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Conflict Dynamics and Opportunities for Second-Generation Family Businesswomen in Saudi Arabia: A Phenomenological Research Study

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Conflict Dynamics and Opportunities for Second-Generation
Family Businesswomen in Saudi Arabia: A Phenomenological Research Study

by

Basmah Sulaiman Alzamil

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University
2019

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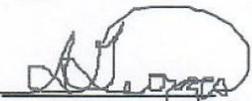
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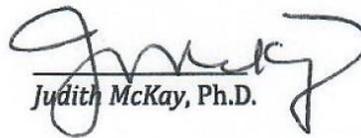
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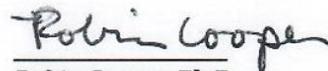
This dissertation was submitted by Basmah Alzamil under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all females who are working in their family businesses, and most especially to all the participants in this study, for sharing their experiences, supporting me, and believing in the value of my research.

The future is in our hands; let us work together for the future of our daughters. We can, we will, and we do believe in a better future. Let us make the difference in our country holding hands and working hard. I hope that this study will help foster the growth, sustainability, and longevity of family businesses in Saudi Arabia, and will encourage Saudi Arabian females in their endeavors to positively impact their family businesses and the world beyond.

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I would like to acknowledge my father, my mother, Anas, and my two sons, Mansour and Sulaiman, for your unstinting support of my dissertation journey. Without all of you, I would never have had the chance to continue my studies and complete the degree. Thank you for your motivation, encouragement, and patience. I have been away for months, and you never complained. Sulaiman, you always ask, “Mom, when will you be a Doctor?” Now, I can say, I am a Doctor.

To my advisor and Chair, Dr. Alexia Georgakopoulos, I cannot thank you enough, you always believed in me. I will always aspire to have your positive energy, your love of teaching, and your unlimited giving. You are my role model.

I am grateful also to my committee members, Dr. Judith McKay and Dr. Robin Cooper, from whom I learned a great deal through their knowledge and insights in the classroom and during my dissertation reviews.

And to my brothers and sisters, my extended family, and many friends who all inspired me with their words, love, and encouragement... thank you!

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of second-generation Saudi Arabian females working in their family businesses, in order to reach conclusions and make recommendations to improve the dynamics and outcomes of conflict experienced now and in the future. Research here analyzed the lived experiences of twenty-two second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in a family business, inquiring about their perceptions of female roles within the Saudi Arabian business world, their lived experiences of conflicts in their family businesses, and their understandings about best management and resolution of such conflicts. This pioneering study's findings about second-generation businesswomen's lived experiences are vital to encourage the growth, sustainability, and longevity of the subject family business entities, as power transfers from one generation to the next. This qualitative study applied transcendental phenomenology and feminist theory to analyze the participant's interviews, contributing valuable missing data to the literature. Conclusions reached and recommendations offered were informed by the collected data's analysis and will serve all Saudi Arabian family businesses by: preparing future generations, guiding and giving hope to Saudi women workers, and benefiting those interested in employing females as it will greatly contribute to their understanding of employment for women in a Saudi Arabian family business.

Keywords: female employment, family business, Saudi Arabia, Saudi Vision 2030, conflict dynamics, women, succession, strategic planning.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study was conducted to examine employment-related issues and conflict dynamics experienced among women employees in family businesses in Saudi Arabia. Family businesses in Saudi Arabia comprise the majority of the nation's businesses, as discussed below. Because said entities are now shifting their management from the first to the second generation, the research concentrated on second-generation females and their lived experiences working in the family business.

Study Context: Family Businesses in Saudi Arabia

A family business “is considered a family business when it has been closely identified with at least two generations of a family and when this link has had a mutual influence on company policy and the interest and objectives of the family” (Neubauer & Lank, 2016, p. 6). The family unit is the ultimate example of unity or togetherness. It is a place where members of shared blood or kin come together and live as one, working towards a more critical, holistic goal (Dahlan & Klieb, 2011). In business, on the other hand, the goal is profit. Profit often does not involve unity or concern for the selling party, but sometimes greed, individualism, and monetary gain (at the expense of the other party: the consumer). Interestingly, there is an extreme juxtaposition that occurs when love and money merge into the family business environment. “Striking a balance between the objectives of family and business systems is key to the success of family businesses” (Dahlan & Klieb, 2011, p. 4); this is a challenge since they are places that combine emotions with money as a central focus.

In private sector businesses, whether a large multi-national corporation or a small family-owned firm, there is a harsh environment in which to succeed. As Harvey and

Evans (1994) in their study noted: "Family businesses are a fertile environment for conflict" (p. 331). The authors added that the overlapping of the business culture with the family culture might cause conflict due to the stress created. Despite differences in religion, culture, and traditions, all over the world the challenges that face family businesses are similar (Kaslow, 2006). In Saudi Arabia, culture has a great influence on society. As a collectivist society, family businesses will go through difficult situations that lead to conflicts, for which family members must be prepared. In addition, as Oukil and Al-Khalifah (2012, p. 50) acknowledged, "the effect of culture in shaping the managerial practices of family businesses in Saudi Arabia is very important" and cannot be understated. Another study revealed cross-roads of change, stating "[c]ulture has always dictated where to draw the line separating one thing from another" (Hall, 1976, p. 230). This indeed is the line that is changing family businesses in Saudi Arabia. These changes present issues we must discuss. For example, business founders traditionally were raised in a different world than the generation who today seeks to inherit the family business. The current second-generation in family businesses in Saudi Arabia are educated, exposed to other cultures through globalization, and looking for the best opportunities available internationally to expand their businesses.

One of the critical challenges in family businesses is the presence of conflict. Harvey and Evans (1994) added that conflicts occur from internal and external elements, and when these conflicts are not addressed, they will create complex problems. With multiple generations often involved in the business at various levels of administration, differing viewpoints, personalities, and ideas emerge and often are at odds with one another. In defining generations, it's been said that "[t]he first generation builds the

business, the second generation “milks” or “harvests” it, the third generation must either auction what is left to the highest bidder or start all over again” (Ward, 2016, p. 1). Kaslow has specifically addressed this issue, stating that in Saudi Arabia the family members “shar[e] ownership but not power” which can lead to a conflict; it can be devastating to the business, creating tension between family members and the potential dissolution of the business (Kaslow, 2006, p. 256). In family businesses, risk and insecurity are felt very acutely by family members, who are always preoccupied with the need to establish sustainable business practices and determine the best solutions to ensure their efforts will survive to be passed on to future generations (Tsai, Lin, Lin, I-Pin, & Nugroho, 2018). In this type of business, keeping the family together and identifying conflict resolution strategies is critical for long-term business success and survival.

This study was conducted to bring awareness to and about women in the workforce in Saudi Arabia, who often do not have a platform from which people can hear their voices. Year after year, the number of female members working within family-owned businesses in Saudi Arabia has increased in conjunction with all the changes that are happening in Saudi Arabia (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, & Al-Sadoon, 2014). For example, in the last seven years women in Saudi Arabia were given their rights in different aspects. In 2009, the first female was appointed as Deputy Education Minister of Girls in the Ministry of Education. In 2013, women were elected to be members of the Nation's Consultative Assembly, which is a government assembly. In 2015, women were allowed to vote and run for office in municipal elections (Alotaibi, Cutting, & Morgan, 2017). All these events and respective royal decrees were foundational for all Saudi citizens, reflecting a clear message from the King to Saudi society and to the world. The

achievement also reflects the influence of the Saudi education system, which has always encouraged the education of females. Moreover, the imminent looming of first-to-second-generation succession in many Saudi family businesses is ever more pressing an issue that families can no longer ignore, as in 90% of family-owned Saudi companies only 5% survive to the third generation (Oukil & Al-Khalifah, 2012). Thus, managing conflicts before they happen may be a solution that family members must consider. With great promise, Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 will take Saudi Arabia to the next level and will align Saudi Arabia with other economically diverse countries (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018). The future will be great for females if they are in the right place.

Study Need and Significance

Current literature reveals that there is much that researchers can study regarding the root causes of family conflict in the family businesses. The subject study concentrated on the business world in the Middle East, in Saudi Arabia in particular. Family-run businesses in Saudi Arabia create significant revenue for the country, contributing \$216 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP) coming from companies owned by families; these are 538,000 companies, which is 63% of the companies in Saudi Arabia (Alkhataf, 2019). The growth and survival of family firms depend upon their abilities to address the challenges the 21st-century presents, capitalize on their strengths, and take advantage of opportunities (Davis, Pitts, & Cormier, 2000). According to Sahni, Alwy, and Al-Assaf (2017), because of these generational shifts conflicts are increasingly common. If Saudi businesses are not prepared to navigate these differences, understand the nature of conflicts that might emerge, and comprehend possible resolutions to those conflicts, said businesses will be at risk. Their management entities must establish a foundation that will

help in the continuity of the business and make the appropriate changes in strategic plans and managerial procedures.

An appropriate succession plan, conflict resolution strategies, and strategic planning can help to influence firm employee performance and to weather that transition positively. In a series of over 200 interviews in the United States, with first- through fourth-generation family business heads, Morris, Williams, Allen, and Avila (1997) identified three general categories that led to breakdowns in the family succession process. They were: 1) problems in relationships among family members, 2) heirs not prepared for their new roles, and 3) issues related to strategic planning and management. However, there are many steps founders and those in leadership roles can take to mitigate the adverse effects of conflict. Recent findings from Spain show that family managers' ownership and family governance mechanisms have a positive influence on the performance in second- and later-generation firms (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, & Delgado-Garcia, 2016).

Managing conflicts is always looked at as negative, but Wilmot and Hocker (2007) proffered a clear understanding of conflicts as positive. Conflicts help individuals understand each other when the conflict participants share their thoughts and perspectives. This might be difficult, especially in a collectivist society, but these elements do change conflicts into a positive perspective. Thus, the benefits of establishing resources for conflict resolution strategies in family businesses extend far beyond the firms themselves and affect the country, which led the Saudi Arabian government to establish the National Center for Family Enterprises (Ansari, 2018). The more successful and prosperous family businesses in Saudi are, the more profit and

benefits will redound to the country and its citizens because family businesses will increase the development of the country at large and the quality of life for its citizens (Oukil & Al-Khalifah, 2012).

Conflict, if not addressed, could cause the demise of the family business (Harvey & Evans, 1994). Research by Brenes, Madrigal, and Molina-Navarro (2006) found that family structure, decision mechanisms, and original agreements on issues concerning succession and business control are essential elements for family-business balance and business continuity during a period of succession. Research suggests that the dynamics of the family change when ownership becomes more dispersed in the family firm (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007). Because of the potential for conflict, it is critical to understand how and when intergenerational improvement would be most likely to promote firms' business strategy (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). This research thus concentrated on understanding the lived experiences of Saudi Arabian second generation females who are working with their families.

Problem Statement

The subject study concentrated on Saudi Arabia since there is a lack of studies addressing women in the workforce and the generational succession within family businesses, to address this significant gap and generate evidence that will help other researchers to conduct further investigations in this area. The family business in Saudi Arabia is one of the vital sources of revenue for the country (Hanware, 2016); therefore, it is essential to concentrate on this field and offer solutions to prevent conflicts from threatening the revenue and prosperity that family firms bring to the Kingdom.

Evaluating how generational involvement influences family firm function is vital, given that only 30% of family businesses survive into the second generation, and only 15% survive into the third. In Saudi Arabia, the statistics are even bleaker: 90% of all Saudi companies are family-owned, and only 5% survive into the third generation. The most successful companies in Saudi Arabia are less than 65 years old (Oukil & Al-Khalifah, 2012), which highlights the importance of conducting more research in this area. The lack of studies in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia is a starting point for researchers to look in-depth for the best strategies for the family business owners as power transfers from one generation to the next, and to encourage the growth, sustainability, and longevity of the family-owned business. In Saudi Arabia, more women have recently joined their family businesses over the past five years. Before that, it was rare for a female to work with her family; she might have been working elsewhere but not with the family business, as not all family members would accept that. The concept of females in the workplace thus is still a highly contested issue in Saudi Arabia, which generated the following problem statement: What are second-generation Saudi Arabian females family members' understandings about their different roles, female employment options, the nature of conflicts, and managing conflicts in family-owned businesses in Saudi Arabia?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand female roles and female employment experiences with regard to conflicts and conflict management strategies in Saudi Arabian family businesses. To understand the lived experiences of Saudi female workers in Saudi Arabia, the instant study explored female employment in

family businesses, the nature of conflicts concerning the preparation of succeeding generations who will handle the business, and the best alternative practices to avoid conflicts in the business and the family. This study is vital to discover and to encourage the change, growth, sustainability, and longevity of the family-owned businesses as power transfers from one generation to the next.

Goals of the Study

Specific goals of this phenomenological study were:

- 1) To understand how Saudi Arabian females perceive their lived experiences and their roles in their family businesses;
- 2) To discover the main issues Saudi Arabian females are facing in their lived experience as they work in their family businesses;
- 3) To discover and analyze the nature of conflicts in Saudi Arabian family businesses from Saudi Arabian females' viewpoints based on their lived experiences;
- 4) To understand Saudi Arabian females' perceptions about conflict management in their family's businesses through their identification of conflict resolution responses and strategies; and
- 5) To provide Saudi Arabian females with the ability to share their voices, thereby enabling them to be an inclusive part of the discussion of changes that are occurring regarding females within Saudi Arabian family businesses and other workforce contexts.

Research Questions

The research questions were chosen carefully, in order to properly frame this study. The researcher sought answers by asking open-ended questions to Saudi Arabian

females working with their families, to gain better understanding and discover the best solutions for conflicts in family businesses, and by collecting data from a group of females who shared their perceptions of their lived experiences working in their family businesses. The study's research questions asked:

- 1) *RQ1* - What are the lived experiences of second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in their family businesses?
- 2) *RQ2* - What are the perceptions of second-generation Saudi Arabian females of the future for their roles and females' roles in the Saudi business world?
- 3) *RQ3* - What are the lived experiences of conflicts that impact second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in a family business?
- 4) *RQ4* - What are second-generation Saudi Arabian females' understandings about how to best manage and resolve conflicts in family businesses?

The researcher strove to fill the gap in the studies on Saudi Arabia. and particularly studies on females working in family businesses. The literature lacks studies on Saudi Arabian family businesses, studies on females in Saudi Arabia working with their families, studies that focus on conflicts in family businesses in Saudi Arabia. This goal creates a unique atmosphere for research. Using transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) that was informed by a feminist perspective (Hooks, 2003), this study explored the nature of conflicts that threaten both family and businesses. These factors were studied to understand the environment of family businesses and discover the best solutions to manage and understand the conflict in this environment – ultimately allowing family businesses to thrive well into the future. In the literature reviewed below in Chapter 2, the researcher explored four different aspects: family businesses in Saudi

Arabia, Saudi women in the workforce, the nature of conflicts in family businesses, and conflict management in family businesses. In each section the researcher viewed the written literature to support and educate the reader.

Context of the Researcher

This study is unusual; the researcher is a Saudi Arabian businesswoman with a keen interest in the subject matter of family businesses and conflict. After many years of studying and working in the United States, she returned to Saudi Arabia to work in her family's global investment firm. As one of the first women to join the Zamil Group Holding Company, she started first as a Human Resources Specialist, then was appointed the manager of Zamil private office due to her exemplary performance; now she is the General Manager of Human Resources.

After her first year at the firm, four of the researcher's female cousins also joined the male-dominated company. Today the Zamil Group employs more than 100 females in Saudi Arabia. The researcher's family believes in allowing women to prove themselves on a par with men, especially with the government's support of female employment in the private sector. The Zamil Group was at the forefront of this movement and was the first company to employ women in factories in Saudi Arabia, believing that it would help further the development of both women and the country. They now have engineers and other professional female workers employed throughout the corporation (Agamy, 2017). Working within all of the foregoing contextual facets of her background, education, and circumstances, it is the researcher's mission to advocate for women within family businesses in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the context of this study's described purposes in Chapter 1, the literature here considered for review included substantial research into contextual factors that might shed light into the four research questions addressed in this study, beginning with Research Question 1:

RQ1 - What are the lived experiences of second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in their family businesses?

The researcher therefore first considered all available sources of scholarship and reporting in the literature that might illuminate the larger, background contextual and influential aspects of living and work-related conflict for second-generation Saudi family business female employees. An overview outline for the discussion of the literature reviewed in this chapter is presented below in Figure 1.

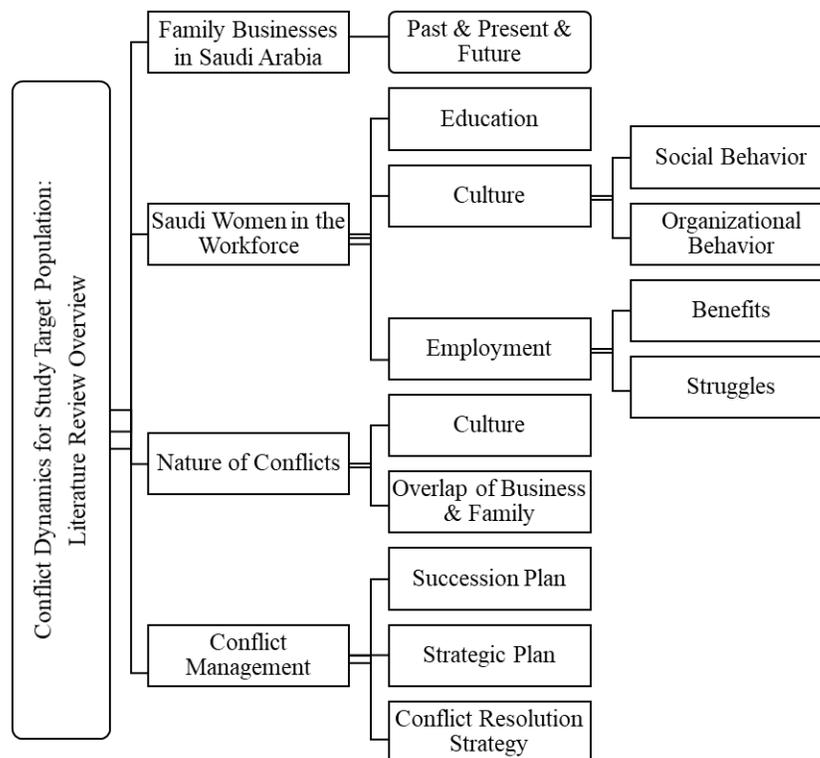


Figure 1. Study conflict dynamics: literature review overview.

Family Businesses in Saudi Arabia

This study's review of family business scholarship was framed by the researcher's consideration of unique issues confronting and influencing family members and family businesses in Saudi Arabia over the last sixty years. The past history of Saudi family businesses, including their tribal origins and unique parameters, was examined to illuminate their important present and future conditions, challenges, and prospects, by focusing on specific aspects as shown in Figure 2.

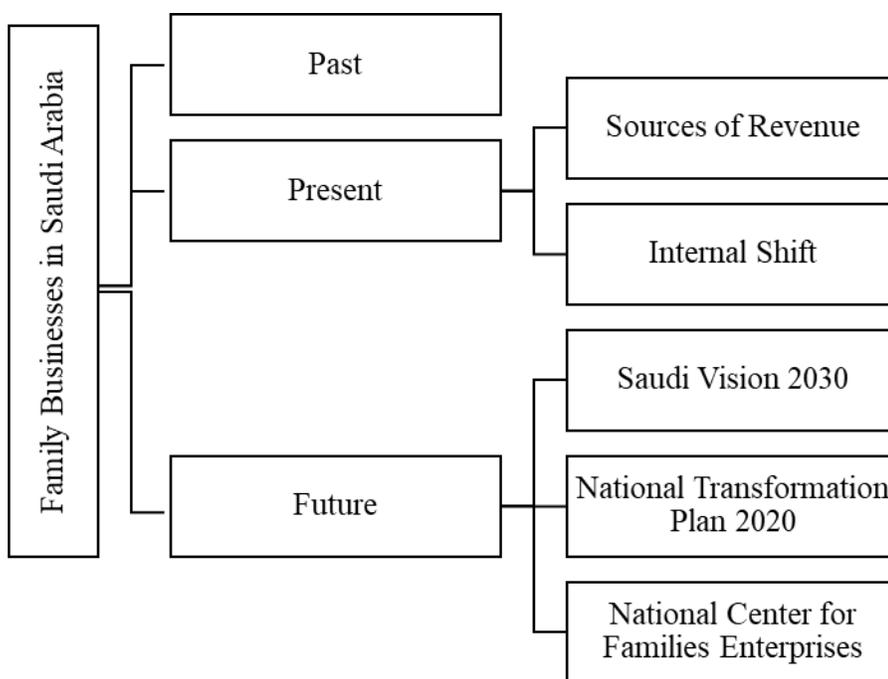


Figure 2. Family businesses in Saudi Arabia.

History of Saudi Family Businesses – Past

The discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in the late 1960s changed the life of the country's citizens and marked the beginning of the nation's industrial revolution era. The government was leading economic development changes in different sectors (Davis, Pitts, & Cormier, 2000). Many Saudi families began their businesses, schools were open for boys and girls, and lifestyles had changed (Hamdan, 2005). From across Saudi a few key

businessmen pioneered the efforts for change, believing that change in the Saudi business environment was timely and essential in the shadow of the oil boom (Davis, Pitts, & Cormier, 2000). These were the people who changed attitudes, the landscape of the labor market, and social life in Saudi Arabia (Nydell, 1996). They were not educated and struggled, but they worked and studied hard.

In the mid-1970s to late '80s, a new generation began entering the market and helping their fathers who had started family businesses, introducing a new era of business expansion and education growth. The government's policy was to train and educate Saudis as much and quickly as possible. In 1980, there were 13,000 Saudis on government scholarship studying in the United States. In a population of 7,000,000, there were 69,000 students in high school, and 10,000 are graduates (El Mallakh, 2014). During that time's construction and industrial boom the government encouraged the private sector to contribute to capital investment (El Mallakh, 2014). Accordingly, this was a period when all businesses noticeably began to flourish.

In the 1990s, a new second generation came of age and began assuming roles within family businesses, alongside their parents who were still heavily involved in management and operations. The quick shift in the region, absent proper education and consensus on managerial fundamentals, has led to some problems (Robertson, Al-Khatib, Al-Habib, & Lanoue, 2001). It is this era that is of particular interest to researchers, economists, and those involved in family businesses with multiple generations managing and working together: there is bound to be conflict when many generations interact within the same firm (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007).

New Generation – Present

Family businesses in Saudi Arabia are a significant source of revenue for the country, with family businesses comprising 90% of total enterprises in the country and responsible for more than 25% of Saudi's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Hanware, 2016). Bardsley (2017) in her article noted that 90% of Saudi Arabian companies are family businesses, 70% of the family businesses have succession problems leading to resolution by the courts, 20% are managed by the second generation, and 10% are managed by the third generation. Despite this, the current financial climate for family businesses in Saudi Arabia is not particularly encouraging. With the recent announcement by the IMF that the Saudi economy is expected to only grow by 0.4% in 2017, primarily due to OPEC oil production cuts (Alkhalisi, 2017), the nation has needed to rethink its economic strategy quickly.

In this climate, creating jobs may be a challenge, with unemployment unusually high at 12%. Most of the jobs created soon will need to come from the private sector, requiring an employment strategy for that achievement. Notably, family businesses in Saudi Arabia employ approximately 7.2 million employees; this represents 52% of employment in Saudi Arabia (Alkhataf, 2019), a significant number. A job creation strategy presents the perfect opportunity for the growth and improved security of family-owned businesses in Saudi. The ability of family businesses to navigate these difficult economic times in our country will be critical to the survival of the family business sector. In addition to a delicate economic climate, many family businesses are currently experiencing an internal shift from first or second-generation executive leadership to the second or third generation (Bardsley, 2017).

Saudi Family Businesses – Future

In June 2016 under the rule of King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman announced the new vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, entitled Saudi Vision 2030.

Saudi Vision 2030. The primary goal of the Vision is to reduce Saudi Arabian dependence on oil and develop the non-oil economy. Through pursuit of Vision 2030, the Saudi government seeks a diverse economy, developing public services and creating six million jobs for the Saudis (Vietor & Sheldahl-Thomason, 2018). The Council of Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA) is responsible for implementing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. The three main themes the Saudi government aims to achieve by the year 2030 are a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation, as visually presented in Figure 3 below.

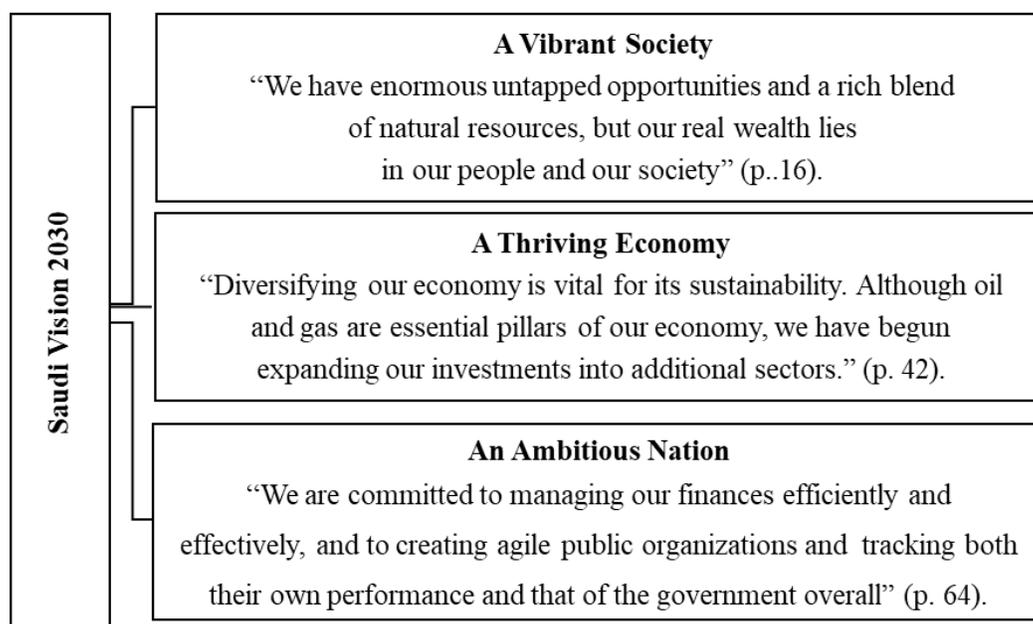


Figure 3. Saudi Vision 2030 three theme goals. (Saudi Vision 2030).

As Alahmadi (2011) in his study noted, in pursuing the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 the government is linking the employment of Saudis with the growth of the economy, which emphasizes the importance of employing females in the private sector. The government is working closely with the private sector to achieve all these objectives, through different programs that help and encourage employing more Saudis, specifically females (Alahmadi, 2011). The Saudi Vision 2030 is the first major step the Saudi government has taken to show their support and belief in the future of females as important citizens with a potential huge impact on Saudi Arabia's future. It is also noteworthy that in the vision's second theme, the government anticipates female employment rising to 30%. It will work closely with the private sector to employ more females. This strategic employment vision remains an important thread of discussion and study, as it is a core driver for Saudi Arabian female workers and their enthusiastic motivation to work hard.

National Transformation Plan 2020. The 2020 National Transformational Plan (NTP), launched in 2016, is one of the programs that support the Saudi Vision 2030. It is a designed platform that sets the path to achieving longer-term aspirations of the Saudi Vision 2030, by working with 24 government entities through their strategic plans to achieve the goals of the vision (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). Specific program goals of the NTP 2020 are presented below in Figure 4.

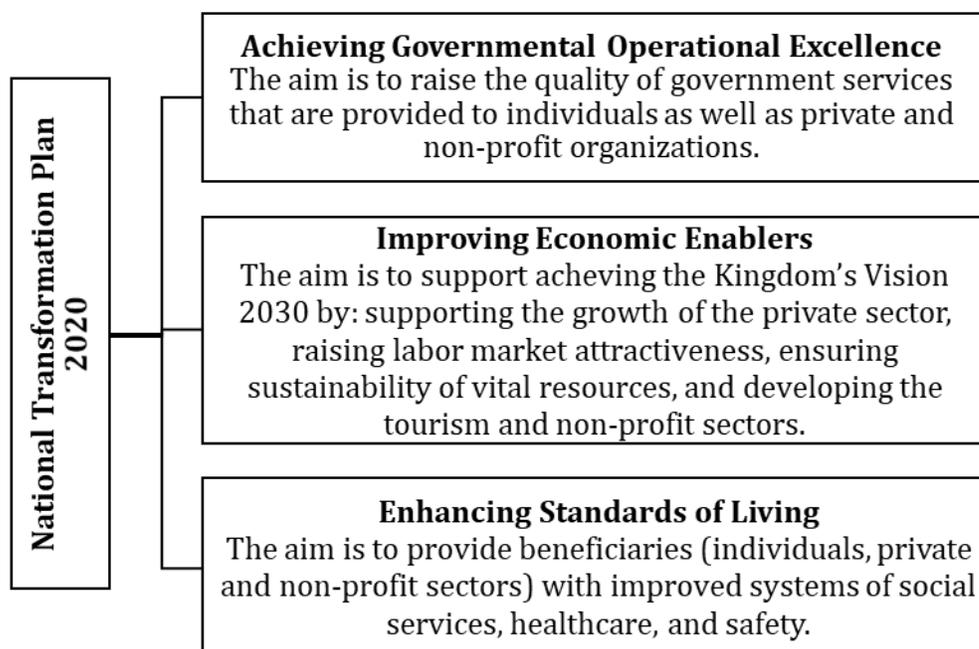


Figure 4. NTP 2020 program goals.

The NTP 2020 is the development of initiatives designed to achieve documented goal outcomes, development of implementation plans, promotion of transparency, and a striving for continual improvement (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018). The amount of effort and time the government has spent in creating and implementing the plan is impressive; the researcher has witnessed the many changes that have occurred in Saudi Arabia over the last four years. The Saudi Vision 2030 represents the new Saudi, the new era, and the new future for all the citizens who believe these changes will benefit them and their children (Victor & Sheldahl-Thomason, 2018).

The government is working closely with the Kingdom's ministries on the Saudi Vision 2030 agenda. For example, the Ministry of Labor has announced its support to the private sector by paying a portion of female worker's salaries, their transportation, and daycare fees. This reflects collaborations between different ministries that will move the wheel of success for female employment more quickly. Such programs are essential

components contributing to the future of Saudi Arabia; this study was designed to describe and explain these initiatives since they are the light that will lead the new generation, instilling confidence in their government and giving them hope and courage to fight and change for the best.

The National Center for Family Enterprise. In 2006 Dr. Mohammed Al-Dugheishem, executive director of the National Center of Family Enterprises (NCFE) (Hamdan, 2006), announced that 20 family businesses had joined the Center as founders and that 300 other family business had expressed great interest in becoming members. His main goal was to establish a database and to introduce family members of the family businesses to each other (Hamdan, 2006); however, since 2006 the Center had not been very active nor accomplished any important initiatives.

In accordance with a 2018 Royal Decree, the Ministry of Trade and Investment launched the reopening of the National Center for Family Enterprises. The Center's important role now is to highlight and develop the roles of family businesses both economically and socially, improve their achievements, and increase their contribution to GDP, in order to achieve Saudi Vision 2030. The Ministry of Trade and Investment in 2009 had issued guiding contracts and agreements for Saudi family businesses, to provide them with best practices to increase the chances of family businesses sustainability (Al-Ansari, 2018). The NCFE strategic objectives are now: 1) sustainability of family enterprises, 2) development of future leadership, 3) preparation of strategic studies, and 4) encouragement of enterprises to be involved in the financial market (Al-Ansari, 2018).

All over the world family businesses contribute to their country, its citizens, and the future of the next generation. It is a topic the researcher believes cannot be neglected

in Saudi Arabia. In the past Saudi family businesses were small, but now typically they are large, well-known international companies, ample evidence of the Saudi citizen's readiness and ambition to work. The past, present, and future in all family business research areas must be investigated and studied to understand the topic and the experiences of its employees. All of the programs that the Saudi Arabia government is currently implementing—Saudi Vision 2030, NTP 2020, and NCFE—offer the fundamentals to prepare all members of the next generation of workers for the future, especially women.

Women in the Workforce in Saudi Arabia

There have been many changes in Saudi Arabia in recent years. A study by Alahmadi (2011) discussed the challenges that face Saudi females and found that the main challenges are more structural and empowerment-related than they are cultural. The lack of utilization of all available Saudi human capital is a limiting factor for growth and will eventually impact the long-term economic sustainability of the country (Alselaimi, 2014). The importance of utilization of female Saudi human capital was corroborated in a recent study by Elimam, Abdullah, Al-Banawi, and Bokhari (2014) using Pearson correlation, which revealed a strong relationship between women in the workforce in Saudi Arabia and the GDP. Further, Nydell (1996) pointed out a vital factor about Arab women that must be considered and discussed in the research: "[t]hey have a good deal of power in decision making" (Nydell, 1996, p. 62).

The literature reviewed thus provided a basis to explore the following study research question:

RQ2 - What are the perceptions of second-generation Saudi Arabian females of their roles and the roles for future women employees within the business world in Saudi Arabia?

