

Exploring the Level of Managerial, Political, Academic, Economic and Social Empowerment Among Women in Saudi Arabia

Maleeha Mohammed Zaaf Al-Qahtani^a, Tarek Tawfik Yousef Alkhateeb^b, Haider Mahmood^{c*}, Manal Abdalla Zahed Abdalla^d, Ghada Shihata Ebrahim Mawad^e, Maha Ahmed Hussein Alkhatib^f, ^aCollege of Education, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Dilam 16213, Saudi Arabia, ^{b,c}College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj 11942, Saudi Arabia, ^dAssociate Professor of Curriculum and Teaching Methods, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj 11942, Saudi Arabia, ^eAssistant Professor of Educational Technology and Information, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj 11942, Saudi Arabia and Ain Shams University, Egypt, ^fAssistant Professor of Educational Psychology (development), Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj 11942, Saudi Arabia, Email: ^{c*}haidermahmood@hotmail.com

Women empowerment supports sustainable development by using hidden and under-utilised potential. The present research estimated the perception-based level of managerial, academic, economic, political and social empowerment among women through a well-structured questionnaire. The Cronbach Alpha test corroborated the reliability of each item in the hypothesised women empowerment dimension. We corroborate the satisfactory level of women empowerment in all hypothesised dimensions as per the perception of the respondents. The highest average score is found for social women empowerment. It means that the social empowerment of women played the greatest role in empowering Saudi women. At the second rank is academic empowerment and the third is economic empowerment. Thus, economic empowerment and academic empowerment play a significant role in empowering Saudi women. The lowest average mean is found for political empowerment. Hence, the political domain needs to provide women rights through political participation and processes.

Key words: *Women empowerment, Managerial, Economic, Social, Political, Academic.*

Introduction

The Arab Women Organisation (2018) in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program conducted a study on the stakeholders, especially policy designers and decision makers, regarding the international agenda for sustainable development (2015-2030). This report focused on the issue of gender equality and on the importance of women empowerment in light of seventeen development goals. This report also shed light on the status of women in the policies of development in the Arab region to identify the gaps in gender equality. To reduce gender inequality, successful Arab and international experiences were shared and it was highlighted that role of women should be enhanced to achieve sustainable development. This study has detected several challenges faced by women in Arab societies, including the prevailing culture and the social heritage of women, and the societal culture based on customs and traditions. Culture was found to be an important constraint on achieving gender equality, despite the quantitative improvement in the level of education for women. The accomplishments had not succeeded in amending social attitudes and norms that were biased against women, which confirmed the need to develop cultural content and advanced education. Education should be designed to confront discriminatory societal culture from its roots.

Jalili (2008) studied the standard framework for empowering women in the Arab Planning Institute and enhancing their status in the development process. This issue of the advancement and empowerment of women was one of the priorities on the world countries agenda at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Governments, NGOs, and institutions of the United Nations faced many challenges in making women a full and effective partner in all of the dimensions of development. Women were considered as an essential factor in sustainable human development. Despite the remarkable achievements made by Arab women in previous decades and the significant improvement in scientific results, women participation was still below than that of the targeted aspirations in the workforce and in political life. According to this study, the framework and tools of the qualitative analysis should be aimed at narrowing the gap between men and women in relation to their practical and strategic needs and to reach equality between women and men to participate equally in all areas of empowerment. By removing the obstacles in women empowerment, women could enjoy the opportunities and resources to participate in a comprehensive development plan.

The United Nations (2015), with the help of the Arab Gulf Program for Development (AGPD), analysed the status of women and their legal rights in the legislation of twenty Arab countries. This was done by reviewing approximately 300 national laws referring to international treaties and agreements. The countries have ratified the measures that they have taken to activate their national and international obligations. The quantitative approach to measure the achievements has been utilised in the given development indicators. This indicated the extent to which male and female citizens would benefit from development outputs as well as the level of their

acquisition of legal and human rights. Secondly, it read through laws regarding gender equality and non-discrimination, involving women or men, and the human rights curriculum.

