan and Turkish origin working in the Netherlands. Women in that study asserted their Islamic identity, yet admitted that some of their business activities, such as giving massages to male clients, were contrary to Islamic rules, rationalizing their behaviour in pragmatic terms. Essers and Benschop's (2009)

participants, however, were a minority working in a non- Muslim society, and as such may not have faced the same social pressure to conform as women living in Saudi Arabia. Participants in this study had been socialized by, for example, the strictly controlled education environment described by Uhud, and were, as Suzana noted, surrounded by people who also upheld Islamic values, so that “nothing [immoral] will happen”.

Such considerations did not prevent some of the women in this study from working in a mixed environment and even (like Duaa and Maryam) preferring work relations with men, which would be opposed by some interpretations of Islam. However, through their observation of certain constraints, notably the wearing of the hijab, they displayed their commitment to the values of modesty and chastity, maintaining a symbolic segregation through their dress code.

The centrality of religion to Saudi culture means that, in the Saudi context, it plays a role in perceptions of work-life balance that is not recognized in Western theory, including Border Theory. It is not mentioned by Clark (2000), nor do Putnik et al. (2018) explicitly include religion within the ‘culture’ dimension of their expanded model. This can be seen as a limitation of Border Theory when applied in the Saudi context, and a contribution of this study may be to further expand understanding of the factors that influence domain and border negotiations in such a context by the inclusion of religion as a salient feature of the environment, imposing practical and psychological influences.

4.5.3 Transportation

Most of the interviewees indicated that transportation issues influence the physical and temporal borders between home and work. This issue arises because women are not allowed to drive. The institutional constraints that prevented Saudi women from driving have recently been lifted, although it will be some months before the new provisions come

into effect, due to the time needed to recruit and train female driving instructors and examiners. Meanwhile, public transport is poor and disfavoured because it exposes women to the gaze of men and to potential harassment, and private hire taxis (referred to by participants as "limousines") are expensive. Uhud explained that without her personal driver she could not go to work or she would need to use a taxi service, which would be costly for her, and so for her, employing a driver took priority over a housemaid. She said:

“It’s a 100% obstacle. If there wasn't a private driver we would stay at home or get into a limousine. For me, the driver comes before the servant” (Uhud, EP1S).

Another participant, Samiya, also expressed that transportation is a huge obstacle, as it might require a working woman to pay a large share of her salary for transportation, and that could affect her ability to go to work. This quotation illustrates this view:

“Many people can be absent because of the lack of transportation. Transportation costs half the salary actually; I can’t imagine those who work in the public sectors or private with a salary of 5000 SR. If a women wanted to have a car to drive her to work, that would cost her 2000 SR and a servant with 1500 SR then that’s the salary; what would she get? 1500 SR? So such women are really serving their community or they must be in bad need of money if they will accept to take only 1500 SR” (Samiya, EPS).

Moreover, Tamara agreed that transportation is one of the major barriers for women in Saudi Arabia. She explained how difficult it was for her when her husband could not drop her to work. She had to use a private hire car, which was very expensive, and also uncomfortable, especially in hot weather in KSA.

“It’s so difficult; when my husband couldn't drive us, I used to take a limousine and it would drive the kids to school, three schools then I would go back to my work, for almost three months. It was a lot of pressure, costly, and I suffered terrible weather and it was so hard” (Tamara, HPS).

Nuha, who was working in the banking sector, suggested that the management should take this problem seriously and give priority to discussing it and finding solutions, like providing transportation for employees:

“Sure, transportation is a must, one of the things we should discuss. Sometimes there is a shortage of drivers. What can we do? It a risk to do some things. One may have fifty ideas to find a solution. I mean, between us, the job managements must think of that a little and provide internal transportation means” (Nuha, BS).

Other participants also working in banks reported that their banks did offer limited transportation, but the facility was inadequate to meet women's needs. For example, Maryam expressed the discomfort she faced when she did not have transportation, as it interfered with her ability to perform her job duties:

“I was suffering, you can't imagine, when I didn't have a driver. The bank driver, if he was free, took me to meet clients. I was suffering and hadn't a car, It is a very serious problem, honestly the - - - effect on working women in the first place” (Maryam, BS).

Amal similarly explained how difficulty with transportation impeded her ability to do her work, and if there was a shortage of drivers at the bank where she worked, she might have to pay for private transportation to meet clients, which consumed a significant part of her salary.

“We go to the customers sometimes. It is normal. We go to a customer where he works. Cars are available, but the number of girls is big, so there is some pressure. I may be obliged, for example, to talk to my driver or deal with a company to drive me, at my own expense, and even if the salary is very high, I am obliged to pay half of it for transportation” (Amal, BS).

She added that some of her colleagues were forced to spend a quarter or half of their salary to pay for a driver. Moreover, because drivers were in short supply, they could charge high prices:

“I don’t deal with a driver, but some people are obliged to pay half of their salary or a quarter of it. Imagine working for over a month and being obliged to pay a sum like that! Drivers, when they saw that they are much needed, they raised their prices. If I had to pay half or a quarter of my salary, this would be difficult” (Amal, BS).

Participant Bisma expressed how lucky she was because her husband’s company provided free transportation for employees and their families, and she emphasised how costly and difficult it would be for her to get to work if she did not have this opportunity:

“I am also blessed because I have an (Aramco) company bus. If I didn’t, I’d have to get a car and get a driver, and that would cost me a lot from my income, 3000 or 4000 a month, I am also blessed I have free transportation”(Bisma, BS).

Lina elaborated further on the disadvantages of lack of transportation, pointing out that women had to depend on someone else, or have a driver to help them when they needed anything, like picking up food or other goods during working hours, while men could go anytime, in their own cars. This dependence on others was a major issue for her:

“All the females here in the hospital, they are stuck from the morning to evening, but a man can take his car and eat at his place and come back. For us, no, we are stuck here till they send someone to bring food for us, so we have a lot of issues, not like men. The environment is not suitable, they don’t think about women”(Lina, HPS).

Lina’s comments frame transportation issues as a matter of gender inequality, since women are subject to constraints and inconveniences that do not apply to their male colleagues. Another aspect of gender inequality was raised by Razan, who made an important point about the transportation allowance which employees receive. In absolute terms, there is apparent equality between male and female employees, because both receive the same allowance, but Razan argued that in real terms, women were disadvantaged because of the unique constraints they face regarding transport, which means that their needs are greater. She compared between men and women, and said that

it is not fair for men and women to receive the same allowance, since women have to spend more money, in order to employ a driver, or for public transportation. This quotation explains this view:

“Yes, the transportation is also not fair. Women get a transportation allowance, guys take it triple, considering that women have to employ a private driver who takes 1500 SR as a salary, but guys drive their own cars, and they get 600 SR as transportation allowance; that is not fair too” (Razan, BS).

Fatima, who worked as a school principal, explained that the discomfort and difficulty of travel had implications for working hours, especially for teachers working in villages or remote areas, and she explained how difficult it is for teachers to make a long journey every day on an unsafe road, especially if they are pregnant or have children who are sick and need care. This quotation illustrates this view:

“Our school is in Al-Kharj city [about an hour south of Riyadh], and almost three quarters of the teachers come from Riyadh city. The journey is about two hours, and they have no servants, and sometimes their kids get sick. Sometimes a teacher may be pregnant; she travels for about two hours in her last months, rain on the road, accidents, that is so cruel. If the work hours were from 8 am till 11 or 12 this would make more people work in a better situation” (Fatima, EPS).

As the mother of four children herself, Fatima was all too aware of the double burden facing women, who go back home after a long working day very exhausted, yet have to fulfil other responsibilities for home and children. Moreover, the problem is ongoing, because when these teachers eventually get a transfer to the city, other teachers come and they face the same problem. She said:

“If she is pregnant, or her kids are sick, and she has no servants to help, and they get back home at 4 pm when they left at 4 am. Besides when they arrive their kids are waiting for them to help them while they are so exhausted, and they have to finish classes and activities, they never get to be moved to Riyadh city, then once they get moved yet other teachers come, and they face the same situation again!” (Fatima, EPS).

Riham explained what a difference it makes to a woman to have her own personal driver or a member of the family to drive her, as a cultural rule, and also suggested that in the absence of such facilitating factors, a woman who does not have a driver might have to stay at home. She cited the example of colleagues who had to travel to work by taxi. Such difficulties increase the importance of family support for working women, since family members' active cooperation in facilitating travel can be essential to their ability to work outside the home.

“Without my driver I would suffer much. Now it is easy as we have a driver. I can go out any time I like. But if I didn't have a driver I wouldn't be able to balance between home and work. The driver plays a role; culture plays a role. I face that with my colleagues as they go in taxis. It is a stress to the degree that you can't take a taxi. I have to have a driver or someone of my family to drive me. Otherwise, I wouldn't work and would stay at home. I say to you that transportation is most important, and the culture. You need to have a family that understand the nature of your work” (Riham, HPS).

Riham's latter point was supported by Elham's illustration of the potential outcome for a woman whose husband is unable or unwilling to facilitate her travel to work. Elham explained that her job was far from her home, and because of the double inconvenience of awkward working hours and a long journey to and from work, her husband was forcing her to leave her work, and she would leave soon. She said:

“I can't work in this situation anymore; the work is 6 days per week and too far from my home, it's about one hour drive, and different shift times. For these reasons my husband now is forcing me to leave this job. I will leave it soon and I have to find another one near my home” (Elham, HPS).

On the other hand, Suzana expressed that, while the distance and the time spent travelling between work and home was a problem for women, transportation itself was not difficult, because almost everyone has a driver. She said,

“The transportation is not difficult, the difficulty is in the distance. I have relatives working and they are teachers, and their work is so far from their

home so they spend a long time. One of my relatives said that she spent two hours going to work and two hours coming from work so it's really a waste of time. So the distance and the traffic are the main issue, not the transportation itself, as these days, everyone has their own driver" (Suzana, HPS).

Suzana offered an interesting perspective on the campaigns being waged at the time of the study, for women to be allowed to drive, which she saw as distraction from more serious concerns. In her view, transportation is the least important issue in KSA, and there are many problems which are more important than the right for women to drive, that need to be addressed as a priority. She expressed that she would never drive, even if women were allowed to drive:

"They are asking us now, they are fighting for women to drive. I'll never drive. I don't know about why women don't drive; this is the least important problem in our country. I don't know why they magnify it and they leave a lot of unsolved problems. The unsolved problems are the most important part, that is what I'm saying. But I am not interested in this case for driving" (Suzana, HPS).

As a doctor, Suzana could afford to employ a driver and seemed to assume that this was the case for everyone, but her perception that transportation was not a problematic issue was rare among the participants.

4.5.3.1 Discussion

Transportation is a factor that influences the temporal and locational borders between domains; the restrictions and difficulties of travel for women (which, as Lina observed, do not apply to men) can be seen as a form of tacit social control, as they limit the hours and locations they can work, and their freedom of movement during the working day. This was illustrated, for example, by the case of Elham, who was forced to give up her job because her husband objected to the impact of travel time on her family role, and by the experience of Lina, who noted that women could not, for example, go home or shopping in their lunch break, if they did not have a private driver. Also, it incurs high

cost, which conflicts with women's major motivation of working for economic reasons, identified in the first section of this chapter.

Saudi women rely on their male relatives or salaried drivers to transport them to work and back, or to other places. This is due to the lack of public transport. There are taxis, but this is not a popular option, since it is considered undesirable for women to be in a confined space with a stranger. Seven interviewees, including Samiya, Maryam and Amal, described transportation as a problem for them, because they did not have a chauffeur and their male relatives were usually not free to drive them. Some of these women pointed out the high cost of another car and a chauffeur, relative to their salaries (Samiya, Amal, Bisma).

Some of the participants who worked in the banking field, such as Razan, received transportation allowances, and some banks provided transportation to enable employees like Maryam and Amal to meet customers. Nevertheless, this was not an ideal solution because, as these women pointed out, the availability was insufficient to meet the need. Since women did not, because of the driving ban, have their own transport, they were in effect forced to bear the expenses of private car hire, simply to carry out their work duties.

While the difficulties surrounding transportation for women constitute an institutional or structural obstacle to their work-life balance, and was construed by Lina and Razan as a nexus of gender inequality, the specific impact depended on the interaction of this issue with others such as job characteristics (e.g. location and work hours), and the way family roles and responsibilities are constructed (illustrated by Fatimah's heartfelt account of exhausted women arriving home, to face the demands of home and family).

Based on Border Theory, when the workplace is far away from home, there is a strong physical border between work and home, while a workplace having 9-to-5 working hours

suggests a temporal border between work and home; a psychological border is generally formed by self-created rules used to differentiate work and family (Clark, 2000). From this perspective some participants such as Tamara faced physical borders, and some were affected by inconvenient working hours and long travel time, which disturbed the temporal border between home and work, as described by Fatima. However, the psychological border depended on the individual women's situation, personality and roles, for example, distance between work and home, financial circumstances (affecting ability to pay for transportation), level of assertiveness or submissiveness (for example, Elham's subjection to her husband's demand for her to give up her job), and extent of role pressures to be in a particular domain at a specific time. The latter constraint was illustrated by Fatima's comments, which reflected the cultural assumption that it is mothers' responsibility to help children with their homework. Such factors influenced the way women perceived and reacted to the practical constraints posed by transportation issues.

4.5.4 Childcare

The childcare category reflects women's perception that arranging appropriate care for young children constituted a challenge to their current work-life balance, or might do so in the future, as well as the strategies they employed to deal with this issue. Codes within this category include nursery availability, trust, and workplace provision. It should be noted that these issues were raised not only by women who had children, but by some who did not, the latter recounting friends' experiences, or concerns about the likely situation if and when they had children of their own.

Childcare is an example of how a woman's ability to negotiate the border between work and home domains is influenced by factors often outside her control. Because the majority of women had responsibility for homes and childcare, the ability to achieve a satisfactory

work-life balance depended to a great extent on the ability to make suitable childcare arrangements. Inability to do so would constrain the women's work hours and job opportunities, in order that they might attend to childcare responsibilities themselves, or cause general stress and feelings of guilt due to the need to entrust these responsibilities to others. However, good quality, affordable childcare is not easily found.

