

QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN QATAR

BY

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of College of Arts and
Sciences

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts in

Gulf Studies

June 2018

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ABSTRACT

FOUAD, NADA, H., Masters : June : 2018:, Gulf Studies

Title: Women Empowerment in Qatar.

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This thesis examines the question of empowerment of Qatari women from multidimensional perspectives and go beyond merely employment and access to economic resources. Qatar is a welfare state that can and does provide its citizens with many privileges. The purpose of this study is to examine a unique case of women empowerment in the context of a welfare state moving from a traditional society to a modern one. What distinguishes this study is that it adopts two approaches; the first is the standpoint theory approach, which draws on Qatari employed women's lived experience, while the second is critiques the Qatari state's approach to empowerment in order to articulate a more comprehensive view of the issue. Since the case of Qatar is a unique one, it was found most appropriate to allow Qatari women to define the themes for a study on their empowerment. To fulfill the standpoint theory approach requirements, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used. Twenty Qatari employed women were interviewed about their work experiences and how it influenced their lives. The results were discussed in relations to the critique of structural empowerment through secondary sources. The discussion is presented through general themes in one chapter and personal-experience oriented themes in the second chapter. The results showed that employment did not resolve for women many the social and legal issues they face.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the group of wonderful Qatari women who shared their time and thoughts with great generosity, and for that I am most grateful. To my loving family, as always, I can never accomplish anything without your support. And finally, thank you Dr. Mazhar for all your help.

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INTRODUCTION

Qatar presents a unique social, economic and political case study. It developed over the past century from a humble underdeveloped city to a state with one of the highest GDPs in the world. It presents the world with a goldmine of knowledge on the influence of economic prosperity on the social structure. It's a case that holds the key to the experience of traditionalism and modernity on an individual and a social level. However, the orientalist approach in research where this society and similar ones were discussed using only imperial data in combination with unsubstantial assumptions about the nature of the society which gave distorted views of this region. Therefore, this study attempts to avoid making the same assumptions regarding women of the region. The purpose of this study is to understand the reality and challenges of women empowerment project in Qatar in ways that solution finding, rather than simply having that surface level analysis. Qatar is a welfare state that has much to offer to its citizens. However, the society seems to be adapting to the fast economic development process. It is transforming their day-to-day lives, their legal system and their relationship with the state and the world. Therefore, the private and public sphere is changing. One main feature of this change in relation to women are needed more than before for the development project to succeed. The state became invested their education, training and employment. It is also sketching women empowerment within its policies and narratives. However, regardless of the increasing number of women in the work sector, the proportion of women entering the workforce remains disproportionate to the number of educated women. The imbalance in the data shows that there is either an issue with the means of empowerment that the state is creating for women or that women are facing challenges on their way to the means of empowerment available for them or a

combination of both, - which is most likely. But since, the surface level analysis is all that is available at the moment, it is important to go beyond it and address these challenges from within the indigenous experience on an individual and social level. The main scope and independent variable of this study is employment as it is one of the vital instruments of women empowerment. Then the research takes a step further by addressing the question of employment's ability, in the way Qatar is facilitating it for women, to empower these women on an individual and collective level, and to create recognizable social change for Qatari women.

Aim

This thesis is an attempt to reexamine the case of Qatari women. Instead of researching women issues a structural vacuum, it aims to examine the structural issues of women empowerment from the perspective of the Qatari women as to identify the most urgent gaps in the structural empowerment and give comprehensive view of the issue through academic and non-academic dimension; hence create a relevant research to the concerned population, instead of one that is detached from the realities of these women. To disengage the long tradition of accounting women's conditioning for all the female related issues in the Middle East and while taking into consideration that not all norms and cultures need to fit a explicit frame to be able to nurture empowerment, this study aims to unveil local opinions and show issues from the feminine indigenous perspective. Since they are the subjects and the informers, their views will abridge the path to finding the core of the problem and feasible solutions. In addition, this study aims also to add a new perspective to understanding women empowerment in relation to employment by using this particular case study in which women are financially empowered however face social struggle as their society moves from a traditional form to a modern one. It aims to give a comprehensive view

of the social barriers, which hinders women's progress in the work sector, from lived experience supported by structural critique.

Research Question

- From employed Qatari women's standpoint, what are some of the challenges that hinder women empowerment?
- From their perspectives, what should empowerment entail?
- How do power relations within the Qatari society (culture, politics and patriarchy) shape women's experiences?