The United Nations (2016) stated that the international community made an unprecedented move in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development to achieve gender equality and to empower women. The report clarified the vital links between women economic empowerment and their right to decent work and productive employment. This report also focused on the obstacles faced by women in exercising their rights in the workplace and also proposed ways to overcome these obstacles. It analysed the opportunities and challenges for women economic empowerment due to increasing work of an informal nature. Economic and social mobility was increasing due to technological and digital developments in the recent transforming world. The report outlined policies and procedures which were aimed at addressing gender gaps in the work and enabling women rights for economic women empowered. The United Nations (2017) reviewed the rights of women to ensure access to health services in a way that could benefit the whole of society. Protection from gender-based violence was very necessary among other important measures that might improve the health of families and would contribute to the economic well-being of entire societies.

The Centre for Women's Affairs of the ESCWA (2017) committee has committed to develop evidence-based policy recommendations to assist Arab countries in expanding their efforts to fulfil their obligations regarding the full participation of women in political, economic and public life. This report also highlighted the importance of women representation in legislative, executive, judicial authorities, and local councils. The report confirmed that there were many obstacles impeding the political representation of women, despite the promises which accompanied the Arab uprisings in 2010 to empower the women. The member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council witnessed some positive developments such as giving women the right to vote in Saudi elections for the first time in 2015. As a result, women presence in the political field in the region increased which is the result of the measures taken by governments, civil society and international organisations.

In the present state, literature is missing to estimate the level of economic, political, academic, managerial and social women empowerment as per the perception of society. This research is an attempt to fill this gap. The first section comprised the introduction, the second will discuss some important literature, the third will discuss the methods, and last section will conclude the study.

Literature Review

Recent literature highlighted the importance of women empowerment. For example, Pineda et al. (2019) investigated women economic empowerment in the coffee industry. They found that

women ownership in the industry provided more rights and empowerment to women. Pradhan et al. (2019) investigated the role of property rights in women empowerment. They found that women in traditional families had lesser rights on the property. However, women of fissionable families were observed to be more empowered for the property rights and were found more in the family decision making. Malapit et al. (2019) investigated women empowerment in the agriculture business. They found that independent income, land ownership and financial access boosted women empowerment in the agriculture sector.

Holland and Rammohan (2019) investigated women empowerment in Bangladesh and found that women and children rights were very poor. But, empowered women in agriculture were found to be very supportive their children's health. Galiè et al. (2019) investigated women empowerment in the livestock index. They found that women ownership and empowerment in livestock improved gender equality in Tanzania, which also helped in improving family nutrition and health. Newman (2016) found that breaking the glass-ceiling would encourage women empowerment and would promote wage equality between both genders.

The World Bank (2018) evaluated the factors that contributed to the low rate of Egyptian women participation in the workforce with an objective to define policies and solutions to promote economic growth while narrowing the gender gaps. This report was intended to serve as a policy note to guide the National Council for Women's strategy in Egypt for the economic and political empowerment of women by identifying specific areas still experiencing gender disparities. Accordingly, the report dealt with the structural motives of women participation in economic activity by applying an analytical framework in Egypt. The report entitled, "Implementation of the National Strategy for Empowering Egyptian Women 2030 Follow-up," was issued by Egyptian minister's council and reflected the role of different ministries and agencies in implementing the national strategy for empowering Egyptian women until 2030. The report considered its subject in light of four main dimensions, which are political, economic, and social empowerment, as well as protection. The international human development measured empowerment and gender equality by three basic dimensions, which were participation in political decision-making, participation in economic decision-making, and resource control.