The researcher therefore designed this phenomenological research inquiry to explore core elements impacting Saudi Arabian female workers, specifically examining their education, culture, and employment circumstances, and focusing on the benefits and struggles within and to the Saudi economy of female employment, as outlined below in Figure 5.

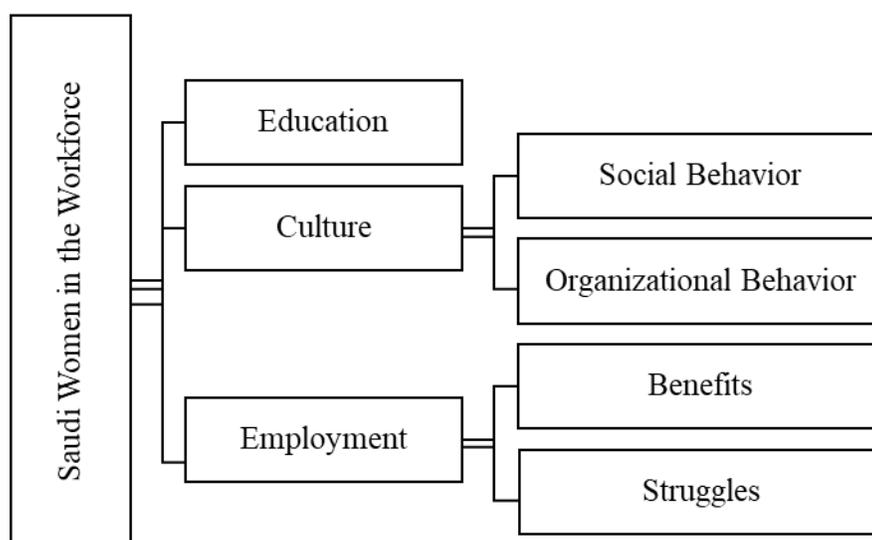


Figure 5. Saudi women in the workforce.

Education

Saudi Arabian females typically are well educated, qualifying them for high positions in both government and private sectors. Educational statistics show that there is no gap in educational attainment in Saudi Arabia (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2010). Lack of education thus is not the reason that female participation in the workforce is low in Saudi Arabia. Instead, low participation indicates that a large proportion of educated Saudi Arabian females are unemployed. For example, it has been estimated that only 35%

of women in Saudi Arabia are employed (Nieva, 2015). Nonetheless contemporary well-educated females in Saudi Arabia are searching for suitable working conditions in alignment with their cultural values.

In recent years, sweeping reforms were introduced to the national education system in a significant step towards preparing Saudi women for competitive jobs. Thus Saudi Arabia provides women with one of the world's most extensive scholarship programs, through which thousands of women have already earned bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees from Western universities (Kattan, 2015). The women's movement, led by King Abdulla in 2005 through the King Abdulla Sponsorship Program (KASP), made an impact on Saudi Arabian society. The Saudi government gave both males and females the opportunity to be educated in the best schools all over the world, fully preparing them to capably handle positions and responsibilities in their family businesses. Remarkably, by 2012-2013 there were 150,109 males and 49,176 females studying abroad. The eventual outcomes of this program had a significant influence on the private sector's employment of females (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). In addition, Princess Noura bint Abdulrahman University is evidence of the Saudi Arabian government's belief in female empowerment. It is the largest women-only university in the world, with 51,092 female students (El Mallakh, 2014). Nonetheless there continue to be some organizations still dominated by antiquated views that have yet to believe it is possible for women to succeed in the workplace and to be an asset to the business environment; this study seeks to better inform those views.

Culture

Culture in Saudi Arabia is affected by Islam; the culture's norms and traditions mold the society to certain thoughts and attitudes. However, there are some cultural norms that differ from each other in various Saudi areas, as evolution of those norms has changed or evolved differently from their origins over the years in each area. In this section the researcher will discuss the Saudi culture and its effect on females for both social behavior and organizational behavior.

Social behavior. Al-Eisa and Al-Sobayel (2012) stated that the social structure in Saudi Arabia:

...tends to remain male-dominated, collectivistic, and patriarchal, with great emphasis on family values and group cohesiveness. Consequently, women who grow up in this kind of society may develop a lower inner sense of control and lower confidence level. This pattern seems to be beginning to reverse itself since the Saudi society is undergoing an important modernization process ... resulting from higher urbanization, more education, and more women working outside the home. (Al-Eisa and Al-Sobayel, 2012, p. 4).

Thus, females in Saudi Arabia continue to fight internal and external battles with cultural norms and shared identities, which are multiple and often overlap in ways that can make positioning oneself within the sphere of being a Saudi woman difficult.

The literature explored revealed studies demonstrating how Arabs are connected to each other. Triandis (1994) talked about the insular social behavior of collectivism, stating that collectivist society members make friends with their relatives rather than outsiders, which reflects their attitudes about self-development, friendship, and the virtue

of self-sacrifice. They feel secure and therefore do not need to work on their social skills to be accepted in other groups (Triandis, 1994). The author added that people must marry from within their in-group, which will allow them to remain separate from the out-group(s). In addition, strong social ambitions emerged in the literature reviewed as factors worthy of consideration for this study of contemporary women navigating the evolving contemporary family business world in Saudi Arabia. In her book *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners* (1996), Margaret Nydell wrote that Arab women are covered with a veil but "anxious to become more active in society and to contribute what they can to developing their country" (Nydell, 1996, p. 157). Now that over 20 years later Arab women are so active in society and openly contributing to developing their county, the researcher also sought to explore gender differences from female perspectives on male and female approaches to regular facets of business, in light of old claims such as the notion that males are more competitive than females (Triandis, 1994).

Organizational Behavior. Female employment presents a direct challenge to male-dominated organizations, as women seek to be accepted on the same plane as their male peers and to be treated as equals even when society does not view them this way. Some of the more recent literature on women in family business has suggested that "a particular bias exists between the roles that women are 'expected' to play and those that they 'agree' to play (Cappuyns, 2007, p. 5, citing Cole, 1997). The strength of gender order and prevailing traditional views of women's roles are embedded in Saudi culture. Long restricted from empowerment, which ultimately results in a systemic gap between the educational attainment of women and fruitful careers, females finally were given access to

public libraries in 1989 in Saudi Arabia (Hamdan, 2005). The researcher sought to assess the impact of a broad range of viewpoints towards women as workers in Saudi Arabia, since Alselaimi (2014) ably noted that "[c]ultural values, social implications and stereotypically gendered viewpoints towards women in Saudi Arabia impact on the business and managerial environments (p. 83)."

Of special relevance to the researcher's goal of understanding possible factors impacting female employee players in family businesses immersed in Saudi Arabian society, Hofstede (1997) defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p. 5). He introduced the term "mental programming" for the patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that lie in an individual's mind from all the experiences that were collected in his life, a process which starts from the smallest circle of one's life and gets bigger, and envisioned three levels of mental programming he believed acted to influence an individual's mental patterns, as set forth below in Figure 6.

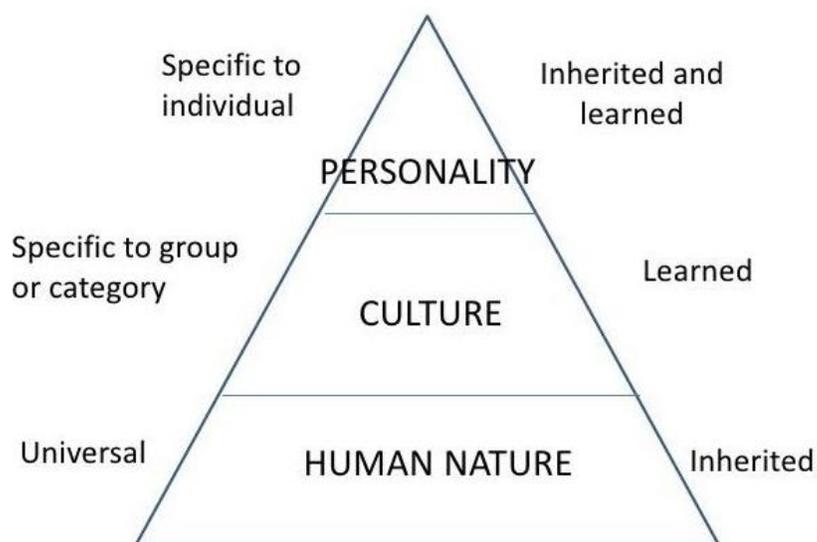


Figure 6. Three levels of human mental programming. (Hofstede, 1997, p. 6).

Thus according to Hofstede's (1997) schema of influence on human mental patterns, mental patterns attributable to cultural programming—the mental patterns (and therefore the lived experiences) of female Saudi American family business employees (category/group)—are *learned* patterns. The researcher therefore designed this qualitative inquiry to discern the identifiable and common threads of these learned influences, as presumably anything learned that has a negative effect still may be unlearned, rendering education key to recommendations that this study's data inspired in the researcher (see Chapter 5).

Davis, Pitts, & Cormier (2000) studied the influence of the many interrelated but unique factors which contribute to the Gulf socioeconomic system, including the: patriarchal system of government; importance of the oil industry; welfare-state economics; fast-paced economic development; high reliance on expatriate labor, and their combined impact on family companies. Present-day threats to the Saudi family business predominantly include globalization. Most economic observers "believe that the majority of Gulf family companies will not be able to compete with independent foreign companies inside or outside their local markets. Gulf family firms lack management talent, management systems, and the ability to operate a decentralized organization" (Davis, Pitts, & Cormier, 2000, p. 233). Recently, companies are beginning to place a higher value on diversity and inclusion as motivations for promoting women into leadership and management roles. Exploring their perspectives will contribute to greater understanding of females' lived experiences working in Gulf family businesses during a period of tremendous sociocultural transitions and economic changes.

Saudi Female Employment

The Saudi government has allocated one-third of the country's government jobs to Saudi women and has sought to create additional job opportunities geared specifically for women, including implementing programs that will assist them with work-related transportation needs. These policies have made the private sector rethink its business strategies towards women and foreign workers, and have opened new opportunities for females to play roles in the Gulf family business world. In this context the researcher will discuss both the benefits and struggles of female employment in Saudi Arabia.

Benefits. Women's employment is necessary for the growth of Saudi Arabia, and more and more women have been seeking employment outside the home. An estimated 450,000 women were believed to be employed in the private sector at the end of 2016. The Ministry of Labor and Social Development even stated in a 2016 report that securing suitable jobs for women was one of the most critical goals for Saudi society, documenting that 350,000 Saudi women by 2016 were employed in the private sector, as shown in Figure 7 below.

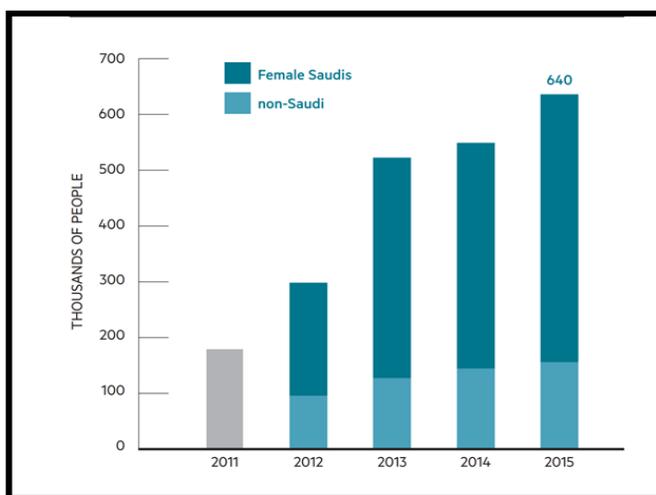


Figure 7. Women's employment in the private sector. (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2016).

Kaslow (2006) notably mentioned in his study additional numbers of import, referencing a growing number of Saudi women who have experienced increased access and influence in the business world: a large proportion of Saudi Arabia's wealth (an estimated \$11.9 billion) is in the hands of women through inheritance. Kaslow (2006) added that Islamic law had granted these women their money from the inheritance; they are amongst the richest in the world. Moreover, improving women's access to suitable jobs within the country is not only closing the gap between the number of educated and working women but is also increasing the country's GDP. This year, General Electric employed the first women engineers in Saudi Arabia (Tuxford, 2017) in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030, while the president and CEO of GE Saudi Arabia & Bahrain stated that they are recruiting the right people for the right jobs. Women recently have secured top jobs at Saudi Arabia's stock exchange and a large national bank, giving hope that King Abdullah's Saudization policies are succeeding (Acton, 2017).

Finally, the inclusion of women in the workforce will be necessary for the realization of Saudi Vision 2030, a development policy aimed at reducing oil dependency and developing diverse economic and service sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, tourism, and more (Marwa, 2016). Legislative commitments and policy decisions during the recent past years have opened many doors for Saudi women—including the opportunity for women to hold managerial positions in some businesses and organizations (Alahmadi, 2011).

Struggles

Unfortunately, society in Saudi Arabia has had little to offer women because of the continued influences of foreign labor, dependency on the oil sector, and the enduring

gender-restrictive social structures of formal Saudi workplace environments, which continue to prefer men (Hamdan, 2005). Between 1975 – 1980 the number of Saudi females who were working represented 6% of the population (El Mallakh, 2014). In Saudi Arabia in general, males receive more support from organizations and more career development and mentoring, as compared to women (Kattan, de Pablos Heredero, Montes Bella, & Margalina, 2015).

Much of the existing literature regarding women in the workforce is Western-centric and may not be transferrable to the Saudi context. Since the early 1980s, Saudi Arabia's immigration policies have been explicitly geared towards replacing foreign workers with Saudi nationals (Silvey, 2004). These policies have been referred to in the literature as the 'Saudization' of Saudi Arabia (Al-Zuhayyan, 2013). The Kingdom's Saudization policy has emphasized the need for more employment and advancement opportunities for women (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). Though the government continues to push for Saudization, the public sector has not significantly changed and adopted these policies thoroughly. In fact, in a study by Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, and Al-Sadoon (2014) respondents indicated that support from the government for their entrepreneurial family businesses was non-existent. To provide that support Saudi Arabia needs to invest in and employ Saudi citizens, specifically women. Moreover, to include women in a male-dominated workforce reduces reliance on foreign nationals (Robertson, Al-Khatib, Al-Habib, & Lanoue, 2001). The government aims to increase the participation of women in the labor market from 22% to 30%. The Kingdom's Saudization policy has also recognized positions most suitable for women. Despite all these progressive indicators

young Saudi women still struggle to find job opportunities, as the private sector continues to recruit foreign workers (Alselaimi, 2014).

Women in the workforce in Saudi Arabia are seeking a better future. There is a gap in the research literature focusing specifically on second-generation Saudi female family business employees and their experiences of work and work-related conflict dynamics. Family business conflict-related literature did offer the researcher a useful framework to fulfill this study's potential to remedy that gap in the research scholarship, as next discussed.

Causes of Conflicts in Family Businesses

Culture and the overlap between business (economic) and family (emotional) issues are two factors that are essential to discuss in any research related to family business. The literature reviewed supported the exploration of employment conflict dynamics for the target study population, specifically with regard to factors unique to family businesses, as outlined below in Figure 8.

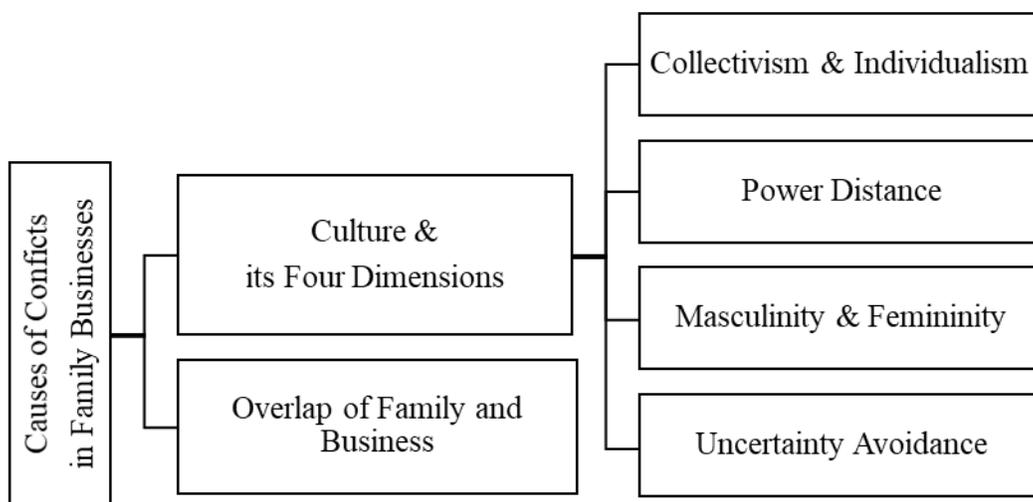


Figure 8. Causes of conflict in family businesses.

Harvey and Evans (1994) identified causes of conflicts in family businesses, noting, “Conflict relative to the family business can emanate from one of three areas: internal to the organization, external from the family or families involved in the organization, and external stakeholders” (p. 344). An examination of internal and external sources of conflict in the literature suggested that, for the specific inquiries of this study, those internal and internal sources of conflict might be attributable or traced to aspects of Saudi culture, as well as to the overlap of family and business. The conflicts-related portion of the study’s literature review thus centered on two topics of influence: culture and its four cultural dimensions (see discussion below and Figure 8) advanced by Hofstede (1997) as they illuminated family business-related facets of Saudi culture, and second, the overlap of business concerns with family concerns and the importance of separating them.

Culture and its Four Dimensions (Hofstede, 1997)

Culture as a source of conflict in and for Saudi family businesses is particularly relevant with regard to shared and not-shared cultural values between generations. Firm founders have worked hard through tough times; now the majority of family businesses in Saudi Arabia are in transition from the first- to second-generation management (Bardsley, 2017). Culture has an impact on first-generation family business founders in Saudi Arabia. Family businesses in Saudi Arabia are new companies in comparison to other companies around the world, as family businesses did not take off in the Kingdom until the oil boom in the 1960s/70s (Alselaimi, 2014). Many have noted that Saudi culture is characterized mainly by collectivism; Saudis support each other socially and financially (Dahlan & Klieb, 2011). As the Saudi Ambassador to the United States stated

in the *Washington Post*, "We Saudis want to modernize, but not necessarily Westernize" (Nydell, 1996, p. 6). Thus even if its people desire modernity, traditions and norms still guide their way of thinking. Moreover, tribal affiliations are still affecting Saudis and their family business decision making, even as tribal sociopolitical issues keep shifting and loosening with all the modernization happening in Saudi (Nydell, 1996).

Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, and the Quran is the constitution through which the government has reinforced strict religious regulation of its citizens, affecting their daily lives and creating unique cultural norms (Robertson, Al-Khatib, Al-Habib, & Lanoue, 2001). Islam has a religious law that states clearly that a woman has her own money and need not contribute to any household expenses, the man is responsible for them (Nydell, 1996). However, in light of historical limitations on women's rights in Saudi Arabia, consideration was paid in this study to the complexity with which women tend to identify themselves hierarchically within Saudi society, as conceptualized by Alselaimi (2014) in Figure 9 below:

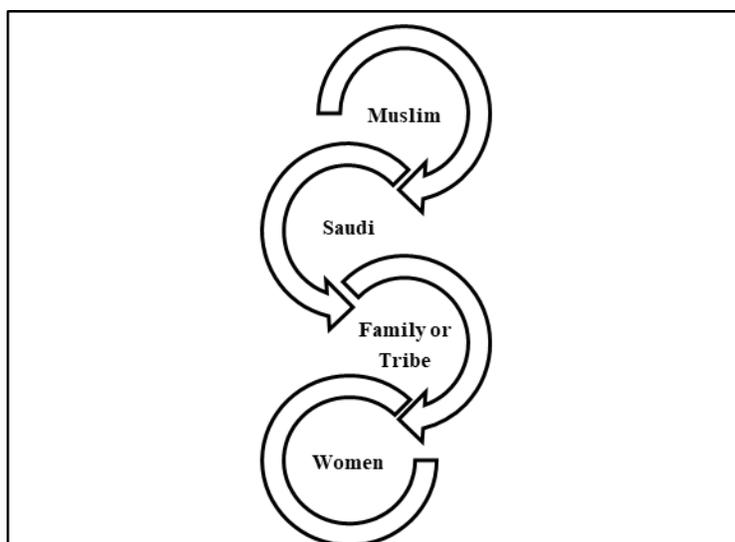


Figure 9. Layers of social identity influencing women's empowerment.

(Alselaimi, 2014, p. 71).

Saudi Arabia has never been colonized and so not been subjected to the religion(s) and culture(s) of other sovereignties; indigenous Islamic identity therefore has had a significant effect on the culture and its norms (Robertson, Al-Khatib, Al-Habib, & Lanoue, 2001). Culture and religion, the main factors that historically have affected the decisions of family business employment decision makers in Saudi Arabia, have also affected the existence and state of female employment in their spheres of influence. Those decisions have meant that historically females in Saudi Arabia were neither part of the workforce nor the development of the country.

A number of scholars contributed perspectives considered by the researcher in her quest to explore culture's effect on Saudi Arabian family businesses and their family members. In their book *Management Worldwide: Distinctive Styles amid Globalization*, Hickson and Pugh (1995) claimed that four factors influence the Arabic style of business management: foreign rule, the West's demand for oil, traditions, and Islam. The researcher believes that nearly 25 years later, everything has changed with the exception of religion's strength of influence; this study accordingly concentrated its focus on the cultural dimensions that might most forcefully be driving the experiences of Saudi American women employed in family businesses.

According to Hofstede (1997), there are four dimensions of national culture: Collectivism versus Individualism, Power Distance, Femininity versus Masculinity, and Uncertainty Avoidance (p. 14). This framework proved useful for considering all possible aspects of national culture that might be relevant to the instant study's design.

Collectivism versus individualism

Geert Hofstede (1997) included Saudi Arabia in his cultural values study of a grouping he termed "Arab," stating: "Saudis within this region are even more collectivist than some others" (p. 54). Although Arabs scored high in power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity, they scored low in individualism (Robertson, Al-Khatib, Al-Habib, & Lanoue, 2001). Comparing individual and collective perspectives in Arab and Western cultures, Ellen Feghali (1997) posited, "In contrast to U.S. Americans' self-reliant and 'individual-centered' approach to life, social life in the Arab region is characterized by 'situation-centeredness,' in which loyalty to one's extended family and larger 'in-group' takes precedence over individual needs and goals" (p. 352). Hofstede (1997) emphasized the "power of the group" in describing Saudis with their extended family, as they grow up knowing "we" more than "I" (p. 50). He defined collectivism as "societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (p. 51).

Table 1 below reproduces Hofstede's (1997) assessments of relational differences between collectivism and individualism in the work environment:

Table 1

Differences between Collectivism and Individualism

ELEMENT	COLLECTIVISM	INDIVIDUALISM
COMMUNICATION	Harmony should always be maintained	Speaking one's mind
CONTEXTUAL COMMUNICATION	High	Low
RELATIONSHIP EMPLOYER	Perceived in moral terms, as a family link	A contract should be based on mutual advantage
HIRING AND PROMOTION	Employee's ingroup	Based on skills and rules
MANAGEMENT	Of group	Only of individuals
RELATIONSHIP VERSUS TASK	Relationship prevails over task	Task prevails over relationship

(Hofstede, 1997, p. 67).

In a collectivist culture "people are not confronted assertively and directly" (Wilmot & Hocker, 1995, p. 16). Triandis (1994) also noted that collectivists prefer indirect negotiation when conflicts occur; using direct messages can by itself create conflict and misunderstanding. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) confirmed this when they stated that in collectivist cultures it is considered "rude and undesirable" (p. 106) to confront. Yet avoiding communicating directly can be detrimental to the longevity of businesses as they transition governance from one generation to the next. Thus cultural norms attributable to the collectivist dimension could certainly be sources of conflict in the future, threatening family businesses.

Power distance index (PDI). Hofstede (1997) defined the PDI as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 28). Considering the PDI as a dimension of influence on the family roots of Saudi family businesses, Arab countries score among the highest in PDI; the power of the family does affect individuals and

parents, and families have a strong influence on their children. Thus Saudi children do and are expected to respect family and the head(s) of their families all of their lives. Similarly, on the workplace side, “organizations centralize power as much as possible in few hands” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 35). The goal and resultant effect of this concentration of power on family businesses is that the business founder will keep all decisions under his supervision. In such high PDI cultures emotions affect the relationship between the organization members and power is grounded in family or friends, not necessarily organizational or business expertise. These factors greatly influence all family business decisions, from the smallest decision to the all-important decision(s) regarding succession; the concentration of power in family and the centralizing of organizational power inevitably will affect the sustainability of the business.

Femininity versus masculinity

This third natural culture dimension (Hofstede, 1997) had a significant influence on the framing and design of the study; Saudi Arabia is considered a masculine society, beginning at the family level. Thus typically and traditionally the father is strict and yet at the same time the protector of the family; mothers are tender and take care of the family. Both boys and girls are raised to be determined and virtuous. However, any successful girl must link (attribute) her success to a male from her family. For ambitious women to succeed and for female employment to increase in masculine societies, women typically must have a masculine source or sources of support. As with the PDI, Hofstede’s (1997) dimension of femininity and masculinity was evident as relevant to the study’s research on family business occupations and positions. In masculine societies such as Saudi Arabia, some occupations traditionally are filled always by men and others by women.

Further, in a masculine society, boys and girls typically do not study the same subjects, which perpetuates each gender remaining in the same jobs and positions of responsibility. In addition, traditionally in Saudi Arabia boys are raised to fight back if they are attacked but girls are not raised or taught to fight back; this dimensional difference surely has affected the conflict resolutions strategies those children will naturally turn to as they mature and face employment-related gender inequities, decisions, and conflicts in the family business environment.

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI)

Hofstede (1997) defined the natural culture dimension of an uncertainty avoidance index as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations” (p. 113). Saudi society is among the highest ranked in UAI, beginning at the family level with the ways that Saudi families raise their children, enforcing strict rules, promoting a structured learning environment, and directing them to look for correct answers from their teachers. While uncertainty avoidance in the context of strict learning enforcement can promote hard work and motivation while curbing emotions, the researcher noted that this cultural dimension can also create resistance to any ideas or innovation outside the sphere of accepted rules, with implications for designing this study of female employment-related conflict dynamics in Saudi family businesses during a time of great cultural changes and transitions.

Overlap of Business and Family

The overlap of the family and business spheres is a distinct characteristic of the family firm (Jayantilal, Palacios, & Jorge, 2016). The family firm pursues goals linked to both business (economic) and family (relational, emotional) concerns; thus Carlock and

Ward (2001) proposed a model to represent the dilemmas family businesses face in trying to strike a balance between family needs and company needs. The Saudi business-and-family concerns overlap can be a potential catalyst for conflict. The literature suggested that first-generation managed family businesses are more conflictual than family firms managed by later generations, in part because family bonds are weaker in the second-generation and communication typically is less frequent. At the second-generation stage, ownership tends to be more dispersed, and intergenerational family bonds tend to be weaker (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, & Delgado-Garcia, 2016).

The findings of Kellermanns & Eddleston (2007) suggested that generational ownership dispersion has a substantial impact on how conflict affects family firm performance. Conflict situations in family firms often emerge when members of different generations contribute to the strategic direction of the firm, and consensus may be challenging to achieve (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). For example, incumbent generations may be reluctant to allow younger family members to be involved in decision-making processes so they retain control, all the while perhaps also simultaneously seeking to become indispensable to the business as they see the security of their jobs weakening over time. Where there is high generational ownership dispersion within family firms, lower levels of conflict commonly are desirable because such conflicts can deeply split the family along generational lines, inhibiting performance (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007).

As noted, culture has a strong influence on the decisions made by top managers and decision makers in family business companies (Alselaimi, 2014). Jayantilal, Jorge, and Palacios (2016) used a game theory approach to study the impacts of culture on

succession. Their findings showed that intergenerational cultural alignment played a significant role in successful succession and familial harmony. That is, if generations share more in common from a cultural standpoint, the transfer of power is much more likely to be successful. Common reasons for this include lack of planning and integration of subsequent generations, disregard of the input and opinions of the next generation, and failure to effectively manage conflict (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007).

Within the Saudi Arabian family business context, Oukil and Al-Khalifah (2012) explored the topic of managerial weakness, looking for correlations between many different indicators related to family business's capital, organizational structure, and activities. The study sample consisted of owners/managers of family businesses with capital in the range of 100 – 500 thousand Saudi Arabian Riyals (1 USD = 3.75 Riyal). The authors' results suggested that Saudi family businesses are evolving in some ways, namely along the lines of sharing the decision-making process and increasingly hiring and promoting based upon qualifications rather than family member status. These are encouraging and enabling features of the family business environment in Saudi Arabia that should lend themselves to resiliency during any trying times ahead for family businesses.

Critical manifestations of conflict management and social capital conflict in family firms can emerge in different forms, such as disagreements about content-related decision-making issues, personal disputes, intergenerational strategy involvement, and family firms' innovation pursuits (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). Because family members working in a firm have difficulty separating work and family, disagreements about work-related issues may quickly become personal attacks. Further, not separating

work and family can affect performance; several research studies have shown that firms with family CEOs underperform when firm ownership is dispersed amongst many different family members (Bennedsen, Nielsen, Perez-Gonzalez, & Wolfenzon, 2007; Cucculelli & Micucci, 2008; Morck, Schleifer, & Vishny, 1988; Sciascia, Mazzola, & Kellermanns, 2014). Underperformance circumstances can be especially acute when considering both active and passive family members in the family business. For example, conflicts of interest may exist between family members who are owners and managers, such as owners misallocating firm resources for the benefit of their own nuclear family at the expense of other relatives (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, & Delgado-Garcia, 2016). Conflicts might also materialize as disadvantageous hiring practices, such as hiring incompetent relatives, paying excessive salaries, or giving misaligned rewards with unsatisfying performance (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, & Delgado-Garcia, 2016).

The literature reviewed confirmed that family businesses should attend carefully to all the causes of conflicts that might affect their family relations and/or the business. Each family is different, and no one can predict precisely what cause conflicts for each; nonetheless, families in business have to be prepared and may need to engage consultants to avoid conflicts.

Management of Conflicts in Family Businesses

Avoiding conflicts between family members while preparing the company for a smooth transition from one generation to the next has the potential to impact both the country's revenue and its families. As generational succession transitions are looming for many family businesses, business owners need to be prepared and enabled to smooth

those transitions. In a time of transition, ambiguity, confusion, and conflict can result both for family members and for other professionals in the family firm. During this time all parties are likely to seek as much control over their destinies as possible (Morris, Williams, Allen, & Avila, 1997). Those quests for control can lead to high anxiety or conflict within the business. In addition, detailed information about family business operations, management, and finances are routinely kept secret; there is no transparency, which also will lead to conflicts (Sahni, Alwy, & Al-Assaf, 2017).

The fourth and final research question sought to elicit the selected participants' views about family business policies and practices for conflict management and conflict resolution:

RQ4 - What are second-generation Saudi Arabian females' understandings about how to best manage and resolve conflicts in family businesses?

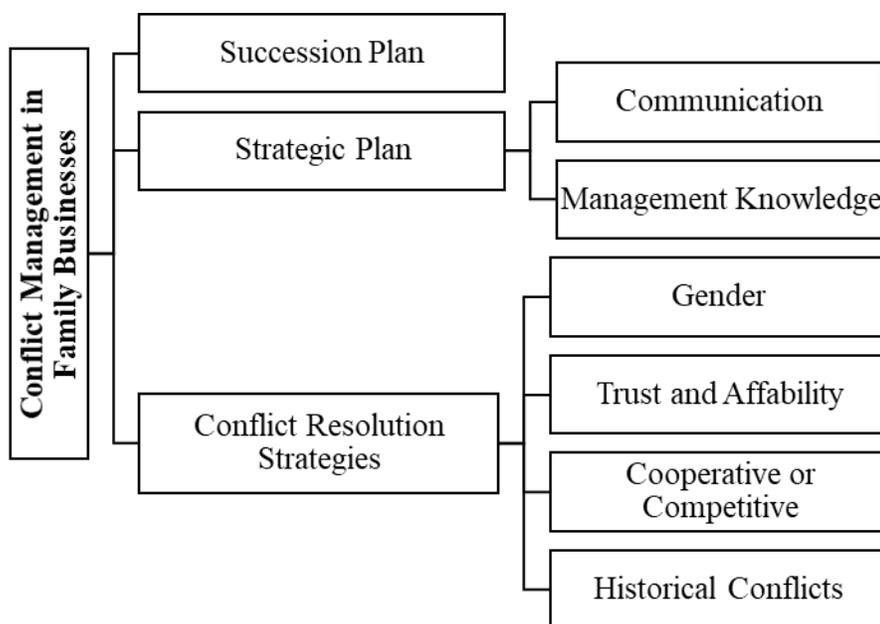


Figure 10. Conflict management in family businesses.

Succession Plan

Succession is perhaps the most challenging issue facing family businesses in the Gulf region today (Allen & Overy, 2010). A successful succession enables the family firm to continue to operate smoothly and be profitable long-term. However, this transition is notoriously tricky to manage and control. The effects of a detrimental succession can be deeply rooted and long lasting, creating fissures within the family firm that could ultimately destroy it. Succession is “not simply a single step of handing the baton; it is a multistage process that exists over time, beginning before heirs even enter the business” (Handler, 1994, p. 134).