Significance of Study

This study enhances the knowledge on women in Qatar by focusing on how Qatari women define their empowerment. Since Qatar is a wealthy country in which Qatari women have been able to pursue high-income jobs, it provides a clearer view of other elements, which play a role in the success or failure of empowerment beyond employment. Studying this region is a pathway to seeing Middle Eastern women away from the stereotypical depictions of poverty and disempowerment. The findings of this study show positive change in some aspects of empowerment like education and employment, but this positive change does not resonate in other aspects like leadership. Therefore, this study plays the role of a road sign for other researchers towards substantiated views on women in the Middle East through contesting the structural empowerment with the individual experience.

Research Method and Methodology

This research has two dimensions, which are the subjects' experience and the critique of the structure. Fortunately, secondary data is available to support the structural debate. However, collecting data on the subjects' experience with women's

empowerment through the means of employment in Qatar required some primary research.

The method chosen is a qualitative method as it allows the researcher to collect more detailed information about the subject's experience. The research here builds on the Standpoint Theory. Standpoint theory (Harding, 2004) states that researching power relations should begin with the lived experiences of the marginalized group. Marginalized groups are usually studied empirically with little attention being given to their views and their experience. The studies tend to focus on certain types of issues that fit a particular conscious or unconscious agenda of the researcher or the research institute without giving a holistic view of the issues of the marginalized groups. Therefore, over the past three decades, the Standpoint theory gained some attention and was further developed. Since it originated from that failure of conventional research methods to reflect the struggle of marginalized groups, qualitative methods helped in concentrating on the narrative and the views of the marginalized groups as a base for the research instead of inaccurately prioritizing certain issues. For this research, the claims of the Standpoint theory are central. Therefore, devised a qualitative research tool was devised to complement the structural critique of women empowerment in Qatar. Examining how employment and empowerment affected Qatari women from their standpoint was vital for understanding their struggle and the nature of empowerment that employment can provide. In regards to justifying using women's self-reported experience, Patricia Hill Collins (2002) explained that, when creating knowledge about women, women's experience is the "criterion for credibility" for these knowledge claims. In other words, women's struggle can only be defined through women's experience. What these women identify as a struggle is what can be credited as a struggle. The

researchers should explain the reasons behind the problem and advise on a resolution, but the experience of women has to remain central to the inquiries and research. This rational enables the subjects to be informants on their own issues, which comes as no surprise. It allows the subjects of the issue to define what they find as a challenge, while eliminating what they do not find important. It bridges realities lived by the subjects and the related research, instead of being lead astray by assumption and preconceived notions.

Building on the Standpoint Theory, the tool chosen was semi-structured interviews with 20 Qatari female informants. This tool facilitated avoiding assumptions about the type of social change needed for the empowerment project's growth especially regarding religion and norms. It has become customary over the past few decades for researchers to also account religion and social norms for the failure of women empowerment schemes; but it was observed that this notion has left a large research gap and alienated many women who do not envisage abandoning their local norms and religious culture for more freedom. Using this approach, we can navigate around the topic and engage the concerned group without reproaching the subjects' national identity and pride.

The Qatari society is proud and discrete in nature, however it was observed that recently the society is moving away from that attitude and more members of the society are publicly discussing their social concerns. Nevertheless, the nature of discretion remains challenging, even with the recent improvement. Therefore, it was important to be conscious of the taboos and try to challenge the interviewees' face-saving answers without alarming them. Moreover, not all the questions posed by the theoretical framework could be openly approached, like the issue of socio-economic class. It was also important to bear in mind that not all of the informants were equally

aware or critical of the issues regarding their empowerment. To address that issue, the women were asked to critically reflect on the norms and the concept of empowerment. With that in mind, it was also important to find that fine line between leading an interviewee based on biases and challenging them.

The advantage of in-depth semi-structured interviews is that it allowed the interviewer to ask follow up questions and divert from the main course of the interview when the interviewee presented a new topic or issue. However, there are few disadvantages of this approach. For instance, it was a time consuming process. Some of the interviews took up to three hours, and most of the time was consumed on keeping a natural conversation flow to keep the interviewees from feeling alarmed. It was also difficult to find the right location for the interviews. Most of the interviewees preferred not to be interviewed at their homes or any private space, as the researcher is inevitably a stranger to the informants. In public spaces and offices, it was observed that the interviewees were conscious of others hearing them. Therefore, it was important to find a space that was both public but did not have familiar people to the informants as to avoid self-monitoring due the fear of others' judgment or rumor spreading.