ESCWA (2017) emphasised the importance of providing information and the technical guidance necessary to implement an accountability framework aimed at integrating the gender equality concept in organisational practices, policies and special programs in the national institutions. The proposed framework targeted national institutions in a number of Arab countries (Syrian Arab Republic, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco) to integrate gender equality in the work environment, support efforts for the advancement of women, as well as create a work-environment to achieve gender equality. This framework tried to measure the progress related to fifteen performance indicators, and these indicators were divided into

six elements: accountability, results-based management, supervision, human and financial resources, capabilities, coherence, and knowledge and information management. The report started from a theoretical framework in which each institution showed that it had implemented policies to support the representation of women at different levels. These policies were supported by a comprehensive package of strategies for achieving gender balance and were closely related to performance goals in human resources and strategies as a whole.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2018) monitored an analysis of the challenges faced by Arab countries regarding their efforts to enhance women employment and entrepreneurship. The current legal provisions in the countries studied the ability of women to fully participate in economic activities. The report acknowledged the progress made, especially after the 2011 uprisings, which aimed at strengthening the status of women. Nevertheless, ensuring adequate opportunities for women remained a challenge in the six countries of the study. The report made recommendations to prepare more gender-disaggregated data on education and economic activities for enacting informed policies on a regular basis. It also assessed the impact of policies that supported women employment and entrepreneurship and also identified the factors affecting women's participation in the labour market.

Abdel Al-Mawjoud (2014) identified the level of social and economic empowerment of educated and uneducated women in Juhaina village in Sohag. He revealed governmental and civil efforts regarding the social and economic empowerment of women in Egypt. The study showed that influence of women's education through increased social participation in family decision-making. Educated women experienced the opportunity to make family decisions related to their partner and children's education as well. The dimension of social communication showed that educated women were able to move freely within the family and outside as well, while uneducated women were deprived of this. In regard to the dimension of participation in health decision-making, high health awareness was found among educated women compared to non-educated women. The dimension of obtaining educational opportunities for women was found to be high in educated-female households who provided the opportunity to other female members of household to obtain education until the higher levels. Consequentially, women education affected the family in a positive way through household decision-making. As for the role of education in empowering women in economic activities, educated-women have an opportunity to obtain a job, especially in the public sector, and uneducated women do not. Moral and material returns in education were also found in educated women. Income, a sense of social status and economic security were better among educated women and helped in poverty reduction. Educated women also enjoyed a high standard of living as compared to uneducated women.

Al-Qudah and Al-Tarawneh (2011) recognised the level of women administrative empowerment in public Jordanian universities to identify the organisational, social and personal constraints on empowerment. They found that the level of women administrative empowerment in Jordanian universities was good on the average. The perceptions of social and personal obstacles affected women empowerment in a moderate way and there was a statistically significant effect of personal constraints on jobs at the university. Al-Zayani (2015) identified the role of education in empowering women to participate in the comprehensive development of Bahrain. He found a good level of women participation in all the areas of development and he proposed to increase women participation through a comprehensive development plan in Bahrain. The study recommended involving women in legal decisions concerning the formation of specialised professional committees to ensure women participation in such committees. To improve the image of women and to eliminate the stereotypical and mental concept that women can only be housewives, the participation of women in creativity, culture and science should be enhanced. To enhance women's status in the labour market, more women should be involved in the recruitment process. The promotion of social security by creating legal and administrative environments could secure women empowerment through economic, social and political rights.

Abu Radi (2017) recognised the philosophical foundations of empowering women, analysed the role of education institutions in empowering Egyptian women and found a high level of Egyptian women empowerment in the local context. Moreover, an innovative scenario was developed to activate the role of educational institutions in empowering Egyptian women. To achieve this, general guidelines should be established to activate the role of education institutions in empowering Egyptian women in light of changing societal conditions and to increase women empowerment and thereby ensure their development. Aldy (2017) put forward an approach to support political empowerment by overcoming political or social obstacles in the way towards empowerment. The study tried to address the level of women empowerment in policymaking, which would directly improve the lifestyle of women in these societies. On the other hand, the politically empowerment of women should be extended to increase women participation in the political process of country through national and provincial assemblies and local civil society organisations.

The reviewed literature highlighted women's economic, social, political and academic empowerment, and reveals the gap regarding the empowerment of managerial women. To bridge this literature gap, this study aims to estimate economic, social, political, academic, and managerial empowerment among women based on social perceptions.