Samiya, the mother of four children, expressed that nursery provision in KSA is highly important but costly. She thought the government should be committed to provide nurseries, especially as, through her specialization in sex education, she was aware that in cases where children face sexual and psychological abuse, it is usually from inside the home.

“I think it’s so necessary to have nurseries, I think that government should be committed to that because when you focus on working dads and moms stay at home then there’s a part of citizens would stay at home. Kids (my specialization is about sex education) most kids get abused from inside the home, whether sexual or psychological abuse and kids can’t explain themselves. You can’t blame moms, they need money to live and they have to send their kids to nurseries. There’s no nursery that costs less than 1500 [Riyals], then we are back to the drivers problem and servant problems” (Samiya, EPS).

Aisha, a mother of two, also asserted the importance of having a nursery, but pointed out that there is a shortage of them, some are very expensive and not all of them are good. Moreover, some of them are not open in summer or operate for a short working day, so they do not fit well with many women’s working hours. As a teacher, Aisha finished work relatively early (Saudi schools start early in the morning and finish at around 2 pm) but she recognized that women in other fields might work longer hours, increasing the childcare problem.

“ It’s really important to have day care, but even if there is day care (nursery) not all are good, only some and over priced for nothing. Because some nurseries are closed in the summer and work only in daytime. They close early,

at 2:pm usually, and not all parents can go out to pick up their kids and not all mothers work in teaching; some are doctors. Therefore it's important to have a nursery, but we find there's a shortage and inconvenient regulations and not good facilities" (Aisha, EPS).

The latter remarks reflect the fact that many nurseries in Saudi Arabia are privately owned and run, based on the profit motive, and are not subject to official oversight. Also, she added that she would take her children to a nursery if she found one that she felt was safe and a good place to leave her children. She used to live in the USA and compared the Saudi provision with the nurseries there, which she considered superior:

"I used to live in the USA, and comparing to here, their nurseries are not only high quality and very clean, they have very high security. There's no nursery there that can't be secure and you feel that your kids are safe there. I was willing to send all my kids there and let them eat there and play, because I felt they were in a safe environment" (Aisha, EPS).

Aisha's remarks raise a further issue that emerged as a major concern in discussions of childcare; that of the issue of trust in those providing care, whether in an institution or in the home. The same issue was raised by Raja, who did not yet have children, but worried when she contemplated the situation she might face once she started a family.

Raja expressed that she would not feel confident to leave her children in a nursery, yet at the same time she did not like the idea of troubling her mother or her mother-in-law; nevertheless, she thought it would be preferable to leave her children with someone she trusted, like her family or her husband's family, rather than with strangers, whom she did not trust. She said:

"Sure, I wouldn't like to have a baby and send him/her to my mom one day and to my husband's mom another day, it's not good, I wouldn't be able to work, I would be worried. Also, I can't be sure of kindergartens, the people who work there. At least at your parents' home you know the people, your mom or your sister, but in the kindergarten you have no idea who works there; I would be worried as a mom" (Raja, BS).

Raja refers to kindergartens, but they are for children from the age of two or three until they start primary school at six; moreover, at least in the case of public (government-run) kindergartens, they have qualified staff and follow prescribed standards of care and education. A more serious problem, however, is the care of children below kindergarten age. Farah, who as the mother of five children had tried a variety of childcare options, spoke of her experiences. In addition, Farah agreed on the importance of trust and security for the children in the nursery, and feared that the standard of most nurseries was unsatisfactory. She thought that there is no suitable place to leave one's children, especially when they are babies:

“Well, the obstacle is that there is no such good place to leave your child. If I didn't have my mother-in-law, what would I do? Where would I put my kids? Babysitters have proven to be useless; we use cameras and so on but it's no use, they aren't good. Nurseries are too bad, their level is poor. Maybe kindergartens are good, but what shall we do when the children are very young, from when they are born until they turn to be two years?” (Farah, EPS).

Gamila, although as yet childless, also doubted the quality of the nurseries. She commented that schools are very variable and so people cannot be sure whether the environment is of a satisfactory standard. She said:

“Kindergartens are not as they should be; they need to provide good places that could take care of my kids. Some schools here in the Eastern region apply that, but not our school, you can never be sure of a clean environment and the people who work with your baby” (Gamila, EPS).

Sabah, as yet unmarried but aware of the prevalence of childcare issues, explained that some women who could not find a suitable place to leave their baby or did not have a domestic servant or nanny, took maternity leave, which meant accepting a much reduced salary:

“When my friend had a baby she had difficulty getting a servant so she had to take leave, then she had to take maternity leave and accept a quarter of the

salary so she could spend time with her baby because she didn't have a childminder" (Sabah, HPS).

All the women quoted above expressed doubts about the quality of available childcare, and mistrust in providers other than immediate family. However, for a few women, there was an alternative, in the form of workplace provision, but this was not always available, even when it should have been mandatory according to the law. Razan explained that the law requires organisations with more than 50 female employees to provide a nursery. However, her organisation (a bank) gave the employees only a very small childcare allowance, in lieu of providing its own crèche, and the amount was woefully inadequate, given the high cost of even the most basic facilities:

"We asked for nurseries. By law, if the organisation has more than 50 women working inside then there should be a nursery for the organisation. We have asked for that since before I was married and I didn't have kids at that time. Unfortunately, there was no response. Then the public secretary issued a decision to give women only 300 S.R as an allowance for the nursery. The worst nursery here costs 2000 S.R, so this money they assigned for us is useless. We are still fighting for our rights, but you know the system of our society. The labour law says that if there are more than 50 women in the organisation then there has to be a nursery; it's written but it's not applied. That's why they gave us an allowance. They said, 'Take this money, 300 S.R, instead of the nursery'. The money they gave us is absolutely not fair" (Razan, BS).

Maryam, as a mother of five, was all too aware of the problems. She added that nurseries are not available in most workplaces, yet private childcare is unaffordable:

"It is too expensive, and there are no nurseries in the workplace to care for staff children" (Maryam, BS).

More fortunate was Riham, the mother of three children, who worked as a doctor in a private hospital. She explained that the hospital provided a nursery for all the employees, which was open until 10 pm, but for Saudi workers they deducted an amount from the salary. She was prepared to pay this because she recognized the value of having facilities

provided for her children at her workplace, but she recognized that such provision is not uniformly available across the sector:

“There is a nursery in the hospital, but most of the people who benefit from it are foreigners as their children don’t have people [i.e. family members or domestic labour] to care for them. As for the number of work hours, it is open until 10 at night. That’s good, it’s a solution to all problems, no one complains saying I don’t know how to confine my children’. But there is a nursery, it’s like other nurseries. We in Saudi Arabia have few of them as most ones are for foreigners. However, for Saudi children there is a sum of money that is deducted from your salary. There’s no problem if the children are near you. But the problem is not all private sectors provide nurseries. Only high standard hospitals in the private sector” (Riham, HP1S).

In view of such concerns, Aisha had taken a proactive stance in finding a solution to the childcare problem. She and her friends rented a room in the same university building where she worked, and they provided all the equipment and brought their housemaids from home to take care of the children during work time. They found it very convenient as they did not have to spend money for a private nursery and there was no need for a driver to drop off and pick up the children.

“Basically me and my friend, we rent a room at the university building. We bring our housemaids to take care of the children. They give us the option, If we asked for this officially from the university, it would not be allowed, so they give us the space but we are responsible for anything that happens and we pay for the equipment and the groceries and the housemaid. I love it because my kids are with me in the building, and if anything happens I don’t need to drive, or get stuck in traffic and I get out of my work, I don’t have to find day care to take care of my children” (Aisha, EPS).

Elaborating on the advantages of this arrangement, she commented:

“but we figure that if we do our day care in our building it is cheaper for us and more relaxing, and we control the hours, and control whether to be there or not” (Aisha, EPS).

4.5.4.1 Discussion

A Saudi woman's main role is considered to be in the home, rather than at work. Reflecting this cultural norm, most of the women interviewed saw their family as their main priority; like women around the world, they asserted the crucial role played by a mother in her children's life (Samman et al., 2016). Consequently, childcare was a problem for the vast majority of the participants in this study. As seen in other sections, some described experiencing feelings of guilt about leaving their children at home. Some unmarried women declared that they would leave their jobs when they got married. Although not yet mothers themselves, women such as Raja and Sabah had witnessed the challenges faced by other Saudi working mums. Such a stance contradicts the claims made by Crompton and Harris (1998) in a Western context that childcare problems are not a barrier to women's employment. Even in the West, it is acknowledged that child – care is costly; according to Helburn and Bergmann (2003) in the USA full time care for a child under five for a year is expensive; in many states it is about twice as expensive as paying a child's tuition fees for a year at a four-year public college. This would certainly be a consideration in the cost-benefit equation, particularly for women with a large number of children and those working for economic reasons, as many participants in this study were (see section 4.2.1). However, for several of the interviewees, such as Aisha and Farah, the issue was not so much the cost of care, as that it was not available, or that they did not trust its quality.

Indeed, trust was a key issue in relation to the childcare category, and an interesting point to emerge from the findings is that women had greater confidence in housemaids than they did in nurseries. This is reflected in Sabah's account of her friend who, when she could not find a domestic servant, took leave from work, rather than use a nursery, and in the case of Aisha and her friend, who took their own housemaids into the workplace to care for their children. It is commonplace for Saudi female workers to rely on family or

housemaids to watch over their children. Only one interviewee took her children to a nursery. Two of the interviewees left their children in the care of their husbands with the help of the housemaid. A possible explanation of the preference to rely on family members, or even housemaids, for childcare, rather than taking their children to nurseries, may be found in Border Theory. Saudi women have central status in the home and family domain, where they can exert a degree of control. By taking a child to a nursery, they would be relinquishing some of that control to strangers (as Raja pointed out), weakening their position in the home domain. By leaving children in the care of their family and housemaids, mothers would retain more control – albeit at arm’s length – over the child’s care and socialization. They would be negotiating within their home domain, rather than across the border with a third domain- the care centre. Nevertheless, this is only a partial explanation, and the issue is by no means clear-cut. The extent of the supervision a woman can exercise over domestic servants, when she herself is out at work, is debatable. Indeed, there is currently in Saudi Arabia a moral panic regarding the widespread reliance on domestic servants; the trend has been portrayed as a dereliction of the employee’s family responsibilities (Hein, 2010), and the domestic servants themselves, who are generally migrant workers (Angloinfo, 2015), have been held responsible for various social ills, including weak socialization of children, importation of alien practices and values, and child abuse (Al-Freeh, 2011; Alttarif, 2011).

An alternative for some women working in large organisations would be a workplace crèche, which would bridge the family and work domains, allowing the woman, for example, to visit her child during work breaks and to monitor the care provided. Riham was in this fortunate position. Smaller organisations, however, lack such facilities, and even some large organisations which, by law, should have provided childcare facilities, did not comply, or did so only minimally, as Razan found. Aisha and her colleagues found their own creative solution by establishing their own crèche, resourced by themselves,

with care provided by their housemaids. Through this activity, Aisha is a rare example of blending of the two domains. Employment of housemaids helped her and her friends to balance between the two domains. Since they employed and supervised the housemaids, they were still fulfilling their "primary" role in the home domain, but at "arm's length", in order also to fulfil their roles in the work domain. In such a case, "the area around the presupposed border is no longer exclusive of one domain or the other, but blends both work and family, creating a borderland which cannot be exclusively called either domain" (Clark, 2000:757).

This solution, however, was exceptional, and relied on a degree of cooperation from the university. For the majority of women in this study, childcare was a constant source of worry, which impinged on their working lives. Their situation calls to mind the suggestion of Emslie and Hunt (2009) that temporal borders between work and family life may differ for men and women. They found that men tended to have stronger temporal borders, viewing their paternal role as more clearly confined to specific times, such as weekends and attendance at key family events, whereas women interviewed in their study did not view motherhood in such a bounded way. Women such as Farah, who used cameras to monitor childminders, Riham, who took reassurance from having her children near her in a workplace nursery, and Aisha who actually imported the care of her children into the workplace on her own initiative, all reflected a deliberate weakening of the temporal and spatial borders between work and family life. Such arrangements demonstrate the salience of Clark's (2000) claim that borders are not fixed, but have to be negotiated. Moreover, they, like the childcare experiences, good or bad, of all the women in this study, demonstrate the validity of Karassvidou and Glaveli (2015) suggestion, based on research in Greece, that organisational culture (here, represented by its policies and practices related to childcare facilities for employees) is an aspect that shapes the nature of the work domain, and of its borders. As these authors note, employees cannot benefit from central

participation at work, unless family-friendly attitudes are reflected in the organisation culture.

4.5.5 Family responsibilities

The category family responsibilities refers to women's perceptions that their ability to achieve a comfortable balance between the work and home domains was constrained by demands in the home domain that they saw as specifically their responsibilities, as women, wives and mothers. It comprises both explicit references to 'home responsibilities' or 'duties' and to specific home-related tasks, such as cooking and cleaning and social obligations.

In Saudi Arabia, most married women, especially those with children, have many home responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children and the husband, because even if they work outside the home, such matters are considered essentially women's role and responsibility. The quotations below explain this. Suzana commented:

“I have all the routine stuff at home, because there should be daily work at home, cleaning, organising the home, and preparing food”(Suzana, HPS).

Nahla elaborated on the range of tasks for which she had responsibility:

“Many daily routine tasks, preparing kids for school, breakfast, waking them up, dressing them. Even if there is a servant, I do such things myself. Once they get back from school, they eat, study, shower; all such issues are my responsibility, Getting them to bed may take two hours, then I have to cook and organise my home. Even if there is a servant, the final touches have to be mine” (Nahla, HPS).

As Nahla's comment reveals, the family employed a domestic servant/ housemaid, yet Nahla nevertheless felt that she had the ultimate responsibility for the home and children.

Another participant expressed a similar situation and described how she set her priorities:

“I have a family and the home responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning and all that stuff, but I take my kids as first priority; home responsibilities come in the second place” (Maali, BS).