Sampling

Snowball sampling was used in the selection of this group. The sample size was 20 women. The criteria for the sample individuals were as following: Qatari nationality, having a minimum of Bachelor of Arts (BA) or equivalent, spending a minimum of one year in an occupation and of an age that falls under one of the following age group: 20-40 and 40-60 years old. The years of experience in work sector were used as a measure to understand the main question of the research, which is regarding the influence of employment. They were chosen to be workingwomen as

some of the questions required knowledge of the labor market and the stereotypes around it. The level of education criterion was important to engage with their experience in education on their journey to employment. There is no assumption here that women with less than Bachelors degree are not capable of reflecting on their lives; but since part of the strategy to empower Qatari women is through higher education opportunities, it was important to have that dynamic in the background of the interviewees. The population of the sample was distributed evenly over the two age groups. As women empowerment can be considered as an uncontested term to the Qatari community, the groups were chosen in that manner to examine the possibility of the change in Qatari women's view of empowerment over different age groups. The purpose of these two criteria is to see the difference between the experience of the younger generation of Qatari workingwomen and the older generation of Qatari workingwomen, if there is any.

Process

A pilot interview was carried out to assess the understanding of the interviewees of some of the abstract concepts regarding women empowerment and disempowerment. It was counterproductive to clarify these concepts in more detail as one of the aims of this research is to learn how these women perceived empowerment, not to educate them about it. The initial communication with the participants was carried out via different methods: over emails, phone calls, and social media, in the snowball sampling style. The participants were asked to recommend another person under the same criteria whom they believed would be interested in participating. The reason behind choosing this sampling method was the need to earn the trust of the potential informants as the topic of women and state remains foreign to public discussion in Qatar; that is in addition to the lack of positive influence of free media

on creating an open discussion on issues like this one. Finally, the interviewees were provided with consent forms ahead of time and were asked to choose where they would like to be interviewed. The location was left to the choice of the participants to allow them as much sense of familiarity and comfort as possible. Some were also given the choice to have the interview over the phone instead of face-to-face. This option was preferred by only two of the participants due to limitations in time and schedule availability.

Interview Process

To allow the interviewees enough ease to explain their understanding of the abstract concepts, the interviews were carried out in both Arabic and English based on the interviewee's preference. Many of the interviewees chose to speak both Arabic and English, with most preferring to alternate between both languages. As one of the interviewees explained, this is due to the college requirement of mastering English in many of the Qatari college courses. The interviews were started off with one grand tour question. Then the rest of the interview was built on open-ended questions and follow up questions. The interview period was determined to be 30-60 minutes, but was not limited to that period. The variation was based on the level of comfort each interviewee felt with sharing their personal experience. The older group was noticeably more discrete than the younger group who seemed to be willing to tell more stories and elaborate much more on ideas.

Documentation

The interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and coding. The method of coding was thematic, focused around the social challenges and obligations and perception of Qatari women to empowerment.

Analysis

A qualitative analysis of in depth semi-structured open-ended questions with 20 Qatari women was used in this research. Open-ended interview questions were coded in order to find the common themes, which created the basis of analysis for this thesis.

Ethical Concerns

In conducting the field research for this thesis, the researcher was faced by some ethical challenges, such as cultural sensitivity of topic of the study. Qatari society is conservative in comparison to the rest of the Middle East and looks negatively upon sharing personal information. This is an observation made by the researcher after living in Qatar for eight years. It was expected to pose a challenge to some of the Qatari participants in the interview. Therefore, the names of the interviewees were omitted from the results and replaced by numbers, for example, interviewee 01. Also, the questions about the participants' demographics were kept to the minimum to allow the informants as much freedom as possible to express their opinions openly. However, that resulted in a limiting the questions posed on socio-economic class, and thus, it negatively influenced the information collected on social and economic class dynamics in the society.

Using the snowball sampling method was likely to result in a group of interviewees that are like-minded since they all belong to the same network. Especially with the small number of interviewees, the opinions of the informants were unlikely to be as diverse as desired. The age groups and occupations in the sample were limited as well. But, the study was done in hope to open the way to more researches.