Methods and Tools

This paper collected 68 responses after distributing 100 questionnaires to people in top management positions in cities including Riyadh city, and the Southern Riyadh region. The response rate was 68%. We use the Likert scale based on 3 scales: disagree, somewhat OK and agree. Our questionnaire contains a total of 23 items, including economic, social, managerial, academic and political empowerment among women, and are contained in 10, 10, 5, 5 and 3 items respectively. After the collection of perception-based data, we test the reliability of items in each dimension of women empowerment by the Cronbach Alpha test. We the conducted discussions on the descriptive statistics including percentage of responses on 3- Likert scale, arithmetic mean and Standard Deviation (SD) to formulate the major findings.

Data Analyses

At first, we checked the reliability of items in each women empowerment construct through Cronbach Alpha test in table 1. We observe that Cronbach Alpha is greater than at least 0.8 in all women empowerment constructs and more than 0.9 in social empowerment. So, a good strength of relationship is observed in all women empowerment constructs.

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha

Construct	No. of Items	Respondents	Cronbach Alpha
Economic Empowerment	10	68	0.8896
Social Empowerment	10	68	0.9111
Political Empowerment	3	68	0.8703
Managerial Empowerment	5	68	0.8374
Academic Empowerment	5	68	0.8729

Table 2 shows the responses on the economic women empowerment items. The items have an average score of 2.4 which shows that most of respondents are agreed in favour of women economic empowerment. Overall economic women empowerment has an average mean score of 2.6 with a minute SD of 0.39. The 62.4% respondents are agreed on women economic empowerment, 34.1% somewhat agree and only 3.5% of respondents disagreed. It concludes that women economic empowerment is very necessary in the perception of the respectable respondents. The highest average score 2.85 is observed for an item “contributing to the family's income” with a minimum SD of 0.36. Here, we observed that 85.3% respondents agreed in favour of women’s support to the family income and nobody is disagreed. Hence, the support of family income is the largest indicator of women’s economic empowerment. The second highest average score 2.69 is observed for item, “contributing in food security and nutrition intake among family members,” with a low SD of 0.53. Here, we observe that 72.1% respondents agreed to the women’s contribution in family nutrition intake and only 2.9% are

disagreed. Hence, contribution to the food security of family is a strong indicator of women economic empowerment like the contribution in income. The lowest average score is 2.43, which was observed for item, “adopting a number of investment opportunities” with a SD of 0.61. For lowest average item, respondents are inclined toward the agreed response. Here, we observed that 48.2% respondents agreed to adopt a number of investment opportunities, 45.6% responded somewhat OK and only 5.9% are disagreed.

Table 2: Economic Empowerment

S.R.	Items	Agree %	Somewhat OK %	Disagree %	Mean	S.D.
1	Rationalising family consumption.	63.2	33.8	3	2.60	0.55
2	Adopting a number of investment opportunities.	48.5	45.6	5.9	2.43	0.61
3	Contributing to solving the women unemployment problem.	54.4	45.6	7.4	2.47	0.63
4	Inculcating positive economic values such as self-employment, productivity, savings and investment, etc.	63.2	30.9	5.9	2.57	0.61
5	Contributing to increase the productive capacity of society.	69.1	30.9	0	2.69	0.47
6	Contributing to the family's income.	85.3	14.7	0	2.85	0.36
7	Establishing the productive and pioneering projects.	61.8	32.3	5.9	2.56	0.61
8	Supporting optimal utilisation of economic resources available in the locality.	57.4	42.6	0	2.57	0.50
9	Participation in the financial and business activities.	58.8	36.8	4.4	2.54	0.58
10	Contributing in food security and nutrition intake among family members.	72.1	25	2.9	2.69	0.53
Avg.	Economic women Empowerment	62.4	34.1	3.5	2.60	0.39