Not all women faced such problems; the ones who reported managing well tended to be those with few or no children, and family support. For example, Duaa (with only one child) expressed that she did not face any problem in achieving a good balance between her home and work, because she received support from her family. However, she explained that some women have issues because the circumstances of every woman are different. She explained:

“I think women have difficulty with that [work-life balance] and every woman has different circumstances. In my case, I don't have any problem to have a good work-life balance, and sometimes my family support me. For example, they look after my child when I'm working more than working hours. Also, they help me if I have terrible transportation.” (Duaa, EPS).

Duaa's reference to the support of family members raises a recurring issue highlighted by several participants, who mentioned assistance from mothers and husbands. For example, Nahla, who also had just one child, argued that family cooperation is very important, and whatever women's own efforts, could be a deciding factor in managing a career alongside a family. This helped her to resign herself to a tiring workload:

“Thanks to Allah, I had someone to help me for a while, yet it's not [only] about their help, Allah helped me, although it's about organisation and time management and such issues. Yet if your family wasn't cooperative you wouldn't be able to accomplish anything. My mom and my husband helped me. I had a great load but I had to be patient. It's right that it's exhausting but that's life and we have to cope with it” (Nahla, HPS).

Not surprisingly, then, one participant who, being childless, did not currently find work-life balance unduly difficult, expected that the situation would change when she had children.

“Especially with kids, women won’t have time for anything. Me and my husband feel that we won’t have time to sit with our kids. However, for now it’s not big issue, but later when we have kids we would have more responsibilities and we may not be able to deal with all those responsibilities. We couldn’t manage it if we were away for 8 hours at work, then there would be a big problem” (Raja, BS).

The view that it becomes more difficult to have a good balance between home and work when one has children was echoed by Riham, a mother of three, who said,

“Generally I can say yes. It is difficult for a woman to have a good work life balance because the work affects her children negatively, especially if they are young. They feel her absence more” (Riham, HP1S).

Indeed, this was the experience of some women, who complained that they did not have time for their children during the weekdays, but were free and had time for them only at weekends. Maali, with three children, expressed that:

“I have to organise my schedule. My work takes the days of the week; the weekend is for my kids and visiting family” (Maali, BS).

Fatima, a mother of four, who worked as a school manager, recalled the experience of a colleague, which illustrates how a successful teaching career had entailed the sacrifice of family time:

“I remember one of the teachers told me, ‘I don’t see my girls the whole week, only Thursday and Friday’ [the weekend in Saudi Arabia]. She was one of the best teachers yet”(Fatima, EPS).

As the above examples demonstrate, women felt heavily the conflict between work demands and those of family, especially children. The prioritization of children's needs was typical, and consumed a great deal of women's time because, as Samiya expressed, the children’s needs are not only learning and food; the interest of the family and creating intimacy and fun at home are very important, and she saw meeting these needs as part of her responsibility. She explained:

“Waking up the kids daily, driving them to school, making their breakfast, making sure they have eaten and preparing healthy food. Healthy food is such a hard task, I cook daily, get them back from school and study with them, have to be with them, I have to do that for a while, then we have to study and have fun too. I believe they weren’t created just to learn at school; it’s enough to go to school and study for a while, then they need to have their own life, go to clubs. I have a programmer who comes to my home and teaches them” (Samiya, EPS).

In addition to the guilt women felt if they had to leave their children, they also faced marital problems because their failure to conform to expectations as wives and mothers annoyed their husbands. For example, a participant who worked as a doctor stated that she could not achieve a good balance between home and work, and her husband became annoyed when she could not fulfil her duties towards her daughter and husband. Therefore, she wanted to move to another hospital where she did not have on-call duties:

“My husband does not have a problem with my work, but he gets annoyed when I cannot do my duties towards him and towards my home and my daughter. He also wanted me to work in a place where they do not have [on call], and now I am thinking of moving to another hospital or clinic, because I cannot balance between my home and work; there must be one losing side” (Nawal, HPS).

Nawal’s comment reflects, in her use of the word ‘duties’, her acceptance of the idea that home and family were women’s responsibilities. Her reference to ‘one losing side’ reflects a perception of the balancing of home and career as a conflict in which, inevitably, satisfaction in one domain was achieved at the expense of the other. In her case, it was her home and, consequently her marital relationship that suffered. As Amal explained, another reason for marital problems when women have careers is that when they become busy with their work and financially independent, their husbands feel threatened:

“Some men have no problem if the wife works. But when she starts her job and the husband feels she has become busy or become independent, this may upset him. He may be jealous. She may surpass his success and be more successful than him. Or when he feels that she has become financially independent. This annoys many men” (Amal, BS).

Raja thought that in particular, a husband's understanding of women's needs and the nature of their work is essential to accomplish work-life balance. She was fortunate that her husband was not too demanding, which reduced the pressure on her.

“I like to leave my house organised, I finish everything before I leave. My husband understands me, and I don't need to cook every day; he knows that I come from my work so tired, so he always tells me, ‘You don't have to cook today, you may rest’, so my responsibilities are not so much. It's only 4 months since I got married so I don't have a lot of responsibilities yet” (Raja, BS).

Despite such cases, in general, whatever strategies women used to manage their responsibilities in the home, balancing work with family life was an ongoing challenge and source of pressure. Life was more difficult, however, for women who not only had duties in their own homes, but also responsibilities towards elderly parents, in-laws and siblings. Saudi society is collectivist and close-knit. Despite the growing trend towards living in nuclear families, it is common for families to maintain extended ties. However, in practice, the task of managing these relationships and providing care falls on women, as the following quotations illustrate:

“I take care of my mom, I have to visit her daily, and on Thursday and Friday and Saturday weekly, we go as a family to her house every weekend and we stay there” (Samiya, EPS).

“In addition to my home responsibilities, my mother is sick and I take care of her, and I'm responsible for her” (Bayan, EPS).

“I have to look after my mother. She has a business and I have to look after my sister and brother. I have one brother and one sister in the university for whom I am responsible financially” (Razan, BS).

Nahla, also caring for an elderly parent, reflected the common perception that this was an obligation, in reciprocity for the care she had received as she grew up:

“My parents are separated and my mom lives with me at the same house, and besides responsibilities for my kids and husband, I am responsible for my mom and my sister too, because when I was young, they took good care of me; it’s my turn now” (Nahla, HPS).

Also, Tamara explained that since her father died, she had assumed responsibility for her mother and her children:

““[I look after] My kids, my mom too since I am her only daughter. As for my step brother, I used to take care of all issues until my father passed away; now my mom lives with me”(Tamara, HPS).

In addition to the responsibilities of care, social responsibilities were also an issue, as much importance is attached to these in Saudi Arabia. Aisha explained the additional pressure this placed on her time.

“We have a social responsibility. My parents live near me so they require me actually to be there 3 to 4 days a week, My mother-in-law asks me to be there also; a lot of time is wasted in visiting family and relatives”(Aisha, EPS).

The same participant drew attention to two strategies that women might use in an attempt to balance home and work: working from home, or employing a housemaid to take care of the children, which is very common in Saudi Arabia.

“Family could be one of the issues. If a woman thinks she can be at home and do other stuff, for example, if she works at home and at the same time should take care of the kids, then she needs to manage that, or provide a housemaid to take care of the kids”(Aisha, EPS).

In fact, most working women with children in Saudi Arabia have a housemaid to help them with home and child care responsibilities, as they are away from the home most of the day. Even then, however, there were certain activities that women were reluctant to leave to the housemaid. For example, Riham felt that, as a parent, she had to take responsibility for the socialization of her children.

“Honestly, cleaning and things like that are done by the housemaid. I share sometimes in cooking if I have time and sometimes if I’m absent for a long time she prepares meals for the children or for us when we come back from work. Caring for children needs us to do it, as we are the parents. She does that when we are absent. She does not do much education; she sits with the children, listens to them and tries to assist them in their study. These things need our guidance and instruction as parents. I don’t allow the housemaid to take our place in this issue. She can replace you for many things, except education. Can she teach the children? No way. We have to give them our spirit” (Riham, HP1S).

Raja, Gamila, and Nuha agreed that they would be uncomfortable leaving everything to a housemaid. They said:

“I have a servant who comes to me once a week; I only organise the usual daily things, my bed, the living room, simple easy tasks, and the servant comes to clean the whole house once a week”(Raja, BS).

“Organising the home and so on, there’s a servant but I don’t like her to do the laundry; I do the laundry myself, I make the final touches and so on”(Gamila, EPS).

“We have maids but we can’t rely on them completely. First, trust is weak and second it is hard to give the responsibilities of the whole house to a maid. She is also a human being. No way can I put everything on her. I must lend a hand” (Nuha, BS).

Nuha’s response is interesting as it expresses the division of labour in terms of concern for the housemaid's welfare. Nuha had a demanding schedule, as the manager of the women’s section in a bank, and the mother of four children, yet she felt it was not right to overburden the housemaid. In view of her reference to lack of trust, however, it appears that, like her peers, Riham, Raja and Gamila, Nuha was reluctant to relinquish full control over what she saw as essentially her domain.

4.5.5.1 Discussion

Saudi culture assigns women responsibility for domestic work (see Chapter One, section 1.8), even if they have other jobs. This has been attributed to the domination of men:

fathers, husbands and brothers. Working women return home early to do housework and look after their children. It is not usual for Saudi men to share in domestic work; their responsibilities are outside the home, in earning income to support their families, and in this way gender roles in the household are considered to be 'balanced' and complementary (Alghamdi, 2014). Participants' experiences related to domestic responsibilities were consistent with Western reports of employees' work-life balance concerns, which fall into three general categories: the numbers of hours and flexibility in the timing of work for parents or those with other care responsibilities, leave entitlements, and childcare, whether by provision of workplace or childcare allowances (Thorntwaite, 2004; McDonald et al., 2005). According to Border Theory, the ease and comfort with which individuals negotiate border crossing depend on their relations and communication with border keepers, significant others who have an active influence on managing the different domains. The theory highlights the necessity to constantly negotiate borders because of the fluidity of the balance between work and family life, but does little to explain how women can become better border crossers or how the theory might extend into other aspects of non-work life (McDowall & Lindsay, 2014).

In Saudi Arabia, in the home domain, there are multiple border keepers (extended family to whom the worker has obligation), not only husbands, but also potentially parents and siblings who define the extent of women's responsibilities in the home domain, adding to the challenges faced by border crossers. When these people are supportive of the woman's career, whether by sharing some of her home responsibilities (like Nuhla's mother) or reducing their own demands (like Raja's husband), this can facilitate the woman's management of her roles in the two domains. Conversely, when they impose demands on the woman's time and energy, like Nawal's husband or Aisha's parents, her ability to negotiate the terms on which she allocates her resources, practically and emotionally,

between domains, is weakened, leading to feelings of conflict, such as those expressed by Nawal.

The findings are consistent with previous studies within an Arab context showing that women in general tend to rely on their family for career support (Jamali et al., 2005; Kauser & Tlaiss, 2011). A supportive home/family environment seems to buffer employees from the negative effects of work family conflict and to positively influence their effort to attain work-life balance (Rathi & Barath, 2013). Thus, participants in this study found that, as Voydanoff (2002) claimed, familial support may be a mechanism that is effective in reducing work-family conflict, thus increasing work-family balance.

An interesting point demonstrated by these findings, however, is the extent to which women themselves had 'internalized' the social cultural values assigning home and family responsibilities to women as (referring to culture, section 4.5.1) part of the way gender is 'done'. This was illustrated, not only in the use of phrases such as 'my responsibility' but also in their insistence, even when they employed housemaids, on reserving certain roles for themselves. Nahla and Gamila both claimed responsibility for "the final touches", while Riham insisted on retaining control over the education and socialization of children because "we have to give them our spirit". Thus, although women's central status in the home domain gave them some negotiating power, their identification with home domain values in some respects resulted in partly self-imposed burdens that challenged their work life balance.

4.5.6 Work responsibilities

The category, work responsibilities, reflects women's comments focusing on the ways in which the demands of their job created practical (e.g. time) and psychological (stress and

strain) difficulties for their attempts to maintain work-life balance. It includes the codes stress/pressure, organisation and management.

Participants experienced the pressure of work responsibilities in two ways: as pressure within the job itself, and through spillover effects on their home life. Some employees described the difficulty of coping with the pressure at work. Riham described the challenges:

“We are really stressed. We are adapted to this situation. The first two months of my work I wasn’t adapted. My colleagues would try to make me patient. I mean in the beginning I wasn’t used to such conditions. I was suffering and would always think of resigning. But my colleagues persuaded me to stay with them. Then, I got used to the system and regulated my time. I tried to benefit from every hour, every minute at work in order not to have any time without something that makes me busy. In the morning, patients’ number is less. In the evening the number is big” (Riham, HP1S).

Maryam saw no reason why some of this pressure could not be alleviated by allowing women to work shorter hours, if they wished to do so. In her view, the concern should not be with the working hours, per se, but with women's efficiency during the working day, which varies from one individual to another:

“It’s not about giving you a limit of hours; there could be someone who is working from 8am to 5pm, but she doesn't produce anything, while another person working only two hours provides a result equal to 8 hours of working, so it’s not about keeping you at work, because this person may not produce anything; it is all about the productivity and the nature of the person” (Maryam, BS).

In the absence of shorter or more flexible working hours, however, apart from the pressure of the workplace itself, most women found that work pressure and stress spilled over into their home life, as Fatima described:

“If I have a lot of pressures at my work then I have to forget about some home tasks for a while and just do the basics, cooking, helping the kids to study and finishing my work, I can do house chores divided over two days or

something. I am always trying my best but it's not always enough" (Fatima, EPS).

A health sector employee commented particularly on her long work day, and how this eroded family time, so that she was constantly rushing to do everything necessary in the short time remaining:

"All what you said, sometimes we work such long hours here, we spend more time working than we spend with our kids, so when we go home we just get into the kitchen then there's the Maghreb prayer, no time, then time for kids' study, then dinner and sleep, no time at all" (Tamara, HPS).

The stress felt by working women was thought, however, to be exacerbated by social norms (also discussed under culture, 4.5.1. and family responsibilities, 4.5.5) that imposed greater responsibility on women than on men. As Samiya pointed out, women are given the primary responsibility for home and family, for meeting their husband's emotional needs and sustaining social relationships, and they are criticised if they fail in any of these areas. All these are very huge responsibilities for working women:

"Also as women we are daughters so we have a lot of responsibilities, not as it's the case with men, we have to be with our parents more time than men, and as for our kids, any mistake that kids do, they always blame moms not dads, in addition to our responsibilities towards our husbands because if we are not great loving wives, we will be blamed too, so I think we have a huge load of responsibilities, and compliments[social obligations] and socialization, endless stuff" (Samiya, EPS).