Some other ethical concerns are related to the method used for collecting primary data. For instance, the pilot interview showed that the interviewee struggled with terms like empowerment and stereotypes. These terms were then intentionally left for the purpose of examining the interviewees' ability to relate to those words and the concepts behind them. Yet struggling with these terms might have led some of the interviewees to face-saving techniques in later answers. It was a risk, but the interviewer attempted to ease their concern of not knowing or relating to these concepts by explaining that this is normal and that there is no wrong answer. Regarding the interview location, the physical setting was comfortable to some interviewees while others could not choose a location that made them feel as comfortable. Therefore, the inconsistency of the location of the interviews might be considered as another variable influencing the results. However, it is not a variable that could be utilized. Also, the interviewer is an expatriate, which was expected to pose an issue. As discussed in the following chapters, one of the issues that drive policies in Qatar is the demographic imbalance and the fear from the overpowering number of expatriates. Another aspect to it is the fear of transferable ideologies that could cause upheaval or political unrest in the monarchic system. Therefore, discussing an unusual topic like the relationship between gender and the state can be considered as a form of criticism and threat coming from an expatriate. Therefore, one should take in consideration that some of the interviewees might have given guarded answers due to a subconscious fear of opening up to an expatriate. That's why the interviewer tried to address the interview as a conversation rather than giving it a formal interview attitude.

Finally, there is an undeniable concern regarding the regression effect where the interviewees might have altered the manner in which they are answering later

questions due to sensing that they have been giving too negative or too positive answers earlier. To avoid misusing the information collected from the interviews, it was important to confirm the answers through supplementary questions and to test the interviewee's ability to defend their answers.

CHAPTER ONE

Background

There are quite a few aspects that we need to consider so we can begin to answer the research questions on the experience of Qatari women with empowerment and power relations. The question of empowerment and power relations in Qatar is a social, political, economic and even historic one. On one hand, the history of Qatari women pre-oil is important for a true understanding of the kind of transition they are facing. From a distance, Qatari society seems to be going from traditional to modern, but what the traditional society was like and what the modern one is shaping up to be is an important aspect of these women's background. It might seem that the answer is obvious, but the obvious answers are usually based on preconceived biased notions. Therefore, to disengage from the preconceived images, we need to ask the obvious questions again and to engage in some sense with the history of these women, which is what the first section of this chapter will do. From a socio-economic aspect, Qatari women are living a social reality that is influenced by state-society relation that stems from the unique economic situation of the welfare state of Qatar. The relation between the state and society is influenced by wealth distribution techniques devised by the state. These techniques, including but not limited to Qatarization, became pillars to the society and its transformation. Therefore, it influences Qatari women as well. That is in addition to the state and society reaction to globalization, which influences the state's approach to addressing social issues and the society's reaction to the state's resolutions. It is difficult to simply ignore any of these aspects because they are vital to a clearer understanding of the primary data collected from the interview. The following pages will attempt to cover briefly these themes and give the reader a general idea about the reality these women lived and are living.

Pre-oil Qatari Women

Qatar is a part of the Arabian Gulf, which remained limited in population and almost deserted for many centuries. There are limited records of the peninsula and even more limited ones on women of this area. There are scattered recordings from colonial records and Christian mercenaries' diaries. However, these have only given us a qualitative idea about what women's lives were like in this region. Nothing statistical has been discovered yet. But the following is a general view of what we know. Before oil, this area was deprived of most forms of technology common in the 18th century. It developed in a different pace than the rest of the world. The inhabitants of the region depended on pearling, supporting and maintaining some trade boats and finally minimal crafts. In the pearling season, all the capable men went to sea for months at a time leaving women and children behind on land in a dangerous voyage to collect pearls for a small pay in the end of the season. Hoda Elsaadi (2012) tells us that what is known about how the society operated was that only women from poor families were the ones that worked for a pay. They produced and sold domestic goods in the market or door-to-door. They also worked as healers and midwives for their tribe and surrounding tribes. The ones of them that were literate would teach the daughters of higher-class families and perform Quran and poetry readings in events. There were also other occupations that had to do with special events where some women worked in dressing up the brides and preparing her for the wedding. The women of richer families did not abstain from being involved with finances but they did it through other females or male agents. Therefore, we can say that women were a productive part of the society. They were a vital part of the economy of the region. They were both involved in domestic and public labor. As Doughty (1936) mentions in his travel records of the region, it seemed that men

married due to their need for the labor provided by women. However, it is worth noting that there is no assumption here that there is something innately evil about that social system. It is quite common in the Middle East till this day. In many societies, marriage is seen as a method for a woman to find a house and a provider, and in return, men expect them to perform the needed domestic labor to sustain the household. Nevertheless, this tells us that women pre-oil were not as passive as they are depicted in the orientalist narrative of the region. Women of this region, even if there are no statistical records to prove it, were breadwinners and an important pillar for the survival of their families when men were out in the sea on their dangerous pearling journeys. In other words, women of this region were not helpless ones in pre-oil era.