Table 3 shows the responses on the items of social women empowerment. All items have an average score of at least 2.45, which shows that most of respondents are in favour of women social empowerment. Overall social women empowerment has an average score of 2.66 with a minute SD of 0.38. 62.5% respondents agreed on women social empowerment, 34% somewhat

agreed and only 3.5% of respondents disagreed. This shows that women social empowerment is very necessary for the respondents. The highest average score 2.81 is observed for item, “contribution to family development and raising young children,” with a low SD of 0.43. We observe that 83.4% respondents agreed to women’s contribution in family development and only 1.5% disagreed. Hence, women’s contribution in family development is the largest indicator of women social empowerment. The second highest average score of 2.74 is observed for an item “participating in family decision-making,” with a low SD of 0.48. Here, we observed that 75% respondents agreed to women participating in family decision-making and only 1.5% disagreed. Hence, women participating in family decision-making is a strong indicator of women social empowerment. The lowest average score of 2.46 is observed for item, “supporting civil society organisations,” with a SD of 0.58. Even, for lowest average item, respondents are inclined toward the agreed response. Here, we observed that 50% respondents agreed to support civil society organisations, 45.6% responded somewhat OK and only 4.4% disagreed.

Table 3: Social Empowerment

S.R.	Items	Agree %	Somewhat OK %	Disagree %	Mean	S.D.
1	Participating in family decision-making.	75	23.5	1.5	2.74	0.48
2	Contribution to family development and raising young children.	83.4	16.1	1.5	2.81	0.43
3	Supporting social development opportunities.	70.6	27.9	1.5	2.69	0.50
4	Providing family counselling.	66.2	33.8	0	2.65	0.48
5	Supporting civil society organisations.	50	45.6	4.4	2.46	0.58
6	Contributing to achieving social security.	69.1	30.9	0	2.69	0.47
7	Contribution in solving social problems, especially concerning family.	73.5	25	1.5	2.72	0.48
8	Establishing social values, customs and traditions in favour of female.	67.7	27.9	4.4	2.63	0.57
9	Activating the role of women in the society with a support of the family and society.	63.2	30.9	5.9	2.51	0.61
10	Contribute to achieving family and social development.	70.6	27.9	1.5	2.69	0.50

Avg.	Social Women Empowerment	62.5	34	3.5	2.66	0.38
------	--------------------------	------	----	-----	------	------

Table 4 shows the responses on political women empowerment items. All items have an average score of at least more than 2.3, which shows that most of respondents are in favour of women political empowerment. Overall women political empowerment has an average score of 2.4 with a minute SD of 0.62. 52.5% respondents agreed on women political empowerment, 35.3% somewhat agreed and 12.2% of respondents disagreed. This shows that women political empowerment is very necessary for the respondents. The highest average score of 2.44 is observed for item, “participation in the Shura council and its various committees,” with a low SD of 0.63. Further, we observe that 51.5% respondents agreed to women’s participation in Shura Council, 41.2% somewhat agreed and only 7.3% are disagreed. Hence, women’s participation in Shura Council is the largest indicator of women political empowerment. The lowest average score of 2.34 is observed for an item “exercising the political rights” with a SD of 0.77. Even, for the lowest average item, respondents are at least inclined toward the agreed response. Here, we observed that 51.5% respondents agreed to exercising political rights, 30.6% responded somewhat OK and 17.6% disagreed.

Table 4: Political Empowerment

S.R.	Items	Agree %	Somewhat OK %	Disagree %	Mean	S.D.
1	Participation in political decision making.	54.4	33.8	11.8	2.42	0.70
2	Participation in the Shura Council and its various committees.	51.5	41.2	7.3	2.44	0.63
3	Exercising the political rights, the most important of which is the right to run - the right to vote - the right to assume leadership positions, etc.	51.5	30.9	17.6	2.34	0.77
Avg.	Political Women Empowerment	52.5	35.3	12.2	2.40	0.62