Most of the women agreed that work pressure affected their family and home responsibilities. Participants Amal and Nuha both argued that it is difficult for women in Saudi Arabia to achieve a balance between their work and home; there will inevitably be a dereliction or sacrifice in one of them or both.

"In my opinion is it hard for a woman to make a balance between responsibilities; this is my view and it is impossible to abandon it. She must fall short in each, there will a shortcoming in her performance of her responsibilities" (Amal, BS).

“Of course it is difficult for women to have a balance between home responsibilities; and job; I don’t expect that there are many people able to manage, although, there are families that try to go a little down from their obligations and needs. For example, a man covers the vacant place of the woman in some cases due to life requirements” (Nuha, BS)

A few women, however, claimed not to experience any difficulty in balancing between home and work, and attributed their success to organisation and effective time management. Maysa, for example, commented:

“I just need an administrative assistant because we have a lot of work. As for the family it depends on the woman who can handle her issues” (Maysa, BS).

Iman agreed, arguing that careful organisation allowed her to demarcate her duties and allocate time efficiently, although she noted that it is important to make the children more independent:

“Organisation [is the key], time for work is only for work, time for home is only for home. For example, if I am a housewife and I have kids I have to help them to depend on themselves. Not only working women have to do that; every kid has to depend on himself. The point is about managing people, whether at work or at home; even the babysitter at home needs to be managed, it’s a kind of organisation and coordination too” (Iman, EPS).

4.5.6.1 Discussion

Based on the Border Theory, one of the important points of the findings emerging in the data was the importance of border keepers having other-domain awareness. For example, in earlier sections, some women reported that their superiors were aware of their domestic situation and would sometimes be willing to exercise discretion on such matters as leaving early or taking time off for family reasons. Conversely, as shown by Nuha’s comment in this section, family members who are aware of a woman’s work pressures may modify their own demands on her. Nuha explained that an understanding husband might cover some of the duties normally fulfilled by his wife. However, this participant did not yet have children and her responsibilities were towards her home and husband only. In

contrast, another participant, Samiya, pointed out that women had responsibilities towards their parents as well as work duty and responsibility for home and children. She also emphasised the burden of social responsibility on Saudi women, as an important traditional activity, which might add to the pressure on working women. For example, it would potentially greatly increase the number of border keepers influencing women's choices as border crossers, and imposing both temporal and psychological demands.

Border Theory suggests that borders between work and family can expand or contract according to the situation (Clark, 2000). It is clear that the home domain differs from one person to another, but as Nuha shows, the Saudi tradition of extended family and social obligation tends to expand the border of the home domain. Conversely, long working hours and the pressure of a demanding job tend to expand the border of the work domain, eroding the time and energy available for home and family, as reported by Tamara and Fatima. The latter's solution to "shrink" her domestic role and "just do the basics" in order to fit the time available. On the one hand, this could be interpreted as her using her centrality in the home domain to shape her involvement in a manner that suited her. On the other, however, it can also be seen that she felt guilty about this: "it's not always enough", suggesting that she identified with traditional expectations to the extent that the temporal expansion of the work border and consequent contracting of the home domain meant that work psychologically impinged on her perception of her home role.

Other women, Maysa and Iman, in contrast, described facing difficulty in balancing the two domains, apparently due to their ability to construct and maintain clear temporal borders between their two sets of responsibilities, reflected in Iman's assertion that "time for work is only for work; time for home is only for home". These two women both had demanding jobs (one as a bank manager, the other as a teacher and administrator in a technical education centre), so their ability to successfully compartmentalize their roles

in a way that other women found more difficult, may reflect their ability to construct not only temporal but also psychological barriers between domains in order to preserve their personal sense of work-life balance. As discussion in other sections has shown, the ability to do this depends on a variety of personal and institutional circumstances.

Summary of the findings for the third research question. What barriers do women in Saudi Arabia face to achieving work life balance?

<p>Culture</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Some women, after marriage, are forced by their husbands to stop working. 2) Some families prevent female members from working in a mixed environment. 3) Some men do not allow their wives or daughters to work because they think that women who work will always take control and be more independent. 4) Views of culture vary, because every family is different. 5) Some think that culture now has become much wider and the woman's role depends on the position she is in. Women can be found in any position. The situation has become easier and wider.
<p>Religion</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) People interpret traditions and religion in their own way. 2) Women should wear customary Islamic dress in the workplace. 3) Some men would not accept women working in a mixed environment. 4) Religion does not prevent women from working, however, the culture and domestic roles may affect women's ability to work.
<p>Transportation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Some women thought transportation is not difficult; the difficulty is in the distance between work and home.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Some women face difficulty if their husbands cannot drive them. They take a taxi and take the children to school, then go back to work. 3) Private drivers or public cars like taxis take a big amount of women's salary. 4) Some banks offer a driver but only for employees to meet customers. 5) Public transportation is scarce and not convenient.
Childcare	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Difficulty finding suitable childcare was a source of stress for women. 2) Nurseries are expensive and often of poor quality. 3) Some workplaces pay a childcare allowance but it is far less than the cost of nursery fees. 4) Workplaces with more than 50 female employees must provide a nursery, by law. 5) Most women rely on relatives for childcare. 6) Some women set up their own crèche by hiring a room and bringing in their housemaids.
Family Responsibilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Married women with children have many home responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children, and the husband. 2) Most working women with children have a housemaid to help them with home and childcare responsibilities. 3) Some women have additional responsibilities, like taking care of their parents or younger siblings and social responsibilities. 4) Because of work some women do not have time for their children during the weekdays, only at weekends.

Work Responsibilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Most woman face a lot of work pressure and responsibilities, and family responsibilities at the same time. 2) Most women agree that work pressure affects their family and home responsibilities. 3) Some women claim not to face problems in balancing between home and work because of their ability to organise and manage their time.
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Women's efforts to balance a career with home life faced several barriers, related to cultural opposition to women's work and consequent lack of family support. In some cases, religion was invoked in attempts to stop women working, limit them to segregated settings and constrain their behaviour. Work responsibilities were often onerous and took women's time and energy to a degree they found difficult to reconcile with home life. Social norms give women primary responsibility for the home, children, and social relationships. Balancing family and career is especially difficult for women with children, but good quality, affordable child care is scarce. Women were also constrained by lack of transportation and the need to rely on relatives for transport, or to spend a large part of their salaries on taxis or private chauffeurs. All these factors restricted women's work opportunities, made work-life balance difficult, and affected their physical and emotional well-being.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of the semi-structured interviews with thirty-one women employees in the health, education, and banking sectors. The research has shown that the women largely lacked autonomy and flexibility in their work due to lack of formal policy, bureaucracy and stereotypical attitudes in the workplace. However, they desired

to have autonomy and flexibility in their work, and perceived benefits to themselves, their families and their employers if such opportunities were made available. In addition, the findings also presented a deeper understanding of the different problems which Saudi women faced, in achieving work life balance. The factors identified in this study that prevent working women in Saudi Arabia from achieving a satisfactory balance between work and home include the culture, religion, transportation, lack of suitable childcare, and family and work responsibilities.

Clearly, the 31 participants daily crossed socially-constructed borders between the two domains, work and home. Such border crossing involved not only physical crossing between the locations and time-spans associated with each domain, but also psychological border crossing, in the sense of the change from one mind-set and role to another. However, every participant created or facilitated her own environment to balance between work and home life, due to the differences in the nature of the work, and the responsibilities they faced in work and at home. Intangible barriers are affected by several factors, such as the customs and traditions and culture, as well as each person's understanding and interpretation of religion and beliefs. Based on the propositions from Border Theory, the degree of permeability, flexibility and blending between the domains (work and home) determines how strong or weak the border is, Also, there are other factors such as border keepers' commitment and other-domain awareness, that affect the ability to manage and make a balance between work and home. Moreover, the situation is complicated by the differences among women in their experiences, perceptions, and strategies. Border Theory was found to be challenged in the Saudi context by different social constructions of family, ambiguous or hybrid centrality, particular disruption of socially constructed borders by physical borders, counter- narratives as a strategy for resisting the status quo, and the blurring of work-life borders through the employment of domestic labour. These will be addressed as research contributions in Chapter Five.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the availability of flexibility and job-crafting autonomy in work, and the barriers to work-life balance for women in the Saudi Arabian context. In doing so, it shed light on the dynamics of a variety of religious, cultural and organisational factors on perceptions of work-life balance, and on strategies Saudi women used to negotiate their roles in the work and domestic domains, through the lens of Work-family Border Theory.

This chapter highlights the contributions of the study from a theoretical perspective, as well as in terms of policy implications. This is followed by a reflection on the research methodology, discussion of the research limitations, and suggestions for further research that would advance the understanding of Saudi women's perceptions of the concepts of work-life balance, flexible work, and job crafting.

5.2 Research Contribution

This study has contributed to theoretical and practical perspectives, through the testing, critique and development of Border Theory, and by suggesting policy implications.

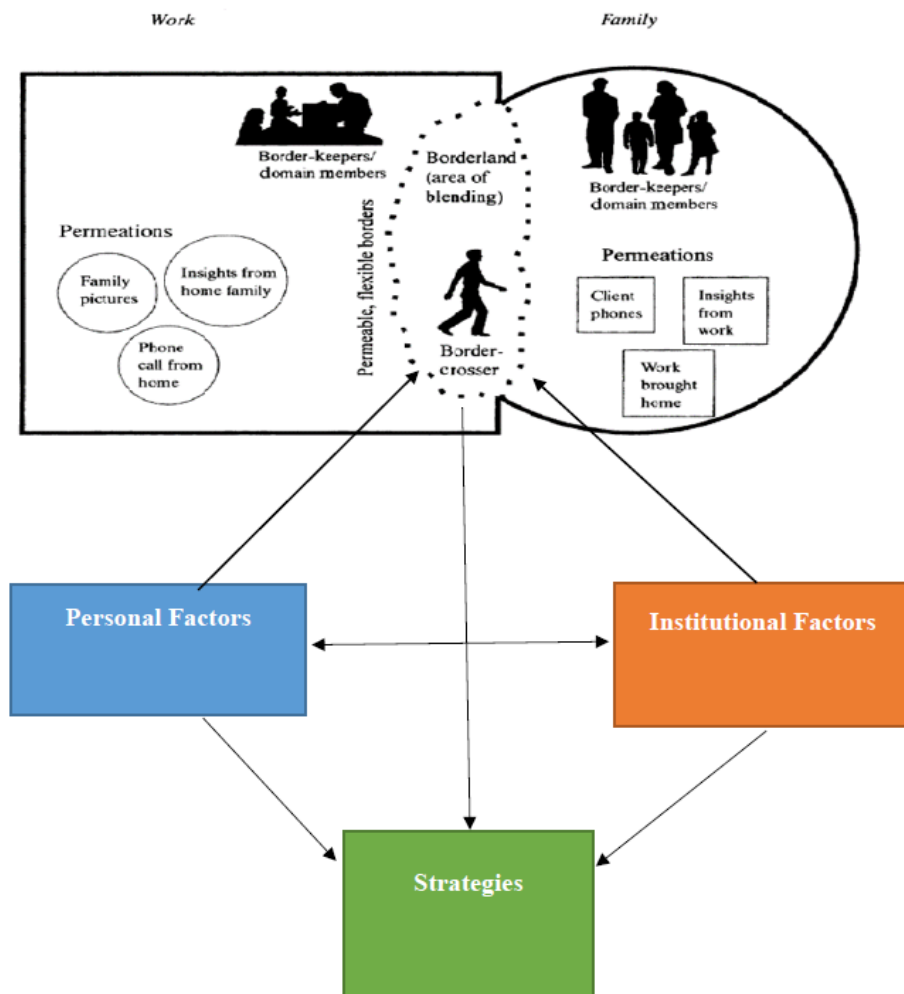
5.2.1 Theoretical contribution

I have drawn upon the Work-family Border Theory as a basis to explore the availability and potential impact of flexible work on work-life balance for women in Saudi Arabia. The theory focuses specifically on the strength and permeability of borders between the work and family domains, the role of border keepers, and bordercrossers' status within each domain (central or peripheral) in influencing the individual's ability to negotiate the borders. The theory and its propositions, as presented by Clark (2000) were introduced in section 2.3, with the aid of a pictorial representation (Figure 2.1) of the theory's main

concepts. Putnik et al. (2018) suggested that Border Theory does not take account of culture, and they considered it necessary to combine it with Intersectionality Theory in order to address this. Other authors have, however, applied Border Theory in other contexts including Greece (Karassvidou & Glaveli, 2015) and Pakistan (Latif et al., 2016), but there have been few such cross-cultural studies, and none of Saudi Arabia. The present study, therefore, offered an opportunity both to explore the ability of Border Theory to provide insights into women's perceptions and negotiations of work-life balance in the distinctive Saudi context, and also to develop the theory with evidence from that context. Indeed, the findings from the Saudi context potentially enrich this theory by bringing to light individual (e.g. education) and institutional (e.g. public policy, social culture) factors that may generate different perspectives on the balance between work and family life, as well as influencing the strategies such as counter-narratives and third-party proxies, available to border crossers to help them in negotiating the border between domains. In this way, the research shows how Border Theory can be developed to better make sense of the issues that women face in the Saudi context, enabling exploration of dynamics, which have so far been neglected in other studies. Some previous studies included one or more such factors; for example, Karassvidou and Glaveli (2015) considered organisational culture as an institutional factor; Donald and Linington (2008) considered gender role orientation among men (individual) and type of work (institutional) and Emslie and Hunt (2009) considered caring responsibilities. However, none of the reviewed studies included the range of factors addressed here, or border crossing strategies. These proposed additions to Border Theory are illustrated in Figure 5.1, which expands on the original model proposed by Clark (2000). It can be seen from the figure that, by the recognition of personal and institutional factors, the research develops Border Theory's concepts of border crossers and border keepers, with refinement to define their roles in controlling border-crossing in specific cultural contexts.