Qatari Women in the 20th Century

By the second half of the 20th century, oil and natural gas were discovered in the region and Qatar was found to have a large reservoir of natural gas that levitated the nation's wealth from poverty to one of the highest GDPs in the world. The market changed drastically. Every family, in comparison to pre-oil living standards, became rich. The old dwells disappeared and were replaced by skyscrapers and highways. The natural gas companies dominated the new market; many of which were western companies. The role of local women in the market almost disappeared. This was due to few factors. The simplest is that since only poor women worked for the sake of survival in pre-oil society, women in the welfare society did not need to work for survival and shifted towards enjoying what their ancestors could not have enjoyed, which is a life free of hard work. Another reason worth considering is the spread of the Wahhabist religious ideologies that perceived women's incorporation in the work

market as something that should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. In a welfare state, it was not absolutely necessary to work for most women.

Another contributing reason is that the Qatari government and ruling tribe seemed to aim for wealth distribution among the different tribes to achieve political stability; most of which was done through methods unrelated or disproportionate to labor work. There is no statistical proof of that wealth distribution, but it is a common argument that many scholars have proposed. -Whether this wealth distribution is truly for all the local tribes or only among a group of elite tribes connected to the royal family is an argument for another day. - This wealth distribution is believed to come in the form of appointing nationals in high governmental positions, stipends, subsidies and incentives. (Colton, 2011) This has created a problem greater than a gender's exclusion out of the work market. The national population transformed from a productive community into a passive one that depended and felt entitled to high income in return for relatively no-risk occupation and short working hours. (Randeree, 2012) With that in mind, there was almost no necessity at all for women to pursue jobs in the era. It did not last long, however, before the government became aware of the dangers of the persisting issue of demographic imbalance where the nationals lived not only as a minority in their own country, but also a passive community that is not well incorporated into the job market. This realization seemed to have changed the attitude of the state towards women.

The number of educated women was growing rapidly. Since pre-oil times, education for women was encouraged. It was important for women to be able to read so they can recite Quran as a sign of piety. (El-Saadi, 2012) Therefore, after the wealth of oil discovery, women started to join schools and universities in increasing numbers, however while moving away from the job market. The starting mark of

structured education for women was 1956 when Amina Al-Jayyida kuttab (a primitive schooling system common in primitive societies in the Middle East) was turned into the first females' school. (Al-Khouli, 2012) As for higher education, the first university in Qatar was the national university, Qatar University; it was established 1977. By 1996, around 70% of Qatar University's graduates were women. (State of Qatar, 2004) But, as the common trend across GCC, women studied specific fields that were oriented towards 'feminine jobs'. (Krause, 2009) These feminine jobs are usually jobs in the fields of education or administrative jobs with a segregated work place. The Qatari labor laws did not prohibit women working in any field; but it prohibits (in Article 94 of Qatari Labor Law) women from working in jobs that are physically dangerous. It also takes charge of deciding on jobs appropriate for women (in Article 95 in Qatari Labor Law). Qatari women of the 19th century enjoyed a life that their ancestors couldn't. They were accepted into universities at the same time as males. There was a general understanding of the need for Qatari women in the certain fields of the work sector. However, this did not materialize in the state policies till the 21st century.

Women in the 21st Century

By the end of the 20th century, Qatar has witnessed great progress in the field of education. Sheikha Mozah had established Qatar Foundation that is a non-profit organization that funds many initiatives for the development of education and social welfare. Being a woman in a leading position, she was an inspiration for much social change. Many women account her for the shift in attitude towards women in Qatar. At the same time, there were other elements in the socio-political dynamics of Qatar changing. Geo-political concerns were on the rise after Iraq's invasion on Kuwait and the rise of terrorist attacks. There was a rising concern regarding the demographic

imbalance in Qatar where the nationals live as a minority with limited control over many vital sectors in the country that were controlled by expatriates from different Arab and non-Arab origins. Such concerns seemed to have resurged the interest of the government in involving the nationals in public and private sector. With this interest, women were found to be a valuable commodity as they outnumbered men in Undergraduate and Graduate Studies (as shown in, Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016)

Qatarization

The topic of Qatarization is an important feature of the state-society relation in Qatar. It influenced the opportunity structure of employment for Qataris in general. Also, from a foreign eye, the concept might be unfamiliar as it is a unique feature of the GCC region. Not that the basic philosophy of it is unheard of, but how it is carried out remains unique to the region. Most scholars (Partrick, 2009; Randeree, 2012; Ridge, 2014; Rutledge, Al Shamsi, Bassioni, & Al Sheikh, 2011) justify this state approach as a reaction to the demographic imbalance and the fear of loss of political control. The efforts of strengthening the national identities through legal and social privileges were referred to (in the sources mentioned above) as nationalization. However, these studies do not clearly give the concept theoretical grounds.