Table 5 shows the responses on the managerial women empowerment items. All items have an average score of at least more than 2.35 which shows that most of respondents are in favour of women managerial empowerment. Overall women managerial empowerment has an average score of 2.51 with a minute SD of 0.46. The 56.2% respondents agreed on women managerial empowerment, 38.5% respondents somewhat agreed on women managerial empowerment and only 5.3% of respondents disagreed. This shows that women managerial empowerment is very necessary in the perception of the respondents. The highest average score of 2.81 is observed for item, “supporting the professional growth and development in the institutions,” with a low SD of 0.55. Further, we observe that 61.8% respondents agreed to women’s contribution in family development, 35.3% somewhat agreed and only 3% disagreed. Hence, supporting

professional growth and development is the largest indicator of women social empowerment. The second highest average score of 2.56 is observed for two items “holding administrative positions” and “opportunities for managerial creativity activities.” The lowest average score of 2.38 is observed for item “contributing to the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies in the institutions” with a SD of 0.62. For lowest average item, respondents are inclined toward the agreed response. Here, we observed that 45.6% respondents agreed, 47.1% somewhat agreed and only 7.3% disagreed.

Table 5: Managerial Empowerment

S.R.	Items	Agree %	Somewhat OK %	Disagree %	Mean	S.D.
1	Contributing to the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies in the institutions.	45.6	47.1	7.3	2.38	0.62
2	Holding administrative positions.	58.8	38.2	3	2.56	0.56
3	Opportunities for managerial creativity activities.	58.8	38.2	3	2.56	0.56
4	Supporting the professional growth and development in the institutions.	61.8	35.3	3	2.59	0.55
5	Contributing to the development and simplify the work procedures within the institutions	55.9	33.8	10.3	2.49	0.66
Avg.	Managerial Women Empowerment	56.2	38.5	5.3	2.51	0.46

Table 6 shows the responses on the items of academic women empowerment. All items have an average score of at least more than 2.58 which shows that most of respondents are in favour of women academic empowerment. Overall, women academic empowerment has an average score of 2.63 with a minute SD of 0.43. 65% respondents are agreed on women’s academic empowerment, 32.6% somewhat agreed and only 2.4% of respondents disagreed. This shows that women academic empowerment is very necessary in the perception of the respondents. The highest average score 2.68 is observed for item “contribute to the advancement and development of scientific and academic institutions” with a low SD of 0.47. Further, we observe that 67.6% respondents agreed to women’s contribution to the advancement and development of scientific and academic institutions, 32.4% somewhat agreed and nobody disagreed. Hence, women’s contribution to the advancement and development of scientific and academic institutions is the largest indicator of women academic empowerment. The second highest average score of 2.66 is observed for item “outstanding scientific production” with a low SD of 0.48. Here, we observed that 64.7% respondents agreed to women’s outstanding scientific production, 33.8% somewhat agreed and only 1.5% disagreed. Hence, women outstanding scientific production is a strong indicator of women’s academic empowerment.

The lowest average score of 2.59 is observed for item “contribution in shaping and adopting the scientific and academic policies and strategies” with a SD of 0.58. For the lowest average item, respondents are inclined toward the agreed response. Here, we observe that 63.2% respondents agreed on the women contribution in shaping and adopting the scientific and academic policies and strategies, 32.4% responded somewhat OK and only 2.4% disagreed.

Table 6: Academic Empowerment

S.R.	Items	Agree %	Somewhat OK %	Disagree %	Mean	S.D.
1	Outstanding scientific production.	64.7	33.8	1.5	2.66	0.48
2	Effective participation in various local and international scientific events.	63.2	35.3	1.5	2.62	0.52
3	Supporting individuals in achieving academic, qualitative and qualitative growth.	66.2	29.4	4.4	2.62	0.57
4	Contribute to the advancement and development of scientific and academic institutions.	67.6	32.4	0	2.68	0.47
5	Contribution in shaping and adopting scientific and academic policies and strategies.	63.2	32.4	2.4	2.59	0.58
Avg.	Academic Women Empowerment	65	32.6	2.4	2.63	0.43

After the analyses of five women empowerment dimensions, we ask an open ended question: “Do Saudi women play other active roles in the field of sustainable development in light of the Kingdom's Vision 2030?” We got different responses. For example, women play an active role in the tourism and heritage industries. Women are partners in building society. Women may contribute very well if women get the right opportunities. Saudi women have already activated their role in all of the areas of sustainable development. Women have a great role whether by direct participation or by spreading awareness among family and society. Women are the basic building-block in the society. Saudi women have already entered the development process by contributing in all sectors i.e. business, media, banking, entertainment, marketing, technology, health, and the military. Governments should empower women for the positions and functions in the sectors which could empower them. Academic qualifications should be matched with the fields of work available to Saudi women currently. Women’s social, economic and administrative roles are active since the emergence of Islam. Women could play a great role in the health and security sector if given opportunities.