Succession processes facilitate the family business’s ownership and management transfer from one generation to the next and arguably present the most critical issues family firms face (Dahlan & Klieb, 2011). The processes include the lead-up to the actual transition, the transition itself, and its aftermath (Morris, Williams, Allen, & Avila, 1997). Statistics show that the generational transition in family businesses is a weak point in business survival, with most family businesses not surviving the transition (Brenes, Madrigal, & Molina-Navarro, 2006). Dahlan & Klieb (2011) discussed succession planning in Saudi; they noted that families must plan for succession and ensure the right management processes are in place in order to support the transition, or the stability of the family firm may be at risk. Having a toolkit of conflict resolution strategies that a firm can employ during this transition will be more critical than ever. As females in the workforce continue to grow in Saudi Arabia through government-supported initiatives, it is only realistic to assume that females will have a role to play in this process.

The extant literature on the conflict in family firms does not give much attention to the conflict that can be triggered by succession within the firm; primarily intergenerational succession (Jayantilal, Jorge, & Palacios, 2016). A tense succession period is made even more difficult by the lack of planning for the transfer of management and power. Succession situations are best managed when the senior leadership takes succession seriously and plans for the orderly transfer of power to the incoming generation (Davis, Pitts, & Cormier, 2000). Deciding on a successor is one of the most critical challenges to the founder of the family firm. The way it is handled, how expectations are managed, and how the final choice is made could spark hostility in the family, especially amongst members of the same generation (i.e., siblings or cousins) (Jayantilal, Jorge, & Palacios, 2016).

Management of the business at the time of the transfer from generation to generation is crucial; a written succession plan is the best solution (Dahlan & Klieb, 2011). Education of the next generation, gender, communication strategies, intergenerational alignment, and succession planning are all central factors for business sustainability. Davis, Pitts, & Cormier (2000) found that succession situations in Gulf families are often tense and not openly discussed. Hofstede (1997) noted that people in a collectivist culture seldom respond "no" but instead say "we will think about it." Nonetheless the importance of succession planning for Gulf region family businesses has been noted as key to their own sustainability and their national economies (Bahrain Family Businesses Association, 2011).

Although traditional culture has influenced many family business decision makers to avoid this important step, having a clear and openly shared succession plan is very

important in Saudi Arabia. Educating family business founders about the importance of succession is something the research studies reviewed agreed upon and recommended.

Strategic Plan

No family business can succeed without a clear strategic plan, it is vital for the growth of the company; as here discussed the literature reviewed supported family members focusing on both strategic planning and company development. Part of family firms' conflict management processes encompass internal communication strategies and management knowledge within the firm. If there is a structure in place allowing more involvement for all family members in current and future decision-making and control of the business, families may be better able to navigate generational succession (Brenes, Madrigal, & Molina-Navarro, 2006). Intergenerational interactions and communications also have an essential role in determining the strategic direction of family firms, particularly those that are seeking to utilize the unique perspectives of younger generations (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). Typically, family firms are better at offering considerable latitude in decision making, as employees are readily accepted as "insiders;" this unique family business perspective may benefit intergenerational successions in Saudi Arabia in the long term (Oukil & Al-Khalifah, 2012).

When family members cooperate and act as a unit to maximize the firm's collective benefit (rather than individual benefit), there is a higher propensity for the success of intergenerational succession. By openly discussing ideas, cognitive conflict improves the range of options for decision-makers, thus enhancing the quality of those decisions. It also facilitates a critical analysis of the issues, ensuring that all innovative solutions are considered and not overlooked (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007). Cognitive

conflict can help people to better understand, identify, and address issues that a firm may face.

Family firms may need to foster certain types of conflict that improve firm performance while limiting those which are detrimental. The benefits of seeking a diversity of opinions and contributors in strategic decision-making are advantageous to infuse novelty into the goals that firms pursue and may then make them better equipped to pursue innovation goals (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). Analysis of findings from a study by Jayantilal, Jorge, and Palacios (2016) led to conclusions that collaborative family solutions increase the likelihood of a secured succession.

The lens model of conflict presents a building block of two elements fundamental in all conflicts: 1) communication behaviors, and 2) perceptions of those behaviors (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). For the instant study of female employment and conflict dynamics in the family business, these two aspects were explored within cultural effects influencing Saudi Arabian families. Wilmot & Hocker (2007) pointed out a positive aspect of conflicts for the benefit and awareness of cultures that do not communicate: "conflict often helps people join together and clarify their goals" (p. 38), which in turn will lead to better communication and success at work.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

In Saudi Arabia, employment-related gender equality is one of the many obstacles family members face; families have to overcome that obstacle to flourish (Bennedsen, Nielsen, Perez-Gonzalez, & Wolfenzon, 2007). The inclusion of women in the management and operations of family firms is therefore an important long-term strategy for growth and performance (Sahni, Alwy, & Al-Assaf, 2017). Saudi Arabia "maintains a

comparatively closed society by requiring conformity to rigid gender roles and Islamic *sharia* law, and by strictly regulating interaction with the multitude of foreign workers living separately on compounds” (Feghali, 1997, p. 348). In light of this traditional closed stance in Saudi society, the researcher believes conflict resolution strategies will be essential tools for family businesses to learn to openly address generational-, gender-, and nonfamily member-related employment conflicts as they arise, without threatening the dissolution of the family firm.

Intergenerational alignment with a shared vision and shared articulated goals for the family firm is also crucial to successful succession. Two critical characteristics facilitating positive relationships amongst family members in a family business are: 1) trust, which is characterized by openness, honesty, and integrity; and 2) affability, which is concerned with mutual respect between the family business head and other family members (Morris, Williams, Allen, & Avila, 1997). When goal congruence within the family firm is high, family members are more likely to be open about what they know, and information sharing can lead to innovative pursuits and business growth (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). A high level of trust and transparency between family members of different generations is necessary for goal congruence and positive management (Sahni, Alwy, & Al-Assaf, 2017).

In conflict resolution and conflict management it is key is to understand how members of different generations apply cooperative or competitive approaches to conflict management. Cooperative conflict management is characterized by high levels of concern for others, with openness regarding both the issue and in identifying acceptable resolutions. Competitive conflict management, on the other hand, is characterized by a

deep concern for others' opinions or feelings, such that there is a central decision-maker who does not seek to be amicable (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). Process conflict focuses on how the capabilities of specific individuals can be utilized to accomplish the work of the firm. Because in family businesses family members are often employed as a result of their family status and not their qualifications, process conflict may be particularly crucial to performance (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007). The use of competitive conflict management may inhibit intergenerational strategy in pursuit of innovation. Alternatively, it could potentially lead some family members to focus more on their interests and overlook critical issues (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). Thus, firm leadership supporting the most beneficial management strategy is paramount for family businesses seeking to successfully navigate internal conflicts.

Understanding the implications of conflict resolution across generations is also essential, as younger generations entering the firm may find themselves entrenched in historical conflicts that are difficult to resolve (De Clerq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). Perhaps for family firms to perform well, they either need to foster a culture which encourages an open discussion of job responsibilities (process conflict), or they need to possess a culture in which family members work independently from one another with little input from other members of the family (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007). Many factors influence Saudi family business employee perceptions, expectations, and reactions: cultural norms and dimensions, interpersonal conflicts, the way family members were raised, and individual personal histories. Thus eliciting a "life review" from researched respondents is essential to reflect the behaviors of these individuals through life (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007).

Morris, Williams, Allen, & Avila (1997) identified three sets of determinants of successful family business transitions: the preparation level of heirs, the nature of relationships among family members, and the types of strategic planning and management of the family business. Family business transitions occur more smoothly when heirs are better prepared, when trust is the base of relationships among family members, and when there is proper planning in place. Family business owners therefore should pay more attention to interpersonal issues that may influence the success of succession. Gender, trust, cooperative and competitive conflicts, and historical conflicts are all important topics for consideration within the family. Their open discussion can lead to the best strategies that families will adopt. Although each family business is different, family members must be well-prepared and educated about all possible strategies that will sustain and help both the family relationships and the family business to flourish.

Theoretical Framework

Two foundational theories initially assisted the researcher to design a qualitative research study that would delve more deeply into a topic not well studied—the experiences of, and their implications for, second-generation Saudi women employees in a family business—to more fully understand and visualize family business conflict from multiple theoretical lenses. Each research study effort considers theories that help in understanding, connecting, and explaining the phenomena at hand. The theories of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) and feminism (Hooks, 2003) discussed below informed the study in different ways, giving it agency and control, voice, rich description, and meaning from actual participants. In addition, these theories allowed

the researcher to use qualitative methodology to formulate interview questions that would elicit responses from the participants about their experience, from their own perspectives. A third theoretical framework, dialectical theory, was later applied as it emerged as relevant during the analysis of the study's collected data; dialectical theory is presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

Transcendental Phenomenology

Phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013) and helps to uncover the varied experiences of different individuals who are going through the same experience, which is called a "shared experience." The theory acknowledges that individuals have different views of one concept but their shared experience makes them all eligible to produce a phenomenon. Creswell (2007) stated that describing the meaning for a group of persons of their lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept is carried out in a phenomenological investigation; Moustakas (1994) noted that the phenomenological model offers a way of interrelating objective and subjective conditions, a way of using imagination, reflection, and description in arriving at an understanding of the lived experience. These objectives were at the core of the study that the researcher sought to explore and understand from the participants.

Phenomenology is a movement initiated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). He defined it as "the experiences of thinking and knowing" (Moran, 2000, p. 1). Van Manen (1990) applied hermeneutic phenomenology "to transfer lived experience into a textual expression of its essence" (p. 78). Moustakas (1994) said phenomenology might be used to provide new knowledge, enhance the quality of life, and inspire; those results can be useful for coping during various experiences of life. The phenomenological model offers

a way of interrelating objective and subjective conditions, a way of using imagination, reflection, and description of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). The German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) identified the connections of phenomenological research with philosophy. Thus it remains a popular method in social and health sciences (Spiegelberg, 1982). Kvale (1996) described the phenomenological perspective by stating that it is a "focus on the lifeworld, an openness to the experience of the subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions" (p. 20), with emphasis on the experience of the participants.

The phenomena with which phenomenology deals are not data nor are they facts, but instead have their reference to a subjective pole, and that is why they are significant (Farina, 2014). Phenomenology provides a disciplined and systematic method for creating knowledge and accentuates discovery and subjectivity of the essence of experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Describing the meaning for a group of persons about their lived experiences with a phenomenon or concept is carried out in a phenomenological investigation (Creswell, 2007). Any investigation begins with a phenomenon. The phenomenon is the starting point of any thought that leads to collecting information from the participants who experienced it and led to new ideas to look through (Husserl, 1931).

In phenomenological research, the researcher has a responsibility to separate any experience to make way for the objectivity of the respondents' experience (Bednall, 2006). Acts of bracketing occur at interpretive moments when a researcher:

... holds each of the identified phenomena up for serious inspection. A researcher then allows those personal ideas and feelings held in *epoche* to synthesize with those

observations as interpretive conclusions ... [b]racketing [facilitates] a recognition of the essence of the meaning of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

(Bednall, 2006, p. 126). Moran (2000) described epoche visually: "[i]t is like putting brackets around an expression in an equation, which remove any notion of what the researcher believes to be 'true' and instead analyze the phenomenon itself to the experience" (p. 149). As Triscă & Ciortuz (2011) noted: "'putting in brackets' ... means that the researcher relates with the respondent reflections regarding his lived experiences in a non-dogmatic way and tries to capture, not to impose meanings that emerge from the dialogue" (p. 432). Bracketing is one of the first steps a researcher should take when conducting a phenomenological analysis.

There are many different approaches to phenomenology, including realistic phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology, and naturalistic phenomenology. The researcher here will discuss in greater depth existential phenomenology and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Existential phenomenology studies concrete human existence, including our experiences of free choice or action in concrete situations, and "has descriptive facets that focus on the world individual's life" (Triscă & Ciortuz, 2011, p. 431). The goal is to describe the lived experiences of the participants. One unique aspect of the existential-phenomenological paradigm is that experience is neither considered subjective nor objective, but rather a mix of both categories. Interestingly, in this tradition the interview dialogue tends to be circular rather than linear. The interviewer's role is to "provide a context in which the respondent freely describes his/her lived experiences in detail" (Triscă & Ciortuz, 2011, p. 431). The meaning of an existential-phenomenological approach is to facilitate the respondent tasks of *Dasein*, as

Heidegger put it, to make accessible to himself (and thus to the researcher) the unconscious processes of lived experience (always personal).

Another phenomenological approach applied for the study's design here was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which "explore[s] in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world..." (Smith & Osborn, 2009, p. 55). IPA emphasizes that the exercise of conducting research is a dynamic process in which the researcher plays an active role. To facilitate this, a two-stage interpretation process, or a double hermeneutic, is involved. As Smith & Osborn (2009) stated: "The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (p. 53)." Aligned with phenomenological tradition, IPA tries to understand the point of view of the participants and take their side.

While these different approaches to phenomenology all have similar underpinnings, they offer unique variances that allow the researcher to select the approach most applicable to the study at hand. For this study the researcher adhered to the transcendental phenomenology theoretical approach because therein the investigator focuses on accounts of the experience of the respondents and focuses on the nature of the experience, by searching for essences of experiences and discovering reality (Littlejohn, 1999). It thus views experience and behavior as the same as the subject/object. This was especially appropriate in the instant case: the participants were from Saudi Arabia, a country with strong cultural norms and traditions that normally discourages the exchange of personal information to nonfamily members or strangers. Selecting this approach facilitated the researcher's ability to communicate study details and interact with the

participants, to transcend cultural boundaries and be allowed to listen to all their relevant lived experiences.

Feminist Theory

In modern history there have been three significant waves of Western feminism. The first wave focused on civil rights issues (the 1920s) and legal obstacles like voting rights, property rights, and rights to equal education. The second wave (the 1960s) was defined as the Women's Liberation Movement and was concerned with oppressed groups. According to Alselaimi (2014), this movement took a more radical stand in increasing demands for women's equal access to employment opportunities and education. In the 1990s, a third wave of feminism rose in response to the remaining oppressed groups of women globally who experienced discrimination based on color, race, or ethnicity. To be sure, "[m]any of the systemic changes towards female development and rights within the legal, organizational and educational systems in the West have been credited to the liberal feminist movement" (Alselaimi, 2014, p. 62, citing Ximari, 2010). Liberal feminism challenges old traditional structures and considers new structures that emphasize justice and fairness to all.

Following the second wave of feminism, so-called radical feminism advocated against socio-cultural discrimination against white, middle-class females in the developed world (Arya, 2012). At its core, "radical feminism opposes cultural representations and structures set by men and hence rejects female roles defined by traditional masculine worlds" (Alselaimi, 2014, p. 49). To radical feminists, achieving equality between men and women requires a fundamental shift in the structures and values that uphold the current system: "hence, the radical feminist approach aims to change both negative

gender stereotypes and the systems that promote and support them” (Alselaimi, 2014, p. 53). Because of the focus of radical feminism on the equality of women in the workplace and the social sphere, it is particularly relevant to this study. With its focus on patriarchal systems of power and authority, radical feminism is an applicable theory to the Saudi system.

While there are many feminist theorists in the world today, the study predominantly drew from the work of Bell Hooks (2003), who wrote extensively on the interconnectivity of race, class, and gender, and their ability to produce and reinforce systems of oppression and domination that uphold the status quo. Hooks defined feminism as the struggle to end sexist oppression. This theory applied to the study’s problem statement by viewing gender as a pivotal point of conflict for family businesses in Saudi Arabia both today and in the future. This broad view of feminism was considered in the framing of the research questions, to shed light on and support the roles of women in Saudi private firms. Feminism remains a potential point of contention, as many founders are still resistant to the feminist perspective despite the support many of its goals have received from the Kingdom. Therefore, it is essential to identify the sources, effects, and management strategies for female employment-related conflict within family firms. Research conducted through a feminist lens considered females’ experiences and thoughts about issues of equality, discrimination, and exclusion. This research was inherently situated within a feminist framework while exploring the lived experiences of women in the Saudi Arabian workforce through narrative inquiry.

In summary, the literature reviewed confirmed there was limited scholarship available regarding the employment-related and employment conflict-related experiences

of females working in their family businesses in Saudi Arabia. Many sources reviewed also confirmed that Saudi Arabia is experiencing radical transformations that now support female participation in the workforce. The four dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 1997) and their influence as discussed in this chapter were always in the background of this research inquiry into the nature of women employees' roles in contributing to a Saudi family business's success and longevity. As more females take their rightful places in a newly accessible, digital, globalized business world—at the very same time that so many Saudi businesses are transitioning in ownership and management from one generation to the next—Saudis' understanding how conflict may be reduced and prevented will be critical to achieving shared goals of family business success, sustainability, and longevity.

The literature also reminded the researcher that awareness and acceptance of generational differences will be key to preparation for smooth transitioning as family business ownership and management changes hand between the generations. For example, first-generation business owners typically hold on to more risk-averse policies, while the second and third generation owners often would like to see the business expand, take more risks, and be more inclusionary to minorities in the workforce, including women (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, & Delgado-Garcia, 2016). The strong family bonds of first-generation family firms typically cause owners to be more aware of how their decisions might affect future generations; they thus are less likely to take risks (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, & Delgado-Garcia, 2016). The new generation of business and community leaders includes women, along with ethnic and religious minorities. This younger generation operates with a newer, more collaborative, and inclusive style of leadership than did generations past (Davis, Pitts, &

Cormier, 2000); the challenge for Saudi Arabia and all the communities of the Gulf will be to recognize the advantages of this new generation of leaders.

Chapter 3. Research Method

The researcher chose qualitative research methodology to design a study that would allow exploration of the lived experiences of her target population through an analysis of their own narratives. Kvale (2007) defined the qualitative method research interview as “an interview where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 1). He advocated for this qualitative research method because it enables researchers to attain a much deeper understanding of critical socio-cultural issues; it facilitates understanding of lived realities through the words of individuals and thereby an understanding of the essence of their lived experiences. These goals exactly aligned with the researcher’s objectives for the target population. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

- 1) *RQ1* - What are the lived experiences of second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in their family businesses?
- 2) *RQ2* - What are the perceptions of second-generation Saudi Arabian females of the future for their roles and females’ roles in the business world in Saudi Arabia?
- 3) *RQ3* - What are the lived experiences of the nature of conflicts that impact the second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in a family business?
- 4) *RQ4* - What are second-generation Saudi Arabian females' understandings about how to best manage and resolve conflicts in family businesses?

Research Design and Utilizing Transcendental Phenomenology

Phenomenology allows a unique opportunity for the role of the researcher which in the construction of research knowledge must be addressed (Rolls & Relf, 2006). Initially, *epoché* allows the researcher to disclose the participants’ own experiences and

feelings as part of the research process. The opportunity to examine one's own experiences is crucial to avoid judgment and biases later, particularly in data analysis (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). There are two approaches to phenomenological research, hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) and transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The utility of hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology is that they both provide an understanding of the essence of an experience. Van Manen (1990) explains hermeneutic phenomenology as the interpretation of lived experience (phenomenology) and the "text" of life (hermeneutics) (p. 78). Under this approach the researcher has an acknowledged impact on the study. On the other hand, transcendental phenomenology focuses more on the participants' experiences.

As discussed in Chapter 2, transcendental phenomenology is based on principles identified by Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938). Many decades later, Moustakas (1994) translated Husserl's principles into a qualitative method; he described phenomenology as the hard science of all conceivable transcendental phenomena. It investigates the origins of knowledge and clarifies the assumptions upon which its understanding is grounded. Transcendental in this context refers to investigating phenomena with an open mind and a fresh pair of eyes, which will then theoretically result in acquiring new and additional knowledge that derives from the essence of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, transcendental phenomenology offers a design for acquiring and collecting data that explains the nature of human experience. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013), and helps to uncover the

varied experiences of different individuals who went through or are going through the same experience.

The researcher used phenomenology to provide knowledge that will lead to a better understanding of the lived experiences of the target population, to understand why family business conflicts escalate or deescalate, and why some such conflicts get resolved or remain intractable. In light of the scholarship reviewed regarding family businesses and the importance of educating owners and stakeholders about all possible means to a smooth transition from generation to generation, it was evident to the researcher that there was a need for information regarding frontline thinking and best practices to avoid conflicts. The researcher therefore sought answers by interviewing different participants whose responses all contributed to a better understanding of their lived employee conflict-related experiences. The researchers collected data from individuals who went through similar experiences in working in Saudi Arabian family businesses, searching for answers to two questions to develop her understanding: "what" they experienced, and "how" they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Through the in-depth interviews the researcher collected more information without interjecting his/her experience into the analysis. Throughout the interviews the researcher listened carefully to the narrated experiences of family members without knowing if the accounts might lead to descriptions of significant conflicts or negative consequences for the business. At the conclusion of the interview process, and grouping, organizing, and comparing the answers and coding the resulting emergent themes, this study provided new and comprehensive information about family businesses in Saudi Arabia, Saudi women in the

workforce, and the target sample population's thoughts and perceptions regarding the causes of conflicts and conflict management in family businesses.

Participants

The study sample consisted of 22 women who were employees in their family businesses in Saudi Arabia. Inclusion criteria for the sample included age (25 to 45 years old), generational status (second-generation), and educational status (university graduates). The participants were second-generation family members who were either decision makers in key leadership positions or those who had recently joined their family firms. This generation is of specific interest for reasons previously mentioned: 1) Saudi Arabia is on the cusp of a generational shift within family businesses, as founders are stepping down from leadership roles due to age or because they require restructuring of their businesses to meet the demands of modern markets; 2) Evaluating how generational involvement influences family firm function is vital, given that only 30% of family firms survive into the second generation, and only 15% survive into the third; and 3) The new state policies geared towards educating and employing more Saudi women, and the increasing rate at which women are obtaining specialized professional education abroad both mean that Saudi women are becoming well situated to play meaningful roles in the business world and to contribute to the Saudi economy (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016).

This research study interviewed Saudi Arabian females, women who—largely because of cultural influences as discussed in Chapter 2—are known to be very careful in talking and sharing their thoughts and ideas. The researcher had the opportunity to have access to twenty-two Saudi Arabian females working in their family businesses. The researcher was very careful in selecting participants, attempting to get the best candidates

who could and might provide the most relevant information to serve the study. In addition, the participants have experienced opportunities that relatively few Saudi females have: the opportunity to continue and complete their educational degrees either in Saudi Arabia or abroad. They had experienced the chance to prove that they are capable of being part of the male-dominated family business. Thus, they represent a minority in Saudi Arabia in comparison to the many females who were not given the opportunity either to study or work. The participants have studied in the best schools around the world. They now feel responsible for spreading awareness and effecting changes to all family businesses, in order to give their daughters, sisters, cousins the opportunity to be part of the family company and to demonstrate how much that in turn will produce positive business outcomes. The foregoing unique features of the participant population added value to the study, contributing scholarship that will not only inform future Saudi business outcomes but provide knowledge that is connected to the future of females in family businesses all over today's digital, globalized, interconnected business world.

As the researcher had informed the participants that all their information would be confidential, in accordance with research ethics the researcher disclosed to the participants the purpose and goals of the study, along with any identified risks, emphasizing the protected nature of what would be discussed at the interview and that it would not be shared with anyone else. A participant demographics compilation was created to enable the reader to understand their background and their experiences, as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Position	Education
Sara	25	Supply Chain Director	Bachelor's in supply chain mgmt
Mahasen	26	Supply Chain Director	Bachelor's in finance
Mai	26	Legal Associate	Bachelor's in law
Huda	28	General Manager	Bachelor's in business
Deena	28	General Manager	Bachelor's in interior design
Nada	29	Communication Manager	Bachelor's in business
Ghazal	29	Vice Chairman for the Family Council	Master's in management consultant and strategy
Fawziya	30	General Manager	Bachelor's in finance
Ibtsam	35	Marketing and Business Development Manager	Diploma in jewelry business management
Nouf	36	Acting Vice President	Bachelor's in business
Amira	36	Operation Manager	Bachelor's in marketing
Haya	37	Manager	Master's in business
Reem	37	Vice President	Bachelor's in business
Fayiza	38	Vice President of Corporate Services	Bachelor's in special education and sociology Master's in international management
Badriya	38	General Manager & Founder of chocolate shop	Bachelor's in business
Lolowa	39	Human Resources Associate	Bachelor's in business
Fatima	39	General Manager	Bachelor's in architectural engineer
Leena	40	Co-Founder of fish farm & caviar court factory & Owner of fashion brand	Bachelor's in international business management Executive Masters in women human rights; a course at Harvard law
Manal	41	Director	Bachelor's in computer science Master's in electronic commerce
Bdoor	45	Marketing Manager	Master's in interior architecture
Lubna	45	Head of Private Equities	Bachelor's in marketing and strategic planning

The participant demographics presented in Table 2 represent aspects of their lives that the researcher believed most critically affected these females in their personal lives and in their professional work-related lives, such as age, education, and current employment position. These elements were essential to apprehend as they were factors contributing to these females' willingness to participate in this study. To ensure

anonymity and confidentiality as well as to limit the possibility that study respondents might withhold disclosure of their experiences from the researcher, the researcher did not interview other family members in the participants' family firms.

Recruitment

The researcher used two kinds of recruitment methods: snowballing and convenience sampling. As a family member in a family business, the researcher had the opportunity to contact other acquaintances who also work in family businesses. Some are friends and others she met at family business conferences and who were interested in being part of the research by using both convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

In convenience sampling, "the target population that meets certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate" (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p. 2). The researcher sent emails and text messages to all the females who were eligible for the study and met the selection criteria. The position of the researcher as a Saudi Arabian female with access and availability in Saudi facilitated opportunities to contact the participants and ask them to participate in her research.

Participants were also recruited through a snowball sampling technique, in which the participant is asked to identify additional participants who meet the selection criteria (Berg, 2007). Because of her position in a family firm the researcher had contact numbers and email addresses for a family business consultant who provided her with names of possible participants for the study; she contacted those women who met the criteria of the study.

The researcher screened the participants to be sure they met the selection criteria and to ensure they would be representative of a variety of respondents from a variety of family firms in Saudi Arabia. The researcher then provided all potential screened participants documents and information to secure their willing, informed, and knowledgeable participation, as discussed below and reproduced in Appendices A and B.

Research Design and Data Analysis Processes

To acquire, collect, organize and extract meaning from data that would illuminate the lived experiences of the study population, the researcher applied sequential and overlapping processes for the study's interview investigation as well as the analyses of data collected, as advocated by Kvale (1996) and Moustakas (1994).

Interviewing Design and Analysis: Kvale's (1996) Seven Stages

The in-depth interview offered the researcher an extraordinary tool to acquire rich descriptions of the participants lived experiences, allowing for exploration of narratives to discover meaning therein. Kvale (1996) detailed seven stages of conducting in-depth interviews: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (p. 81).

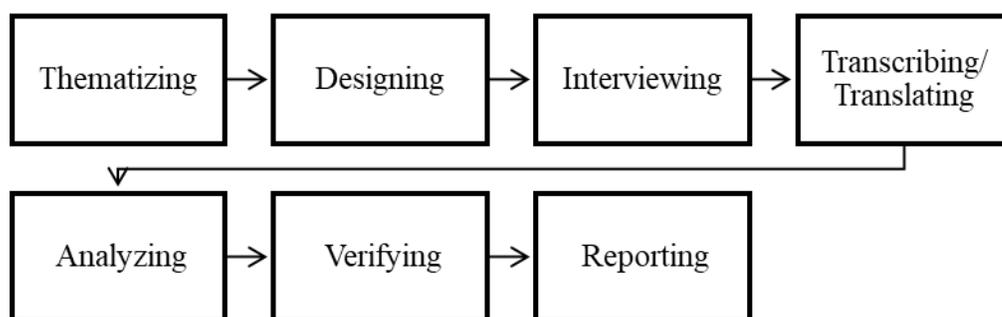


Figure 11. Kvale's seven stages of interview investigations.

Thematizing. Kvale (2007, p. 37) stated that this stage of an interview investigatory endeavor needs to be completed before the interview itself is conducted and

recorded. The role of the researcher is to formulate the research questions and to clarify theories of the themes discerned, as discussed below. In this stage the researcher asks three questions; the reasons for each were described as follows by Kvale (2007): *Why?* – “clarifying the purpose of the study,” *What?* – “obtaining a pre-knowledge of the subject” and *How?* – “becoming familiar with different techniques of interviewing and analyzing, and deciding which to apply" (p. 37).

The researcher considered these questions in light of the literature reviewed and her study’s purpose of advancing awareness and acceptance of female employment in Saudi family businesses while improving conflict dynamics in those family businesses:

Why? – As there is little literature on family business conflicts in Saudi Arabia, and especially little scholarship incorporating the female family business employee’s perspective, the researcher studied the described and delineated study phenomena to acquire and analyze data that would illuminate the feminine point of view.

What? – The researcher sought a pre-knowledge of the subject of family business conflict dynamics from the perspective of female family member employees, to gain knowledge and insight on their thoughts regarding best practices for family business conflict management that would positively contribute to the respective firm’s sustainability and longevity.

How? - The researcher studied and became familiar with options for successful interview data acquisition and collection, formulated open-ended and appropriate interview questions under the supervision of her committee, complied with ethical and procedural requirements for protection of the study participants as discussed below, prepared the interview protocol, and arranged interviews. The formulated interview

questions were open-ended, for which the researcher developed a topic guide beforehand for her formulated interview questions; the study invitation letter and interview guide are reproduced in Appendices A and B.

Designing

This study's design addressed the "how" questions raised by the challenges of successfully interviewing the target population. In consultation with her dissertation committee the researcher followed Kvale's (2007) suggested sequence to guide her interview investigation: *Overview* - develop an overview of the whole subject; *Interdependence* - understand the consequences of choosing the method; *Push forward* - improve the interview by asking control questions during the interview; *Spiraling backwards* - go back and forth between the stages to understand the themes; *Keep the endpoint in sight* - the answers should serve the study; *Getting wiser* - learn from the interviewee's answers; and *Work-journal* - note all of the experience and learn from it (pp. 120-121).

The researcher included in the interview protocol questions she formulated to address the research questions posed in the study, seeking to gain an overview of employees' lived experiences of the phenomena from their own perspectives (see Appendix B). The subjects received the interview protocol and Informed Consent Form before the interview; their signatures indicated they were willing to participate in the study, agreed to the specified use of the information, were aware of the identified risks, and knew who to contact should they have any questions. Participants then were given a signed copy of the Informed Consent Form for their records. The received answers provided guidance for moving from one topic to the other since the purpose of the study

was the primary focus during the interviews. The researcher's overriding goal throughout the entire forgoing process was to build rapport with the participants and have each interview conversation be as free-flowing and natural as possible, so that they felt comfortable sharing their lived experiences with the researcher.

Interviewing. The interviews were semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions designed to collect the data. Semi-structured interviews have been long regarded as a legitimate method of data collection in social research (Alselaimi, 2014). The interviews were conducted in Saudi Arabia in person, at the place the interviewee had chosen, so that each female participant could decide where she felt most comfortable. Some interviews took place via video conferencing, which provided flexibility for the participants and allowed more time to respond, benefitting both the participant and the researcher (Nicholas, et al., 2010).

The questions were direct, and participants always were given the choice not to answer any of the questions. All interviews were conducted in Arabic, and the translational equivalence was provided in English for analysis and reporting, as further discussed below.

Transcribing. Following Kvale's (1996) recommendations, all interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed, which helped later in coding of the interviews by allowing the researcher to replay the tape recordings. Having the opportunity to listen to the interviews more than once facilitated the discovery of a more clear and accurate picture of the participants' personal experiences. Although interviewing was expensive and took much time, it proved a more precise and accurate method of data collection and allowed for the reporting of rich, full personal experiences that supported the study's use

of direct quotes from interviewees. This in turn allowed the researcher to compare data obtained from different family member participants, allowing for a more in-depth analysis of the text to cover all the research questions, and a clearer apprehension of female family business employees' feelings and perceptions, the essences of their experiences.

Translating from Arabic to English

Despite the challenges that translation and transliteration (see discussion below) can present for qualitative research efforts, it was crucial for the researcher to conduct the interviews in Arabic. Arabic is the mother tongue of Saudi Arabia, and as such, the language in which the respondents were most expressive and at ease. Had the researcher conducted the interviews in English, a second language for many of the respondents, they might have been able to fully express themselves; any efforts to discover the true meaning of their lived experiences would have been compromised or hindered from the start. Conducting all the interviews in Arabic ensured some synchronism with the data in the sample. The researcher's reason for translating the interviews into English was to enable her dissertation committee to understand the resulting study. An additional benefit of its translation into English is that this dissertation study will be read by a wider audience; it is well-known that non-English publications are often omitted from systematic reviews (Regmi, Naidoo, & Pilkington, 2010).