Qatarization, in its local meaning, is a process encouraging nationals to enter the work sector or a particular branch of the work sector. It could also be considered as a method for wealth distribution among Qataris. The laws for it were passed in 1962. But it only started to take effect in the 21st century. The concept of workforce Qatarization originated from two coinciding issues which GCC faces: demographic imbalance and political tension (Partrick, 2009). The smaller GCC states have small populations, a larger employed population of migrants, and an insufficient system of

naturalization. As a result, the states devise policies and incentives to attract nationals toward the different sectors which lack nationals in fear of the over powering migrant labor. There are many other policies, which reflect the same fear and attempts to sustain and protect a certain imagined identity of Qataris. Such includes dress code restrictions in public spaces and many initiatives to revive local traditions. But the question of whether this identity is imagined, imposed or reflective of the reality of the nationals is a question for another day. What these concerns meant for the work market is that more Qatari nationals needed to be involved. For women, as Randeree (2012) argued, this meant that they became an important educated human asset for the state. The government became aware of that around the beginning of the 21st century. But as argued by Rutledge and her colleagues (2011) about UAE and Saudi Arabia, the influence of these initiatives on women remains marginal and there is more systematic changes required to reach a more vivid change for women. Also, these policies impacted the experience of women at work, which will be discussed later in this study.

Globalization

Globalization as a phenomenon that had an impact on the Arabian Gulf, as much as, it did on the rest of the world. It did not necessarily have a direct effect on spreading the western ‘look’ or ‘life style’, but one must consider the reactionary effect. The influence is reactionary in the sense that the fear of lost identities caused, Qatari society to take preventive measures against the influence of globalization. Therefore, the influence of globalization should be examined in its direct and indirect effect; the first being the influence of the western culture on the local life; the second being the influence of the fear that resulted in the local policies. Both have resulted in a shift in the attitude of the state government towards women. Krause (2009) argued

that the need for stability and identity building has led to state feminism where women were seen as a vital asset. The state needed to appear capable of coping with modernity and development. For Qatari women, that meant more attention and resources channeled into their education and facilitation of job acquisition. However, we need to consider here the state society relation in Qatar. The tribe and family hold great power in the Arabian Gulf societies. The question of how these powers play out is a hard question to answer due to the guarded attitude of the society towards researchers. But one can assume that the direct intervention of the state in private family affairs might not be welcomed. The purpose of state feminism, as Krause argues, is to enhance the stability in the society. Arguably, that is why the state would not approach the change of women's role overtly. It remained a cautious slow attempt. Later in the chapters, we will discuss some observations from the interviews about the different attitudes of the families towards the change proposed by the new image of the state.

Women Empowerment- Tamkiyn al-mar'a

Over the past two decades, the Qatari government has produced women empowerment initiatives fragmented across different platforms. First, women empowerment is one of the state long-term goals for Qatar National Vision 2030. Secondly, it is a cause represented by the female members of the royal family like Sheikha Mozah and Sheikha Hind. It is present in Qatar Strategic Plan for 2030 as a subsection. "Increasing women empowerment" falls under 'Family Cohesion' in the Strategic Plan. It focuses in its essence on putting women in leadership positions. Some of the other targets include overcoming stereotypes around women and establishing civil society concerned with women's issues. There have been different initiatives to empower women in the work sector by giving them access to training;

and there are other initiatives, which concentrated on specific social issues like domestic violence and sports for women.

These initiatives are limited in their echo in social debates. Al Muftah (2016) justified this limitation by explaining that women empowerment is signified in only few lines which most governments in GCC add to their long-term plans and aspirations under family-life development. It usually stresses on the need to empower women economically as a contributor to the finances of the family. One of the limited opinion pieces written by Qatari women about the issue was published in Alsharq newspaper by Amal Eissa Al Mohannadi (2016). She explained that as a Qatari woman she felt that she had some validity in listing demands on the behalf of Qatari women. The interesting part was that her demands were constructed based on expected gender roles, and included lower working hours. In that sense empowerment to her meant accommodating and facilitating the means for women to carry out their traditional gender role in addition of being an economically active member of society. This opinion, -not that there aren't any other opinions-, raises many questions about how these empowering initiatives are received on the Qatari women's end. It raises questions regarding the wellbeing of these women as they contribute to the work sector. It also raises questions around the level of freedom of choice that they have. It calls for new knowledge about their experience with these state operated initiatives for empowerment.