Conclusions

This research investigates the level of women empowerment in the managerial, academic, economic, political and social empowerment domains. For this purpose, we target women who are working in top positions in the government and private sectors of Riyadh city and Southern Riyadh region, with some men participating as well. We floated 100 well-structured questionnaires with sufficient items in each domain of managerial, academic, economic, political and social women empowerment and collected 68 valid responses. The Cronbach Alpha test is then applied on the items of each women empowerment domain. We find that all the items sufficiently contributed in their respective women empowerment domain with a Cronbach Alpha score of more than 0.8. In the descriptive analyses, we find that all managerial, academic, economic, political and social empowerment items have average responses of at least more than 2.4 in the 3- Likert scale. The perception about “level of women empowerment” is found to be the least satisfactory in all domains of women empowerment. The highest average score is noted in case of social women empowerment. It means that social women empowerment played the greatest role among the others to empower the Saudi women. The second rank is achieved by academic women empowerment with a slightly smaller average score from social empowerment. Thus, academic and social domains play the great role in empowering Saudi women. Further, the third position is for economic empowerment. Thus, economic empowerment also plays a significant role in empowering the Saudi women. The lowest average score is 2.4 in political empowerment and this lowest score is also sufficient to find the perceived agreed response of the respondents. Hence, the comparatively weaker political domain should be improved by increasing women rights in political participation during any political process of the country.

Policy Implications

This research offers many policy insights with the perceived responses about each item of targeted women empowerment domains. Women contributions to the family's income and in food security with nutrition intake of family members are found to be larger indicators of women's economic empowerment. The government should frame the policies to improve women economic participation in the jobs and business which would support the family income of the household and could improve nutrition of the family as well. The least score is found for the number of investment opportunities by women. So, the government should announce a quota to provide loans for investment purpose among the women who own businesses to support this weaker side of women economic empowerment among others. Thus, women could contribute in their economic role with full potential towards the sustainable development of the country.

In the women social empowerment domain, women's contribution to family development by raising young children and participating in family decision-making are found to be larger contributors among the others in women's social empowerment. Hence, women empowerment is found to be helpful for nation building by contributing in raising the youngsters for the future of the nation. Secondly, women in family decision-making carry a significant position in the social women empowerment. Hence, the social role of women should be enhanced in society by the government and social organisations' social campaigns to improve the status of women in the family to contribute to the social development of the country. The smallest role for women is found in supporting civil society organisations. So, the government should initiate some civil society organisations by offering them funding to accelerate the role of women in the social development of the country. In the political women empowerment domain, the highest score is found for women participation in the Shura council and its various committees. Participation should further be extended to empower the women in the political process so women may represent all the women of Saudi Arabia, while designing major political decisions. The least score is found for exercising political rights of the women. Political institutions should design the framework in a way which could facilitate women in exercising their role in the political process of the country.

In the women managerial empowerment domain, the highest score is found for women's participation in the professional growth and development in the institutions, holding administrative positions and opportunities for managerial creative activities. The high scores of these items highlight the importance of providing some top positions to women to exercise their managerial role to boost the growth and development of the institutions. The government should specify some female quota in the top positions of government institutions and should encourage the private sector to do the same by legal instructions and financial incentives. The least score is found for women contributing to the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies in the institutions. It is again highlighting the importance of allocating some top positions to women which could enable women to formulate and implement the policies and the strategies in the institutions.