The process of *transforming* text during analysis from one language to another is inherently embedded within the sociocultural context (Regmi, Naidoo, & Pilkington, 2010). Transliteration is the process of replacing or complementing the words or meanings of one language with meanings of another—this can be problematic when an

exact equivalent does not exist or is not widely agreed upon. Therefore, translation and transliteration must be undertaken with the utmost care. As Khan and Manderson (1992) noted, maintaining accuracy in representing people's views and perspectives when using qualitative approaches is essential but challenging, particularly when the research project is conducted in one language and then analyzed and synthesized in another. The researcher used translational equivalences to transform the oral captured narratives into written text. Translational equivalence is “a relation that holds between two expressions with the same meaning, where the two expressions are in different languages” (Melamed, 2000, p. 221). Equivalence is, therefore, the ideal method when the translator must deal with proverbs, idioms, clichés, or adjectival or straightforward phrases when translating the text.

Analyzing. In accordance with Kvale’s (1996) suggested stages of interview inquiry and processing, the researcher followed a specific methodology of analysis for the data generated by this phenomenological study. The researcher looked for meaning units, critical statements, and textural and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013). After conducting the interviews, the researcher listened to the audio tapes and transcribed all the words and details of note in the interviews. The researcher listened directly to each recorded interview, translated it, and annotated her notes with comments and queries. Each interview was then coded after its translation; during the coding process the researcher identified the keywords of the interviews, the words that the participants repeated or emphasized repeatedly, for example. The coding process was one of the most critical activities engaged in by the researcher during this study’s analytical processing of data. Those codes, once discerned and creatively organized, operated to guide the

researcher towards answers to the research questions posed and helped to validate that the participants had answered or addressed those questions. Codes identified in all interviews were then organized into categories, which facilitated reducing and refining the massive amount of data generated by and represented in the interviews. These categories were then entered into a table to explain and gain an overview of all the interviews. Bracketing is the tool the researcher used during the interviewing and coding to ensure that there was no influence from her own experiences or biases during either process.

Verifying. Throughout the interviewing process, the researcher continually asked about, examined, and confirmed all provided sources to validate the materials and processes utilized. In accordance with Kvale's (1996) stage of verifying, the researcher ensured that all the collected data was valid and reliable for the study. All sources were confirmed as credible, and the verification of data provided was determined by triangulation of the responses provided. For example, the data was organized and analyzed to determine the quality and quantity of repeated, similar, and different responses. The appearance of numerous verified (shared by multiple participants) oppositional responses led to the application of dialectical theory in the analysis of the study's results, as more fully discussed below in Chapter 5.

Reporting. Relying on Kvale's (1996) approach to qualitative research interviewing the researcher examined the study's problem statement and research questions posed, in order to select and follow closely a methodology most appropriate for achieving a better understanding of the subject of inquiry. The shared experiences between individuals proved the essential factor that developed an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Publication and dissemination of this

dissertation research study findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action and future research will contribute to—and perhaps inspire more—scholarship regarding family businesses, conflict, and female employment in Saudi Arabia.

Moustakas (1994): Eight Steps Data Analysis Sequence

The researcher used Moustakas's (1994, pp. 120-121) eight steps to analyze the data collected, as outlined below in Figure 12.

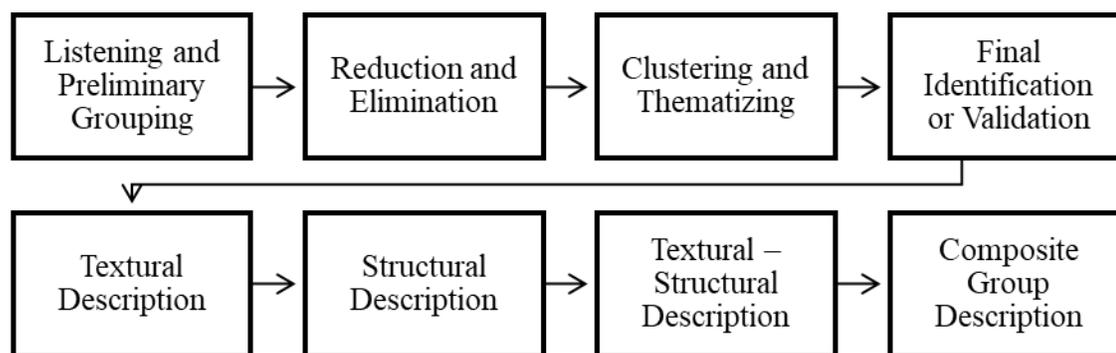


Figure 12. Moustakas's (1994) eight steps for analysis of data.

Listening and preliminary grouping (horizontalization). After the interview, the researcher listened carefully to the audio tapes and transcribed and translated each recorded word. The researcher organized and grouped the entirety of the written and annotated translated transcripts of the participants' spoken interview narratives. During the interview perceptions of participant body language and gestures additionally were noted; this information also was organized and grouped by similarities and differences. Continuing to practice bracketing the researcher focused on the participants during the analytical process and set aside her own expectations, biases, and assumptions.

According to Moustakas (1994), in this first analytical step each statement or portion of statement of the interview must be highlighted for what each especially: contributes to the study, adds value, and answers the research questions. These

expressions as data must be categorized and grouped in each participant's transcript, then organized and entered into a table to identify the varieties of perspectives of the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) defined the horizon as "the grounding or condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinct character" (p. 95). Grouping each participant's statements individually and collectively, looking for similarities, differences, and shared consensus, gave the researcher a fuller understanding and a clear vision to important answers that served this study's research inquiries. The process of cumulative horizontalization gifted this researcher with views of facets of lived lives that had been verified as part of, true to, and therefore the essence of, the lived experiences of these Saudi female participants working in their family businesses.

Reduction and elimination. Elimination in Moustakas's (1994) data analysis steps references deleting all information that is ambiguous, uninteresting, or does not add value to the research. During the analytical elimination process, the statements that contain new and vital information to the study and statements that could be quoted and used in the data analysis are categorized as a "horizon of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95) as previously noted; they survive reduction and elimination to be retained during the continuous discovery and categorization process that drives the productive analysis of qualitative data.

To separate the irrelevant and insignificant from the useful and verified aspects of the data collected, the researcher listed all significant statements or meaning units and removed what was not relevant or significant in the interviews. After horizon statements were figured, the researcher colored each experience differently to facilitate the data's further analysis and comparison. Statements that were not mentioned by at least five

participants were eliminated. For example, although it may be an important subject to discuss elsewhere, the researcher eliminated the categorized theme of “in-laws working in the family business” as significant because it was mentioned by only two participants. Statements of five or more participants were accorded an equal value for their contribution to the study.

Clustering and thematizing. Each research question had a different statement unit into which data was grouped to create themes. These themes are the "structure of the experience" and the central identified factors that guide the research (van Manen, 1990, p. 78). The invariant constituents are grouped and form the "core theme of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

All 22 participants contributed information to the themes, and all their stories and statements were categorized to identify their lived experiences as female family members working in their family businesses in Saudi Arabia. Their lived experiences had the most critical, primary influence on the researcher’s determined categories and themes. Those themes that emerged and were verified in the data’s analysis are the outcome of experiences and stories that the participants described having undergone in their work lives. The researcher colored the transcript by themes; each theme was designated by a different color. These themes helped to define the core of the participants’ lived experiences and guided the researcher to answers addressing the research questions.

Final identification or validation. The step is similar to Kvale’s (1996) verifying stage as previously discussed; according to Moustakas (1994), to finally identify or validate the interview data themes each theme must be repeated several times by different participants. This is assessed by exploring the interviews, counting how much/many

times each theme is discussed throughout the interview, and assessing how much it added value to the research. Validation is essential for retention of the most relevant and significant themes.

The researcher validated each theme and determined whether it was consistent with the entire interview and whether it was relevant or not; themes that were not covered from different angles by the participants or were not clearly expressed were deleted. The researcher then carefully reexamined every interview to confirm that the remaining themes were discussed throughout the participants' experiences, double coding data with her dissertation chair to validate those themes that had been created by the researcher. In addition, the researcher practiced peer review validation to ensure that the researcher's thoughts had not influenced the themes' formation.

Textural description. In this step of analysis the data should be examined to determine the “what” that the participants experienced that might be pertinent to the research questions posed, using the descriptions in the transcribed text and the exact words of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher extracted the participant's wording from the written transcripts of the interviews and entered them all into one document. Each theme had its respective table presenting the participants' names and quotes of the theme. The participants used different wording for each theme; the researcher therefore worked to ensure that all these words were covered in each theme and were developed to be studied in the data analysis. The findings of the study reflected emergent themes that were identified by highlighting the individual exact words of the participants and important experiences they recounted, which enriched the study's own significance. From each theme three or more verbatim quotes were selected by the

researcher as most relevant to providing new and important information that will assist readers to understand the subject lived experiences under study.

Structural description. To describe "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon under study, the researcher constructed an individual structural description (Moustakas, 1994), using the individual textural descriptions discerned and the researcher's own imaginative variation (e.g., her perceptions of meaning, external indicators of emotion, energy, knowledge, and context) to construct a description of the structure of the participants' lived experiences here. Throughout their interviews the participants described the environments and situations that helped create their experiences and validated the themes that emerged. The use of open-ended questions allowed the researcher to discover even the smallest details of what the participants went through as family business female employees, and to thereby construct from those details an individual structural description of those experiences.

Textural – structural description. Moustakas (1994) explained that this analytical step incorporates both the textual and structural descriptions that answered all the questions, "what" the participants experienced and "how" they experienced it. The researcher constructed a textural-structural description based on the translated transcriptions and the structure of the phenomenon that involved the data analysis codes and categories selected. Upon completion of this step the researcher worked to create and continually refine for final discussion a single paragraph condensing and describing all the meanings and essences of the lived experiences of the subject females in Saudi Arabia. Continual reflection and review of this big-picture condensed summation led to the organization of the data's evident oppositional pairing of emergent themes, to assess

the implications of dialectical theory, as procedurally presented in Chapter 4 and more fully discussed in Chapter 5.

Composite group description. The final step of Moustakas' (1994) analysis of phenomenological data as followed by the researcher involved the production of a composite description of all twenty-two participants; this step endeavored to capture and condense all the significant common experiences the participants shared in their interviews. Thus in this analytical process component all the individual composite descriptions of experience were combined into a group description, a larger composite picture of the meanings and essences representative of all the research participants (Moustakas, 1994, pp 121-122). That group description process facilitated the discussion, conclusions reached, and recommendations for action and future study offered in Chapter 5.

Role of the Researcher

As a third-generation female family member in a family business, the researcher has a personal interest in exploring and understanding the best conflict management and resolution practices that will help to create smooth leadership transitions between generations in family businesses. She also has a keen interest in determining key aspects of the roles women can play to positively influence the experience of a successful and sustainable company transition. The literature reviewed confirmed that a smooth transition involves communication, conflict resolution, and effective family business management. From a feminist perspective, it may be argued that female interviewers are better at gathering data from females as compared to males from females (see Alselaimi, 2014). This argument may be founded on a shared gendered identity, shared

understanding of issues that face females, and general camaraderie. The researcher was careful during the interviews to ensure that the participants were comfortable sharing their experience.

Trustworthiness

Below are presented all the actions and activities that the researcher practiced and completed to ensure that the study demonstrated trustworthiness and validity, and specifically to ensure to the best of her ability that the lived experiences of the participants were subjected to investigation without harming them or interference with their experiences. The researcher practiced bracketing, double coding, confidentiality, ethics, and validity.

Bracketing

The researcher practiced the act of "bracketing," or suspending any preconceptions about the natural world, allowing herself to instead focus on the analysis of the experience of the individual (Rolls, & Relf, 2006). She applied an adapted version of the bracketing framework laid out by Bednall (2006). The steps the researcher followed when conducting research to employ bracketing were: 1) becoming aware of the potential for bias; 2) suspending that bias at the commencement of data collection; and 3) using a transparent process to evaluate the significance of that bias in interpreting the data.

The process the researcher followed to carry out the steps of bracketing was as follows:

Step 1: Before the first interview, and iteratively throughout the study, the researcher wrote down the items for which she needed to set aside any value judgments.

The researcher treated them as items with potential for bias. The researcher recorded all the feelings related to these items that were relevant.

Step 2: When conducting each interview, the researcher only audio recorded and did not make notes of any ideas or impressions that emerged during the conduct of the interviews. After the interview, the researcher quickly found a quiet place in which to record journal notes, in order to not to distract the respondent and to limit the introduction of her own biases. To ensure the researcher's personal biases were removed, the researcher listened to each audio transcript on two separate occasions, removing any responses from consideration where her comments/questions appeared to be influenced by experience or were pre-emptive in nature.

Step 3: The analytical process was followed by a stage of reintegration or de-bracketing. For each participant the researcher referred to both the interview transcript and any journal notes, asking: "Did my experience have the potential to reduce the significance of this item to the essence of meaning being constructed?" (Bednall, 2006, p. 235).

Double Coding Process

To ensure trustworthiness of the findings and the themes the researcher employed the double coding process, in which the researcher and her dissertation chair applied this technique to validate the themes. As previously noted, Moustakas (1994) stated that double coding the data to confirm themes reduces any misleading interpretations.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the participants was and will remain an important consideration for the researcher. She therefore gave the participants pseudonym names to

hide their identities and additionally withheld disclosure of certain details that might identify the participants, to protect their privacy. The study data and files were stored on a password computer. The researcher is the only individual with access to the study data and files. The participants' confidentiality was protected by redacting of identifiable information from transcripts after they were transcribed and coded; audio-recording and consent forms were stored in a password protected computer. Paper documents were stored and protected in a safe.

Ethics

In this study ethical considerations were important and involved private matters of sensitivity for the participants. In Saudi Arabia, religion and culture have a substantial impact on people's everyday lives, their sense of self, and their interactions within the world around them. The researcher obtained permission from the participants by sending them both the interview protocol and informed consent form before the interview, explaining the importance of the research and its contribution to the family business field. As stated earlier, to ensure confidentiality, the participants' information was only available to the researcher through a password-protected computer; upon conclusion of this study the researcher will de-identify the data. Furthermore, the researcher did not include any identifying information or real names anywhere in the study documentation to ensure the protection and safety of the participants, which is of the utmost importance to the researcher and is required under federal law and university guidelines governing research with human subjects.

The researcher complied with all ethical training, testing, and documentation parameters required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Nova Southeastern

University (NSU). The NSU IRB panel of faculty reviewed with staff the research study design and approved it after determining that the risks were minimal for the participants. The researcher prepared approved Informed Consent forms which were provided to each participant before their interview. Participants were asked to read an Informed Consent form and sign it as confirmation that they knew and understood: the purpose and the details of the study, their own roles, all measures taken to protect their privacy and safety, and the role of the researcher.

Validity

For qualitative researchers whether a study's interview design and methodology is valid will focus on whether the interview measures what it is supposed to measure: validity is "a term describing a measure that accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure" (Babbie, 2010, p. 160). For this qualitative inquiry the researcher measured thoughts and experiences, phenomena inherently difficult to measure as compared to numerical data. Babbie (2010) emphasized that researchers must examine the basis for the words they use during interviews, as words might be understood differently by each participant. The researcher during these interviews looked deeply into the lives of 22 participants to understand the nature and implications of their experiences. She therefore remained aware and careful of all wording during the participant interviews and in all participant-related communications thereafter.

As the researcher was cognizant of her own biases, peer review validation was done to ensure that none of the values or thoughts of the researcher influenced the data collection. In addition, Kvale (2007) explained that validity "pertains to the issue of whether a method investigates what it purports to investigate" (p. 122) and defined

reliability as “pertain[ing] to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings” (ibid). Further, he added, that validity usually leads to a “valid scientific knowledge” (ibid.). Kvale (2007) noted that factors affecting the validity of a qualitative interviewing investigation included: 1) quality of the craftsmanship of the interview researcher, 2) communication of the interview findings, and 3) the pragmatic effects (p. 123). The researcher remained aware of these important factors throughout the foregoing described stages (Kvales, 1996) and steps (Moustakas, 1994) of interview data acquisition, collection, and analysis.

The researcher chose qualitative methodology to gather data that would shed light on the true lived experiences of Saudi Arabian females working with their family businesses, and more specifically within those experiences, on their perceptions and thoughts regarding the nature of family business conflict and best practices for conflict management. Chapter 4 below presents the analyses conducted on the data gathered and highlights significant findings therein that form the basis for the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations that follow in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

As previously stated, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand female roles in Saudi Arabian family businesses, as well as to identify conflicts and conflict resolution strategies in said family businesses. This purpose was accomplished through exploring the lived experiences of second-generation women in family businesses in Saudi Arabia, and their roles in the upcoming successions that many family businesses are facing.

This chapter describes the analyses conducted on the participant data collected and the content of the resulting emergent themes that thereby were identified. After completion of each recorded interview the researcher converted each audio tape into transcribed and translated written data. After this interview conversion process the researcher subjected the data to the eight steps of Moustakas's (1994) data analysis and Kvale's (1996) analytical processes, as described in Chapter 3. All these foregoing steps provided guidance towards a clear understanding of the phenomena studied here: the lived experience of the participants and their views on conflicts in the family business. Throughout the data collection process the researcher noticed that the participating women were collaborative and excited about the study; they believe it is vital to raise awareness. The interviewed participants answered a series of open-ended questions. By conducting analyses following the steps of Moustakas (1994) and analytical stages of Kvale (1996, 2007) the investigator was able to examine rich descriptions in the data for emergent themes, all contributing answers to the research questions posed in this study.

As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 demonstrated, insufficient studies exist regarding family businesses in Saudi Arabia in general, and specifically regarding female

employees in said businesses. The researcher's study sought to fill that gap by interviewing in depth 22 females from Saudi Arabia who are working in their family firms. Because the principal investigator here is also a female from Saudi Arabia working in her family's business, she practiced especially careful bracketing throughout the data gathering and analysis processes wherever possible, to ensure that her personal biases and assumptions did not influence those processes.

Findings for each step of the analytical processes were recorded. This chapter is primarily focused on presenting findings derived from the described last step of Moustakas's (1994) process and are thus findings associated with the individual textual structural descriptions and themes that emerged from the data. Those descriptions supported the composite description of meaning and essences of experience for the entire group of females analyzed in this study; conclusions and recommendations based on that composite description will be discussed in Chapter 5. The study's collected data revealed unique and common thematic threads in the participants' shared expressions of their experiences. Each family has a different approach and way to manage the family business; their decisions affect numerous aspects of the participant's experiences in both the business and in family relations. Figure 13 below presents a categorized compilation of all 16 composite (also in this study termed "dialectical," see discussion of dialectical theory in Chapter 5) oppositional research themes the researcher identified and developed as they emerged during the analysis of rich descriptions within the transcribed participant interviews.

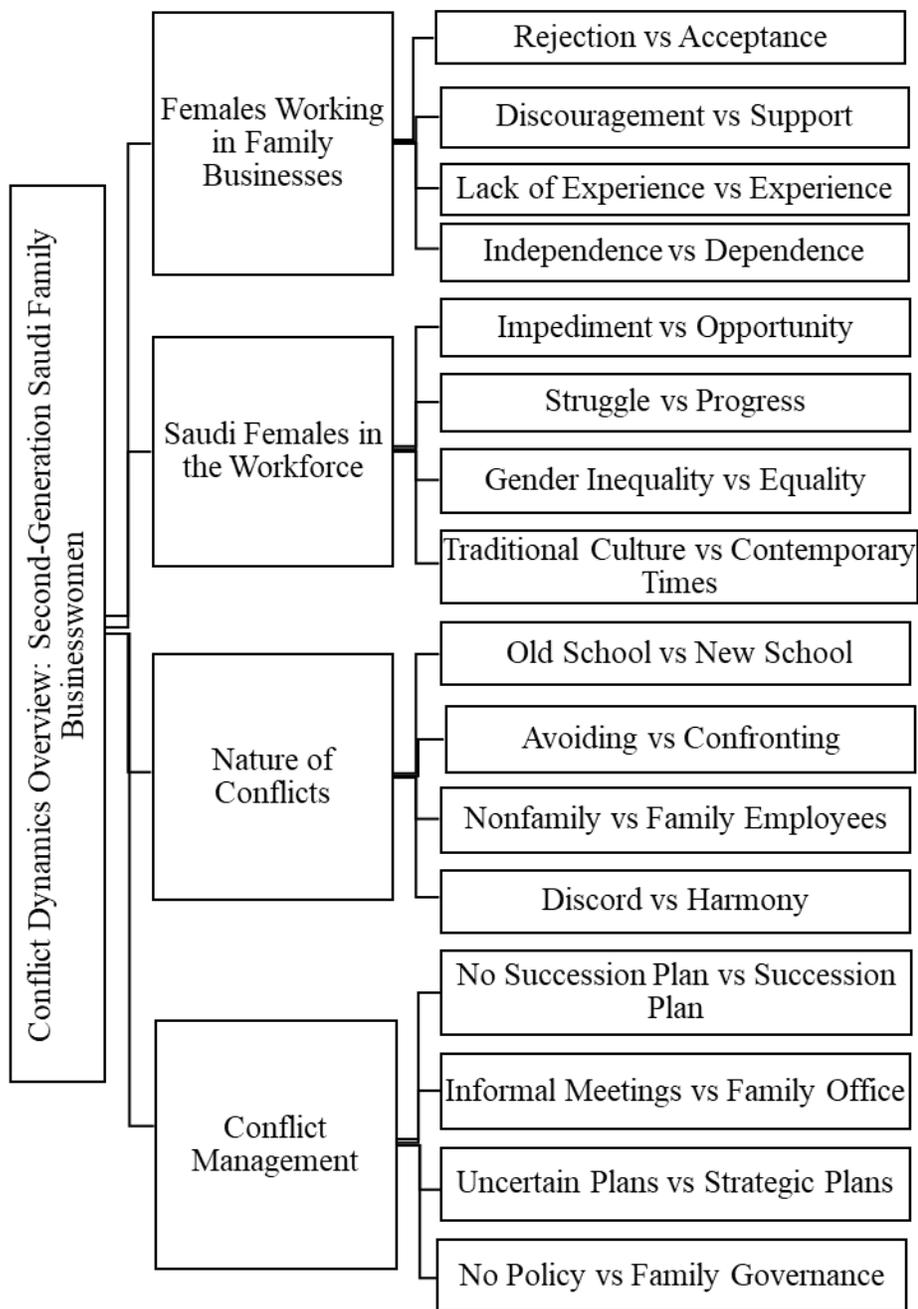


Figure 13. Study composite dialectical research themes.

Females Working in Family Businesses

As previously stated, this study's first research question sought to collect data that would shed light on the following inquiry:

RQ1 - What are the lived experiences of second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in their family businesses?

The researcher's interview questions that sought to address *RQ1* elicited responses addressing many different aspects and areas of concern that the Saudi second-generation businesswomen participants shared regarding their experiences of working in the family business. They spoke about their experiences upon first joining the business and reactions of the family at that time, their experiences working outside of the family business, and the motivation that they have received from family. The participants' answers provided the foundation for the following four themes that emerged to answer the research question posed in this study, as set forth in Figure 14.

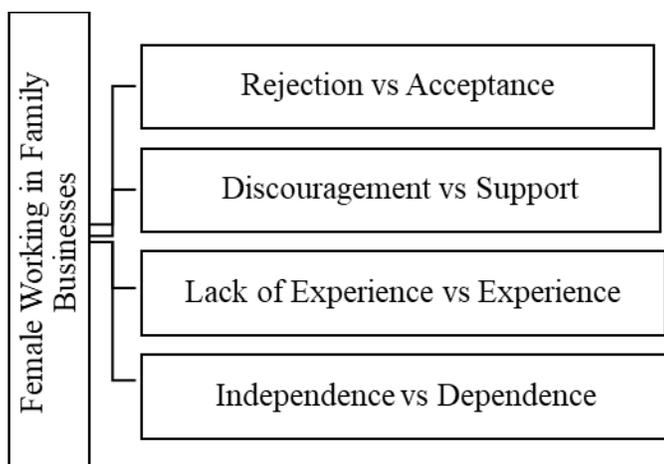


Figure 14. Females working in family businesses: themes.

1. Rejection vs Acceptance: Research Theme

An important theme that emerged in this study was rejection versus acceptance for the participants as female workers in the Saudi Arabian business world: the struggle for acceptance was a common theme they often discussed. The stories they shared explaining what they went through at the beginning of their employment included experiencing rejection from family, friends, and society. It is difficult for some families to

accept female employment in a male-dominated company; this is especially true for conservative families. The first generation might accept employing females who are nonfamily members; it might be the best and only choice for them. Some families accept nonfamily women workers because they do not want the female family members to work in the firm. Other family members believe that only females from the family can join the company and work. The researcher gathered these two different views from the participants.

Females in Saudi Arabia are looking forward to receiving acceptance even after rejection; the participants talked about the rejection they received from their families at the beginning of their employment as actually having made them stronger. Some girls described their experiences after a couple of years of joining the family business, others talked about the acceptance of their families and society. Both aspects of this theme are addressed below, with specific examples from participants.

Rejection theme. Participant Leena spoke about her experience in dealing with society: "The family firms all over have the same problems, each with its own different culture but in deep ways they are all similar, they do not believe in women, the woman always has to fight to claim her rights. It takes time even if they give her validation. There will always be obstacles, and we do not understand the lobbying needed to make it happen. We are more direct in going after what we need to do now, though." She added, "I studied it after I was pointed at when I was talking with some older females who were in high positions in the country, and they were saying to me: 'Who are you to talk about women's rights?' That was when I made the decision to study human rights."

Another participant, Haya, comes from a very conservative family, with ten uncles working in the business and five aunts who are not working in the business. Haya stated: "After graduating, I worked with my family. I was the first female to join the company. It was not easy to convince the family although a couple of my uncles were happy to let me join. However, others did not welcome the idea and they were not happy about it." Haya herself was not happy when she first began working, because not all of the family welcomed her to working in the family business. Four of her uncles were not content.

Fatima expressed her predicament by explaining: " My father owns a huge food factory, and he was clear that I cannot work with him. The factory was built by my grandfather in Iraq, then they moved it to Saudi and they shipped all the equipment there. In Saudi, it became a very successful business." Participant Manal stated: "I am from the second generation, my father and uncles began the business; it was very hard at the beginning, especially since few females were working with their families."

In every instance the researcher actively practiced bracketing in the collection and analysis of the foregoing rejection and related acceptance accounts below. As an example, without the disciplined bracketing practice here applied throughout, the researcher might previously have let her own assumption—that the participants would feel more rejection because of their gender—influence her interpretation of the data collected. Bracketing instead facilitated her ability to process hearing from participants that in fact many brothers encouraged their sisters to work. The researcher's awareness of her own possible biases allowed her to be open to all accounts of the female participants sharing their

experience of acceptance from males like brothers and uncles encouraging women to work in the family business.

Acceptance theme. Amira offered many examples as evidence of the local and international acceptance that she is now experiencing based on the history of her accomplishments with the family business. "In the 2nd year, they believed in my team and me, and they gave us 40% of the budget. Now we have 70% of the budget, and they are calling me to do the due diligence on any CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Department projects, and they wait for our feedback now that they trust us. Today I represent the family in our nonprofit organization projects all over Saudi and the world. Now they give me a chair in different meetings, and they are proud of my work." Haya proudly observed: "I have learned with the best mentors. When we redesigned the departments in our company, with new ideas and a new structure, my uncles were supporting me, and I was enjoying the work." In Haya's family business women work in a section designated only for females, a structural design that has proven effective and very productive. After a couple of years, Haya was appointed manager of the female corporate section; she now supervises more than eighty women in the company.

Badriya has experienced acceptance of female employees in many visible sites. "In hospitals, schools, and retail shops...my father believes in female empowerment, and we've all supported him. We have females in different roles. We have recruited women, believing that they can work and be part of the firm's success."

Participant Amira: "Men and women have different viewpoints, and it was hard at the beginning, because men do not want females to manage them." She said, "My father believes in female employment, and it is vital for the business to have females. In every

department, we have a percentage [of participation]." She elaborated: "We have females in all departments, marketing, HR, finance, and IT. And we're proud to have them working in our company. From the family, it's only my sister and me who are working in the family business."

The change that these participant females have experienced is what makes this study important; the experience of living through rejection to acceptance of female employment. The women who were interviewed shared their own personal experiences, saying that it was not easy to join; they had to fight and stand strong in front of their families and society to get accepted.

2. Discouragement vs Support: Research Theme

This theme was the dominant theme throughout the interviews. Although there was discouragement from family members that was experienced by the participants, other family members were described as supporters. They were in effect the people who made all the participants' dreams a reality. To have support in a male-dominated country, whether from father, mother, brother or uncle, supports the female's need to work. Without that support and without the shared belief that they can achieve, the participants stated they would never be part of their family businesses today. Throughout the interviews the participants kept bringing up mention of their supporters. Although it was not a direct topic addressed in the interview questions, they talked repeatedly about their supporters, highlighting thereby the importance of this to the essence of their lived experience as women workers.

Discouragement theme. Deena described her mother's unhappiness since she has begun working with the family. "My mother is not happy that I am working, she believes

that it is better to stay at home. She always complains when I come back from work tired. However, I am doing this to satisfy myself and feel strong." Besides, said Deena, "There was extended family saying that the family just gave me the restaurant to work on in my free time. But it was a challenge and made me stronger, to prove to everybody that I am serious about what I am doing... in the end, it is the work that I am doing will prove that I am a serious and hard worker."

Lolowa said, "The family did not want us to work in the business, so they let us work in the corporate social responsibility department. I was working with my female cousin. We worked for a couple of years, which I am very proud of. We changed a lot in the department and the family trusted us. I can say that we laid the foundation and began the programs."

Huda stated, "I felt a little resistance... but I wanted the change." She added, "My father never showed any excitement when we (women) joined the company. If he had shown a little enthusiasm for this I would have continued in the head office working with him. I left because I was really upset that they don't get how much I am working. They did not give me a job description. I rotated around each part of the firm, I did it myself. I was trying to learn more, to learn as much as I can."

Participant Fawziya expressed the essence of her own lived experience in the family business, colored by her fears for the future: "As sisters, we talk to each other on our projects and try to help each other. I am afraid of the future especially because we do not have a brother." She shared: "the CEO always says to me "your problem is your last name."

Support theme. Table 3 below presents numeric data about this qualitative research study's twenty-two participants who shared the essence of their experience, compiled to explore factors that might be related to their experiences of support as opposed to discouragement. The table shows how many years they have been working outside the family business, how many years they have been working within the family business, the number of their siblings and how many siblings also work in the family business. The researcher believes that these elements are essential to highlight as they related to the participants' experiences and feelings of support or discouragement upon first joining the family business.

Table 3

Participant Work History and family Business Siblings

Name	Work in Non-FB	Work in FB	Siblings		Siblings Working in FB	
			M	F	M	F
Amira	No	8	2	4	-	1
Badriya	No	10	2	6	-	4
Deena	No	8	2	4	2	2
Fayiza	Yes	12	2	1	1	1
Fatima	Yes	9	2	2	-	-
Fawziya	No	6	-	4	-	1
Ghazal	No	4	2	2	2	-
Haya	No	14	1	2	-	-
Huda	No	6	-	-	-	-
Ibtsam	No	10	3	-	-	-
Jawida	No	12	2	2	2	1
Leena	Yes	17	1	-	2	4
Lolowa	Yes	8	2	2	1	-
Lubna	Yes	16	-	5	-	-
Mahasen	Yes	2	2	-	1	-
Mai	Yes	2	1	5	1	-
Manal	Yes	7	1	4	1	2
Nada	No	6	1	2	1	-
Nouf	Yes	10	2	2	1	-
Rana	Yes	6	2	2	-	-
Reem	Yes	5	1	2	-	-
Sara	No	3	3	3	-	1

Fathers' support. Leena is the first female to work with her family. She lost her mother and six siblings in a car accident when she was eleven, and feels this made her father believe in her: "My father believes in women, and he is a powerful leader. He took me after graduation to a meeting. I was one of the first females in Saudi to work with her family business."

Participant Fayiza: "My brother was the only family member who was working with the family, and my father pushed me to join. However, I must study something related to business. It was a condition to joining the firm."

Rana said, "At the time my father asked me to join the company, I refused at the beginning, but I was thinking of an income that will make my life better in the future. Thus, I asked my father if I can work part-time. He was pleased that I will work."

Her father was and continues to be the chief supporter of her success as a worker, Fatima explained. "We (Fatima and her friend) had a hidden office, so no one would know that we were there. It was the first hint that my father believes in me and believes that I can work. At that time, many family members did not like what he was doing and how he was letting me work with men. He did not care and was very proud to introduce me to his friends."

Family support. Lolowa shared, "I was the first female to work in a bank and to travel abroad for work, which was hard for my parents. However, they supported me... but the society at that time was not ready yet. When I traveled, either my mom or my dad had to travel with me." Now she is working in the Human Resources department of the family business.

Deena has support from her family, which is important to her. "When you have a dream, it is tough to stop this dream. I have a dream that I am working on; I am lucky to have the support I need from my family."

Leena mentioned the important backing of her husband, who comes from a family business as where he too is a second-generation employee, as well as the support of her mother-in-law. "My husband and my in-laws are supporting me too. My mother-in-law

always asks me if I need help, and she always helps me with my kids. They believe that it is important to work."