The category of institutional factors, in particular, responds to Putnuk et al's (2018) suggestion that Border Theory does not take account of such factors, thereby contributing to fill a gap in the original theory. In addition, by the addition of strategies, the research contributes to address the criticism of McDowell and Lindsay (2018) that Border Theory does not address how individuals can enhance their border crossing ability.

Figure 5-1 Work-family Border Theory: a Revised and Expanded Model



- **Personal Factors:** education level, financial income, age, family culture, social level, perspective towards flexible work or job crafting.
- **Institutional Factors:** organisational culture, structure and location of decision-making, law, public policy, culture, religion.
- **Strategies:** counter- narratives, third-party proxies.

The diagram shows that interacting personal and institutional factors influence border crossers' negotiation of boundaries directly, by exerting pressure and influencing needs, expectations and values. They also affect the strategies available to border crossers for negotiating the boundary. Individual factors influencing women's experience as border crossers (identified by participants in their responses in section 4.2, for example) include education level, financial income, age, the social level of the family, whether her family are open minded or conservative, their perspective towards home and work responsibility, and also their perspective towards flexible work or job crafting. Education, for example, was found to be important in several ways; it fuelled women's desire and expectations for personal fulfilment and social contribution through a career (see section 4.2.2) and increased the work opportunities available to them, although this sometimes, for example, in the selection of careers such as health and banking, meant challenging established social norms such as segregation. Financial income determined the degree of need for women's financial contribution to the family (section 4.2.1), which might influence family members' attitude towards women's jobs, and women's own willingness to accept compromises in either domain in order to keep a job. Age had implications for the relevant border keepers in the home domain (parents, for the younger, unmarried women, husbands for the others) and the extent and nature of women's domestic obligations for children or elderly relatives.

A key consideration, moreover, was the degree to which the family was open- minded or conservative, which was linked in complex ways to the social level of the family, reflected, for example, in the education level of women's parents. Such factors were seen to influence the different ways in which social roles were construed within the family- especially important given the power of men as border keepers, who could influence the kind of job a woman took, and her commitment to it- and even control whether she

worked outside the home at all. Many of these women came from relatively liberal, supportive families, in the sense that their parents and/or husbands had allowed and encouraged them to pursue higher education and careers, and even supported them practically through help in the home or relaxing their own demands in the family domain. This was reflected in the analysis and discussion of their responses (in Chapter 4 discussions) in which they acknowledged and expressed appreciation of these encouraging attitudes. Nevertheless, their accounts of friends' and colleagues' experiences showed that attitudes conducive to women's work-life balance are by no means the norm.

All these factors influenced women's own perspectives on their home and work responsibilities: where they assigned primacy, what they perceived to be their duties in each domain, and the strategies they adopted (discussed below) to balance the demands of their twin roles. Lastly, it was observed (in sections 4.3 and 4.4) that women had different attitudes towards flexible work, in terms of what they thought it meant, and the extent to which they perceived it as compatible with their job values (for example a doctor's sense of obligation to be always available for her patients). Such factors would benefit from further research and discussion, for better understanding of how they may impact the nature of borders and the challenges of border crossing for different women and in different circumstances.

It was noticeable that a number of the personal characteristics mentioned above have culture – specific manifestations, such as early marriage, large number of children (several women in this study had 4 or 5), or the subjects women are allowed to study. This calls attention to the contribution of this study in adding to knowledge regarding the ways in which culture – specific social and institutional factors modify border crossers' understanding of domains and borders, and impact on the negotiation strategies available

and, hence, the potential for work-life balance, for example, women's use of housemaids as third party proxies (section 4.5.4), which enabled them to work while fulfilling culturally imposed family duties at arms' length.

An interesting way in which the Saudi context challenges Western presentations of Border Theory is with regard to the issue of domain values and primacy. In my view, Work-family Border Theory as presented in Western literature appears value – neutral, in that it does not make assumptions that certain values are necessarily attached to the home and work domains, or assign primacy to one over the other. It recognises the relevance of gender role perceptions and the possibility of tensions and conflicts, but appears to view these as negotiated by individuals, according to their own values and circumstances. This is demonstrated, for example, in the work of Donald and Linington (2008) who explore the salience of gender role orientations of men in dual career relationships, with dependent children, where such orientation was a morally neutral variable investigated in correlation with other variables.

In the Saudi context, however, the situation is somewhat different. In this particular society, an almost monolithic culture has evolved, which uncompromisingly assigns women to the domestic domain and asserts that, even if women have careers, the domestic realm has primacy. Even though, as noted previously, participants in this study were from comparatively liberal backgrounds, in the sense that they were allowed and supported to have careers, they nevertheless saw child raising and domestic duties as their primary responsibility. This was reflected, for example, in the role conflict and strain reported by a number of participants, in the guilt expressed by women who coped with their dual roles by restricting their domestic roles to "the basics" in order to fit the time available (" it isn't always enough" - section 4.5.2), and in the assumption expressed by younger unmarried

or (as yet) childless women that they might have to give up their jobs when they had children.

These values are reinforced by religion and legislation, and as the experiences of my participants demonstrated, largely internalized by women themselves. Such cultural and institutional factors included norms on gender segregation (or the policies and practices of non-segregated organisations to render 'mixing' acceptable), law and policy on the fields in which women may study and work, organisational culture and structure (including the locus of decision-making power), transportation, and childcare facilities. The weight of societal expectation and the social norms and roles generated to maintain it, pose particular challenges to Saudi women aspiring to careers, and constrain their strategy options for balancing the two domains. It was seen, for example, that the cultural acceptability of some jobs was an important factor in both the attitudes of men (as powerful border keepers) towards their wives' or daughters' work, and also the degree to which women themselves felt comfortable in the work domain. Paradoxically, however, the result was that women experienced the greatest comfort and psychological freedom in the most physically restrictive environment – the education institutions, where gender segregation is strictly enforced. In such settings, the physical barriers that excluded men from these work environments disrupted the socially constructed barriers of female subordination. Women were free to discard their hijab, did not need to guard their tongues, and appeared to have a greater degree of autonomy than their counterparts in health and banking.

In this respect, an interesting challenge is posed, by the Saudi context, to Border Theory's assumptions about central and peripheral status. As indicated in earlier chapters, Border Theory suggests that an individual's centrality or peripherality in either domain is a key factor in negotiating both conditions within that domain, and the terms on which border

crossing takes place (e.g. the permeability and flexibility of borders). Theoretically, an individual who occupies a central position, by virtue of such factors as knowledge, expertise and seniority, should have more opportunity to shape domain conditions and roles, and to influence others' expectations, in ways that help to meet his or her needs and so facilitate work-life balance.

In the Saudi context, however, this was not necessarily the case. Women appeared to occupy a hybrid, ambiguous position in both domains, as a result of institutional (cultural and structural) factors which in turn constrained their capacity for negotiating their domain roles and the terms of their border crossing. The domestic domain is purportedly assigned to women; they have the key role in managing the household and bringing up children, which is their socially-ascribed field of expertise. In this sense, they should be 'central'. Nevertheless, as reflected in participants' experiences, see for example, 4.5.1, social norms are such that it is the husband or father who has decision making power, and whose permission is required for women to work outside the home. Thus, he effectively has control over how and when a woman performs even her domestic role, making her, in a sense, peripheral. Similarly, in the work domain, in mixed sectors, a number of women who occupied high positions and had considerable experience, knowledge and skill, were still relegated to peripheral status in such matters as departmental decision making, which was dominated by men (section 4.3). It appears that in a society where women have traditionally been subordinate, it is difficult for them to hold an unambiguously central position. Even if they meet the criteria for centrality described in Border Theory, this does not necessarily give them the power to control their domain roles or significantly influence the terms of their border crossing.

Another way in which institutional factors constrained women's flexibility in negotiating domain borders concerned childcare (section 4.5.4). Not only were childcare facilities in

short supply, but also, women showed a reluctance to delegate the culturally important task of early socialisation of children (traditionally assigned to the family, and especially the mother) to strangers. Their internalisation of this role led some women to create or preserve borders around their children, resulting in self-imposed limitations on the location, hours and conditions of work.

Such institutional factors, interacting with the individual factors discussed earlier, influence the strategies available to women to negotiate domain borders. Thus, another contribution of this study is to shed light on counter-narratives and creative strategies by which Saudi women are rebelling against, or at least modifying, prevailing social constructions, in their efforts to negotiate the border between the work and home domains. One example is the counter-narrative challenging the “safe family” discourse with allegations of harmful influences, and even abuse of children, cited as a rationale for the demand for more and better childcare. Another is the way in which women’s employment of housemaids as role proxies helped them to bridge the gap or blur the boundary between the home and work domains. By selecting, employing and supervising domestic workers, as surrogate housekeepers and carers, women were enabled technically and psychologically to fulfil their domestic responsibilities, while still devoting the requisite time to the work domain. The most extreme example reported in this study was that of a group of women who negotiated the permeation of family across the border into the work domain by importing their domestic workers into the workplace in order to create their own crèche. Thus, these women performed both work roles and (by proxy) domestic roles in the same location. The role of such proxy domain actors and border crossers in enabling individuals to manage and balance their roles, and the consequent blurring of the distinction between the two domains, have not so far been addressed in the Border Theory literature and are new contributions of this study.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be seen that this study demonstrates the applicability and value of work-family border theory in explaining attitudes and behaviours around border crossing and work-life balance in a distinctive, non-Western context. At the same time, the Saudi evidence suggests ways of developing the theory to take account of the role of institutional (e.g. cultural) factors in shaping the context in which border crossing takes place and the terms on which it can be negotiated, as well as paying attention to strategies to facilitate border crossing and work-life balance. The specific factors identified within each of the three proposed new components in the revised model relate to the Saudi context. Nevertheless, the inclusion of these categories within the model potentially offers an enhanced understanding of the factors influencing the attitudes, roles and status of border crossers, and the way they seek to enhance their border crossing ability, within the parameters of their own and others' domain expectations, through the adoption of creative strategies. It also offers scope for exploration and refinement to define their context in specific cultures.

5.2.2 Potential policy implications

Although considerable interest has been directed to work-life balance issues in the West, very little literature on work-life balance issues is available in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this study contributes significantly to knowledge of work-life balance issues in this specific context.

It was shown that the Border Theory' of work-family balance can contribute to understanding of the boundaries between work and personal life at different levels (societal and family, organisational and individual levels). As a result of insight into the boundaries and domains of work and family, it is possible to identify ways in which individuals can help control the border of each domain and its impact on the other domain.

Understanding how women negotiate the border between family and home, their needs and concerns and the challenges they face, is the first step towards identifying practical measures that can help women to achieve work-life balance. As indicated previously, it emerged in this study that women differ considerably in their experiences, depending on their personal characteristics and family situation, so it is not possible to offer “one-size-fits-all” prescriptions. To a great extent, women’s work- life balance will depend on their attitudes and status (central or peripheral) and the attitudes of border keepers within each domain, and must be negotiated individually. Nevertheless, there are some measures that can be suggested to the government and employers that would facilitate women’s management of home and career obligations.

One of the important contributions of this study is to highlight the importance of implementation of flexible work and job crafting in all the sectors that employ women. It emerged clearly in section 4.3(addressing Research Question One of this study) that women in all three sectors perceived a lack of flexibility, for example, in hours of work, and lack of opportunity to exercise autonomy or initiative in their jobs, or craft aspects of the work to meet their needs. At the best there might be some informal discretion on the part of managers (as reported, for example, by Maryam and Tamara, p 218) to allow women to leave early or take time off in an emergency. The great majority of participants, however, expressed a desire for flexibility and job crafting, which they felt would alleviate pressure in both home and family domains, improve their work-life balance, and enhance the involvement, creativity and performance in work. Whilst this would not resolve all the complex challenges facing women workers, many of which are embedded in socio-cultural arrangements such as organisational hierarchies and male dominance, they would at least alleviate some of the barriers to work-life balance that persist, even in areas where women’s participation is becoming socially accepted. Various obstacles that have been explored in this study, such as cultural and religious norms, transportation

difficulties and lack of childcare facilities (see section 4.5) should be notified to the Ministry of Labour in KSA, to inform labour policy, and encourage cooperation to reduce the challenges that women face. A further benefit of this may be to facilitate women's participation and relations in the workforce, thereby contributing to address the government's concern to increase employment among Saudis and reduce the need to rely on expatriates.

A challenge frequently raised by participants was their lack of access to convenient, affordable transportation. A number of women reported (section 4.5.3) reliance on male relatives or private drivers, or having to pay a large part of their salaries on taxis and hired cars. According to Riham (p 284), such issues could make the difference between a women being able to work or not. Saudi Arabia has very little public transport – only one railway line and limited, unreliable bus services. When Saudis refer to public transport, they usually mean taxis, which are public in the sense of being available for general hire, as opposed to the private drivers employed by individual families. However, taxis are expensive. Samiya and Amal, for example, commented on how transport cost eroded their salaries. The situation with regard to public transport affects men as well as women, but women, as has been noted, have until now been additionally disadvantaged by the indirect ban (through refusal to issue driving licences to women) on their driving. The need to rely on a male relative or driver to take them to and from work is a serious constraint for women. Tamara, in this study, for example, noted the difficulty she had experienced when her husband was not available to drive her. Very recently, the government has reconsidered the ban on women drivers. Allowing women to drive would not only ease the border-crossing between work and home, consistent with the government policy of encouraging women into the workforce, but would also serve the government's objective of reducing reliance on expatriates, who are often employed as chauffeurs. It remains to

be seen, however, to what extent women avail themselves of this opportunity and whether their doing so is subject to enduring cultural constraints.

Another way to alleviate women's transportation problems would be to improve the quantity and quality of public transport, for example, by introducing safety and service quality regulations for bus companies, private bus operators and taxis, requiring them to meet certain criteria in order to be awarded an operating licence. This might make such services more appealing to women and more acceptable to their families. Consideration might also be given to encouraging - or even requiring - organisations with substantial numbers of women employees to provide their own mini-bus service to transport women to and from work. In this study, it was revealed that some women in the banking sector benefited from the availability of company cars during work time, while Bisma used a free bus service provided by her husband's employer. Aramco, for its employees and their families, suggesting that such provision would be feasible for some employers at least. Moreover, the government has already imposed requirements on large organisations to provide childcare (see 4.5.4) so there is a precedent for government intervention in human resource policies to facilitate women's employment.