As we briefly touched upon some of these themes there are few starting points to summarize. Firstly, the imagined Qatari women pre-oil were not helpless women who were limited to the private sphere while being segregated from the rest of society. Based on the limited qualitative data available, women in pre-oil Qatar contributed to the economies and production of their society. It was a society that was

strongly upheld by working women. It is possible that Qatari women retaliated to the private sphere as to enjoy a luxury that was very difficult to achieve not many years before. Secondly, Qatari women of the 21st century are being called back to aid in building their market and their nation. Some of that attention was redirected to them through forces of globalization and Qatarization.

Literature Review

For a very long time, this region was boiled down to the orientalist image of the Arabian Sahara where women are oppressed and hidden. It almost seemed to the rest of the world that there was no point in studying gender in this region. That the world knew everything there was to know about gender in this part of the world. But recently, there is a growing understanding that there is more to gender dynamics of this region than the orientalist image. Most of these researchers, as we will see, focused on the transition towards modernity and how that influenced gender-related attitudes in the unique context of Qatar. What makes Qatar unique (along with the rest of the GCC) is its rentier economy, which in the most part depends on revenue from natural gas. Moreover, the state runs on a monarchic system, which gave the state-society relation power dynamics that are unlike the rest of the world and even unlike the rest of the Middle East. Most of these factors, as we will see in the following lines, were bases for studies attempting to understand the gender relations in Qatar and the challenges that women face in their pursuit to power and autonomy.

The first scope is social attitudes towards women's participation in the workforce. One popular study done by Felder and Vuolla (2008). They surveyed 260 female secondary school seniors in 2006 using questions in the purpose of understanding Qatari women's legal rights, education for workforce participation, occupation choice, their attitudes towards work and societal attitudes towards working

women. The study relied heavily on the data collected by one of RAND's (Stasz, Eide, Martorell, Constant, & Goldman, 2008) studies. Their results showed that women had the legal rights needed to progress in their careers, but there were other variables that influenced women's choices regarding career pursuit. They reported, "some of the women of the 1998 cohort were not currently working or looking for work and reported family responsibilities as the main reason for their employment decision." (p. 12) Moreover, "religious beliefs and parental advice were the top two factors that Qatari women in both cohorts of secondary school graduates said they look into consideration when making career choices." (p. 19) Finally, the researchers were lead to believe that some of the issues with women employment emanated from employers views. The employers, who were surveyed, cared about family and work balance and thought that women are shy which in their opinion made them unfit for certain positions. Therefore, Felder and Vuolla recommended that more flexible working arrangement should be made available for women. Many of the points made by their research is helpful in leading the way into building the questions for this thesis as it covered some of the aspects of women's experience. However, their conclusion about legal rights might need a second visit. Another study was carried out by Asghar, Bengali and Shahzad (2015), who surveyed a sample of 274 women ages 17-25 to study the obstacles in the way of reaching a gender-inclusive labor force in Qatar. They reported that,

46% cited parents and or/ culture (ie most women in our family didn't work), and/or religion as constraining factors. Furthermore, 54% of our participants believed that there were certain jobs that could only be done by women and certain jobs that could only be done by men.(Asghar et al., 2015, p. 15)

Another main limitation that they found was the large pay gap between men and women working equal hours. Also, it shows similar results regarding the power of family and religion in women's choice making.

The second popular scope of study is Qatari women's attitude towards work, society and empowerment. Golkowska (2017; 2014) did two interesting studies on Qatari women's attitudes towards the challenges that they face within the society. In her 2014 study, she used semi-structured interviews with female Qatari students. She remarked, "Generally speaking, they measure themselves against the past generations of Qatari women or against the situation of women in countries like Saudi Arabia, and observe how much their lives have changed to the better." (p.60) This remark raises a question regarding how these women perceive empowerment and the way they feel about rights that they receive. It also leads to a question about the mindset of Qatari women that hinders them from challenging the policies and laws. She also emphasized, "Looking both west and east, Qatari women seem to opt for gender equality within the framework of the benevolent theocratic patriarchy." (p.63) There is no doubt that this is a result of the overwhelming patriarchal attitudes, but it also hints to where the core of the problem is. She echoes the same believes in her 2017 paper, but she expands on her analysis by saying "for most part, Qatari women have availed themselves of the unprecedented opportunities created by the government-sponsored narrative of change." (p.8) She finally acknowledges that it is important to realize that these women are attempting to survive in a patriarchal society while navigating around its norms and rules. Her researches help in setting the right questions for further understanding of women's perception and attitudes towards the empowerment project.