Participant Lubna spoke admiringly about her aunt, who heads one of the biggest companies in Saudi Arabia; she is an influencer. Lubna added, "The family is supportive of whatever you believe in, especially with emotional support, which is more important than financial support."

Mother's support. Huda is one of the participants who talked expansively about her mother, and how supportive she is of her daughter: "My mother is a working woman, she used to say when we were children that you have to make a change when you grow up. My mother was around us all the time; we did not feel that she was away. She'd say, 'I am expecting that you will do something that we will make us all proud of you, you will be successful women in the future'—and she'd say it in a high voice with a smile." Now Huda and her sisters own one of the most famous restaurants known in Dubai and Saudi Arabia.

Participant Mahasen's mother is a supporter and believes in her daughter: "My mom, she is very supportive, she always says, girls are better. I believe that this is the right time to go out and work. This is an opportunity."

Sara mentioned both her mother and father, but she spoke more about her mother. "My mother, she always said, 'you are strong' when I was a child, and it remained in my mind. My father always talks about the importance of education."

Brotherly support. Generally the relationship between the siblings was regarded as key to a better future. As Mahasen said, "The relationships between the family [members] is important. My father always says, your sister is your support. There is

respect between the members." Huda is one of the participants who mentioned in particular the significant support of her male siblings: "My brothers are very supportive, even my uncle. They were all supporting me from the first day."

Participant Manal said, "My brother is involved, he is the mediator between us in the family, and tries to make us each happy. He understands our personalities and the capability of each individual, which makes him the best mediator. My father is always concerned that we do not become angry with each other."

Nouf noted that in her family, "We all support each other, and they [father & brother] are proud; my father is very proud of my work and achievements. Even with his friends... he is happy to come back to home after visits, saying that his friends are talking about me and my achievements." She added, "My father was holding my hands from the beginning. This is a gift from God; it does make a huge difference and gives me more confidence. When my brother goes on vacation, I will be the acting VP. We all work together." Talking about her brother, she said, "My brother is my supporter. Sometimes I do something wrong, but he helps me and guides me to know and to be educated. In 2008 there was a drop in the company I was managing, but his support was the main thing that got us back on track." She summarized her views of this significant source of support, declaring: "Family support is the main and the most important step to achieving your dream."

While discussing these experiences the participants became excited as they talked about their familial sources of support. Most of the girls felt they had gotten support first from their fathers, then their mothers, then their brothers. On the other hand, some were not supported by their mothers or brothers. In Saudi Arabia each family is different,

depending on its background and history its members' education. The support the study's female participants received from their families and friends has had a substantial impact on their personalities. They believe it made them stronger and that the support they have received is what has made them successful family business members today. One of the messages they hope to pass on to other female family business members in Saudi Arabia is that while it might not seem easily accessible at the beginning, successful achievements like theirs are real and possible.

The participants mentioned their brothers, which is surprising in a culture such as Saudi Arabia's, and indicates that real changes are happening. As the participants were talking about the support of their male siblings, as noted the researcher continually practiced bracketing, since it was surprising for the researcher to hear of brotherly support; traditionally a Saudi brother does not support the notion of his sister working.

3. Lack of Experience vs Experience: Research Theme

The participants shared their thoughts and stories about when they first began working in the family business. Believing that they could work under pressure to prove themselves and handle their new positions, participants admitted that they each tried to hide their fear and their relatively sparse knowledge to convince their fellow employees that they could do the job. Some participants thought that working outside the company would help them gain better experience before joining the family business; it is a condition in some families that their children must work outside the company before joining the fold.

The participants reported different experiences as they had pursued different strategies to deal with their experience levels. Some openly asked questions in the

workplace environment; others wanted to appear more professional and try to figure out privately what they did not know. As family members, participants recognized that it is essential to act and be confident. Thus some families reportedly believed that first working outside the family business is the best choice, to gain experience and to learn outside one's comfort zone before joining the family business. Other families gave the female participants the chance to open their businesses under their supervision, since no women were working in the business. The rich descriptions within the data collected in these stories indicated that many participant women passed through different stages before joining the family business, which gave them the knowledge and self-esteem necessary to achieve their dreams.

Lack of experience theme. Lack of experience was a recurrent theme described by the participants as a significant barrier to be overcome. Thus Amira declared, "I believe the experience will be the essential factor that will increase female participation. Women must be more persistent since they did not work before. They have to work and prove to themselves that they can achieve, and they are serious."

Participant Manal stated, "Some of the women want to work, so now they are working outside the company to get the experience, to be able to work with the family business. Now we are empowering women; we support females, and the number of females in the family [business] is bigger. So all the females are looking forward to the future."

Mai said, "I did not think of working with the family; I wanted to work outside and get experience, then work with the family." Even though that was her preference, she did add that her family has a rule: "As family members, we are to go see HR [Human

Resources] to ask about all these details. We must work outside the family business before working with the family. I wanted to work with the family because I am good at what I do and I make an impact."

Ibtsam added, "The transition from the second to third [workplace] is much harder than first to second. The experience of working outside the company is important."

Experience theme. Amira said, "I worked in a bank in Dubai for four years, I was working hard. During these years I met a lot of people and learned a lot about investments and the business. During that period I had a lot of information to share with my father and uncles about commercial projects. I was sharing with them the knowledge I was gaining."

Participant Badriya stated, "I established a youth leadership center under a fund for women's development, and worked as an executive manager for three years. One of the things I am always proud of is that I coordinated youth leadership programs with the United Nations and coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to nominate a youth delegation."

Fawziya added, "From deciding to open a coffee shop to convincing my father to let its success come true and not be a dream...things were very difficult for me at the beginning, but now I am working hard to make it bigger and to open other branches."

Lubna's family does not allow family members to join until they've worked elsewhere: "To work in the family business, we have to work outside the company. Now I have been working for 11 years. I did a rotation in the company. It was a high-speed rotation. I learned everything about the company."

Fayiza stated that every female must believe in herself. "For the longest time I always focused on having to work extra to prove to people that I am here," she said with emphasis, in a high voice and proud tone, "because I can, not because I am a family member." She essentially described an internal struggle, not a struggle with anyone else. "I did not like how my friends and society looked at me. They would say, 'just go on vacations any time, it is your dad's company...' but I was committed to taking 30 days off just like any other employee. When I take additional days, they will deduct from my salary. I put more pressure on myself."

Jawida said, "This is my 12th year in my career. I never want them to feel that I am not confident about the information I have, so I must learn fast."

The participants are ambitious; even when not given the chance to work in the family business, they went out and worked. They did not have any experience, but they built up their curriculum vitae by working outside the family business or opening their own businesses to eventually join the family business—experienced and confident.

4. Independence vs Dependence: Research Theme

Under traditional rules and regulations women in Saudi Arabia used to depend entirely on males; however, some regulations have changed and they are now more independent. In this context, during the interviews the participants spoke about their experiences with their families related to that independence. There were different approaches for the families; some fathers allowed their daughters to begin their own business under their supervision and with the support of the family business. Those participants shared their experiences as entrepreneurs.

In the past females were not allowed to work in the private sector, one of the reasons that gave women the impetus to explore and begin their careers elsewhere. Four participants shared their experiences of working within the family business, others talked about their experiences working outside the family business. In their accounts they often compared the two experiences, remarking how much they benefited from working outside the family business. Their processes of comparison showed how much these women were working hard to achieve their dreams. Some girls were taking pride that the family now is depending on them in the business, others took pride in themselves for achieving their dreams.

Independence theme. Amira said, "I wanted to do something different. My father did not want me to work in the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Department. My cousins are working in other departments but no one in the CSR. I joined the Department believing that I want to do something different. I wanted [my work there] to be a sustainable project."

Fawziya added, "My father did not let us work directly with the company, but through his practice (of giving each daughter money to invest as they wished), we were working with him indirectly. Each year we learned something new from this practice. Over the years I have failed and succeeded. We asked many questions, and we asked for help and advice from the company's employees. After all these years, each one of my sisters had her own idea and was required to present it to my father for his approval to begin."

Huda noted, "I get the support [I need] from the family. If I have a problem in the restaurant the company will support me; it is a privilege." She added, "I have a vision of

who I am. I wanted to do this with the support of the family business. They have supported me with the best team." Huda presented her idea in front of her uncles and aunts to convince them about her vision to open a restaurant. "There are some families that do not allow their kids to work with them. However, my family firm will support them. Like this building, for example; it was a risk that the company gave it to me."

Manal learned the ropes pretty much on her own: "My sister and I began an engineering office. I went to the Ministry, did all the paperwork by myself. All the obstacles I went through and solving of problems were without going back to the family business. Nonetheless, my father was very supportive and helped me."

Dependence theme. Mai noted, "The movement away from dependence has been growing in all aspects of the family business and in all the fields, even in the industrial sector of the business. So we can see that female roles are becoming very influential and important to the family business."

Badriya also described the trend away from dependence that is now being bestowed upon all members of the next generation: "I must report to the board every quarter. I love how my father is giving every sibling the chance to prove himself and begin in business with his support."

Deena said, "I presented the case in front of my father, uncles, and aunts. I was very sad to see the restaurant close...they simply gave it to me as a challenge to work on."

Mai's descriptions of her responsibilities position her far beyond the dependence on males that has characterized the Saudi Arabia of the past: "Being a lawyer in your family business is a big role and a critical position for ensuring the absence of liability;

my role in the family business is to fight for the best version of contracts that will save the business and keep it always harmless. Such a role in the family business is a unique role, and sometimes is considered more important than going after any deal or business."

Amira gave another example of the shift from dependence to independence:

"There is an annual company meeting every year, and I was invited for the last four years but my husband did not allow me to attend. This year I went and presented my work."

Saudi Arabian Females in the Workforce

The second research question sought an understanding of the picture of female employment in Saudi Arabia in general, whether working for a family business or elsewhere, specifically asking:

RQ2 - What are the perceptions of second-generation Saudi Arabian females of the future for their roles and females' roles in the Saudi business world?

The researcher asked open-ended questions of the selected participants and collected data in which the participants shared their thoughts about different aspects, challenges, opportunities, gender equality issues, and cultural effects relating to female employment in the future. The themes identified and supported in the data collected appear below in Figure 15; they represent the researcher's disciplined interpretation of rich descriptions of the Saudi Arabian business world experience contained in the recorded perceptions of the participants, who are contemporary females operating in that business landscape. Recognition of the weight and nature of these themes will valuably contribute to a more complete understanding of the second research question posed in this pioneering study.

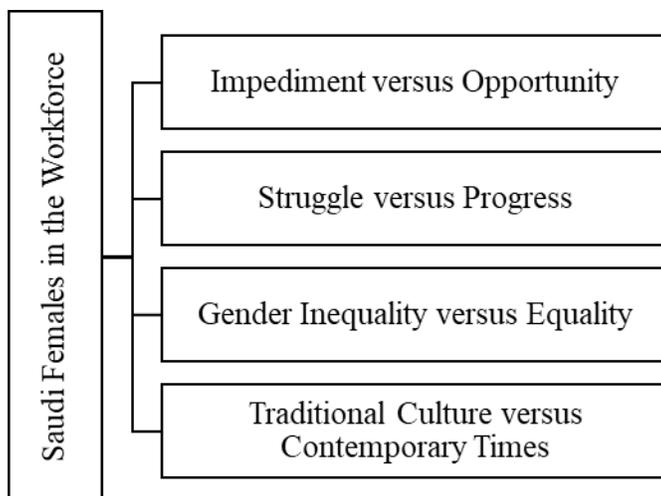


Figure 15. Saudi females in the workplace: themes.

5. Impediment vs Opportunity: Research Theme

The participants talked about both the obstacles to working and the opportunities they have today. These opportunities are now considerably greater and more significant than in the past; as previously noted certain new rules and regulations in Saudi Arabia have had a massive impact on female employment opportunities. Although the pathways to opportunities for females in the country are evolving and the study's participants are still navigating their first steps along those paths, progress and change is evident from their expressed views and experiences.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 confirmed that for a long time Saudi Arabian females did not have the opportunity to be part of the workforce. Over many years they had to work hard, standing up to their society and its restrictive cultural norms if they wanted to work. As noted previously, while sharing their experiences the participants discussed both the negative and positive aspects of their experiences: the difficult struggles they had gone through when they first began working as females in Saudi Arabia but also their hopeful thoughts about the promising future awaiting Saudi females

under the new regulations. They are viewed as paving the way to a brighter future. After waiting decades the opportunities available now are viewed as enormous and most welcome; they must take advantage. The participants agreed that the opportunities they have as females now in Saudi are remarkable and affected by trendsetting supportive government initiatives that foster the employment of females by the private sector, now permit females to drive, and reflect the changing cultural norms of Saudi Arabia's social views of the working woman.

Impediment theme. Huda, the participant with extensive experience in the restaurant business, noted that "...there is a struggle because some females are not trained, and not punctual. They are not committed. They are shy when they talk with clients. However, we are training them to allow them to prove themselves."

Participant Lubna passed on her advice based on her work experiences: "You have to put your ego to the side and ask when you do not know something, allow yourself to be open to everybody. From my personal experience, they respect you more. They feel that you learn more."

Amira said, "I joined the CSR Department, and I asked for 30% of the budget. I wanted them to see that it is working and it has an impact, so they will give me more of the budget in the next year. It was tough the first year I struggled; after three months the budget was gone."

Supporting her female coworkers, Faiyza works closely with them. "Even when their children get sick, females apologize. NO! Women must be more confident and ask for their rights; they must schedule their time. I do not have to be very sorry about any

commitment. If a male promises his family something, he will take care of that and will change other schedules."

Opportunity theme. Reem, speaking with passion, said: "The 2030 Vision is what we as Saudis are looking forward to. All that is happening in the country— the changes, chances, opportunities, and most important, the acceptance—are factors that keep females working and empowered. When we go to shopping malls, and all the retailers are females, when we go to government offices we see females working, and when females take high positions in the country, I think we all can see a bright future." Reem's family owns the biggest bookstore in Saudi Arabia. She added, "Now the government has a new policy, all the retailers have to be Saudis. Thus the company now is looking for good retailers, either males or females, to sell at the bookstore. In the head office [however], we do not have any females." Her family did not accept women working there before.

Amira said: "All the regulations that are happening in Saudi are on their [the women's] side, and the private sector is getting support from the government. This all will help to increase female participation."

Deena talked about females who are working with her: "We have females in HR and Finance and Interior Design... I was amazed that these women are doing better than I expected. They have strong work ethics and they've been working with us for the last three years."

Driving is another opportunity that the participants all agreed is an important factor. Beginning in June 2018, women in Saudi Arabia are permitted to drive. Mai

added, "Driving has a huge impact on female employment. To be able to operate their cars will have a huge impact on women's employment."

Ibtisam talked about this factor also. "Women driving definitely will have a huge impact; it will give them the confidence and strength to be independent. They [the government] want women to seek their independence. They want them to feel capable; this will help them reach their goals. It will facilitate many things for women in the workforce, going and coming back from work. From the simplest to the most complex things, driving will affect one's experience."

Jawida emphasized the impact of driving on employment as well. "I expect half of the problems will disappear. In our company we have 9,000 employees, almost half are females. From my own experience, driving was 50% of the females' struggle. The salaries are low, so it becomes not financially practical for the girls to work. It will cost them to have a driver, and with a low salary, it is not reasonable."

Reem noted: "Allowing women to drive, it will change the life of the females who were not able to work, now it is easier for them. This law has an impact on female lives, the economy, and even the contribution of these females to the country. Now they can work and can go from that place to another safely and cheaply, especially since we do not have public transportation and they need to use a taxi to go from one place to another."

Gazal observed that the number of women being recruited as employees is growing. "In the last couple of years there was a huge change. Thus the company is reconsidering everything. So now we have more females joining the company. We are looking for approval to employ more women, both family and nonfamily." This growth surely will be facilitated by the ability to drive, for as Deena noted, "Transportation was

one of the main challenges that female employment faced, but now that they can drive this will be solved."

These changes represent some of the new opportunities that Saudi women have; after long years of struggle females must take those opportunities seriously to reach their goals. The passion with which they speak must accompany their first steps to achieving their dreams and succeeding in the Saudi Arabian business world. The researcher practiced bracketing throughout her analyses of data collected regarding opportunities, as this emergent theme is an important matter that drove the study's conclusions and recommendations discussed below in Chapter 5.

6. Struggle vs Progress: Research Theme

Females working with family businesses have gone through difficult stages. There were limited jobs in Saudi Arabia before, but that did not stop them. They tried to convert their struggles to progress. That progress in turn gave them more confidence to work hard and to encourage other females to work, thereby fostering the employment of yet more women in their companies. After years of neglecting female employment, the government is working hard with the private sector to help in employing females, resulting in considerable progress for female employment in Saudi, a new reality shared by the participants.

Struggle theme. Participant Nouf expressed her views: "I still work with females, and most of my team are females. Owing to the non-fixed working hours and the work environment of exhibitions, some females quit. Although I still believe that we must support them and I try to convince them to stay, they quit and go to other jobs. However, I will continue; I have noticed that females are hard workers with great ideas."

Rana said, "The day I began working I asked my father to change the company's policy and to allow females in the offices. He was hesitant at the beginning, but I said to him I would not work by myself in the company. He asked to have a separate area for the females; I accepted his choice to take this first step, then it changed."

Haya has a unique situation as her family still insists on separating males from females, which has been detrimental to progress for female workers. She explained, "In our company, the females are separated from men. We communicate through emails and special software created to let communication easier. There some obstacles that we face but the environment makes our company very attractive for females who do not want to share office space with men. [But] now we are facing one issue: the women cannot be promoted because they are not working directly with other departments. They are working with their direct managers only."

Mahasen added: "It took me a while to understand basic things in the company that I cannot ask about and nobody explained to me. They ask me about the parts of a truck and I don't want to say that I don't know. In the beginning, I tried to memorize all the parts. But now I have learned a lot. I was afraid that if they know that I don't know everything [they will think that] I am not the right person to handle the responsibility."

Participant Deena noted: "Some females don't make any extra effort to impress the employer. They don't work on any more than what they are asked to do."

Badriya described her own evolution from struggle: "The first couple of years it was difficult, but now it is much better."

Progress theme. Family support may not be the case for all females in Saudi Arabia. Ibtsam and her family were born and raised outside Saudi and had a different

experience: She described her circumstances: "My family is very supportive, especially since the focus of our business that was founded by my mother is jewelry, which is considered a female business. She is an example of successful working women in Saudi." Ibtisam's mother began the business; although she comes from a very wealthy family, she wanted to have her own business.

Deena said, "I was the first female to work with the company's group with a female lawyer." She added: "We all believe that women are better in some jobs in our organization. We trained them and they went to exhibitions and traveled for business all around the world. We have a specific career path for them. We have created a very good environment to keep them comfortable all the time."

Amira spoke proudly: "Fortunately, now 40% of our employees are females. My father is earnest about it, and he always tells the women: 'Prove yourselves and you will reach the top management one day.'"

Fayiza noted her achievements have entitled her to contribute her own stories to the progress of Saudi Arabian women in business: "I used to refuse [invitations] to be a guest speaker because I am a businesswoman, not an entrepreneur, and I work with my family. However, now, you know what? No. I think that I have proven myself and I can enjoy talking about my achievements and pass along my story."

Badriya added, "The fund to empower women in development, education, and leadership is one of the funds that every female must ask about and go to. We worked very hard on this center that is supported by the government. Through the center the government provides females with the location and the employees [needed] to help them to begin their own business. Some girls have started and now they have their own shops.

In addition, all the government regulations that changed in the last years are essential. The government is helping both women to go get a job and the private sector to employ them. In the new regulation that the government has announced, for example, they will pay 30% of a female's salary, besides paying the daycare fees and providing free rides to the workplace. Allowing them to drive [too], that is crucial."

Huda pointed out that she believes the support and examples of other females is essential: "Some female family members do not work, but they are supportive. Also, some females work, and they are inspirational."

Participant Nouf noted that the past was very different from the progress possible today: "I had a dream, to work in Aramco, to have my own business, to be famous, and to be a Minister one day. These dreams were from 20 years ago; all were impossible things to happen with the culture and the rules at that time." However, now she is proudly an active female working with the chamber of commerce to support females. She has a vision, she is living all her country's changes, and all her dreams were realized, but for becoming a Minister.

Whether they were women who joined their family firms before it was common and experienced resistance from society, or females who worked in jobs which had never been occupied by women before, this study's participants all moved from struggle to progress because of their determination from the beginning.

7. Gender Inequality vs Equality: Research Theme

Gender is one of the critical aspects of lived experience examined in this study. The participants' shared experiences included descriptions of incidents they went through as a result of the new employment-related regulations that are changing the lived work

experience in Saudi Arabia. Now families in Saudi are practicing ensuring the equalization of males and females; many believe that employing females in the family business is part of that new practice. The next generation of Saudi females have hugely important roles and are now under tremendous pressure to succeed in those roles. The participants believe that females can be equally treated in Saudi Arabian business world and are looking for a better future. They are trying to give all working women opportunities and to create the best atmosphere for them.

Female employment has increased in the last couple of years; with the support of the government, females must take advantage of all opportunities and work hard to catch up about everything they have missed in previous years. Both Islam and culture influence Saudi Arabia's rules, and traditionally the role of females was minimal. Islam's laws and regulations have never explicitly forbidden women from working. However, culture laid down the socially-accepted rule that they did not have the right to work and join the workforce. Saudi Arabia's culture was and still is a big obstacle facing females. The study's female participants shared their gender-related experiences in their culture, often comparing the past, the present, and the envisioned future. They gave examples and told stories about how their experiences have been different from those of men. and recounted how they work to shift the perpetuation of their unequal treatment because of gender.

Gender inequality theme. Mahasen stated, "I grew up looking up to my grandfather and father, and I wanted to work. Moreover, I wanted to join the family business, and believe that being a family member is an opportunity. I want to be part of its success."

Participant Ibtsam added: "In other families it was very strict, business here was always a male-dominated field. Females were not given the right to work in their family's business. In the past ten years a lot has changed, and nowadays it is changing fast. Women will be an important part of the workforce and their family businesses. Also, many families have more confidence to women, they have proven themselves."

Fatima specifically mentioned males and their perceptions as barriers to women's ability to enter the workforce: "Not all the companies are ready to employ females. There is resistance from the male employees, believing that there will be problems and they are not ready."

Nouf is one of the first women who joined the private sector. She went through many obstacles; at the time, nobody supported female employment. Similarly, Leena offered: "Women always underestimate themselves, we need more education and training, and we need to be more focused. The men who have succeeded either got their achievements from experience or from studying abroad. We have to focus more on education; that is the first step to a better future."

Gender equality theme. Lubna, who has more than twelve years' experience in family business, gave this advice: "I think the families who are serious about the employment of females, they have to [provide] mentors. A [mentoring] policy can help tremendously to train female family members to believe in themselves."

Participant Rana talked about the progress towards gender equality that her family business has gone through. "We employed three girls in different departments, and thanks to God they were amazing, and they did an excellent job. Because of this all the [company's] departments were asking HR to employ more females. In two years there

were thirteen girls employed. Now they are working in all departments; there is no separate [work] area for them, but there is a rest area for females only. It is a lounge where they can go and take a break. This lounge is one of the things that our company is proud to provide for females. There is a sitting area with TV and snacks, a small kitchen and restrooms. In each lounge, the female employees can take a rest." The family businesses are trying to give the girls a space to relax in the absence of males, principally because some girls in Saudi cover their faces when they are with men.

Haya spoke about her vision of having more next-generation women in the workplace: "Recalling all of these memories reminds me how lucky I am to be working with the family, and it makes me eager to work hard and to convince management to employ more females." Now more female family members are joining the company and are treated as equal to their male cousin employees. Similarly, Mai recounted, "Things went smoothly, even easier than what I expected. I do not see that there are any differences. We (both male and female cousins) are treated equally. Even my male cousins, now they welcome us and pass by my office to check by me." Participant Amira holds her own amidst her male family coworkers: "However, now when we (she and her male cousins) work together, they know that I am determined, and they look at me as a serious working woman in the company."

Participant Nada stated she is supporting female workers and looks forward to a better future in the family business: "We are employing females in different sectors in the company. In HR, finance, and accounting. All these females are hard workers, and I always support them. I am proud to say that in our company we treat males and females the same. They have the same salaries and the same jobs, although certain jobs are

prohibited to females: they do not work after five, even in the factories that are open for work 24 hours."

Over time female employment has begun to change and females are being given a chance to join the workforce; the regulations and laws have changed, helping women workers to feel more confident in Saudi Arabia. However, they must work hard to cope with change and to face all challenges. The participants experienced cultural gender-based rules that did not serve them, and noticed a shift in attitudes based on those cultural norms since the country's laws have changed. Saudi Arabian laws are now serving females and protecting them in a male-dominated business world.

8. Traditional Culture vs Contemporary Times: Research Theme

Saudi Arabia's culture has a strong influence on the nation's people and their decisions. Thus there are many choices that Saudis make that are constrained by traditional culture. Cultural norms have prevented females from working and gaining experience, even when they were educated and had worked in different places but not the family business. The stories the participants shared revealed that some women were working behind the scenes because working was still perceived traditionally as acting against the culture. Female participants also shared that the culture was against them working with male employees in the same place, but that has begun to change.

Some interviewees also spoke about women who refused to work with men but who after a couple of years have changed and accepted job offers. There are still some families that have not changed their views on women in the workplace, but the participants indicated they believe they have to share their stories to make these families listen to success stories and thereby revise their policies of not employing female family

members. Interestingly, the need for money is another matter that has factored into what contemporary family businesses are considering as they revise their receptivity to women in the workplace. The stories participants shared recounted many reasons that Saudi Arabian cultural attitudes and perceptions towards working women are shifting from the old to the new, as discussed in this section.

Traditional culture theme. Traditionally daughters and sisters in Saudi Arabia's family business world would be overlooked in favor of available sons and brothers. Thus Fawziya explained, "I come from a family of five sisters, we do not have a brother. Indeed, it is not easy to be from one of the [country's] richest family businesses without a brother." In traditional Saudi Arabia, the brother would take the lead and be responsible for the business after his father.

Participant Fayiza currently represents her family's business on a couple of boards. She noted, "Society has changed. When I joined the first board there was no female except me. I had to attend; I wanted to prove myself. It was in a rural area three hours away from home, and they asked me to have someone accompany me. I was anxious about what would happen when I arrived. Everybody was surprised when I entered; they were nervous. So was I, it was 2013. But now things are different."

Haya offered another point of view, talking about her family and how conservative they are. Culture and traditions are obstacles that family businesses must contend with, and although Haya is now managing more than 80 women in the company, she described the influence of tradition on the conservative pace her firm followed at the beginning as they expanded female employment: "We were the first to employ females in the country in the assembly lines, and we were cautious about it." She added, "I do come

from a conservative family; however, they are serious about female employees, and they look for more employment and to grow the female section bigger and more successful."

Discussing traditional culture, Badriya said, "I come from a prominent tribe in Saudi, and we are very proud of our traditional norms. However, my father moved from a small village to the city. He had a dream, and he worked hard to achieve it. We grew up looking up to my father and how he is committed to his work."

Participant Deena spoke of tradition as the fundamental basis for the resistance to change she has experienced in business. "I think it is a culture thing, that [people] do not like to start something out[side] of the [traditional] norm(s), and they are afraid of conflict. They don't want to deal with anything that might bring us trouble."

Contemporary times theme. More and more females from the next generation are joining their family businesses. Deena's cousins are among this next generation: "The first female to be working in the holding company is my cousin, in their finance department. In the last two years, she has made a difference. She is strong, she is the first, and she paved the way for others. Another female cousin is joining as well."

The next generation will have a different future, Nada believes: "The family is looking to employ more women. Unfortunately, few females from the family are working. However, I am sure that in the next couple of years they will join; the new generation will never accept staying at home."

Badriya said: "My father has a couple of companies. I was more interested in health. One of my sisters went into education and she opened a school, which is one of the best in the area. Another sister is a dentist, so she opened her own clinic. My fourth sister, she is more into fashion so she has a salon and a retail shop. Each one of us

decided what she wanted; we each had to do a complete study and present it to all the family.”

Saudi Arabian men once believed that they must provide all the money for the family and did not accept any money from their wives. However, this now has changed and family members support each other financially. "Yes, this is changing," Deena says, "I can see that many fathers are looking for jobs for their daughters, even from families who are from different backgrounds."

Jawida added, "The culture, each family has a different perspective. There was one father who came with his daughter to see the workplace to be sure that there were no men [there]. After three years the same father came by, wanting us to hire his other daughter, and he was fine with her working with men. I could not believe how much he had changed."

The culture and traditions in Saudi Arabia remain barriers for some families, but this is shifting. Culture cannot be changed quickly; it takes time. However, the Saudi people are incrementally changing and adapting to the described big wave of change that is happening, believing that change will bring the country to a great future enabled by the Saudi Vision 2030 that the government has announced.

Nature of Conflicts in Family Businesses in Saudi Arabia

This study's third research question inquired about the lived experiences of female employees with regard to conflicts in Saudi Arabian family businesses:

RQ3 - What are the lived experiences and nature of conflicts that impact second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in a family business?

The researcher formulated open-ended interview questions to explore family business conflicts from the perspectives of the selected participants. Conflict-related interview data was collected and analyzed, throughout which the researcher assiduously practiced bracketing in order to not let either her own ingrained assumptions and biases or her own education in conflict studies interfere with or improperly influence her interpretations of said participant lived experience data. The following four themes emerged from the analyses conducted, as set forth below in Figure 16.

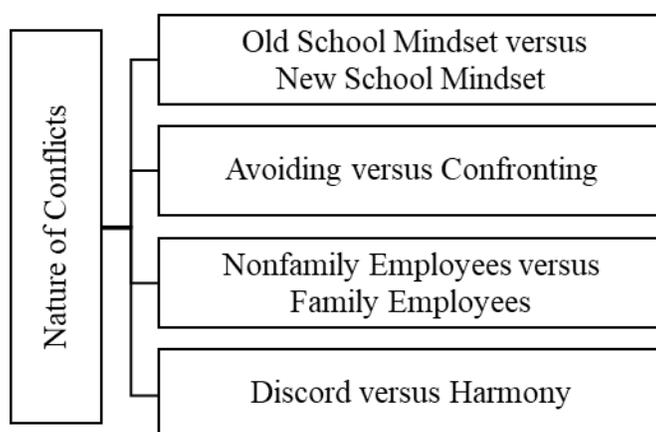


Figure 16. Nature of conflicts in family businesses: themes.

The researcher sought to understand employment-related conflicts that the participants shared and that they all might have experienced. The themes that emerged as outlined in Figure 16 reflect their beliefs about their experiences of conflict, including whether they have had a direct or indirect impact on the business and the ideas of its founder(s), the effects of culture on escalating conflicts, whether their conflictual experiences differed if they were not family member employees as opposed to family member workers, and the resulting relationship between family business members as observed by the participants.

9. Old School Mindset vs New School Mindset: Research Theme

Family business founders are very careful in every decision they take; they try to keep all decisions under their control. They began the business, and they are reluctant to quickly release their grasp on its control. The participants' responses to the researcher's questions indicated that the typical "old school" mindset of founders has been affected by the next generation; they feel that they are not in control, which may lead to conflicts between family business members. The participants' shared stories about interacting with first-generation founders of the family business were informative. For example, the second generation seeks to implement new ideas of management but founders typically do not believe that these ideas are effective, they prefer to remain with traditional and old ways of management.

The participants shared inspirational stories about the "new school" of thinking awaiting contemporary Saudi females who are enthusiastically joining the workforce. These stories reflect the strength women are bringing to the changes they face now. The new school of thought is the lens through which founders may look to change; some families are moving forward fast, others are not quickly embracing the changing times, still holding tightly to customary practices. The participants recounted stories revealing that each family is different; some families have successfully changed their ways and are creating a better future for women in the Saudi business world. Despite the fact that the next generation is also seeking the best possible future for the family business, the founder(s)' different mindset may create conflict within the family and the business itself.

Old school mindset theme. Participant Nada talked about intergenerational family business interaction as recurrently problematic from her perspective: "Delegation,

no delegation. We as the second generation must go to management for everything, they are three (uncles), and each has a different personality and perspective. So we do not know who we should follow. This is not only my experience, it is also that of my cousins. They must go to three different uncles and ask for permission. This practice makes all the work late, and sometimes we miss great opportunities because of this delay. Having three decisionmakers in the family business is a disaster. The [resulting] confusion is one of the main conflicts that we face, because at times everyone has lost it and that created a very tense environment."

Rana said, "I am trying to sit with my father and talk to him more about the best solutions. However, he is not cooperating with me; he thinks that everything is fine and that no needs to think negatively. My mom always talks about how important it is that we stay together as siblings. So that is important for us. It might help in the future if we just all sit and remember what she has said."

Fatima added, "Unfortunately, the only females who are employed [in the company] are the females who are working with me. I am trying to convince the board members to employ more females." She added, "I am the only family member who is working. My brother joined last year. So this puts more pressure on me."

Participant Mahasen said, "I remember when I was in high school, I said to my father that I want to work in the family business. I remember that at that time there were not many girls working in the private sector."