Indeed, the other main concern raised by participants was childcare. This was a controversial issue, arousing ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, the majority of women preferred children to be cared for in the family, by a relative or housekeeper, because they mistrusted the quality of nurseries, or could not afford suitable ones (see for example, Samiya and Aisha, p 288-289). On the other hand, there was a counter-narrative to the "safe family" assumption by concerns that children might be exposed to unhealthy influences from foreign domestic employees, or might even suffer abuse in the home, as Samiya suggested. From this perspective, some women called for more nurseries, as did some, like Raja, who favoured home care but did not wish to impose on parents and in-

laws. This raises the question of the amount and quality of nursery care available in the KSA. Women interviewed in this study were critical of both, and expressed serious doubts about childcare quality. The government has already demonstrated some willingness to mandate family-friendly provisions, such as the requirement for organisations with 50 or more female employees to establish an onsite crèche, as pointed out by Razan, although she indicated that not all liable organisations comply. With more women entering the workforce, and the government keen to tap their potential, more priority needs to be given to ensuring a sufficient supply of child-care places to meet current and future needs. Moreover, consideration should be given to ensuring the quality of nursery provision, including private nurseries, through adequate training and strict qualification requirements for those managing or employed in nurseries, as well as a system of inspection and accreditation. Such measures might alleviate the concerns such as those expressed by women in this study, such as Aisha who compared Saudi nurseries unfavourably with those in the USA, and Raja, who mistrusted kindergartens because she “can’t be sure of the people who work there”.

Concerns about the quality of child care, and the cost of the better nurseries, were frequently raised in this study. Moreover, this resonates with my own family experience. One of my sisters, a doctor, was able to find and afford suitable childcare and continue in her career; another gave up her job, at least in part because of childcare problems. My own experience as a father whose daughter attended nursery in the UK is that the quality is higher and more reliable, and the hours of availability more convenient, than in KSA. If working women were more confident of the quality of childcare, it would help them to achieve work-life balance. In such a situation, they could fulfil their self and societally-imposed childcare obligations at “arm’s length” (as many now do through the employment of nannies and housemaids, in one case reported, even taking them into the workplace in order to operate their own crèche) by their selection and monitoring of the

nursery. At the same time, when they are in the work domain, it would be easier for them to be “fully present”, psychologically as well as physically, in the knowledge that their children are being well cared-for. This, in turn, might help them in attaining a “central” rather than “peripheral” status in the organisation, and hence their ability to control aspects of their jobs and the border between domains.

5.3 A Reflection on Methodology

Understanding employees’ perceptions needs detailed insights, which can be facilitated by qualitative interviews. In this study a qualitative strategy was used to gain enhanced understanding about the ways in which particular circumstances influence female employees’ perceptions of work-life balance. The application of the social constructionist paradigm and an inductive approach, provided an opportunity to explore the meaning of employees’ experience, and the complexity of the realities constructed in individuals’ minds. The interview approach was valuable for this study, because it gave Saudi women a rare opportunity to express the meanings they gave to their experiences of work-life balance. Previous studies such as Emslie and Hunt (2009) have done this in a Western context, but Saudi women’s voices have not so far been heard.

It is acknowledged that the philosophical stance of the study and the research methods used are not in themselves novel. In order to appreciate their significance in this study, it is necessary to bear in mind the unique cultural context of Saudi Arabia. The kingdom’s immature research culture, together with cultural norms that attach great importance to personal privacy, combine to make a general preference for quantitative research such as mailed or online questionnaires that do not require direct contact with respondents. It is only relatively recently that qualitative studies have been conducted in the management field, and they are still comparatively few (Alharbi, 2013). This study has demonstrated the feasibility of using such methods in the Saudi context, subject to a sensitive awareness

of areas of cultural reticence and reflexive acknowledgement of the implications for the study.

Of particular significance is the fact that this study of women's perceptions was conducted by a male researcher. Given the predominant practice of segregation in Saudi society, research is generally conducted with single-sex groups by a researcher of the same sex. Indeed, it is often assumed that it is not possible for a male researcher to gain access to women, and vice versa. In this study, a number of factors enabled the departure from this established practice. The participants, as professional women, were well-educated (as shown in the participants' background, Table 3.3) and a number of them had studied abroad, and therefore had experience of a mixed environment. Moreover, those working in banking and medicine had to interact with male colleagues and clients or patients in the course of their work. It is also worth noting that the very fact that these women were pursuing professional careers implied a degree of openness and tolerance that facilitated these women's involvement, as several acknowledged in the interviews. Nevertheless, there were some challenges. Teachers, for example, could not be interviewed at their places of work, because it is not permitted for men to enter girls-only schools and colleges. There were also some women who, either for their own comfort or to reassure their families, preferred not to meet me privately. A number of strategies were used in these circumstances. I conducted some interviews by telephone or Skype, interviews were held in premises of the participant's choosing, such as a restaurant or coffee shop, and, if necessary, I arranged to be accompanied by a female relative - my wife, sister or mother-in-law (see chapter 3, section 3.7.6. for a discussion of the implications of this strategy and its significance in the Saudi context). By such means I was able to obtain the cooperation of female participants who might otherwise have felt unable to participate, and they indicated that they welcomed the opportunity to express their feelings.

In these ways, this research ran counter to the stereotype of gender-restricted research in Saudi Arabia, challenging the view expressed by researchers such as Al-Saggaf and Williamson (2004) that it is not culturally acceptable for a man to interview women, and might give encouragement and guidance to other Saudi researchers who may be interested in researching social issues across gender. In turn, this may contribute to the development of a more open research culture in Saudi Arabia, and to more holistic understanding of social phenomena in the Kingdom.

5.4 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on exploring the barriers to work-life balance for women in three sectors only: health, education, and banking, to make important contributions. However, it may have been better if data were collected from different regions, not only the three big cities (Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam) but also other cities, as there may be differences in the barriers and practices experienced for balance between work and home by women employees from other cities. Moreover, some other limitations exist. The data were mainly collected from women working in the main three sectors that employ women, in three big cities in Saudi Arabia. Due to the lack of reliable secondary data and statistics on women and work life balance, flexible work, and job crafting in Saudi Arabia, it was not possible to triangulate the data collected during this research with other perspectives or types of evidence. Indeed, dependability and credibility might be enhanced by utilising various data sources in order to triangulate all the collected information. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the findings of studies using a qualitative research methodology cannot be generalised to the whole population of women in Saudi Arabia, although transferability may be possible, based on consideration of the detailed contextual information provided, which can inform judgment as to the potential relevance of the research conclusions to other contexts.

Because of the importance of the issue of work-life balance in both academia and practice, especially for women, it is highly recommended that similar research should be conducted in other sectors and other private or public sector organisations, in different cities in KSA in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of women's barriers and Work-family Border Theory, in order to develop this study's findings. In addition, it is important in future research to study work policy in relation to women employees' participation in the balance between work and home, and also to investigate employees' perspectives on the potential of flexible work and job crafting at different levels in organisations, to help employees to achieve work-life balance. Such studies may contribute towards development of more effective policies and practices to overcome the barriers that women face in Saudi Arabia.

Further study might complement this research by taking other perspectives to explore the issue of work-life balance over large populations. It would be necessary to test the Work-family Border Theory quantitatively in order to generalise the study. In other contexts, Border Theory research has been investigated by survey methods, allowing large and widespread samples, for example, more than 300 in surveys in the USA (Li et al., 2013) and UK (McDowall & Lindsay, 2014). Thus, a quantitative study with a larger sample from different sectors and regions is recommended in order to explore from a different perspective the insights afforded by this theory.

This study has focused on the perceptions of work-life balance, flexible work, and job crafting of women working in three sectors in KSA. Further study is required to explore the perceptions of employees in different sectors in Saudi Arabia, to investigate whether perceptions differ among sectors in the same country. Apart from this, perceptions and implementation of work life balance, and flexible work policies should be explored from organisations' perspective in order to see employers' view of the idea of work-life

balance, and to explore the degree of matching between organisations' provisions and employees' perceptions of their experiences in the work domain. It is important, also, to be aware of the distinctiveness of Saudi society and the cultural influences that affect all aspects of women's lives. Without such understanding, it will not be possible for researchers to draw credible conclusions about how the experiences of women in different contexts compare. Similarities and difference in women's experience can only be properly understood with reference to the mediating impact of culture.

The present study was an exploratory one conducted in one country, Saudi Arabia, and one region, so its conclusions are not generalisable to the entire population. Rather, the reported findings should be viewed as a starting point and guide towards discovery of additional insights. The purpose of this study was to understand the struggles and difficulties faced by working women in achieving work-life balance in a complex cultural environment. Managers and policy makers need to understand these issues and take them into account in further decision-making. The Ministry of Labour, which has already taken some steps towards relaxing constraints on women's work, should further develop their working policy for women, with reference to preventing barriers and constraints in order to facilitate the balance between work and home for female employees. The Ministry of Labour has provided a number of initiatives for recruiting women, but there are still many socio-cultural and practical obstacles that should be taken into consideration to achieve a balance between work and home. Although cultural change is typically slow, and there can be no instant solution for Saudi women, there are signs of moves towards change and the application of flexible working programmes in various sectors would be a step in the right direction.

Moreover, research is needed to understand how the cultural factors affect the relationship among border characteristics if the Work-family Border Theory is used in different cultures.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

This study has explored the potential for achieving work-life balance for working women in the under-researched and culturally-distinctive context of Saudi Arabia, through the lens of Work-family Border Theory. In so doing, it exposed the limitations of that theory in accounting for perceptions and behaviours in the Saudi context. A key contribution of the study was to show (with a revised model, presented in this chapter), how Border Theory can be developed in order to make better sense of Saudi working women's work-life balance issues, by taking account of a wide range of individual and institutional factors (many of them context and culture-specific) and the way they interact, in turn influencing the strategies adopted by these women in the attempt to manage work-life balance.

The study has also contributed to the immature Saudi research culture by not only demonstrating the value and feasibility of qualitative research, but also the possibility, through culture-sensitive strategies, of conducting cross-gender research, a rarity in the Saudi environment. Lastly, the research has contributed by deriving potential policy implications for facilitating women's work-life balance. Many cultural and structural constraints remain, but government policy and my participants' resilience, determination and creativity suggest that change is possible, which this study may help to support.

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Appendix A

Saudi Arabia

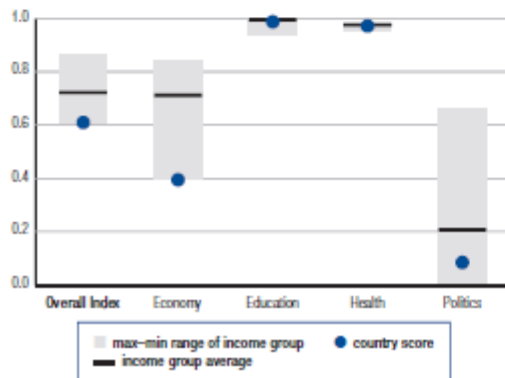


Key Demographic and Economic Indicators

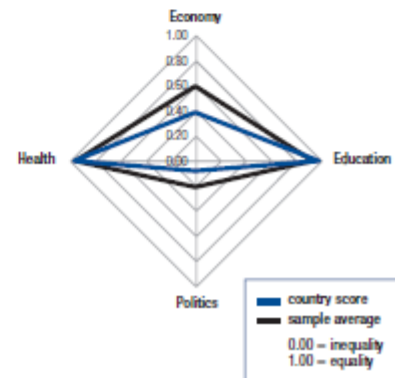
GDP (US\$ billions)	519.89
GDP (PPP) per capita (constant 2011, international \$)	51,122
Total population (millions)	28.83
Population growth (%)	1.89
Overall population sex ratio (male/female)	1.23

	Rank	Score	Sample average	Female	Male	Female-to-male ratio
Country Score Card						
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND OPPORTUNITY	137	0.389	0.596			
Labour force participation.....	138	0.25	0.67	19	77	0.25
Wage equality for similar work (survey).....	108	0.56	0.61	—	—	0.56
Estimated earned income (PPP US\$).....	106	0.49	0.53	19,763	40,000	0.49
Legislators, senior officials and managers.....	120	0.08	0.27	7	93	0.08
Professional and technical workers.....	117	0.38	0.65	28	72	0.38
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	86	0.987	0.935			
Literacy rate.....	96	0.95	0.87	91	97	0.95
Enrolment in primary education.....	1	1.00	0.94	98	95	1.03
Enrolment in secondary education.....	—	—	0.62	—	—	—
Enrolment in tertiary education.....	1	1.00	0.88	53	49	1.06
HEALTH AND SURVIVAL	90	0.971	0.960			
Sex ratio at birth (female/male).....	1	0.94	0.92	—	—	0.95
Healthy life expectancy.....	99	1.03	1.04	66	64	1.03
POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	117	0.077	0.214			
Women in parliament.....	74	0.25	0.25	20	80	0.25
Women in ministerial positions.....	138	0.00	0.20	0	100	0.00
Years with female head of state (last 50).....	64	0.00	0.20	0	50	0.00

Country score within income group



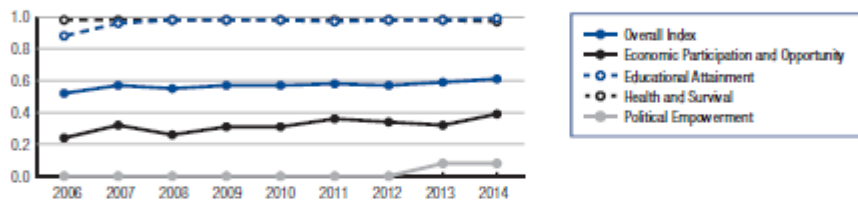
Country score vs sample average



Saudi Arabia

	OVERALL		ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION		EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		HEALTH AND SURVIVAL		POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Gender Gap Index 2014 (out of 142 countries)	130	0.606	137	0.389	86	0.987	90	0.971	117	0.077
Gender Gap Index 2013 (out of 136 countries)	127	0.588	134	0.322	90	0.976	52	0.976	105	0.077
Gender Gap Index 2012 (out of 135 countries)	131	0.573	133	0.340	91	0.976	55	0.976	133	0.000
Gender Gap Index 2011 (out of 135 countries)	131	0.575	133	0.358	92	0.967	53	0.976	132	0.000
Gender Gap Index 2010 (out of 134 countries)	129	0.571	132	0.335	92	0.974	53	0.976	131	0.000
Gender Gap Index 2009 (out of 134 countries)	130	0.565	133	0.310	92	0.975	65	0.976	134	0.000
Gender Gap Index 2008 (out of 130 countries)	128	0.554	129	0.259	85	0.979	62	0.976	130	0.000
Gender Gap Index 2007 (out of 128 countries)	124	0.565	127	0.321	87	0.961	60	0.976	128	0.000
Gender Gap Index 2006 (out of 115 countries)	114	0.524	115	0.240	93	0.880	54	0.977	115	0.000