In the women academic empowerment domain, women's contribution to the advancement and development of scientific and academic institutions and outstanding scientific production have the highest scores among the others. Women should be employed at the top positions in academic institutions to encourage the development of scientific and academic institutions. Further, research funds should be allocated to women as women contribute to outstanding scientific production, which also has the highest score among the other items. Lastly, the role of women in shaping and adopting scientific and academic policies is found least among the others. So, it again realises that women should be in the top position of academic and research institutions to play their role in shaping scientific and academic strategies.

Funding Acknowledgement

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deputyship for Research & Innovation, Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia for funding this research work through the project number (DRI-KSU-SS-339) through the initiative of social sciences number of contract.

REFERENCES

- Abdel AL-Mawjoud, G.A. (2014). *The role of education in the social and economic empowerment of woman in Upper Egypt*. Cairo: A case study of the village of Juhayna, unpublished master's thesis, faculty of higher studies, Cairo University.
- Abu Radi, S. M. (2017). The Role of Education Institutions in Empowering Egyptian Women: a forward-looking vision. *Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 28, 34-51.
- Adly, H. (2017). *Women's Political Participation*. Cairo: Friedrich Ebert Foundation.
- Al-Qudah, M. A. & Tarawneh, N. (2011). The reality of administrative empowerment of woman in Jordanian public universities and the affecting constraints from the viewpoint of faculty members. *Mu'tah Journal for Research and Studies*, 26(4), 133-178.
- Al-Zayani, M. (2015). The education role in empowering woman's participation of the comprehensive development in Bahrain Kingdom. *Journal of Contemporary Education*, 32, 100-108.
- Arab Women Organization (2018). *Women and achieving the goals of sustainable development in the Arab region: Experimental study*. Sultanate of Oman: Department of Public Information of the organization.
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (2017). *Political representation of women in the Arab region*. Beirut: United Nations Center for Women Affairs.
- Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (2017). *Policy Brief on Arab Women's Economic Empowerment*. Beirut: Centre for Women of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. <https://nca.gov.sa/pages/about.html>.
- Galiè, A., Teufel, N., Korir, L., Baltenweck, I., Girard, A. W., Dominguez-Salas, P., & Yount, K. M. (2019). The women's empowerment in livestock index. *Social Indicators Research*, 142(2), 799-825.

- Holland, C., & Rammohan, A. (2019). Rural women's empowerment and children's food and nutrition security in Bangladesh. *World Development*, 124, 104648
- Jalili, R. (2008). Empowering Women. *Indicators and Development Dimensions - A Periodic Series on Development Issues in the Arab Countries*. Kuwait: Arab Planning Institute, Issue (72).
- Malapit, H., Quisumbing, A., Meinzen-Dick, R., Seymour, G., Martinez, E. M., Heckert, J. & Team, S. (2019). Development of the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI). *World Development*, 122, 675-692.
- Newman, J. B. (2016). Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Local Gender-Based Earnings Inequality and Women's Belief in the American Dream. *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(4), 1006-1025.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2018). *Women's economic empowerment in some Arab countries: the impact of legal frameworks in Algeria*. Egypt: Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, Cairo. the Arab Administrative Development Organization of the League of Arab States.
- Pineda, J. A., Piniero, M., & Ramírez, A. (2019). Coffee production and women's empowerment in Colombia. *Human Organization*, 78(1), 64-74
- Pradhan, R., Meinzen-Dick, R., & Theis, S. (2019). Property rights, intersectionality, and women's empowerment in Nepal. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 70, 26-35
- The World Bank (2018). *Study on women's economic empowerment*. National Council for Women, Washington: Department of World Bank Publications.
- United Nations (2016). *Report of the Secretary-General on the economic empowerment of women in the changing world of work*. United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on the Status of Women.
- United Nations (2015). *Arab Women Development Report 2015 on Arab Women and Legislations*. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women jointly with the United Nations Development Program, Tunisia: Arab Women Center for Training and Research (CAWTAR).
- United Nations (2017). *Working towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls to ensure reproductive and sexual health rights*. United Nations Population Fund, Cairo: Regional Office for Arab States.