New school mindset theme. The family business members who believe in their family's future generations give them opportunities. Nada initially did not expect that her family was serious about employing her female cousins: "One year a couple of my

female cousins joined the company. I did not take this step seriously; I thought that they would work for a couple of years and [then] leave the company. Moreover, I thought the company would not be serious about their work. However, after a couple of years, what I thought was wrong. They were working hard and they were responsible for projects."

Nada also made a significant point about how the new generation is different from its predecessors: "In the past and still in some families, Saudi men do not allow the female to spend any of her money on the house or kids." She added, "Living in Saudi now is very expensive. Everything is costly, and it is the first time there is a merchandise tax in Saudi Arabia. All these developments have made people look for jobs for their daughters and wives. It is a must now; the man cannot support the family alone. She must have help to have a decent life. Changes in lifestyle is one of the important reasons that we see more females in the workplace. Fathers and husbands now are seeking jobs for their daughters and wives so they can pay for all their expenses from their own salaries. They prefer to get married to a working female so she will help with all the expenses. The need for money is the reason."

Lolowa noted: "Some companies have females in their HR offices or as accountants; some companies have females in sub-assembly lines, and there are others who do not. We in HR are trying to facilitate the companies' employment of more females."

Amira described a familial climate of secrecy leading to conflict that she has endeavored to change: "In our culture, we believe that we don't share anything with society that takes place within or is done by the family. We think that it has to be hidden and nobody should know about it. I was trying hard to change this thought."

The data collected and deconstructed by analysis here regarding conflicts caused by differing generational mindsets is essential; conflicts have and will arise with change. Changing employment circumstances and work opportunities experienced by Saudi females have created different aspects of conflicts in and for the family. Some family members accept the changes discussed here, others do not and they will argue. The more they all talk and share, the fewer conflicts will arise, as was evident in data collected and analyzed that supported the following conflict-related emergent themes identified by the researcher.

10. Avoiding versus Confronting: Research Theme

The participants talked about conflict-related communication practices and strategies. As previously noted in Chapter 2's review of the literature, in collectivist cultures individuals typically avoid talking about what they feel; the power of "we" is stronger in collectivism. This study's female participants shared the struggles they experienced from not talking with their family members. They noted that avoiding talking with each other about any conflict or idea was and is a significant contributing factor in creating conflicts between family members. They felt that families have to be more open to sharing their thoughts in order to prevent conflicts.

The participants also shared examples of decisions their families had made and how those decisions affected the family's relations. Family relations in the Saudi Arabian society are complicated. For example, the family considers first the family's own feelings, before anything else, however those feelings might be expressed. Separating what pertains to family and what pertains to business is by definition difficult for family businesses. However, as the participants shared in different portions of their interviews,

separation between business concerns and family concerns is vital for any family business, which can be challenging in the Saudi Arabian business world. To illustrate, in Islam there can be more than one wife. Family businesses with sons and daughters from different wives can experience conflict, depending on how the first-generation founding fathers manage the resulting interfamilial dynamics. Moreover, the existence of conflict is also dependent on how Saudi mothers support the concept and reality of their children working together. There are family businesses that failed to continue on the day the founding father died because potential successors in the business were from different mothers. Strategies and practices of avoiding or confronting conflicts emerged as important themes of concern for the study's participants.

Avoiding theme. Fatima raised the issue of conflicts created by avoidance of communication, saying, "It is time to talk seriously with my father and to have him do something. Now we do not discuss anything about business in the house, which makes it difficult. It is hard to compare [our] two [family] businesses since my father gets upset and angry whenever we mention the business on my mother's side. We have to find a better solution to solve this problem."

Amira stated, "Confidentiality is another problem that we have to talk about that creates conflict in the family. Stakeholders have to be able to talk openly about different subject matters without affecting the business or all the family relations."

Deena also described the costs of avoidance for herself and her family: "It is different [in my family] from my husband's family, where they face each other and try to solve the problem at hand. As for my family, we try to avoid facing the problem, although

it is healthy to face the problem and solve it. We pass the problem around and no one takes responsibility, then we get angry."

Interestingly, Leena thought that having different mothers helped her and her male sibling transcend to some degree the avoidance of communication about different viewpoints: "My brother's way of thinking is different; our relationship is excellent. However, being from another mother has had some effect. Although his mom also raised me, he was looking for new businesses, but I did not agree with him. He opened a concrete company, but unfortunately we did not do well and we lost everything."

Manal noted that the content of what is communicated and focused on by family members working together is also important: "I am the youngest, and in our meetings we are partners (she and her sisters). However, my sister could not do anything [about a problem], even though at work she was my partner and my oldest sister. We were concentrating on our feelings more than work at that time."

Confronting theme. Some families have firm rules about communication and confrontation. While they might ostensibly have been created for the benefit of the company, they also may simultaneously create conflict for the families. Participant Haya described one such scenario: "One of my cousins has left the company because he was not performing and his family are very upset. Now they do not talk with my other cousin, who is the CEO."

Gazal shared a similar story in which lack of communication exacerbated problems for the business and for family members. "There were some [in the company] who misused their authority, though that was not resolved quickly. Unfortunately, it escalated to a big problem: one family member made a big fuss about it because nobody

involved this person. However, when his father passed away in the same week, he was removed from his position."

Amira shared her thoughts on how confrontation might work well if concerns of family and concerns of the business were separated. "It is better for the next generations to separate the family from the business. I don't want anything to happen between the family [members]. Let us lose the money but not lose the family; conflicts pop up in seconds."

Participant Rana described her personal frustration at some of the problems experienced in her family business when communication and avoidance strategies operate at cross-purposes and she is left to reconcile them: "We are a small family, and we are still in the beginning [stages]. However, some conflicts still happen because my siblings do not know what is happening in the company. They do not want to be involved in the day to day work, but at the same time, they want to know everything. How can I do this?"

In sum, the data indicated that conflicts can arise when family members step outside of their traditional comfort zones, which is what is happening in Saudi family businesses. Many family members are more relaxed if they do not talk to each other about any issues that bother them, unaware that if they talk openly they can save their business and their relations.

11. Nonfamily Employees vs Family Employees: Research Theme

Nonfamily employee issues were a factor in the struggles that the participants experienced and described in their interviews as important. Family businesses often keep such employees on the job because they have been working with the family for a long time. The loyalty of nonfamily members was also mentioned by the participants,

evidence that families in business can have a great relationship with their nonfamily member employees. After many years of working these employees not only feel very loyal to the company, they often feel that they are part of the company. Conflicts thus may surface when nonfamily member employees are confronted with a new generation's policies and practices and they do not accept any changes.

The participants shared their experiences of interacting with their other family members as opposed to dealing with nonfamily member employees of the business. They thought about the potential solutions and the best practices to solve these issues. All these stories laid the foundation for discussing the best strategies for conflict resolution, as later discussed in this section.

Nonfamily employees theme. Jawida said, "One of the problems is that there's an employee who has been working with the family since I was young. He knows me, and I am very young, and it is a problem; he has been working for 25 years and sees me as a kid, you cannot go into a negotiation with him." Leena described a similar situation involving trust and a nonfamily employee: "The main issue was trust, my brother trusted everybody. So this led us into many conflicts."

Other participants mentioned how they had dealt effectively with situations involving nonfamily employees, even those with longtime work histories in the family business. Thus Deena gave another example, "My husband and I were the decisionmakers, we even changed some [nonfamily] employees who have been working for years. And the group was supportive and gave us the green light... They did not interfere with us. We changed the staff and implemented a new plan."

On the other hand, Mahasen spoke about the value she gained from a particular nonfamily employee: “I benefitted from a female employee who was working in the business. She is from France, and she is still working with us. I used to sit in her office and she trained me on Excel. It was very basic work but I was very excited.” The data also indicated that the distribution of family versus nonfamily employees—in terms of numbers—varies considerably between companies. Thus Haya noted: “In my company I am the only female from the family working. All the other female [workers] are nonfamily members.”

Nada added that in her case a nonfamily member was the impetus behind the company’s employment of females. “I got the job and worked closely with the VP, who has been working with the family for the last 35 years. I was lucky to work with him. I have learned a lot; he was the man who pushed for female employment in the company. Moreover, he believed that women must be part of the family business. He began working with the company from its first years. I believe that his support of the decision to employ females was important to everyone’s comfort with that choice, knowing that we would be working with him and under his supervision.”

Family member employees theme. The perceptions and responses of family member employees were very important to the participants. Thus, Amira said, “Talking about myself, it was hard at the beginning. My cousins, they look at me as a cousin, not as a manager... When I first joined [the company] my male cousins asked me: ‘How long are you staying at work? Why don’t you bring the kids and [isn’t] staying at home better for you?’ I proved myself while working in SABB bank, I was very successful and you had to trust me. This was my answer.”

Jawida talked about the difference between first- and second-generation family member employees: "You cannot expect the children to be as ethical as the founder. They do not have a strong relationship. Now our company is 40 years old. I am sure all the family businesses have the same issues." Indeed, with regard to issues between family member employees the participants described conflicts they have faced with other family member workers, mainly conflicts over age, gender, and money. The latter topics were mentioned as important factors that create conflicts and can affect the feelings of family members who are working together. For example, Lulwa stated, "It hurts to see that there are problems because of the money." Family business conflicts are often all about money."

With respect to age, Participant Nada noted: "In the work environment one's age does create a conflict. There are some of my cousins in high positions because of their age, not their qualifications. Before it did not make a difference, but now there are younger family members who are smarter and have higher degrees and are more serious in their work and achievements. Here comes the conflict: to accept a younger family member who will be in a higher position and to be OK with that." Gazal added: "The conflict arises when there is no equality... it can be financial or emotional [conflict]."

In Saudi Arabia, it is the male family member (as opposed to the nonfamily member employee) in an organizationally superior position, such as in management, who remains largely in control of most female employees' opportunities. Things continue to evolve in the direction of change on every level, however. As Ibtsam has mentioned: "When it comes to other families things were very strict, business was always a male-dominated field. Females were not given the right to work in the business. I think

nowadays and in the past ten years, a lot has changed, and things are changing fast. Many families are giving more confidence to women; they have proven themselves.”

The rich descriptions and emergent themes in participants’ stories about the conflicts that might arise in both scenarios, either working with a family member or nonfamily member, gave the researcher a more complete understanding of family members’ feelings and their views about issues that create problems. The researcher was careful to practice bracketing in analysis of the described stories, since she herself has experienced many of the same issues with her own family when she first joined the family business.

12. Discord vs Harmony: Research Theme

The role of family members is vital in any family business. As the analysis of emergent themes thus far confirmed, the roles that family members take with their employees affects both the employees and the business; the role of females in this context is crucial. How those roles best might be designed to both deal with discord and promote harmony in the family business and among family members emerged as an important concern and goal for the participants interviewed.

Discord theme. Some participants elaborated on the discord they experienced as female family member employees, which affected their lived experience as workers in personally unsatisfactory ways. Thus Huda, discussing her first years of working with the first generation, said: "I had to report to my father and uncle. I felt like I was in prison; they did not give me any space." She implied that they dominated her role, and that constrained her experience and abilities.

Similarly, Amira painted a picture of personal frustration and discord from her perspective: "Many questions have been raised and are creating some misunderstanding. For example: Why is my cousin my manager? Why did my cousin get promoted? What is the difference between these two cousins? He carries the [family's] last name, and the other does not carry the last name."

Participant Fayiza is a company vice president now; as a family member it is her responsibility to be the best possible leader. However, leadership is a challenge. She explained that her male coworkers were not accepting of her role. Nonetheless a work colleague eventually did signal that acceptance of her was progressing favorably: "After a few years [as coworkers], the same man who would not talk to me before in 2013 is now reporting to me. He said that you are the best employee for this job. He knows that I am very supportive, and I support my team."

Fatima also discussed her experience of resistance on the part of the male employees: "Not all the companies are ready to employ females. There is resistance from the male employees, believing that there will be problems and they are not ready." Fatima added: "Also, my father is stubborn, and he likes to do everything by himself, which creates many conflicts, even with the employees."

Discord experienced by the participants was also sown because of communication issues. Thus participant Lolowa noted, "In our tradition, we do not talk in detail, and we do not express our feelings. So as a result, conflicts appear." Gazal similarly declared that "...lack of transparency and lack of communication lead to conflicts."

Harmony theme. Working harmoniously together as a team was a recurrent theme of importance for the participants. Fayiza said, "I am leading by example. I am not

involved in a revolution; change comes gradually. It does not come suddenly. If I came and said no, this is [a matter of] female rights, he (her male coworker) will never listen to me." Fayiza related that when she first joined the company her male coworker did not speak to her properly, even though she is the owner. She said, in a high voice and with excitement, "Then one time I received a cake from his department for my birthday! It was very emotional. His group, they do not even sit with girls. It meant they had really changed, and now we are one team. They started to feel that we are [all] colleagues; they forget the female part of it."

Jawida pointed out some essential benefits that as a family member she has been able to secure for her female coworkers, to facilitate a harmonious work experience for them that is in turn valuable to Saudi Arabian society: "The females have priority in [scheduling] vacations, and they do not take a lunch break so they can leave earlier. The girls need to go home for their kids, and they need to have a balance between work and home. If you hurt the family, you hurt society. You have to be a responsible employer."

Amira described strategies she's employed to bring harmony through clear communication of values that can be passed on from one generation to the next. "I talked [to the family] about family values like communication and honesty. I tried to let them see the importance of showing our values to society and educating the next generation... We have to believe that whatever our kids learn from their parents will be inherited, and we tried to transmit our values to our kids."

Nouf contributes to harmony in her family business by backing women in the workplace: "I am a female, and I will always support the females."

The theme of harmony between family members working together emerged as a key goal to which every family must pay attention. If a family member employee feels a strong sense of belonging to the business that can helpfully contribute to harmony. The study participants compared scenarios of family members being away from the business with examples of family members working together and having harmonious good relationships. The researcher was careful to practice bracketing during the appearance and analyses of the foregoing described discord and harmony themes, in order to not introduce her own related assumptions and biases since the themes represent issues she works on with her own family.

Conflict Management in Saudi Arabian Family Businesses

This study's fourth research question sought to explore and mine for meaning the subject collected data to serve the purposes of this qualitative investigation, which as previously stated are to encourage the change, growth, sustainability, and longevity of Saudi Arabian family-owned businesses as power transfers from one generation to the next.

RQ4 - What are second-generation Saudi Arabian females' understandings about how to best manage and resolve conflicts in family businesses?

The formulated open-ended interview questions posed to the participants were designed to explore the lived experiences of female family member employees in Saudi Arabia, seeking to identify the conflict management practices and strategies employed in their workplaces. The participants shared their experiences and views regarding best practices to resolve conflict, resulting in the four emergent themes described below in Figure 17.

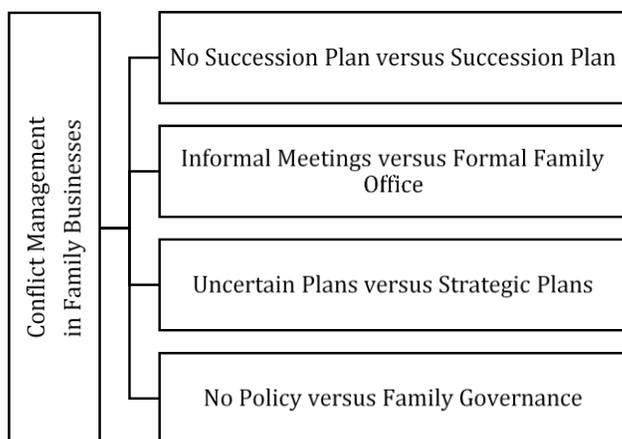


Figure 17. Conflict management in family businesses: themes.

13. No Succession Plan vs Succession Plan: Research Theme

A family business succession plan allows both the company's founder(s) and successor(s) to know precisely where they are heading. These plans were characterized in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as useful; there is no one plan format as each family differs from the next. Each business family facilitates different experiences, follows different values differently, and pursues different means of communicating and delivering information. Business families must be very clear and firm about their visions in order to have successful succession plans, as became evident from the participants' responses analyzed in this section.

No succession plan theme. Reem described the controlling role of her father alongside her uncles: "Since right now the first generation is still in control, there are no conflicts that have come up. The control lies with my father; he is the oldest. Also, he always tries to solve a problem before it becomes a conflict. In our culture, age has much impact on everything, which makes our family very considerate of the oldest."

Badriya said: "I attended a conference on family business and think they had a lot of great ideas. I shared them with my father, but he still believes that keeping everything

as is without investigating further will solve the problem. However, I don't think the same."

Participant Ibtsam spoke about the preparation of the next generation and how it can lead to conflict. She declared that family members preparing the next generation for the future so that they have the flexibility and adaptability to address challenges will prevent conflicts. She gave a contrasting example in which the founder of the company had his sons in management positions within the department; when the founder passed away, his children inherited his greater managing role, not because of competence but by inheritance alone. Ibtsam outlined the operative logic: "My father was the manager of this department so automatically I will be the manager. It has nothing to do with competence; it is just inheritance. I think that is where all the problems start." Ibtsam added, "Especially when the third generation will be leaders and the company expands, many conflicts will surface because of issues of jealousy, uncertainty as to who handles management and who does not. Further, as I said before, the age problem is very revered in real life in the companies."

Huda talked about intergenerational issues that have yet to be resolved as her company moves inevitably towards succession by the second generation. "We do not have any conflicts as of today, we (she and her sisters) are still working together. Differences between the generations have caused some issues to surface; each generation has a different way of thinking, they want something different. The first generation is still working, and we have to convince those founders for any change to happen."

In the absence of clarity about generational succession Fatima recommended educating decision-makers for a better future. "I believe that educating the

decisionmakers and talking to them about success stories in the market will change their thinking, especially with the great success stories that we know of in the Saudi Market."

Succession plan theme. Ibsam has been preparing herself for the responsibilities and skills that succession will entail: "After doing the logistical part of the [jewelry] business, I moved into designing with my mother. I created a collection of jewelry. Then I decided to go back into management as the next generation to help introduce me to the business." Ibsam went to work in different parts of the business to be prepared to manage it all one day.

Haya noted, "In my company we are treated exactly like all the employees. There is no difference between us. We do not have any privileges just because we are family members." Considering the issue of family member succession in family businesses, Fayiza said its resolution was one of two critically important issues for family businesses: "The biggest two challenges are the actual separation between ownership and management, and a succession plan."

Mahasen added: "There is a career path for all family members. They asked me, where do you see yourself? I was allowed to look at my career path and to discuss it."

Amira pointed out the importance of education and close family interaction so that family members understand issues such as ownership, management, succession, and maintaining a legacy. "[Our] Education Committee is one of the committees that cares about the family members. For example, the women are educated in financial matters because they will be shareholders one day. Even the in-laws, it is important that they are educated. At family retreats, we talk about history, family values, and financial issues. We meet twice a year, in February and August. One retreat is without a program agenda, it's

only fun, the other is more structured. In the last seven years, we have had consultants come to the family retreats and conduct workshops for the family members. There are three groups, from zero to 7 years old, 7 years to 13 years old, and 15 to 20 years on; each group has different programs — the most important thing about the family retreats is that we want the legacy to continue."

Sara implemented a process to prepare her family businesses' next generation and to help create the firm's succession plan. "What we have done for the succession plan is we have a rating process, and they have to pass all the [itemized ratings on a] checklist. It is an application, and each employee rates himself as does his manager; the application indicates how your work measured up."

Participant Mai's family were described as following a clear succession plan, which included a policy "to separate the family members, the father and son cannot work together." In terms of familiarizing themselves about company practice and succession policies, internships were advanced as a means to educating newcomers to the business. Lubna shared, "We are six girls, two are working, and others are still too young to work. They get involved in the internship program and it allows family members to know the company."

The researcher noticed that a majority of the participants discussed succession in terms of not having a plan but being willing to talk to family members to begin the process of creating one, which in the past for some families was not a discussable subject. Other participants reported already having a plan and being proud of this accomplishment. They believe that it will foster good family relations since it will present accessible and clear career pathways.

14. Informal Meetings vs Family Office: Research Theme

As previously noted, communication is one factor to be assessed for effective conflict management in a family business; thus communication forms the basis for strategies that the founder(s) of the business or its family members may consider. Clear communication between family members is essential, so creating a formal communication system for the company can help reduce tension between family members. In the context of considering what constitutes good communication within Saudi Arabian family businesses, it is important to recognize the scope and purpose of the family office. This office is responsible for different aspects of family relations; each family tackles those aspects differently. However, the primary purpose of the firm's family office is to keep the family notified and knowledgeable about both business and family matters. The family office plans all the activities that help to create harmony within the family via planning initiatives; it also is responsible for following and fulfilling the desired outcomes of any family member committees that were created to serve the family business.

Informal meetings theme. Informal meetings between family members can serve to stir up conflict or educate current and future family member employees about the business. Thus Manal pointed out, "One of the problems that we face [is] with the aunts who do not work, when they question the business and their money. I think that the next generation has to be more educated and know more about the business." Badriya said, "We are seven girls and two brothers from two mothers. We must be careful and to prepare ourselves for the future especially that the two boys are the youngest. I am older than them in 25 years. My father is trying to let us meet more often and discuss business

matters in front of each other. However, they are still young to understand all these talks. But we must be prepared.”

Rana said, "Sometimes they (other family members) hear about a problem, and they call me. I explain it to them; they think that if I share it with them they might help to solve it. So I try then to send an update to them, but they do not read it and they do not communicate. I ask them to attend meetings, but they never show up, and I get angry. However, I do not want to feel this pressure so I send them the minutes of the meeting to keep them updated."

Family office theme. As a second-generation female employee, Nada said she sincerely believes that "[t]he support of the second generation is the key for a better future." She talked about educational programs that the family office ensures are offered to the next generation: "The programs are for the next generation, from 5-year-olds [on up]. They develop [family members] in educational, financial, and social aspects. These programs affect them in real life. They help them to know each other better, let them meet at different times and events, and prepare them for the future. Either they join the family business or don't." Gazal promoted her family business's educational opportunities as a way to bring family members together so that they are all on the same page about the business. She explained, "The in-laws in our family, they are not engaged; I think we have to be balanced. I am encouraging them to attend the educational sessions offered by the family office, and I am trying to discuss this issue in the family council, believing that they will be someday shareholders." She thus was trying to share a problem that some in the family were trying to avoid.

Gazal also observed that "the family office is one way of managing problems. We try to solve the problem before it goes to the family council. We are a very supportive family, and we all work together." Gazal is on the education committee for the next generation in her company. She added, "We have many things that we are doing. 'Let us work together'— this is our aim. We have 50 members, [ranging] from 16-years-old to 50 years [in age] ... The family members who are in their '20s are the targeted group. We look at their interests and try to focus on them. Everyone is invited, although not all are interested."

Reem described her family business's central office as smaller but similarly fully committed to keeping family members engaged and involved. "The family office... it is still small, but we have one ritual that we doing since I was six years old. All the second-generation [family members] go to a summer camp in New Jersey, where we learn and at the same time spend time with the family."

Those participants whose family businesses have family offices described their company's structure at very different stages. Thus Deena said, "We just began our family office. We employed a consultant." In contrast, Haya talked about the communication and conflict resolution process in her business's family office: "Whenever conflicts arise in the family, it goes to the second generation, and there the decisionmakers have to take any necessary action."

Essentially the family office emerged thematically as kind of intergenerational bridge for the participants' family businesses. Lolowa noted that ",,, strong beliefs in the second generation is making the [family office] move gradually, which will make it successful." Besides, she said, "I believe that the more you engage the family together

and keep the third, fourth, and fifth generations together, caring and loving... it will change many things."

Amira talked about her family business's formal meeting structure, explaining that it has a "... family council committee, we don't have a family office. In this committee there are family members and nonfamily members. We take it very seriously; there are workshops." Sara's family does the same: "On weekends we have educational speakers. We [get together] in Europe in summer so all the family is there."

Leena acknowledged the importance of the family office: "Now while talking with you, I realized that all family members have to attend family business conferences and listen to stories of other families, to learn from others."

As previously noted, the family office is the office that manages family issues and prepares the next generation to handle the business. That preparation goes through different stages so family members typically must be involved. The rich descriptions of the family office's scope, purpose, and function that the participants shared in the data collected revealed that it is a tool that many believe can effectively contribute to the success of the family business.

15. Uncertain Plans vs Strategic Plans: Research Theme

Each family business must have apparent and firm strategic planning for the next generation; strategic planning will help the decisionmaker(s) and the next generation to have a vision of their future. Uncertainty in the absence of a plan causes confusion, which will lead to conflicts. There are different ways of preparing strategic plans, depending on the family and the tasks of each family member who is working. Some families prepare the next generation by presenting a clear career path, as discussed; others prepare job

descriptions and find or identify the right candidate. Thus it is the family that decides on and follows the best employment strategies, planning, and methods that they believe will suit the needs of the family business and its members.

Uncertain plans theme. Uncertainty about plans in and for the business was described by some participants as a backdrop for unhappiness and disconnection. In this context Leena brought up her relationship with her brother: "I did not notice any conflicts until my brother came to work. We have a different way of thinking. We went through many problems. I left the company because of the problems [I had] with him. I am very disappointed that he would not see me. My father was not looking at [either of] us, and he went through depression."

Fatima, who is the only female working in her family's business, described the personal and corporate impacts of not strategically planning for the future: "My father is not serious about organizing the company. I feel sorry that this is happening—the company is huge, and we have different factories. I am afraid that one day there will be no one that will be interested in working with the family business." She added: "There are not any clear regulations or practices in our family business, my father does not want to think about it. He thinks that everything is fine, and that nothing needs to be corrected or organized."

Badriya said, "Unfortunately, we do not have any strategies. My father is the decisionmaker, and we all go to him." She added, "I handed the shop to my little sister who had just graduated, and started my real passion."

Gazal from Jeddah described her family business's transition and strategic planning as still evolving: "In the last couple of years there was a huge change; thus the

company is reconsidering everything. So now we have more females joining the company. We are looking for approval for both family and nonfamily [employees]."

Reem added: "Separating business from family is another step that the family has to take to survive. Right now, all family members have the authority, and this is making conflicts in some areas of the company."

Strategic plan theme. This theme emerged as significant to success. Thus Ibtsam pointed out: "I think it is imperative, and it is important even to get external help if necessary, to help implement strategy and get experience from other family businesses who have gone through the process before, and [to] learn from their experiences. It is important and crucial to the continuity of the family business." She added, "It is critical when you have a strategy. I know a family business, they did not have a clear strategy, and they are suffering now. The third generation [members] are messing it up, there are no [clear] roles, and everyone has inherited his position, not because of competence."

Amira said, "There is no strategic plan in this department, they budget for it but [have] no plans. Which makes things very difficult...So we created a committee, one person from each family would be a member. In this committee we each represent [and present] all the projects that we will work on, and we listen to each other's ideas if there are any. We don't get approval on a project until everybody is fine and accepts it."

In the context of discussing strategic planning, Jawida noted the importance of standing strong: "I am working as an employee, not as a family member. The most important thing in a family business is respect. Moreover, you need to be able to judge and be strong. There is no one [else]; you need to take responsibility."

Strategic planning for more women in the workplace was the source of great pride. Thus Haya shared: "I am very proud to be part of this family. They are the pioneers in female employment in Saudi... They are looking for more jobs to be done by females, and for females to get promoted and work at the managerial level." Participants also shared their views on planning in terms of acknowledging the responsibility the family has for the next generation, as well as their perspectives how to prepare the next generation. In this regard Huda noted: "They have supported me with a great team."

Reem spoke about the importance of the strategic plan for the family business. "In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry is looking seriously at organizing the family business. In the last couple of years, a couple of the biggest families unfortunately halted all their operations because of conflicts that are happening between the second and third generations. Thus, I am reading about, and attending conferences about, family businesses and listening to their stories to educate myself. I think that this will prevent some of the conflicts that might happen."

Nada pointed out that clear communication might lead to the best direction in terms of planning. "The best thing about the family is their openness and clarity in any decision they make. They try to keep all the family together and in a good relationship. However, they try to avoid conflict by sharing selective news and thoughts with the family. We are very close, and we meet on different occasions."

Sara shared her family's experience of promoting intergenerational interaction opportunities that have assisted in family business planning and the avoidance of conflicts: "In every family business there are conflicts, I prefer to talk about how we are trying to avoid these conflicts and what it is that the family is doing. We have a family

retreat that we meet at every year; it includes all the family [members] and in-laws, second, third and fourth generation."

The identified themes here discussed suggest that for the family business to succeed there must be a well-prepared strategic plan addressing projects, employees' career paths, and different aspects of employment and role responsibilities. Strategic planning can thereby greatly assist family businesses and decisionmakers to manage and prevent conflicts.

16. No Policy vs Family Governance Handbook: Research Theme

All family business members must think seriously about all possible situations that might lead to a problem in the future. The creation and adoption of a family governance handbook offers an effective strategy for prevention and management of anticipated problems. Ideally such a handbook contains all the laws and regulations that were influenced by the family values and the founder's vision. These rules and policies in the governance handbook will reflect and guide the family's approach to the next generations' future. Each family is different, but they all share issues such as the desired sustainability of the business and desired state of family member relations. The participants' sharing on this topic revealed their awareness of the importance of clear governance as opposed to working in the absence of policies, as emerged below.

No policy theme. Rana's family is a case-in-point that illustrates the problematic impacts of working in an environment without policies. She said, "Now I am the Vice President of the company. I have two brothers who are older than me and two sisters who are younger. My brothers, one is a doctor, and the other does not have any role in the company and does not want to have any managerial position. My two sisters are married

and do not want to work. Here I am alone with all this work and stress. I enjoy it, but I am afraid that one day my brothers and sisters will blame me."

Family business governance that instead clearly states rules and policies was appealing to Amira: "There is no flexibility like before; the new generation who are entering the business are arguing more. However, the old family members there [in the business] used to do everything by themselves. They used to travel without negotiating and do the job without complaining. The new generation has a different approach, and this is one of the things that we as family members have to think about. Thus it is crucial that the first generation set and state the rules so that all the family members will be aware of them."

The interest in successfully adapting how things are run in family businesses was important to participants who painted a picture of conflict and transition as family members grapple with challenges in the absence of clear and accepted rules that are accepted by all who work for the company. Thus Gazal described a scenario in which "...[i]nefficient management from a family member created a conflict. We couldn't measure the performance of a family member. That was resolved by asking him to join the HR committee, and he [still] does not want to be evaluated."

Badriya noted that her family's members are aware of the importance of operating in a professional manner, of properly governing their behavior and interaction: "We are all shareholders. Thus we all discuss everything and challenge each other. Throughout these conversations we may disagree, but my father has taught us that whenever we leave the room, we have to forget everything. We must differentiate between the business and the family." Leena observed that interest in improving management and governance for

the future is a priority today: "Now Saudi Arabian family businesses have changed a lot, and a couple of families are trying hard to be more educated and to know how to have a better future."

Family governance handbook theme. A family business governance handbook addresses a number of different company areas of focus; the family board decides its content and approves it. Handbook sections commonly state or list the company's vision and mission, and outline or define who are considered family members, the composition of the family board and of committees related to family issues, and the rules and regulations for joining the family business. These foregoing issues were viewed by participants as the most important, but each described business family's experiences and practices emerged as different.

Gazal explained, "We have family values and mission. The values are [listed on] one page. These values are indirectly trying to put [forth] the solutions for all the [company] problems." She also related how her family's handbook of rules supports one generation's positive effects on the actions and behavior of the next generation. "One of the conflicts [involved] the different branches of the family, and three wives. In our family, the uncles are from three mothers. In the beginning, [things were] very unclear, but now it is obvious and all is explained for everybody through the governance handbook. The mothers make a difference, they can keep the children together."

A governance handbook's content will be only as good as its support and implementation. Thus Participant Haya stated: "The family has a constitution, but unfortunately it is not effective. Maybe because the first generation is still on the board and they have a voice [over] the second generation. The strategies that are written in the

constitution are very general, and when I asked about that, they said that they hope there will be no conflict and the family might not need it (the constitution)."

Deena announced that in her company, "The constitution is done, the first generation have signed it." Similarly, Mahasen related: "We have everything written and we all signed it. We read it out loud. I think this gives you comfort. You know what your career path is and what the [career] steps are." She added, "[A] family constitution is very important. [Having one] would avoid conflicts. It makes [things] clear for female and male members and their future, which creates a comfortable work environment because each member knows his role and his part in the company."

As previously noted in foregoing sections, the participants' interests in conflict's prevention, avoidance, and resolution were evident from the data analyzed in this chapter. A governance handbook or written constitution governing the family business was considered a promising tool in recognition of its potential to impact conflict. Thus Badriya summarized her wishes for the clarity that formal articulation of rules and policies offers: "I hope that my father will allow me to begin a governance handbook. I have seen in other families that they have committees and family offices. We do not have. Maybe because we are small in number, but we must begin to avoid any conflict that might appear in the future."