Trend 2006–2014



Selected contextual data

EMPLOYMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Female, male adult unemployment rate (as % of female, male labour force)	18.6, 3.2
Female, male part-time employment (as % of total female, male employment)	—, —
Female, male workers in informal employment (as % of non-agricultural employment)	—, —
Share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector (% of total non-agricultural employment)	14
Average minutes spent per day on unpaid work (female, male)	—, —
Percentage of women, men with an account at a formal financial institution	15, 73
Ability of women to rise to positions of enterprise leadership ¹	3.3
Firms with female top managers (% of firms)	—
Share of women on boards of listed companies (%)	—
Firms with female participation in ownership (% of firms)	—

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH

Percentage of Internet users (female, male)	—, —
Women, men who used a mobile phone in the last 12 months (%)	—, —
Percentage of tertiary-level STEM students (female, male)	41, 59
Percentage of tertiary-level STEM graduates (female, male)	40, 60
Percentage of PhD graduates (female, male)	45, 55
Percentage of total R&D personnel (FTE) (female, male)	—, —

HEALTH

Cardiovascular disease age-standardized deaths per 100,000 (female, male)	287.5, 382.4
Cancer age-standardized deaths per 100,000 (female, male), excl. non-melanoma skin cancer	62.7, 66.9
Diabetes age-standardized deaths per 100,000 (female, male)	26.8, 42.8
Respiratory diseases age-standardized deaths per 100,000 (female, male)	20.5, 28.6
HIV age-standardized deaths per 100,000 (female, male)	0.0, 0.0
Malaria age-standardized deaths per 100,000 (female, male)	0.0, 0.0
Tuberculosis age-standardized deaths per 100,000 (female, male)	7.1, 10.0
Malnutrition prev., weight for age (female, male) (% of children <5)	4.5, 6.1

MARRIAGE AND CHILDBEARING

Singulate mean age at marriage (years) (female, male)	25, 27
Early marriage (% of women aged 15-19)	4
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) ²	16 [9-29]
Total fertility rate (children per woman)	2.7
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19)	10.2
Mean age of women at the birth of the first child	—
Antenatal care coverage, at least one visit (%)	98
Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)	98
Contraceptive prevalence (% of married women or in-union)	24
Legislation permitting abortion to preserve a woman's physical health	Yes

CHILDCARE ECOSYSTEM

Length of maternity leave (calendar days)	70
Maternity leave benefits (% of wages paid in covered period)	100
Provider of maternity benefits	Employer 100%
Length of paternity leave (calendar days)	1
Paternity leave benefits (% of wages paid in covered period)	100
Provider of paternity benefits	Employer 100%

RIGHTS AND NORMS

Parental authority in marriage ³	1.0
Parental authority after divorce ³	1.0
Female genital mutilation (% of women aged 15-49)	—
Existence of legislation punishing acts of violence against women in case of domestic violence ³	0.8
Existence of legislation prohibiting gender-based discrimination	—
Inheritance rights of daughters ³	1.0
Women's access to land ownership ³	0.5
Women's access to credit ³	0.0
Women's access to property other than land ³	0.5
Year women received right to vote	—
Quota type (single/lower house)	Reserved seats
Voluntary political party quotas	—

Appendix B

Key indicators		
Total population 2014 (people)		30,770,375 *
Population growth rate 2014		2.55%
Population density (person / sq km) 2014		15.3
Saudi population 2014 (people)		20,702,536 *
Saudi population growth rate 2014		2.1%
GDP growth at constant prices 2014		3.47%
Per capita GDP at current prices in 2014 (SAR)		90,946
Economic diversification indicators	Private sector's contribution to GDP at constant prices for 2014	39.5%
	proportion of private sector growth for 2014 at constant prices	5.58%
	proportion of non-oil exports to imports 2014	33.31%
Growth of exports of non-oil goods for 2014		7.08%
Growth of imports of goods for 2014		3.38%
exports contribution to GDP for 2014 at current prices		47.51%
The cost-of-living index 2014		130.1
Change in the cost-of-living index (inflation) for 2014		2.7%
Unemployment Rate (> 15 years) 2014		5.7%
Saudi's Unemployment rate (> 15 years) 2014		11.7%
Employment as percentage of population 2014		35.7%
Revised economic participation rate 2014		41.1%
Infants mortality rate (per thousand live births) 2014		15.5
Gross enrollment rate in primary education (2014)		108.17%
Net enrollment rate in primary education (2014)		97.39%
*According to Population Census 2010		

Central Department of Statistics and Information 2015

Appendix C

التوزيع النسبي للسكان السعوديين وغير السعوديين داخل قوة العمل (١٥ سنة فأكثر) حسب الجنس
Distribution Of Saudis and Non Saudis Population In the Labour Force (15 years and Above) By Sex

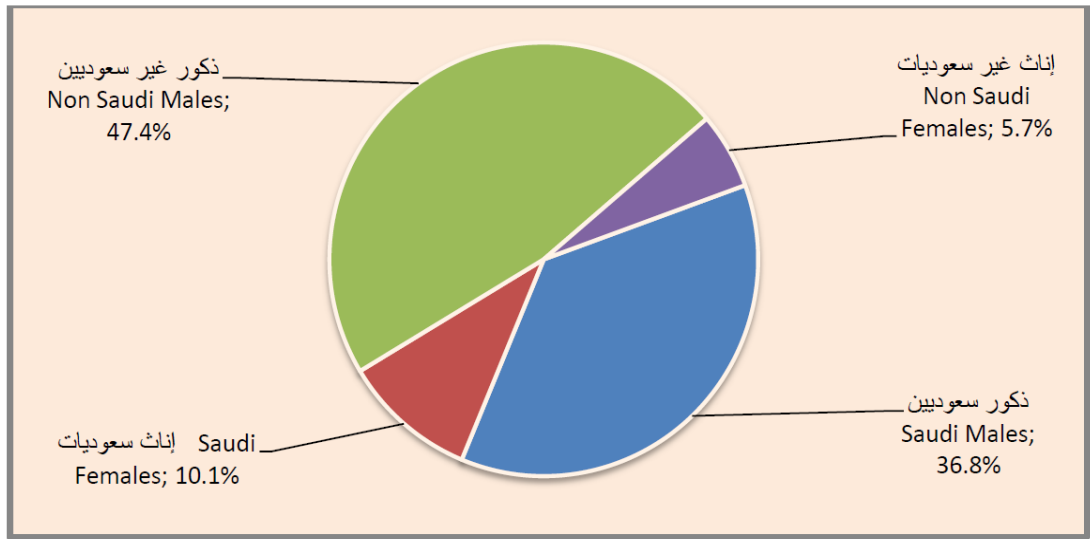


Chart (1)

شكل (١)

Central Department of Statistics and Information 2015

Appendix D

Labour force in Saudi Arabia

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Government sector	959,833	998,138	1,089,501	1,224,821
Saudis	884,715	919,108	1,013,652	1,150,828
Male	589,627	616,748	643,212	718,383
Female	295,088	302,360	369,840	432,445
Non-Saudis	75,118	79,030	76,449	73,993
Male	33,677	37,128	36,663	36,203
female	41,441	41,902	39,786	37,790
Private sector	6,991,200	7,781,496	8,487,533	9,679,635
Saudis	724,655	844,476	1,134,633	1,466,853
Male	669,037	744,990	918,793	1,068,315
Female	55,618	99,486	215,840	398,538
Non-Saudis	6,266,545	6,937,020	7,352,900	8,212,782
Male	6,178,130	6,823,554	7,244,206	8,051,394
Female	88,415	113,466	108,694	161,388

Source: Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency.

(SAMA.2014)

Appendix E

التوزيع النسبي لقوة العمل السعودية (١٥ سنة فأكثر) حسب الجنس
Distribution of Saudis Labour Force (15 years and Above) by Sex

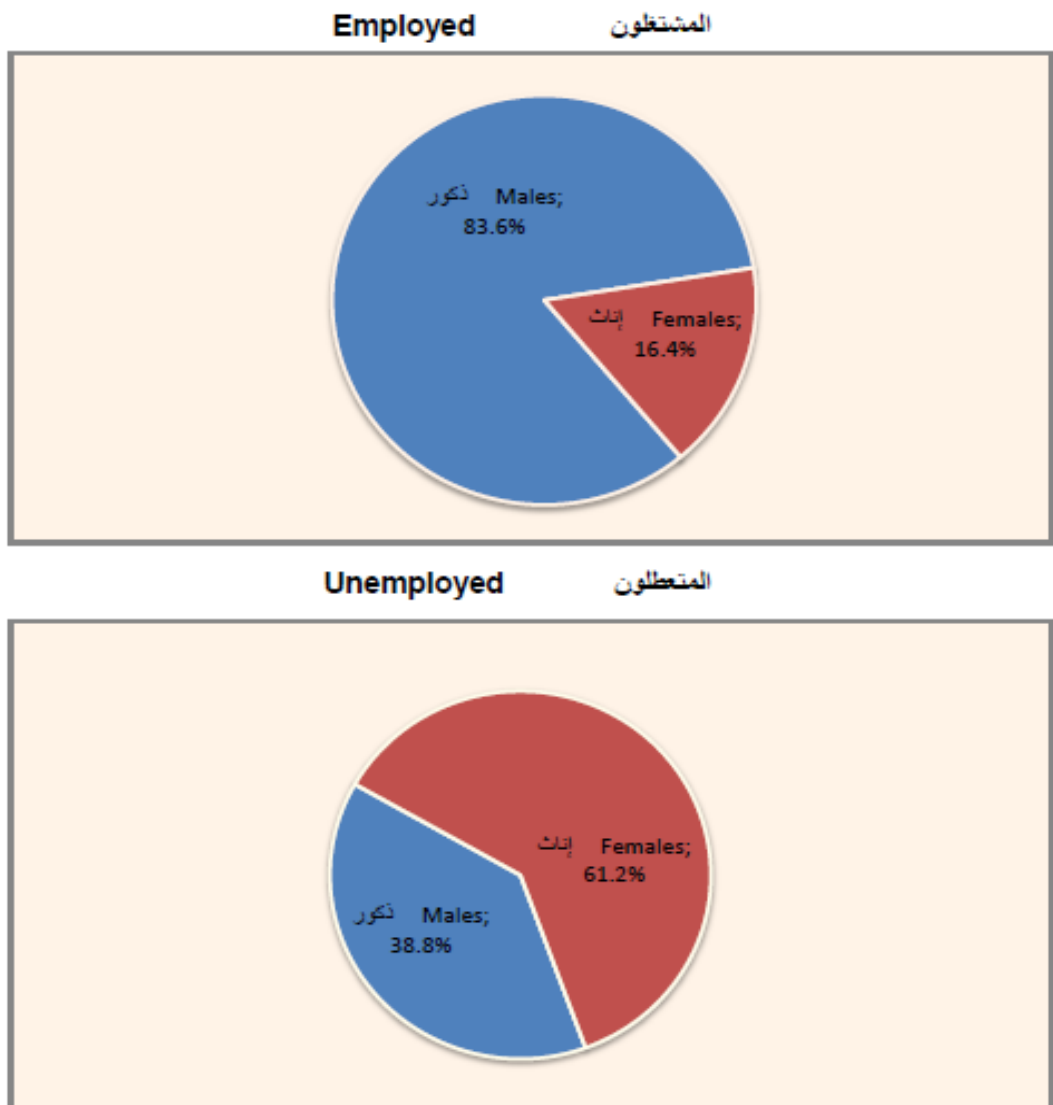


Chart (2)

شكل (٢)

Appendix F

معدل البطالة للسعوديين (١٥ سنة فأكثر) حسب الجنس للنصف الأول من عام ٢٠١٥ والنصف الثاني من عام ٢٠١٤
Unemployment Rate Among Saudis (15 years and Above) by Sex in First Half of 2015 & Second Half of 2014

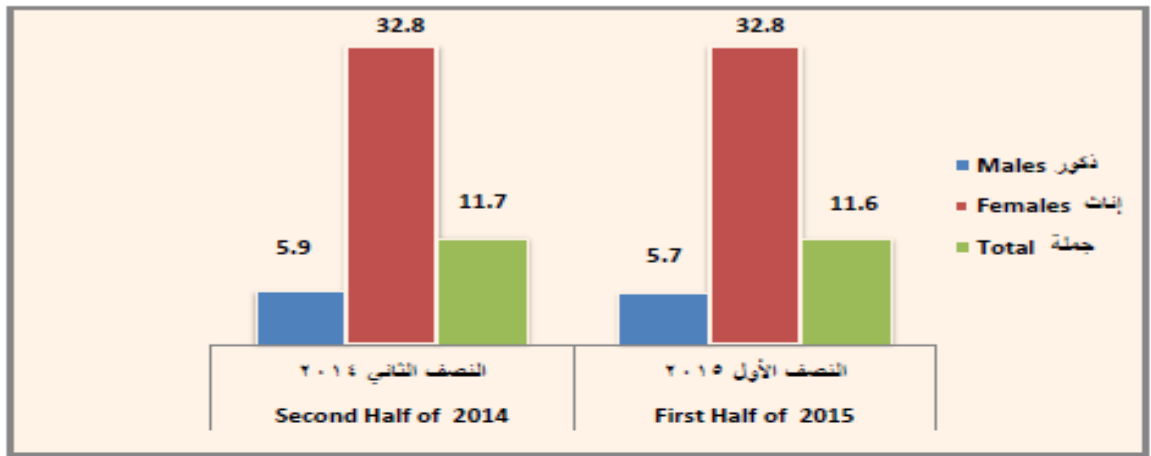


Chart (6)