In this chapter, the researcher analyzed the selected participants' lived experiences of female employment in family businesses and their views on the future of female employment in Saudi Arabia. Findings that related to conflict avoidance, conflict management, and conflict resolution policies and practices were highlighted. In the following chapter, the researcher will review the theories applied in the instant study as

well as discuss conclusions reached and implications discerned from the emergent themes here identified. In Chapter 5 the researcher additionally acknowledges limitations of the study as well as its positive contributions, and presents recommendations for future research that will benefit Saudi Arabian women in the workplace.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study was designed and conducted to examine the conflict dynamics and opportunities that exist for second-generation females employed by their family businesses in Saudi Arabia. Twenty-two selected participants so employed were interviewed regarding their perceptions and experiences in order to better understand their lived experiences while working for their family businesses in Saudi. This study explored characteristics of Saudi Arabian family businesses, female employment, the nature of conflicts in family firms, and the best alternative practices to avoid disputes between family members. The purposes of this phenomenological study were to understand female roles in family businesses, to identify conflicts and their nature within Saudi Arabian family businesses, and to explore female Saudi family business employees' lived experiences to improve their employment experiences and those of future generations.

This study's data-driven conclusions and recommendations are vital to encourage the change, growth, sustainability, and longevity of the family-owned businesses as power transfers from one generation to the next in the private sector. Whether working towards success in a large multi-national family corporation or a small family-owned firm, Saudi female workers in a male-dominant Saudi Arabian business world must navigate environments that still resist their presence and contributions. The study's conclusions and recommendations may assist both female workers and their resisters to reach better understandings and harmonious interactions in the service of mutual goals such as the success of their family businesses throughout the Kingdom and beyond.

As was evident throughout the available literature reviewed in Chapter 2, there exists an absence of research that has been conducted on the lived experience of Saudi women in the workplace generally, and specifically on women employees in the Saudi family business workplace. The lack of research in this area motivated the researcher to enthusiastically design a study that would address four research questions generated both by the literature reviewed and by her own deep personal commitment to improving the accessibility and experience of Saudi Arabian working women in family businesses. After formulating interview questions to ensure the exploration of past, present, and future employment-related experiences, the researcher conducted interviews with 22 Saudi Arabian females, transcribed/translated those interviews, and conducted analyses to discern useful answers to the posed research questions from the data collected, as detailed in the foregoing chapters on methodology and results.

Evolved Theoretical Framework for Study

As initially designed, this study sought to meet its discussed objectives as they might be informed by phenomenological and feminist theories (see theoretical discussion in Chapter 2). Based on the identified contradictory themes contained within the participants' described lived experiences that emerged during analysis of the collected interview data, the researcher applied an additional theory to better inform her understanding of their employment-related conflict dynamics and to provide the basis for the conclusions and recommendations here presented: dialectical theory. The following discussion briefly reintroduces the two selected foundational theories and explains the relevance of dialectical theory (applied post-data collection) to the researcher's analytic thematic pairings, conclusions, and recommendations as presented in this chapter. The

chapter will also make note of the limitations of the study, make recommendations that include suggested topics for future research, and summarize the contributions of the study.

Transcendental Phenomenology Theory

Phenomenology is "the study of the knowledge that comes from consciousness or the way you come to understand objects and events by consciously experiencing them" (Littlejohn, 1999, p. 199). Metaphorically speaking, in a qualitative research phenomenological study the researcher seeks to collect data about lived experiences to uncover and reveal— from examination of different points of view—all the layers of the onion that has been subjected for study, to enrich our understanding of aspects (the layers examined and analyzed) of the onion, such as its nature, composition, and structure, what some might describe as the reality of or reality for that onion. Thus the participants interviewed for this study shared their experiences of joining the family firm. Choosing phenomenology provided a disciplined and systematic method of creating knowledge and accentuated the discovery and subjectivity of the essence of experiences (see Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological theory gave the researcher the impetus and method to explore, analyze, and combine all discernably significant facets of the participants' expressed employment-related lived experiences of conflict. Those facets as they emerged are further discussed below.

Feminist Theory

Hooks (2003) defined feminism as "the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women... It does not privilege women over men. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives (p. 240)." The

potential for transformative effect that feminist theory offers was foundational for the assessment of significance and concerns for those who would understand the experience and opportunities that are lived and real for the women this researcher specifically and ultimately hopes to assist. Feminist theory was the lens through which the perceptions and lived experiences of Saudi Arabian females employed in a family business were viewed here, in order to better understand not only specifically what constitutes shared truth(s) for Saudi women who work or would work in their family business, but also to better comprehend the impacts on other individuals more indirectly affected by the quality of those females' work experiences, past, present, and future.

During the interviews that included questions informed by feminist theory, the participants shared their views of gender equality and the conflicts they went through with male family members and male non-family members. Their described experiences portrayed both the positive and negative effects of gender status and treatment on the lifestyle of Saudi Arabian families. For example, and as discussed in greater detail below for the relevant themes identified, the participants shared the positive effects on themselves and their immediate family of the support they perceived or received during their first years of employment as well as the roles they now play to support females working at their firms. In contrasting examples, others shared negative experiences they underwent as new female employees in the family business that involved their perceived rejection by family members and lack of acceptance from male cousins.

Dialectical Theory

Just as individual themes emerged to be identified by the researcher in this study's qualitative research data analysis process (see Chapters 3 and 4), dialectical theory itself

emerged during the data analysis process as an important theoretical lens for this study's qualitative research focus: to understand family business conflict dynamics for the targeted female worker population. Indeed, dialectical theory emerged as a kind of third side to complete a triangular theories frame for the instant research inquiry about conflict dynamics for second-generation Saudi women working in their family businesses, along with transcendental phenomenological theory and feminist theory. Thus dialectical theory proved not only useful for organizing and then analyzing the data collected; as discussed below it informed the researcher's thematic conclusions and recommendations presented in Chapter 5.

Dialectical tensions theory: thematic organization & analysis. During the analysis of the data collected the researcher uncovered substantial evidence of contradictions at play in the lived experiences of the participants. Upon identification and coding of recurrent words and phrases during the data analysis process, research themes emerged that related to family business employment-related conflicts for the women interviewed that were oppositional or contradictory in nature, e.g., dependence and independence, acceptance and rejection, discord and harmony. A total of 16 oppositional theme pairings (see Figure 13, Chapter 4) was developed by examination and rearrangement of the themes identified in the data collected. This pairing of contradictory themes was informed by dialectical theory and the promise it holds for transforming social and relational conflict dynamics in people, relationships, and organization, as discussed below.

Dialectical theory has its roots in the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang, the principle that "all things exist as inseparable and contradictory opposites, for example,

female-male, dark-light and old-young” (Cartwright, 2018, para.1). It is not only rooted in Yin and Yang, the idea that every aspect “of the universe contains the seeds of its opposite... [but also in] the Western philosophy that the world is in constant flux (change), with creative and destructive forces constantly operating upon each other” (Hirokawa, 2013, para. 1). This acknowledgement of oppositions as acknowledged realities of human experience inspired the pairing of identified themes in the data collected, to reflect the identified oppositions expressed by the participants as perceived realities of their lived experiences.

Dialectical tensions theory: relational conflict. Creating the foregoing described oppositional (“X versus Y”) diacritical thematic pairings of expressed contradictory themes allowed the researcher then to explore the content of data that might comprise the metaphorical spokes of an umbrella covering all the important factors impacting the lived experiences of employment-related conflict for Saudi Arabian women employees in family businesses. Conflict was a central essential topic for these 22 participants, one they appeared eager to discuss and often described as important while they related many stories. They were open to sharing their employment-related conflict experiences and the problems they have faced. Although familial conflict was a sensitive subject they also indicated they believe that participating in its discussion and understanding will benefit both women workers and their Saudi family businesses. Further, they shared very personal stories and asked for copies of the published research, indicating their willing to participate despite conflict’s sensitivity. Within the described context of conflict as the research topic of study, dialectical tensions theory also offered guidance for the improvement of relations among and within individuals (see e.g., Braithwaite, Baxter, &

Harper, 1998) and thereby also for the reduction of conflict as experienced by those individuals.

Dialectical theorists have explored the human internal and relational tensions created when the existence or coexistence of contradictory themes in one's everyday life creates conflict. Thus it has been noted that "[c]ommunication behaviors and patterns in everyday life can be explained by the presence and influence of dialectical tensions in our daily relationships" (Hirokawa, 2013, para. 2). In the subject study the relationships referenced as significant to the participants that were family business employment-related (such as family member relationships, intergenerational relationships, and coworker relationships, among others) often were described as featuring relational tensions and internal/external expressions of distress. As Harvey and Evans (1994) noted, "[f]amily businesses are fertile ground for conflict" (p. 331). The relationships among family member employees, however identified (e.g., as fathers, mothers, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers, siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, in-laws) in family businesses are complex and unique, and their improvement directly transfers to organizational improvement(s) with implications for recommendations by this researcher, as next discussed.

Dialectical tensions theory: organizational conflict. The transformative potential of dialectical theory's framing of organizational conflict stems from the "innovation [that] occurs through a process in which one element or 'affirmation' unintentionally gives rise to its own opposite or 'negation,' producing conflict and transformation" (Hargrave & van de Ven, 2017, p. 320). The theory focuses on how these contradictions and conflicts are in constant flux and change over time. Hargrave and van de Ven (2017) added that the resulting conflicts produce new elements from these

contradicted elements. Sometimes those new elements introduce improved organizational efficiencies, productivity, products, and outcomes (McKee, Madden, Kellermans, & Eddleston, 2014). As Jameson (2004) noted, organizations and their members struggle with dialectical tensions—opposing needs that appear mutually exclusive but must be met simultaneously” (p. 257). Examples of organizational conflict born of contradictory views, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions in the subject Saudi Arabian family businesses that were discussed by the study participants included: disagreements on decision-making issues, personal disputes, business (economic) and family (emotional) issues, next-generation succession plans and the designated successor, strategic planning of the family business owner(s), impacts of culture, and the retirement of the senior generation. As detailed in Chapter 4, study thematic findings included discerned positive effects from the expression of family business conflict, such as the development of: family governance handbooks, family council responsibilities, processes to select and evaluate board members, and definition of critical information for consideration by decisionmakers. On the other hand, findings as well included a list of negative effects, such as poor work relationships, poorly communicated and executed business strategies and instructions, serious challenges facing the business, and dissolution of the family firm.

Through the lens of diacritical theory all the contradictory themes (that were already emergent in the data) could be combined to indicate the presence of dialectic tensions that were indigenous and central to the participants’ shared experiences. The participants notably agreed that they must change the stereotyping of females working in family businesses in Saudi Arabia by being pioneers and role models for future

generations. Those shared objectives promise to be facilitated by the awareness that the diacritical pairing of themes enabled in this study. Diacritical theory usefully informed the researcher's conclusions and recommendations regarding each thematic oppositional pairing, as next discussed.

Dialectical Oppositional Study Emergent Themes

During this research study's qualitative analysis process, thirty-two different themes emerged from careful examination of the collected and coded data. The researcher applied principles of dialectical theory to combine those individual themes into constructed oppositional pairings of themes, herein termed "dialectical themes" for purposes of this study. The following discussion presents conclusions reached regarding each data-driven oppositional dialectical theme identified by the researcher (See Figure 13, Chapter 4) that contributed to answering the four research questions posed in this study.

The larger, combined, and oppositional dialectical themes (X versus Y) form the outline of this chapter's discussion of qualitative research that was conducted to better understand the lived experiences and the work-related conflict realities, conflict dynamics, and opportunities for the participant second-generation family business Saudi female employees. The number of participants whose responses indicated the documented presence of an individual theme during data analysis are indicated in corresponding figures below, following each of the study's four stated research questions.

The first research question explored important aspects of employment-related everyday life for women working with their family businesses in Saudi Arabia:

RQ1 - What are the lived experiences of second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in their family businesses?

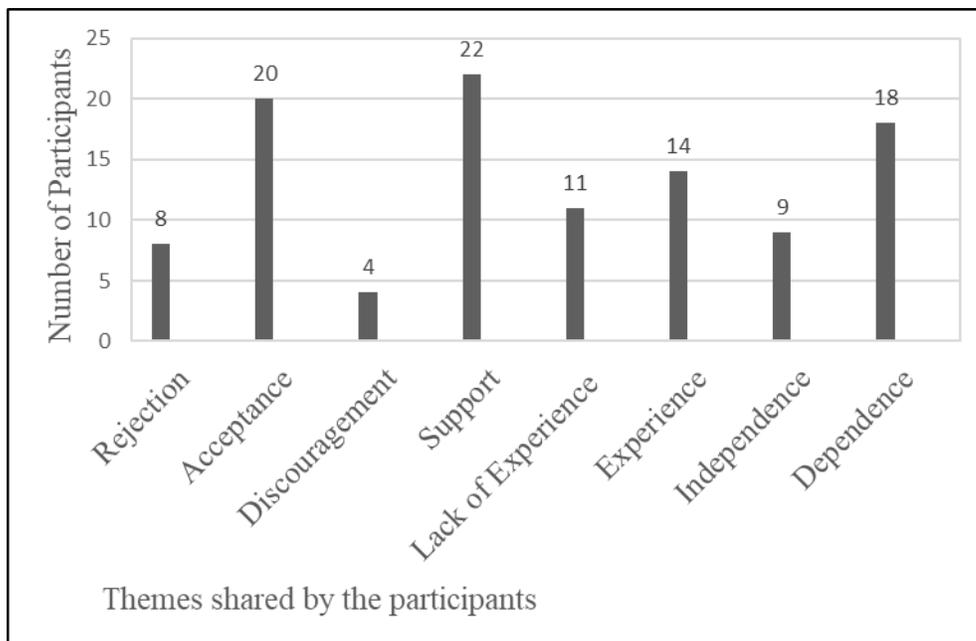


Figure 18. *RQ1* - Emergent themes: participant responses.

Rejection vs Acceptance: Dialectical Theme

Although the participants indicated that religion was a primary reason for their rejection as females in the workplace, Maqsood (1994) noted that Islamic religion has no ethical injunction against women working. Nonetheless the female participants' perceived rejection turned them into stronger women who are now leaders; they have been working hard, often behind the scenes, to prove that they are serious. Some participants could not face their rejection and quit, leaving their roles for their brothers or nonfamily members to fill in their place. As Figure 18 indicates, eight participants experienced rejection from their families when they first joined the business; they did not feel welcomed as female employees.

In contrast, their stories of acceptance as females at work in the family business elicited different viewpoint from other participants. Fourteen participants shared their experiences about acceptance and reported experiencing a shift from rejection to acceptance in the family. Business families were described as having acknowledged the positive values served by having women in the workplace and having recognized the significant important benefits that their presence had introduced.

The participants shared many aspects of both rejection and acceptance, two themes interwoven throughout their work experiences in their family business, They spoke about the difficulties they faced and the rejection they received from society or their family but also readily about people who supported them either financially or emotionally. Working in a family business was clearly a challenge for the female participants who shared their knowledge with passion and described themselves as confident because they had stood up to people who did not believe in them.

Discouragement vs Support: Dialectical Theme

Studies in the literature have shown that in the lives of Saudi Arabian females, fathers are the first supporters, mothers and brothers are the secondary supporters (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, & Al-Sadoon, 2014). The relations between the children and the parents in the Arab world are different: the mother is a source of emotions and kindness, and the father is a source of love and authority. The man has the power; however, the woman influences the scenes (Nydell, 1996). Saudi history, culture, and traditions historically have worked against females; they have faced tremendous opposition on seemingly every front.

With regards to discouragement, culture consistently was broached by the participants and described as a significant source of barriers, the wellspring of many obstacles whose very mention demonstrated how hard they had struggled to be in their present positions. Only four interviewees talked about discouragement; they were among the first women who faced all the challenges posed by history, culture, and traditions. They stated with pride that they simply wanted to achieve something and they had done that.

Although support was not the direct focus of a specific interview question, all 22 of the participants shared stories about support and who supported them. The participants believed that family support was the foundation of their success. They shared their work-related experiences throughout the stages of their lives. Some spoke about their lived experiences beginning in childhood, talking about their childhood, their dreams, their present and future lives. Many volunteered examples of encouraging words they heard—"you are strong" and "you can achieve your dream"—that stayed with them and helped make them leaders now. The researcher concluded that the support the participants shared was a strong indication of its importance for females working in the family business; continuing encouragement of that support from all available sources as further detailed below is a central focus of this study's recommendations.

Lack of Experience vs Experience: Dialectical Theme

Whether a female employee had any experience at all, or had gained experience inside or outside of the family business, emerged as issues for that mattered the participant second-generation family member employees. At the same time, each family and its family decisionmakers(s) were described as uniquely individual in their expressed

or enforced beliefs about the amount and site of experience expected of female family members.

Some participants described family businesses requiring that they begin their work experiences outside as a condition of even working at all. Such requirements do find support in the literature. Neubauer & Lank (1998) gave three reasons that a family member should, indeed must, work outside the family business: the results will indicate the true market value of the member, if the member succeeds outside the company s/he will enter the family business based on competence, and if the member fails it will be outside and not in front of the family and its employees.

Working outside the family business was described by some participants as having positive impact(s) that included the opportunity to master new skills and to influence their family's acceptance of their own value to the family business. Others described being "allowed" to begin and pursue their ideas outside the business and then to master their skills under the umbrella of the family business.

Although the level of experience upon entering the workforce is an important matter that families must consider as more women join the ranks of family business employees, the variance was marked among families regarding the necessary level of experience required or where it should be acquired. Just as some families required an outside first employer, other described families preferred that their children to join the family firm immediately upon graduation. The researcher thus recommends that further research be conducted on the subject as the number of Saudi women employees continues to grow.

Independence vs Dependence: Dialectical Theme

The Saudi Arabian culture has had massive impacts on this dialectical theme, as females traditionally have grown up depending on their fathers or brothers. But with experience as just discussed, and most importantly education, a great deal has changed. Education was a decisive factor for the described work experience of all family member participants. All 22 are university graduates, and they emphasized the importance of education. This position on education is borne out by the literature: "[those] who run family-owned businesses seem to demonstrate a greater thirst for knowledge regarding several managerial skills in comparison with non-family business owners" (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, & Al-Sadoon, 2014, p. 7).

The majority of the participants shared stories referencing dependence from the perspective of being depended on by their families in the family business; others characterized their employment experience as independent and themselves as working indirectly with their families. Family business founders were described as hesitant to give females workplace responsibilities but over time that has changed. Nonetheless, in some cases that independence was granted but conditionally: Fayiza was asked to complete a master's degree in business administration in order to join the family business.

The female participants reported being given opportunities and they tried to achieve their dreams. Their accounts about living with dynamic conflict tensions between themselves, their family businesses and its members, and society at large because of unresolved consensus on dependence versus independence issues, all suggested to the researcher that believing in females and their contribution to the family business will

create an independent generation that will be of great value to the family and the company.

Recent and current shifts in laws as well as attitudes regarding female employment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 1) have changed many work-related dynamics. The participants shared their different opinions about female employment, opportunities, challenges, and the future. As indicated in Figure 19 below, their responses referenced themes that proved helpful in answering this study's second research question regarding their views of female roles in the Saudi business world:

RQ2 - What are the perceptions of second-generation Saudi Arabian females of the future for their roles and female roles in the Saudi Arabian business world?

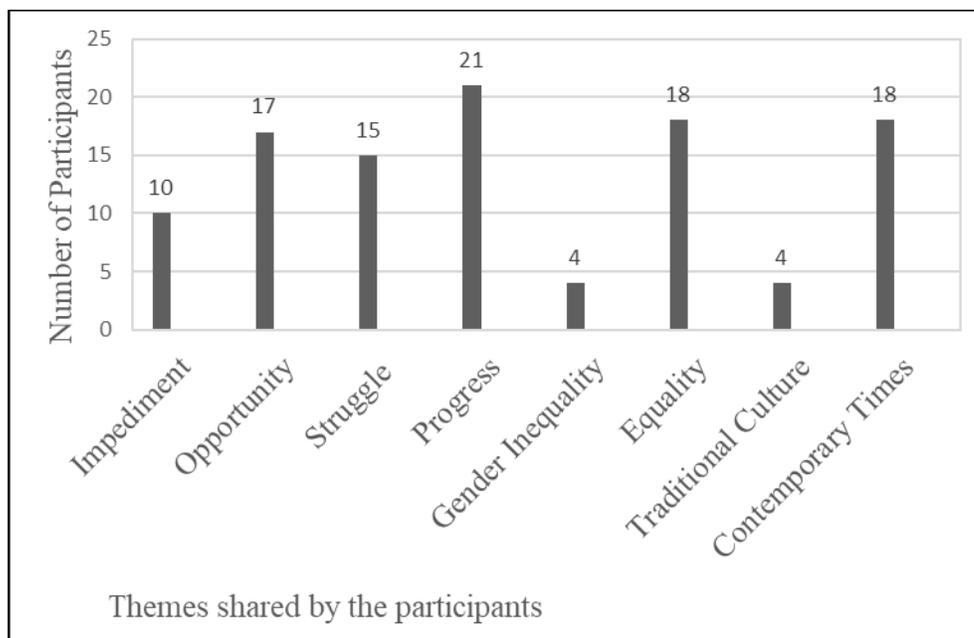


Figure 19. RQ2 - Emergent themes: participant responses.

Impediment vs Opportunity: Dialectical Theme

The participants deliberated about all the opportunities they have received but also described the obstacles they have faced and are still facing. Those dual aspects of

their lives combined to form a dialectical work-related tension for women in their family businesses. That tension (reflected in the dialectic theme of “impediment versus opportunity”) can also be seen, most often with familial support, to have contributed to their success. “[R]unning a family-owned business gives ... women more confidence in their sales and idea generation/product innovation capabilities” (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, & Al-Sadoon, 2014, p. 7). Addressing the opportunities that family members can have and the power they can acquire in their lives by being a family member of the family-owned business, Gersick, Davis, Hampton, and Lansberg (1997) noted that “the influence of families on the businesses they own and manage is often invisible to management theorists and business schools” (p. 4).

Several participants shared their thoughts about the lack of opportunities and the struggle they as females experienced in employment. More than half of the participants agreed that the country is changing, and they are passionate about the potential positive impacts for women of those changes. Although the culture in Saudi Arabia encompasses and in practice may constrain the Saudi people, the participants shared stories of how individual families are changing. Now families and family business members who are assessing their support of female employment are considering the benefits for the family, forecasting benefits that would also accrue for the country, and perhaps rethinking their own personal views before judging others. The future appears bright for Saudi females although participants noted they must work hard. The positive view all participants shared was that an enormous amount of opportunities await Saudi working women.

Struggle vs Progress: Dialectical Theme

Fifteen female employee participants compared working in Saudi Arabia to engaging in some form of battle or struggle. As previously noted, many participants experienced rejection at the beginning; some noted that a great many female workers still experience rejection in the present in various forms, both in overt aspects such as male employees openly not accepting females in the common work area and more subtle aspects, such as gender-based working hours. The participants shared stories that revealed at least four important factors that affected their lived experience of struggle or progress, directly or indirectly: 1) the support of other females, 2) government support, 3) self-achievement, and 4) family support. The presence of these factors in the participants' own lives was cited as the basis for their positive expectations for the future. The stated mention of the support of other females was particularly noted by the researcher and formed the basis for her suggestions regarding female networking, as further described in the section below presenting recommendations.

While 15 of the 22 study participants spoke of struggle, remarkably 21 of 22 shared discussions of progress for women employed in Saudi family businesses. They recognized their present time as a truly extraordinary time of progress and future potential for women in Saudi Arabia, expressing their awareness of current laws and royal decrees, shifting business priorities, and increasing availability of government and private sector resources (see Chapter 1). Many participants viewed themselves as role models for other females in Saudi Arabia, stating they must work hard to encourage other females to achieve their dreams. From their own perspectives they are decision-makers in their companies, and they contribute to the country directly and indirectly. Their positions

in their companies will lead other companies to hire females; they thereby are promoting gender equality and seeking to share their own progress with other women. Additionally, the government of Saudi Arabia is paving the path for female employment by initiating and maintaining different programs to promote and increase female employment (see Chapter 1). All these signals of progress for Saudi women are signs of the new—gender equality—as opposed to signs of the old—gender inequality.

Gender Inequality vs Equality: Dialectical Theme

Although the participants described many of their own personal efforts to promote and achieve equality for Saudi family business female employees, many aspects of gender inequality were evident in their recounted lived experiences, indicating that gender equality is far from fully adopted and accepted throughout the Kingdom. In Saudi Arabia males always have and continue to dominate the entire country, not only family firms. Considerable research on gender diversity at the workplace within the Kingdom has been conducted, although few studies have investigated the advancement of women in their careers once they are employed (Alahmadi, 2011). Gender equality further is supported in Islam, where men have authority in certain limited aspects and the religion supports women and equality: “Muslim women are granted equal rights in Islam as well as equal responsibilities” (Maqsood, 1994, p. 174).

Eighteen out of this study’s 22 female participants talked about equality between genders; in comparison only four participants talked about inequality. The participants shared both positive and negative aspects of their gender-related work lived experiences, but all were determined to help achieve gender equality’s acceptance as a reality for future generations. Regrettably gender inequality continues to be an international

phenomenon, affecting females all over the world. Nonetheless the positive attitudes the participants expressed may create a brighter future for working women in Saudi Arabia and in turn the world beyond.

Traditional Culture vs Contemporary Times: Dialectical Theme

Oukil & Al-Khalifah (2012) examined the effect of culture in family businesses in Saudi Arabia. To emphasize how culture's customs and traditions typically shape family business practices and governance, they gave the example of a commonly respected notion used to guide communication practices in the family firm: "old and senior people are well respected, and thus should not be counter-argued" (Oukil & Al-Khalifah, 2012, p. 50). Culture continues to dominate the behavior and attitudes of the Saudi people and the Saudi business world; even with all the discussed governmental and private sector changes affecting female employment (see Chapter 1), people's reactions may first be driven by cultural expectations and assumptions. Interestingly, in a 2011 study conducted on 160 Saudi female leaders they ranked last in identifying the challenges that face women leaders in Saudi (Alahmadi (2011)). In contemporary times of transition from traditional culture to contemporary times, Saudi women need to remain aware of the challenges that culture, even as it evolves, will place in their path as they move away from the past and into the future.

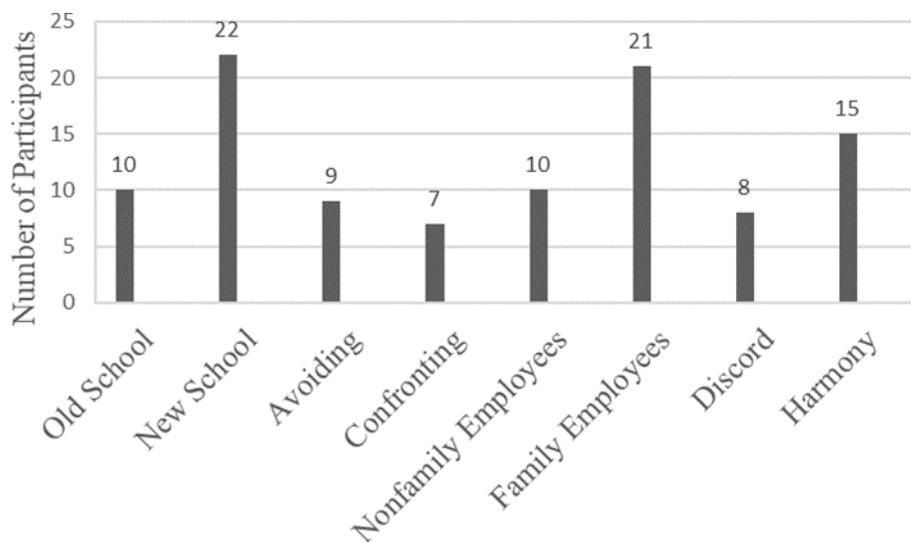
Eighteen participants spoke about contemporary times and the female employment-related changes in Saudi Arabia that have affected their family business and thereby their own work experiences in some manner. As one example out of many cultural shift accounts detailed in Chapter 4's presentation of study results, Jawida described fathers who completely changed their negative views about females working in

Saudi, moving from complete disagreement with the idea of their daughters working with men to accepting, indeed actively soliciting, jobs for their daughters in a mixed environment workplace.

This study's findings and the constructed dialectical theme of traditional culture versus contemporary times, among other themes, indicated that Saudi Arabian culture remains an important topic of study as a contextual factor of influence on women's employment.

The third research question sought to explore the aspects of work-related conflicts that Saudi female workers experience in the family business work environment, inquiring about their lived experience of those conflicts:

RQ3 - What are the lived experiences of the nature of conflicts that impact the second-generation Saudi Arabian females who work in a family business?



Themes Shared by the Participants

Figure 20. *RQ3* - Emergent themes: participant responses.

Old School vs New School: Dialectical Theme

Old ways and new ways of doing business may clash in Saudi family firms but that dialectical tension theme of conflict is not always openly acknowledged. The literature review revealed that submersion of disagreement is common. Thus based on their study on the importance of communication and transparent governance, a common focus at contemporary Middle East family business conferences, Sahni, Alwy, and Al-Assaf (2017) would agree that "internal family disputes rarely get to the point of open, public conflict" (Nydell, 1996, p. 87). This study's participants discussed fears they attribute to founders and managements following an "old school" way of thinking, such as deciding not to delegate tasks and responsibilities. The literature supported this participant expression of fearing the old and staying open to new ways of doing business: a study of family businesses in the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia (Oukil & Al-Khalifah, 2012) emphasized that a family business founder who does not delegate, has no written policies, and trusts only old employees will negatively affect both the business and its family members.

All 22 participants talked about the Saudi business world changes that are taking place and impacting their lives, including so-called "new school" ways of thinking about the responsibilities of family business founders. For example, they believed the founder(s) must envision the family business years ahead into the future, to avoid and prevent any conflicts. Many also discussed their own experiences with new school thinking and mentioned the evolving new mindsets of some fathers and brothers. The overriding theme conveyed was one of ongoing change and flux, giving the researcher insight into evolving opportunities for changes in internal family business rules and

practices for dealing with internal business conflicts, such as avoiding or confronting internal disagreements, as next discussed.

Avoiding vs Confronting Conflict: Dialectical Theme

The family must have excellent relationships to prevent conflicts from happening: its members “need to monitor each other’s opinion and reaction continuously” (Gersick, Davis, Hampton, & Lansberg, 1997, p. 90). Wilmot and Hocker (2007) addressed the effect of indirect communication skills on the part of decisionmakers; in a collectivist culture, it is an issue that generates conflict. Conflicts appear if there is no clear guide and role for each family member, as a result of the founder’s decisions. Neubauer and Lank (1998) posited that confrontation is the most important strategic stage in any family conflict; for face to face dialogues among family members to identify the problem and the best solutions they recommended enlisting the assistance of a facilitator.

The participants shared their own personal experiences with internal family business conflicts, voicing their concerns and ideas for solutions. They described conflicts that began as seemingly small disagreements but eventually escalated, some even leading to failure and dissolution of the business. Certain participants discussed the conflict’s escalation as having happened because of avoiding and not discussing the issues at hand. Many who discussed avoidance described not openly discussing disagreements and different viewpoints as a culturally-driven practice that they hoped would change over time as more women join the family business workforce.

The Saudi Arabian culture is a collectivist culture, which is reflected in many aspects of social behavior, such as believing that being in a group is the best guarantee of protection for any Saudi individual. Avoidance under the prevailing Saudi cultural

mindset is believed to prevent exposing the family to conflict rather than feeding the conflict's escalation. Confronting family conflict as a strategy to improve the family business or to help achieve a better relationship between family members was not described by the participants as a culturally-supported business practice.

Non-Family Employees vs Family Employees: Dialectical Theme

A study of Saudi Arabian women entrepreneurs stated that one of the obstacles they consistently have faced involves effectively managing family members instead of non-family members in their businesses (Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, & Al-Sadoon, 2014). The participants expressed the belief or concern that the status of key employees as family or nonfamily was at times an important consideration when dealing with internal family disagreement or conflict. Their focus is supported in the literature: "Family relationships among the owners and key employees impact the business as a whole" (Dahlan & Klieb, 2011, p. 4).

Twenty-one of the 22 participants talked about family member employees, either brothers or fathers, and the problems they presented for the business. These problems were described as significant conflicts that the participants believed families must be well prepared for by learning how to deal with their relatives who are also their fellow employees. In contrast, participant Nada mentioned a different experience in which a key employee who happened to be nonfamily in status and had been working for the family firm for over 35 years was a source of strength and not problems: his backing and support for women in the workplace proved to be the reason that her business's founders eventually accepted females as employees.

The data collected also showed that some participants were aware that family members represent a "threat" to non-family members and a threat to their jobs, since they may gain their position by inheritance over any assessment of competence for which a nonfamily member might be selected for employment. Certain conflicts were described that stemmed from lack of cooperation between nonfamily and family members, a lack of cooperation driven by nonfamily employees' fears that they will be replaced by a family member. The importance of a clear succession plan—that would allay such fears and promote job security for all employees, family and nonfamily—was a topic that surfaced in this context and will be discussed below.

Discord vs Harmony: Dialectical Theme

While eight participants spoke specifically about discord in their discussion of family business conflict, 15 spoke about harmony between family members in the business and its effect on both the business and family relationships. As previously noted, the role of family members is vital in any family business; in the case of female family business employees the roles they might play to prevent discord and to foster harmony in the business was a topic of interest and concern for the participants.