شكل (٦)

المتطلون السعوديون (١٥ سنة فأكثر) حسب الفئات العمرية
Saudis Unemployed Persons (15 years and Above) by Age Groups

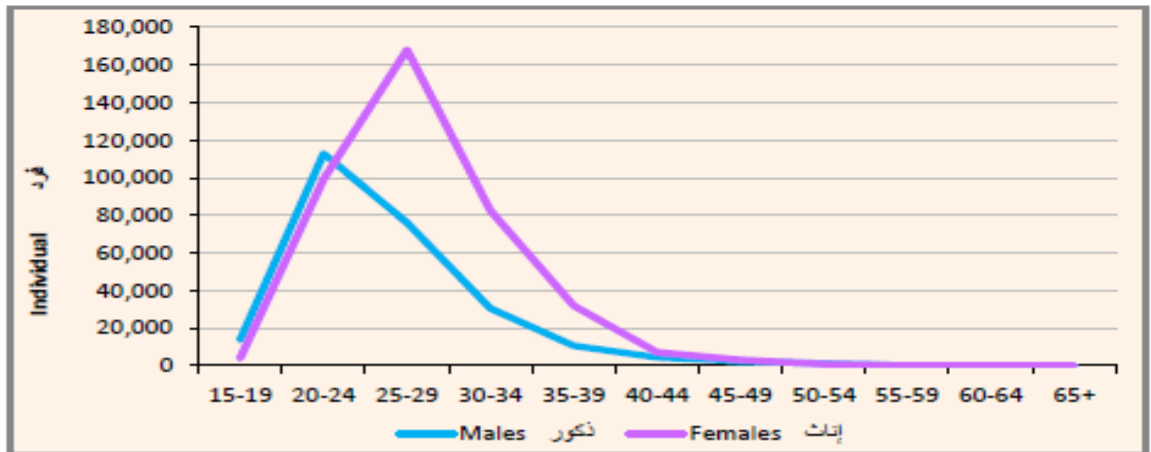


Chart (7)

شكل (٧)

Appendix G

Table 2.10: SELECTED INDICATORS FOR POPULATION AND LABOR FORCE

Major Regions		2013			2014		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Population	Saudis	10,181,018	10,090,040	20,271,058	10,398,993	10,303,543	20,702,536
	Non-Saudis	6,643,278	3,079,936	9,723,214	6,867,332	3,200,507	10,067,839
	Total	16,824,296	13,169,976	29,994,272	17,266,325	13,504,050	30,770,375
Birth	Total	311,315	296,491	607,806	311,135	296,318	607,453
Mortality	Total	63,698	42,823	106,521	64,876	42,811	107,687
Workers	Saudis	1,786,698	830,983	2,617,681	1,854,531	864,030	2,718,561
	Non-Saudis	8,087,597	199,178	8,286,775	8,337,677	205,849	8,543,526
	Total	9,874,295	1,030,161	10,904,456	10,192,208	1,069,879	11,262,087
Unemployment rate	Saudis	6.3	34.8	12.0	6.0	33.3	11.8
	Non-Saudis	0.2	1.7	0.4	0.6	2.0	0.7
	Total	2.9	22.1	5.8	3.0	22.3	6.0
Government Sector staff	Saudis	718,383	432,445	1,150,828	717,629	450,957	1,168,586
	Non-Saudis	36,203	37,790	73,993	36,125	36,037	72,162
	Total	754,586	470,235	1,224,821	753,754	486,994	1,240,748
Private sector staff	Saudis	1,068,315	398,538	1,466,853	1,136,902	413,073	1,549,975
	Non-Saudis	8,051,394	161,388	8,212,782	8,301,552	169,812	8,471,364
Job seekers in the private sector	Total	9,119,709	559,926	9,679,635	9,438,454	582,885	10,021,339
Banking sector staff	Total	40,506	5,672	46,178	41,601	5,987	47,588

Source: Ministry of Economic and Planning, Central Department of Statistics & Information, Ministry of Civil Service and Ministry of Labor.

Appendix H

٢٠١٤ هـ / ٢٠١٤ م

65 Health Resources الموارد الصحية

جدول ٢-١٦: القوى العاملة بمستشفيات وزارة الصحة حسب المنطقة والفئة والجنس والجنسية
Table 2-16 : Manpower in MOH Hospitals by Region,Category,Sex and Nationality, 1435 H.

المنطقة Category	Riyadh الرياض			Makkah مكة المكرمة			Jeddah جدة			Taif الطائف		
	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S
طبيب* Physician	ذكور M	1190	2830	4020	494	1117	1611	719	591	1310	844	177
	إناث F	484	1051	1535	241	349	590	723	245	968	238	27
الاجمعي Total	1674	3881	5555	735	1466	2201	1442	836	2278	1082	204	
عاملون بالممرض Nurses	ذكور M	2607	600	3207	748	316	1064	758	79	837	873	18
	إناث F	3816	7739	11555	1411	2722	4133	2002	2311	4313	772	1943
الاجمعي Total	6423	8339	14762	2159	3038	5197	2760	2390	5150	1645	1961	
صيدلي Pharmacist	ذكور M	199	20	219	97	30	127	75	2	77	65	5
	إناث F	251	27	278	78	25	103	62	3	65	17	3
الاجمعي Total	450	47	497	175	55	230	137	5	142	82	8	
فئات طبية مساعدة Allied health personnel	ذكور M	5214	339	5553	1474	198	1672	1929	65	1994	51	1176
	إناث F	1429	488	1917	660	249	909	1021	80	1101	87	321
الاجمعي Total	6643	827	7470	2134	447	2581	2950	145	3095	138	1497	

* Include Dentists

تشمل أطباء الأسنان *

Cont. Table : 2-16

تابع - جدول: ٢-١٦

المنطقة Category	Medinah المدينة			Qussem القصيم			Eastern الشرقية			Al-Ahsa الاحساء		
	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S	الاجمعي Total	سعودي NS	غير سعودي S
طبيب* Physician	ذكور M	470	1171	1641	159	966	1125	835	987	1822	543	289
	إناث F	222	407	629	52	299	351	688	315	1003	205	67
الاجمعي Total	692	1578	2270	211	1265	1476	1523	1302	2825	748	356	
عاملون بالممرض Nurses	ذكور M	1312	23	1335	987	30	1017	730	230	960	568	17
	إناث F	2103	1988	4091	1159	2254	3413	3849	1695	5544	1312	1078
الاجمعي Total	3415	2011	5426	2146	2284	4430	4579	1925	6504	1646	1329	
صيدلي Pharmacist	ذكور M	101	8	109	106	5	111	62	7	69	40	1
	إناث F	17	11	28	4	21	25	95	5	100	19	2
الاجمعي Total	118	19	137	110	26	136	157	12	169	59	3	
فئات طبية مساعدة Allied health personnel	ذكور M	2309	49	2358	2490	47	2537	1802	167	1969	936	30
	إناث F	472	80	552	280	236	516	1275	200	1475	231	56
الاجمعي Total	2781	129	2910	2770	283	3053	3077	367	3444	1167	86	

Ministry of Health

Appendix I

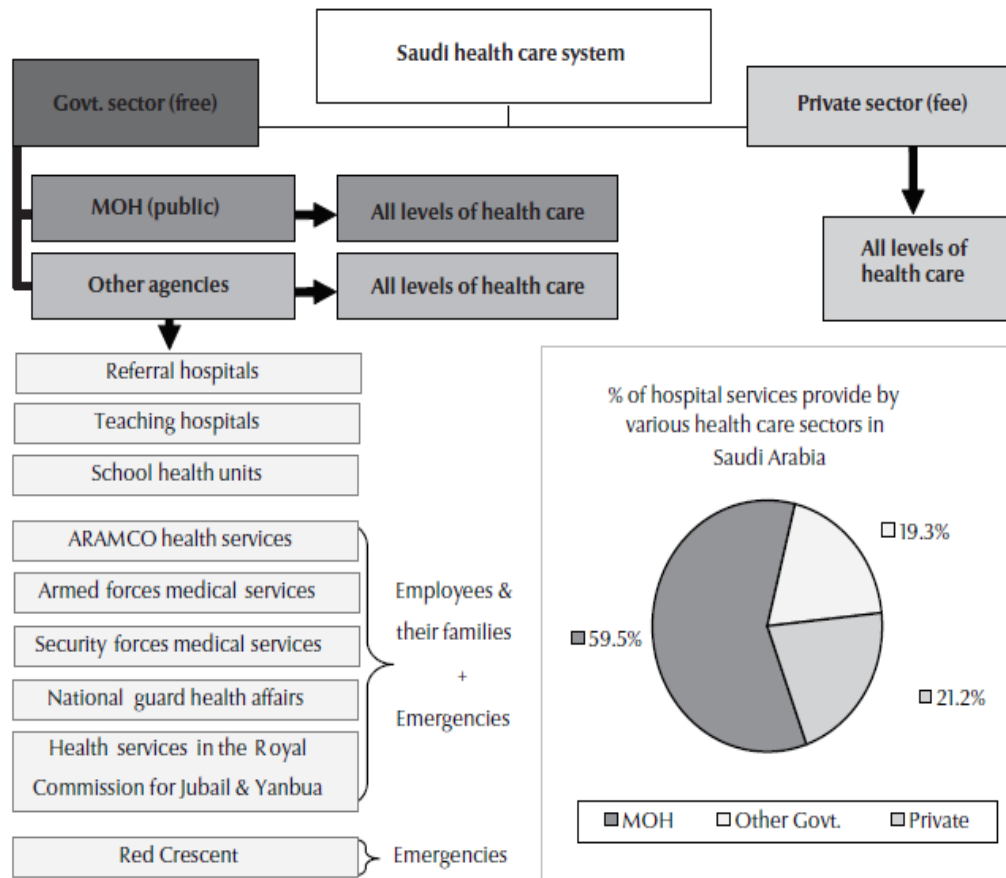


Figure 1 Current structure of the health care sectors in Saudi Arabia (MOH = Ministry of Health). Source of data: [4]

Appendix J

Semi Structure Interview for the PhD research (Exploring the barriers of work life balance for women in Saudi Arabia)

Mohammed Bahudhailah



Semi Structure Interview questions

Personal Questions:

- 1) What is your education level?
- 2) Are you married?
- 3) If yes, how many children do you have? How old are they?
- 4) If no, who do you live with?
- 5) Are your parents alive? How old are they?
- 6) How many siblings do you have?
- 7) What is your current job?
- 8) What is your position or your responsibilities in the organization?
- 9) What are your family responsibilities? Describe your family situation.
- 10) Who looks after your children/elder parents when you are at work?
- 11) How do you feel about it?
- 12) How your husband/guardian feel about the idea of you working outside home?
- 13) Does he/Do they support your decision to work?
- 14) If yes, what have they done? If no, why?

- 1) Why did you choose to work?
- 2) How long did you take to get a job? Why?
- 3) Have you experienced any difficulty to find a job because you are married or have children? (For married women)
- 4) Do you work in a public or private sector?
- 5) How long have you been working?
- 6) How many days you work per week?
- 7) How many hours you work per day? Are you satisfied?
- 8) Do usually start in 9 am to 5pm, or different time?
- 9) Is that because you want or your work asked?
- 10) Could you work part time if you want that?
- 11) How do you get to work?
- 12) How far do you live from your work?
- 13) Do men and women work together in your organisation?
- 14) If yes, how is that organized?
- 15) Have you experienced hostility or discomfort at work?
- 16) Have you experienced any struggle at work e.g. several responsibilities, heavy meeting schedules, business trips...etc.?
- 17) If yes, how did you deal with it?
- 18) Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your job? Why?
- 19) Are you actually planning to leave your job in the future? Why?
- 20) Do you have some flexibility over where you work? Ex: (work from home, different office that near your home..etc.)

Appendix K

Semi Structure Interview questions (Arabic)



أسئلة المقابلات باللغة العربية

- 1) ما هو مستواك التعليمي؟
- 2) هل أنت متزوجة؟
- 3) إذا كان الجواب نعم، كم عدد الأطفال لديك؟ كم أعمارهم؟
- 4) إذا لم تكوني متزوجة ، مع من تسكني ؟
- 5) هل والديك على قيد الحياة؟ كم أعمارهم؟
- 6) كم عدد الأخوان/ الاخوات لديك؟
- 7) ما هي وظيفتك الحالية؟
- 8) ما هو مناصبكم أو مسؤولياتكم في المنظمة؟
- 9) ما هي مسؤولياتك العائلية ؟ وصف وضعك العائلي.
- 10) من يرعى الأطفال / الوالدين عندما تكوني في العمل؟
- 11) كيف تشعر حيال ذلك؟
- 12) كيف يشعر زوجك / الوصي عن فكرة العمل خارج المنزل؟
- 13) هل هو دعم قرارك للعمل؟
- 14) إذا كان الجواب (نعم)، ماذا فعل؟ إذا كان الجواب (لا)، لماذا؟
- 15) لماذا اخترت العمل؟
- 16) كم من الوقت أخذتي حتى حصلتي على وظيفة؟ لماذا؟
- 17) هل واجهتي أي صعوبة في العثور على وظيفة لأنك كنت متزوجة أو لديك أطفال؟ (بالنسبة للنساء المتزوجات)
- 18) هل تعملي في القطاع العام أو الخاص؟
- 19) منذ متى وأنت تعملي؟
- 20) كم يوماً تعملي في الأسبوع؟
- 21) هل عادة ما تبدأ في 9 صباحاً حتى 5 مساءً، أو أوقات مختلفة؟
- 22) كم عدد ساعات العمل في اليوم الواحد؟
- 23) هل أنت راضيه عن وقت وساعات العمل ؟
- 24) هل هذا لأنك تريدین ذلك أو عملك طلب ذلك؟
- 25) هل يمكنك العمل بدوام جزئي إذا كنت تريد ذلك؟
- 26) كيف تذهبين إلى العمل؟
- 27) كم يبعد منزلك عن عملك؟
- 28) هل يعمل الرجال والنساء معا في المنظمة؟