Accounts of discord were shared that emphasized a number of factors that had negatively affected the lived experiences of the participants. They included: 1) unnecessary reporting to first generation management that constrained their capabilities and responsibilities; 2) employment or promotion based on inheritance rather than competence; 3) the resistance of males to females as their coworkers, whether that resistance were openly visible or subtle in practice; 4) lack of transparent and open communication between different generations involved in the business and between

groups such as family member employees or nonfamily employees. Discord was also attributed to not having a clear set of rules that clearly defined tasks, practices, and responsibilities for family business employees.

On a positive note the 15 female study participants who discussed harmony in the workplace raised its prospect as an important goal for women workers in Saudi and a necessary objective for family businesses to ensure business success, sustainability, and longevity. Important factors that the participants viewed as contributing to harmonious interaction among all employees in a family business, many of which they proudly reported as personally having practiced and accomplished, included: 1) acting as a receptive and cooperative female employee role model for internal and external observers and coworkers; 2) supporting male and female coworkers, ensuring especially that females progress rather than struggle as they work in a male-dominated workplace environment; 3) helping to clearly and consistently communicate values of benefit to female workers to the next generation as they enter the Saudi family business world; and 4) promoting a sense of belonging in the family business and equal treatment for all employees of the firm, regardless of family/nonfamily status, experience level, age or gender.

The study participants' expressed perspectives on their lived experiences of discord and harmony were related closely to their many shared views on effective conflict management; many suggested solutions during their discussions that were based on personal stories about what had worked and what had not in their own employment experiences. The fourth research question inquired about the selected participants' views

on conflict management and resolution; their response levels for the themes that emerged in their accounts are presented below in Figure 21.

RQ4 - What are second-generation Saudi Arabian females' understandings about how to best manage and resolve conflicts in family businesses?

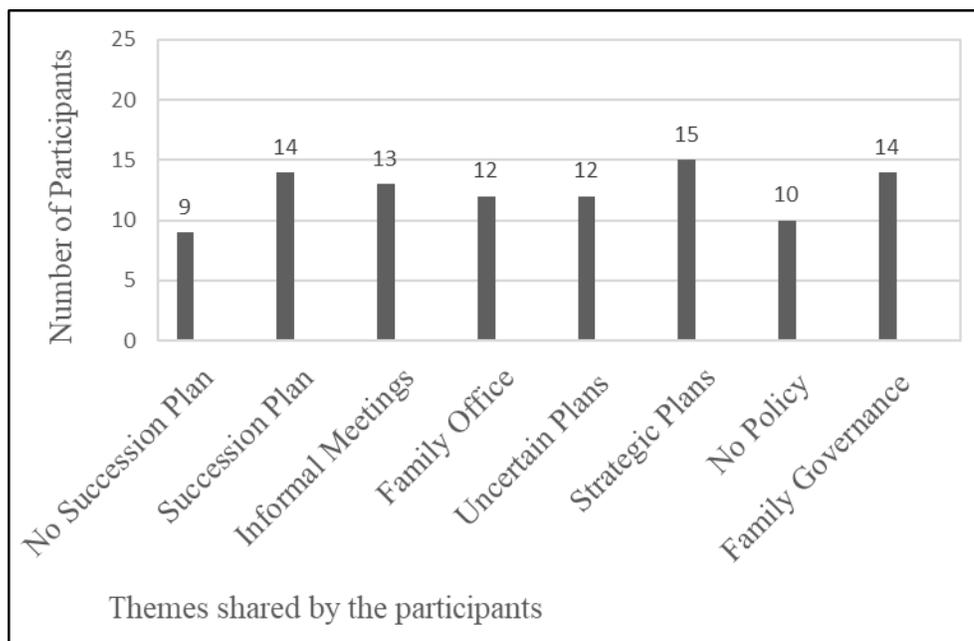


Figure 21. *RQ4* - Emergent themes: participant responses.

No Succession Plan vs Succession Plan: Dialectical Theme

Ibrahim, Soufani, and Lam (2001) discussed the importance of the successor who will be ready to join and lead the family business; they noted that a family business succession plan helps to keep family members employees on track and is typically the product of a long process that can consume 15 – 20 years, to prepare a designated successor(s) through mentorship and training. Gersick, Davis, Hampton, and Lansberg (1997) added that a succession plan takes time and it is not a single process. It reflects a series of structural decisions to which the next generation must adjust and adapt: “[o]wners must formulate a vision of a future governance structure and decide how to

divide ownership” (p. 194). They added that some families work hard on preparing the next generation yet other families succeed without planning.

Nine participants described conflict management in the absence of clear policies about succession and the future governance of the family business; in every case discussed the absence of clear policies sowed discord, uncertainty, fear, and other negative outcomes. Twelve participants spoke of their experiences with different family governance rules and regulations. Participants suggested that having a succession plan and preparing the next generation might prevent conflicts in family businesses. Other positive factors advanced included: 1) the benefits for women employees of having a clear career path laid out for them, 2) expectations and resources regarding education for employment, 3) clarity that promoted commitment and a sense of belonging, and 4) the fostering of family unity that comes from having clearly articulated rules, regulations, and expectations.

Informal Meetings vs Family Office: Dialectical Theme

Gersick, Davis, Hampton, and Lansberg (1997) emphasized the importance of separating the family from business. While families often meet informally for social events they also must develop policies and create a "code of understanding" (Neuebauer & Lank, 1998, p. 89) in order to educate the family. Typically the family governing or managing office (a.k.a., the family office) is responsible for these family meetings, which ideally are designed “to increase the number of [desired] positive behaviors and break out of destructive dead-end spirals” (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007, p. 173).

To keep family business employees coherent and working in concert together, a family business office looks after different facets of its family members’ lives, typically

inclusive of educational, financial, and social aspects. Twelve participants spoke about their experiences with a family office, which was viewed as having helped to define employee roles and to create the best possible climate for family member meetings and education. Other participants talked about their experiences of not having a formal office to take care of family members and their needs.

The researcher learned that participants generally favored the existence of the family office; participants whose businesses lacked that central structural component expressed their desires to persuade their firms' founder(s) of its benefits. While it remains a strategy that each family business must individually assess as appropriate and feasible, it also was one supported by the majority of the participants interviewed.

Uncertain Plans vs Strategic Plans: Dialectical Theme

The family business founder is the responsible person for the firm's strategic plan. This plan looks far beyond any family member and is designed to keep everything on track for the future. In strategic planning the business founder must bear in mind the personal history of the family firm's origin because it affects how the family reacts when conflicts surface (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Gersick, Davis, Hampton, and Lansberg (1997) elaborated on a recommended formal process for strategic planning, suggesting that an outside consultant can help to define for the next generation important employment-related matters such as job descriptions, organizational structure, and employee responsibilities, among others.

The participants believed that having a strategic plan gave them confidence that their family business would last and that it was built a solid foundation. In the absence of strategic planning in their family business work experiences, they shared feelings of

frustration because of the resultant uncertainty and lack of clarity they experienced. Several mentioned that the same uncertainty makes the family members confused. This confusion may be exacerbated if the absence of clearly articulated and shared strategic planning is accompanied by an absence of willing delegation: several participants contended that if the founder refuses to delegate authority to the next generation conflicts will inevitably arise.

Participants emphasized the importance of these plans, saying that they positively affected both their own performances as employees and the company's future. They talked about their experiences and how an awareness of strategic planning in the family business had affected them. Some shared their efforts to convince the firm's decisionmaker(s) about the importance of the strategic plans for both the family and the business. Their perceptions of the value of strategic planning is supported by Ward's (2004) model of "Continuity Planning Triangle" emphasizing the importance of planning in family businesses, as shown in Figure 22.

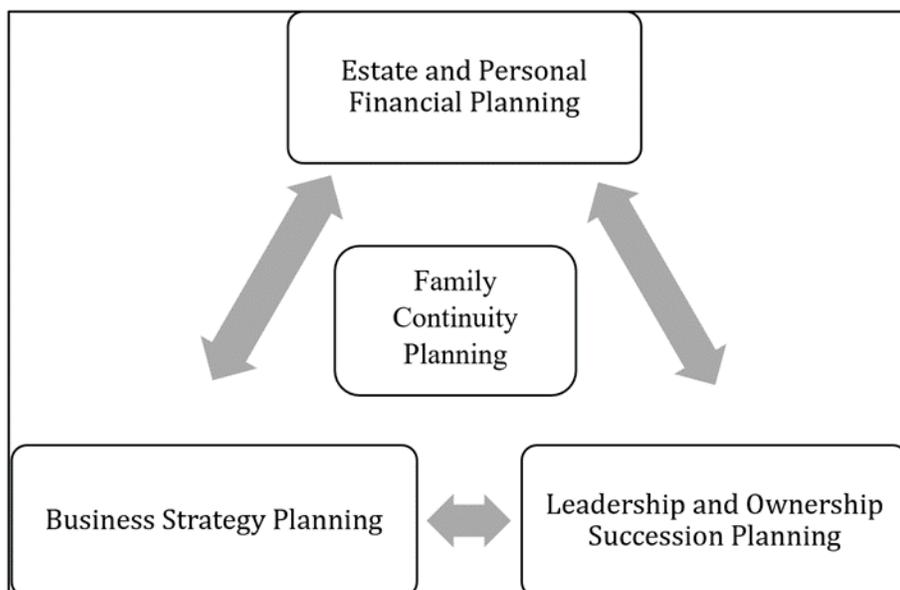


Figure 22. Continuity planning triangle. (Ward, 2004, p. 18).

This family continuity planning triangle shows that the business, financial, and leadership/succession components of planning for a family business are connected and should not be separated; all the designated components of family firm planning are important for the continuity of the business.

No Policy vs Family Governance Handbook: Dialectical Theme

Written documents are always the best choice for managing conflicts (Dahlan & Klieb, 2011); they can provide clarity, define roles, and greatly assist understandings for all individuals involved in any collective effort such as a family business. In this context a family governance handbook has been described as a “[s]et of institutions and mechanisms whose aim is to order the relationships occurring within the family context and between the family and the business” (Suare & Santana-Martin, 2004, p.146). A family business governance handbook can have a broad reach of governance that reaches beyond employment and often consists of rules and regulations that the family expects a family member to follow, whether they have or have not officially joined the business as employees. Agamy (2019) pointed out that there is no template; each family must write its own version depending on its values. Family governance documents carry great weight beyond their present impact as they provide guidance for family members in the future.

The participants talked about experiencing both situations reflected in the emergent dialectical theme, either having family business governance policies that were not written out or alternatively having shared written documents in some form of a handbook. From either perspective the participants did point out the importance of having a manual to guide family relations; they spoke of it as a tool to manage and prevent

conflict. Thus some shared stories and declared that if a role is defined in writing, disputes will not arise. While a family business governance handbook was viewed as an official document entailing a process for its creation and approval, it also was viewed as helpful in shaping the family's needs and expectations.

Dialectical Themes: The Essences of the Participants' Life Experiences

This phenomenological research study's participants were Saudi Arabian second-generation female family members of family-owned businesses who were working with their families. The participants had work experiences in a family business environment in Saudi Arabia and could speak specifically about women in the workforce. The cultural context of the qualitative research study here conducted is important to any assessment of essence of the lived experiences for the participants interviewed: the nature of qualitative research interviews typically presents a challenge for Saudis since it is deemed culturally taboo to discuss one's private life in front of strangers. With respect for that cultural norm the researcher nonetheless was able to gain the trust of the participants and to be well received by them in the conduct of her interviews. This was critical for the discovery of data that would illuminate the essence of the participants' lived work experiences.

The essence of the lived experience describes the larger picture and understanding of the participants about employment of and for Saudi women; the researcher therefore analyzed and discussed all thematic aspects of experience derived from information received from the participants. As Dahlberg (2006) so well defines and describes the key target of this study's inquiry into the target population's lived experiences, "an essence could be understood as a structure of essential meanings that explicates a phenomenon of interest. The essence or structure is what makes the phenomenon to be that very

phenomenon. That is, the essence or structure illuminates these essential characteristics of the phenomenon without which it would not be that phenomenon” (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 11). In the case of these study participants, each theme that emerged (such as, rejection they experienced as female employees in a family business, or their experience with avoiding conflict as family member employees in their family business) could be combined with an oppositional or contradictory theme that also emerged in the study data collected from the 22 selected participants (e.g., support participants experienced as female employees in a family business, or participant experience with confronting conflict as a family member employee in their family business). This allowed the researcher to combine opposite themes into what has been called for purposes of this study “dialectical themes:” rejection versus acceptance as a female employee in the Saudi family business, and avoiding versus confronting conflict as a family member in a family business. Not only did each emergent individual theme represent an “essence” true to the reality of experience for the participants of the phenomenon here studied (second-generation female family member employee experience in their family business); the reality of experiencing the conflict dynamics created by their opposition was also a “truth” for the participants, a kind of essence of essences. This discovery has inspired the researcher to continue her investigatory, educational, and advocacy efforts on behalf of Saudi women in family businesses, in the hopes that the dynamic, dialectical tensions she’s uncovered and termed also their lived employee realities in the workplace (e.g., gender inequality versus gender equality) will continue to evolve and shift in the direction of a lived experience theme that is of benefit first and foremost to women, such as gender equality.

There was reason for the researcher to conclude from the data collection process and data collected and analyzed that the shift and evolution of the lived realities for Saudi women in the workplace will continue to move towards favoring women. Some participants mentioned their intent to look at and learn from other women active in family businesses; some participants mentioned that they are trying to learn more about how to advance the cause of women employees by attending forums, listening to others' experiences, and then discussing it with the family members to see their reaction. As witness to their displayed tone, energy, and gestures during their responses to the interview questions posed, the researcher concluded that the subject of their lived experience as Saudi women employees in family businesses is both important and inspiring to them. Although a few seemed unsure or lacking in confidence, the majority seemed to actively preparing for the right time to begin implementing the "new school" practices that their family needs, as discussed.

In choosing such a broad age-range for this study (22 – 45 years of age), the researcher was attempting to understand the full range of thoughts and viewpoints existing within this generation. Forty-five-year-olds will arguably have different lived experiences than twenty-two-year-olds. However, it was essential to capture these different perspectives and understand them. Arguably, those on the lower end of this age-range faced many more difficulties than the younger women faced. The older women entered the workforce at a time that was not as hospitable to women, nor were women given a voice or ability to influence decisions, which affected the firm. Today, this situation is much different. Women are increasingly shown favor within the Saudi government through new policies and initiatives; those have allowed them to seek

employment positions for which they otherwise might not have been eligible, take advantage of educational opportunities abroad, and enjoy increased rights within the country. Despite the challenges this broad age range may bring to the study, it was essential to give the women of this wide generational span a voice to speak on an important subject.

Limitations

This study's design was limited by the lack of nonanecdotal, data-driven qualitative research studies on the lived experiences of Saudi women in family businesses. Alselaime (2014) noted that there is a lack of literature by Saudi researchers that examines what feminism means for women in Saudi Arabia, especially within the business world. Moreover, because Saudi Arabia remains in many respects a "closed country" limiting tourism, foreign investment, and the intervention of non-Saudis in Saudi commercial affairs, the researcher noticed that non-Saudis have generated most of the relevant existing research literature. That literature reviewed was therefore arguably Western-centric, lacking a full understanding of the Saudi indigenous cultural context. Culture oversees the evolution of core values for each country, tribe, family, and self (Hofstede, 1997) and markedly influences the decisions of Saudi family business founders; it also affects the experiences and expectations of the next generation.

Culture is constantly changing; as a phenomenon in flux its understanding will always be a challenge for Saudi citizens of different generations. In this respect the study also is limited, as it captured the essences of individual lived experiences during one particular slice of time, as opposed to over a specific period of time to assess more accurately the effect of cultural changes. Additional research examining and assessing the

effects of culture over time for specific identified Saudi Arabian female employee populations would further our understanding of their lived experiences as women working in the Saudi business world.

This study was both limited and enabled by the researcher's own status and circumstances. As a family member in a Saudi family business she was still initially a stranger (not related) to the participants; as previously noted Saudi culture traditionally does not encourage discussions by family members of family issues with persons outside one's family, nor discussions about family matters among persons of different ages and gender, inside or outside one's family. At the same time the researcher may have been welcomed by the family business female employee participants as because of her own employment status in her family's business. Her similar status as a family member worker and family business "insider" helped her to gain the trust of these participants and transcend familial culturally-mandated boundaries, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge through data collected to better inform our understanding of Saudi female employment in family businesses. The researcher's awareness of her own status as potential source of personal bias led her to carefully practice bracketing throughout the study's data collection and analytical processes, as previously discussed.

Although the instant study was also limited by the sample size (22 participants) selected, that limitation is a function of the pioneering nature of the study. Saudi culture as noted previously is a "closed" culture within which the family-related topics discussed would not normally be shared among strangers. For reasons of her own status as a family member female employee in a family business, the researcher was able to overcome the participants' culturally-driven decision to be silent about their personal views and

experience. Although it may be argued that the broad age range of the participants selected for study here (22 – 45 years of age) is also a limiting factor for assessment of this study's applicability or value for Saudi women, that age range represents the generation that the researcher sought to understand for its full range of thoughts and viewpoints on Saudi female employment in Saudi Arabian family businesses. Although it is true that forty-five-year-olds will have different lived experiences than twenty-two-year-olds, it is also arguable that their different experiences can shed light on the larger picture of what is true—the essence of experience—for the second-generation target population. Those females on the upper end of the participant age-range faced many more and different difficulties than the younger women faced; the older women participants entered the workforce at a time that was not as hospitable to women, when women were neither given a voice nor the ability to influence business decisions, which directly and indirectly affected their respective family firms. Today, the situation for women regarding employment is far different. Women are being increasingly shown favor within the Saudi government through newly initiated policies, granting them employment opportunities for which they otherwise would not have been eligible, educational opportunities abroad, and increased rights (such as driving) within the country. Despite the limitations that the broad age range here selected for study may present, in the context of understanding what is the lived reality for Saudi female family business employees during a time of tremendous changes, the researcher believed it essential to capture their different perspectives as pioneers for those who would follow as female employees in the Saudi family business world.

Contributions of the Study

This study helped to rectify the lack of qualitative research in the literature regarding the lived experiences of female employees in Saudi Arabian family businesses. Its analyzed data-driven results have enriched understanding of the nature of work-related conflicts for the target population. The researcher constructed what she has termed here “dialectical themes” from the data’s emergent individual themes, thereby illuminating conflict dynamics and dialectical tensions between oppositional realities (essences) at play and affecting Saudi female employees in the family business workplace.

The study’s focused inquiries of the participants regarding conflict management and the future for female workers in family businesses substantively contributed evidence on best practices affecting the sustainability and longevity of family businesses, benefitting future generations. There will be fewer conflicts between family members if they are prepared for what the future holds and have the flexibility and adaptability to address ongoing and future business challenges. The researcher believes this study contributes to that necessary preparation for the future by educating Saudi Arabian families about “new school” thinking on options in the transfer of the business from generation to the other. This then may facilitate the consideration of succession as an activity based on qualification and competence rather than a rote practice only driven solely by rules of inheritance.

The study contributes directly and indirectly to the field of conflict and resolution to improve conflict resolution strategies which will enrich the field. The past and present conflict management and resolution strategies at play in Saudi family businesses that the researcher has raised from emergent themes in her data are important because rarely

discussed: the study reflects the culture of Saudi Arabia and presents participant-generated potential solutions to prevent conflicts from happening in family businesses at a time of generational succession. Females who now will become more involved in family firms will experience new and different conflicts they have never faced before in that area of the world. This study will inspire discussions and different strategies in both the public, governmental sector and the private family business sector that will add new information and data to the field of conflict resolution, incorporating a uniquely female perspective on realities for women in the family business workforce.

As previously noted, both the literature reviewed and the analyzed experiences shared by the study's participants support the notion that female empowerment is clearly linked to the success of the family business. This study found that females are empowered by the support they receive as family business employees, most especially from other females. This study will facilitate the sharing of connections and female support that Saudi women workers are looking for to further empower themselves and improve their employment access, scope, and opportunities. The implications of participant perceptions about the importance of female support form the basis of the first of several recommendations the researcher next offers.

Recommendations

Based on the literature reviewed, data collected and analyzed, and conclusions reached in the instant study exploring the lived experiences and conflict dynamics for second-generation Saudi female family business employees, the researcher offers the following recommendations. Their purpose is to improve the nature of the lived experiences and conflict dynamics for Saudi family business working women by

fostering empowerment, promoting education, improving contemporary family business governance, encouraging future research, raising awareness and acceptance, and driving cultural shifts in Saudi Arabia towards a more harmonious Saudi business world benefitting all coworkers, females as well as males.

Empowerment

In particular, the support of other females was a strong positive factor that emerged in the data analyzed: when describing both their struggles and their progress participants emphasized the importance of females staying together and supporting each other. To foster empowerment of female Saudi family business employees the researcher recommends encouraging and facilitating support groups and networking opportunities for women that will increase their visible support from/of other females, something the participants clearly believed was significant to their own positive experiences and success. In one example, during her interview participant Deena suggested creating a local support group for females working in family businesses in the area, which she believed would empower them by allowing them to share their experiences. The female networking strengths that support groups and other collective groups (such as those available through social media) can bring to the table will help empower women employees seeking to move from struggle to progress and success.

Education

Education was mentioned by the many participants as they related their lived experiences as Saudi female employees: it was always portrayed as an essential aspect that all family members must believe in and commit to supporting at the highest possible schooling levels. The researcher recommends the education of all students, including

graduate business school students, as well as family businesses' human resources employees, regarding the importance of female employment. Educational resources about female employment in Saudi Arabia should emphasize the unique characteristics of Saudi family businesses which operate within the larger Saudi tribal family structure in the Kingdom: as tribal in origin they are highly individual and different from other companies in many respects. Based on this study's results confirming that many families apply many different approaches to managing conflict, the researcher believes that educational institutions and platforms are the best fora for sharing knowledge about conflict management and for finding solutions by examining case studies of family businesses. In light of Saudi family business's marked differences in approaches to both female employment and conflict management, the researcher also recommends that family businesses—through their family offices and/or employment of family consultant—refer the family members to the best educational programs that meet their criteria and needs.

Governance

The study' results supported the use of shared written documents that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of every employees in a Saudi Family business. Based on the participants' accounts of the various means employed for the governance of family businesses, in the absence of written documents the researcher strongly recommends the creation of a family business governance handbook. Such a manual would be shared with all employees of the business, preventing uncertainty by disseminating detailed family business policies and practices, roles and responsibilities.

It is also recommended that the governance handbook state the mission and vision of the family business: the researcher found that families who have a clear mission and vision have more opportunities to sustain and grow from generation to generation. She believes in the importance of preparing the next generation to manage their employment-related responsibilities and to work together for the future of the family firm. The researcher believes a family governance handbook will add value to employees for its clarity and career directions, add value to the family and family business by more openly and efficiently distributing tasks and responsibilities among employees, and thereby add value to the country, since 60% of GDP in Saudi Arabia is derived from family businesses.

Future Research

The researcher recommends conducting qualitative and quantitative empirical studies that will add to the literature on all aspects of female employment in Saudi family businesses, including those aspects that relate especially to conflict dynamics and conflict management. It is hoped that much research on the topic will be conducted by Saudi researchers and scholars, to add the indigenous perspective to a mostly a Western-centric body of work on Saudi Arabian businesses and culture. The researcher also recommends conduct of a study on the perspectives of male family members whose female family relatives have joined the business, in order to broaden the scope of inquiry into all manner of positive and negative impacts from female employment. A broader scope of inquiry would also be achieved by studies analyzing the perceptions of female employment of female family members who are not family business employees. These and more Saudi female employment-related research studies will enrich the scholarship

and understandings of Saudi family businesses, Saudi female employment, and family business conflict management, assisting all affected by these topics to gain knowledge to conduct best practices for all concerned.

Awareness and Acceptance

Given all the rapid changes occurring that affect women during a remarkable time of transition in Saudi Arabia (see Chapter 1), the researcher believes that fostering acceptance will contribute to a successful future for Saudi family businesses. Every effort to raise awareness of the positive contributions that female employees bring—to the workplace, their families, their society, and the nation—will in turn lead to their acceptance. From speaking in classrooms and sharing across dining tables to giving presentations at meetings and contributing to scholarship, there is much that can be done to raise awareness of the positive benefits gained from employing women in family businesses and beyond. The researcher also recommends raising awareness by conducting female employment workshops with Gulf region family businesses organizations (e.g., the Bahrain Family Business Association) and collaborating with other researchers throughout the world to share practices that will promote the continuity of family businesses and foster harmonious business interactions among family members.

The Promise of Cultural Shifts

Culture was the predominant influential factor that imbued the participants' accounts of their family business employment-related experiences and business-related conflict experiences. Culture in Saudi Arabia has a tremendous impact on every aspect of Saudi lives. The researcher believes that her findings and recommendations here will help to ensure the protection and advancement of females in the Saudi family business world,

as the culture continues to shift and change in response to forces at work in contemporary times. The participants' shared experiences reflect the simultaneous effects of traditional and contemporary cultural assumptions and expectations.

It will be critical to assess continually in the future the impact of the many changes for women and for the Saudi people that have been initiated only recently in the country's long history. What will be the differences wrought, and their effects, as Saudi Arabia and Saudi women navigate the changes (see van Geel, 2016) being introduced in these rapidly evolving contemporary times? Will modernization and potential assimilation of the world outside Saudi Arabia's borders act to retain or delete traditional Saudi ways of life that long have been centered on family and tribal achievements? Over 17 years ago in her book *The Saudis: Inside the Desert Kingdom* (2002), Sandra Mackey wrote that "Saudi Arabia never was nor is likely ever to be a melting pot. Its society, built on family and tribe, is incapable of assimilating outsiders even on a casual basis" (p. 35). Will that still ring true as the country continues into the future, as Saudi society strives to maintain its proud national identity even as it navigates a turbulent, globalized, digital new world? Only time, and excellent empirical research of course, will tell. The researcher is sure only that things are quickly changing for the better in the case of Saudi women who would take their seat at the family business decision-making table. *In shā Allah.*

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

INVITATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Participants,

A research project is currently being undertaken by the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The thesis title is: *Alternative Dispute Resolution Among Family Members in Family Businesses Conflicts in Saudi Arabia* and the research objectives are:

- To understand and discover potential areas of conflict for family businesses in Saudi Arabia.
- To discover and analyze the nature of the conflict in Saudi Arabia family business from second-generation Saudi Arabian's participants' viewpoints.
- To improve conflict and resolution management of Saudi Arabian families who work in family business, thus increasing resiliency and sustainability of the firm.

As a Nova Southeastern student, I invite you to participate in the project. The aim is to gather perceptions of Saudi women in family business in Saudi Arabia to gather a clear understanding. The data collection will take place through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interviews are expected to take between 30-45 minutes.

With your permission, interviews will be recorded and accompanying notes may be taken. Please note that your identifiable information will not be made available to anyone other than myself, and will instead be identified with a coding system and reported in aggregate – meaning individual data about yourself will not be reported. Following the study, all identifiable information will be redacted. Besides, this data will be stored on a password protected server only I have access to.

Attached is a consent form indicating your willingness to participate in this study. Please sign and return the form to be if you agree to be involved. Setting a time and location for the interview will then be arranged. You will also receive a copy of this signed consent form for your records.

For further information about the project, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or supervisor; Professor Alexia Georgakopoulos, Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Nova Southeastern University.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

The interview will comprise of the following questions:

1. Can you give me a brief overview of your career path to date?
2. What can you tell me about your current role in your family business?
3. How would you describe the nature of female employment in your family's business overall?
4. What do you think could help increase female participation in the Saudi labor market overall?
5. What kinds of conflicts are most common in your family firm? And other family firms?
6. What are conflict resolution strategies employed? Are these effective? What would you do differently?

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION (your personal information will not be identified in the research)

Name:

Organization:

Job Title:

Interview Date & Time:

Interview Location:

Age:

If I need to clarify something after the interview, may I contact you again? Y/N

Telephone Number:

Appendix C: Study Interview Questions

1. Can you explain your current role in your family firm?
2. Despite women in Saudi Arabia graduating college at record rates, women (especially younger women) still struggle to find employment in Saudi Arabia. Why do you think that is?
3. What barriers do you see for female employment and opportunity advancement in your family firm?
4. What tensions or conflicts exist in your family firm?
5. How do these conflicts impact you personally or professionally?
6. How are these conflicts managed by leaders?
7. Do you believe there is an active conflict management system in place in your family firm?
8. How would you change the way your family firm handles conflict, especially inter-generational conflict?
9. What threats to succession, or sustainability, do you see within your family firm?
10. Would you like to add anything else, or ask any questions?

Appendix D: Informed Consent

**General Informed Consent Form****NSU Consent to be in a Research Study Entitled**

The Dynamics that Exist Among Second-Generation Women in Family Businesses
Conflicts in Saudi Arabia: A Phenomenological Research Study

Who is doing this research study?

College: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Principal Investigator: Basmah Alzamil, MA

Faculty Advisor/Dissertation Chair: Alexia Georgakopoulos, Ph.D.

Co-Investigator(s): N/A

Funding: Unfunded

What is this study about?

This is a research study, designed to test and create new ideas that other people can use. The purpose of this research study is to identify the conflicts and raise awareness of conflict resolution strategies in the family business as power transfers from one generation to the next in Saudi Arabia and to encourage the growth, sustainability, and longevity of family-owned business from female family members in family businesses in Saudi Arabia.

Why are you asking me to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because you are a second generation Saudi Arabian woman, working in a family-owned business. This study will include approximately 22 people in similar circumstances. Inclusion criteria include age (25 to 45 years old), "generational status" (e.g., all women must be second-generation), and educational status (university graduates). The participants will be second-generation family members who are either decision-makers in critical leadership positions or those who have recently joined the firm.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in this research study?

While you are taking part in the research study, you will participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview or an interview conducted via video conferencing. The

interviews are expected to take between 30-60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted in Saudi Arabia in-person, at the place the interviewee chooses or via Skype, in semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and conducted in Arabic.

Are there possible risks and discomforts to me?

This research study involves minimal risk to you. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would have in everyday life.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research study?

You have the right to leave this research study at any time, or not be in it. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to be in the study anymore, you will not get any penalty or lose any services you have a right to get. If you choose to stop being in the study, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study, but you may request that it not be used.

What if there is new information learned during the study that may affect my decision to remain in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to whether you want to remain in this study, this information will be given to you by the investigators. You may be asked to sign a new Informed Consent Form if the information is given to you after you have joined the study.

Are there any benefits of taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits from being in this research study. We hope the information learned from this study will bring awareness to women in the workforce in Saudi Arabia, who often do not have a platform from which their voices that can be heard.

Will I be paid or be given compensation for being in the study?

You will not be given any payments or compensation for being in this research study.

Will, it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you for being in this research study.

How will you keep my information private?

Information we learn about you in this research study will be handled confidentially, within the limits of the law and will be limited to people who need to review this information. Please note that your identifiable information will not be available to anyone other than the researcher, and interview data will instead be identified with a coding system and reported in aggregate – meaning individual data about yourself will not be reported. All interviews will be transcribed from my home office, using earphones to

protect participant privacy. Besides, this data will be stored on a password-protected server only I have access to. Paper documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. This data will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any regulatory and granting agencies (if applicable). If we publish the results of the study in a scientific journal or book, we will not identify you. All confidential data will be kept securely on a password protected server. All data will be kept for 36 months and destroyed after that time by either shredding any paper documents and/or permanently deleting electronic files from electronic devices.

Will there be any Audio or Video Recording?

This research study involves audio recording. This recording will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any of the people who gave the researcher money to do the study (if applicable). The recording will be kept, stored, and destroyed as stated in the section above. Because what is in the recording could be used to find out that it is you, it is not possible to be sure that the recording will always be kept confidential. The researcher will try to keep anyone not working on the research from listening to or viewing the recording.

If you choose to interview over Skype, you can visit their website to know more about their privacy policy. General information as your name, email address, age, gender, IP address, etc. will be saved in Skype data.

Whom can I contact if I have questions, concerns, comments, or complaints?

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have more questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact:

Primary contact:

Basmah Sulaiman Alzamil, MA can be reached at +966564774477.

If the primary is not available, contact:

Alexia Georgakopouls, Ph.D. can be reached at 954-262-3054.

Research Participants Rights

For questions/concerns regarding your research rights, please contact:

Institutional Review Board
Nova Southeastern University
(954) 262-5369 / Toll Free: 1-866-499-0790
IRB@nova.edu

You may also visit the NSU IRB website at www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants for further information regarding your rights as a research participant.

All space below was intentionally left blank.

Research Consent & Authorization Signature Section

Voluntary Participation - You are not required to participate in this study. In the event you do participate, you may leave this research study at any time. If you leave this research study before it is completed, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you agree to participate in this research study, sign this section. You will be given a signed copy of this form to keep. You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this form.

SIGN THIS FORM ONLY IF THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE TRUE:

- You have read the above information.
- Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction with the research.

Adult Signature Section

I have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining
Consent and Authorization

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent &
Authorization

Date