The third scope of studies focuses on negative social attitudes towards Qatari women and how they hinder the personal and social progress of women. One form of negative attitudes towards women is justifying domestic violence initiated by men against the female family members. Kaltham Al-Ghanim (2009) reported in her study that there are prevailing negative attitudes towards women. She explained that the legal system does not define or criminalize domestic violence within the family context. Though analyzing the patterns of violence exerted by men within the family context and how it was justified, this study shows important data on domestic violence, which is difficult to find otherwise, as the sample for this study was 2,366 Qatari women (4.4% of the population of women studying in university level in Qatar). The results showed that 95% of Qatari women who were subjected to violence did not report it. Nizam Khan and Abdul Rahim (2012) reported similar results from their sample of 788 Qatari men and women. But their study took a step further and studied the primary reasons for wife beating. The number one justification was showing disrespect to the husband; moreover, the results showed alarmingly that age in men did not positively affect their attitude approach to violence. The younger generation of men justified wife beating the most and enrollment into college did not show significant change in the attitude. However, the study did not make the distinction in the results between working and non-working women neither did Kaltham in her study. Finally, it was also interesting to note that these negative gender attitudes prevailed since the 1990s. Abdalla (1996) surveyed 7, 382 Qatari professional men and women using the short version of the Attitude toward women scale [12] and Ben's sex- Role Inventory [25]. She found that age and level of education did not significantly affect the attitudes of men towards women. She also reported that her results “ suggest that while Arab women are willing to accept more

responsibilities in the political, occupational, educational and social spheres, Arab men are not willing to share these responsibilities with them.” (p. 36) It’s interesting to see that there is a prevailing trend in men of negative attitudes towards women.

Finally, there is the scope that focuses on Qatari women’s rights and development challenges. Al-Mannai (2006) wrote his doctorate on the issue. He surveyed 397 Qatari men and women and carried out semi-structured interviews with 6 professional men and women. The results of his survey showed that 57% of men disagreed when they were asked to indicate their level of approval of the following statement: “women and men should both take on caring responsibilities.” And the larger group of both men and women disagreed when asked if men should do house work. He also emphasized the role of the female elite group in Qatar in causing social change. He finally remarked, “The older generation believed that women’s rights threatens the values and norms of the family, the tribe and the state.” (p. 182) It is worth noting that Qatar’s Third National Human Development Report (2012) focused on women development challenges. It noted that there is a relation between the level of education of women and increasing number of unmarried women and that married women are far more likely to not work than unmarried women. There are other reports which echoes the same challenges like PDGP’s report (2015); socio-cultural, family and patriarchal barriers. This raises a question about the relation between level of education, women’s employment and marriage, which I plan to address through my interview questions.

As shown, the studies regardless of their scope conclude very similar results about the challenges faced by Qatari women. The main factors reported were family, culture and religion, which abstains women from making free choices. Most of these studies covered on surface level the obstacles faced by women in their pursuit for

education and employment, but it does not go beyond that to understand how the inequality plays out as a social power dynamic through norms and culture. Also, most of them do not ground their studies in theoretical grounds.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Since United Nations' Decade for women (1975-85), women empowerment gained more momentum in theory and practice. Much of the theoretical debates focus on the connection between women empowerment and employment as the concept emanates from literature about development and its goals of enhancing men's and women's well-being. However, this study focuses predominantly on the question of women empowerment in Qatar and not narrowed down to development. This thesis focuses on a tighter scope, which is the impact of employment on the empowerment of Qatari women. In the following section, we discuss a theoretical frame to understanding employment and empowerment of women from a feminist angle, which will allow a broader discussion that goes beyond the economic development gains of employment.

We need to define here two main concepts: empowerment and employment. Empowerment is commonly defined through development goals (the structural definition); but in this research, it had to be defined using both structural and cultural empowerment. This research builds on a strong faith that structural and cultural forms of empowerment are two vital aspects of true empowerment. A structural initiative without cultural and social change would lead to many "forgotten" cases and groups who are excluded from the institutional empowerment that managed to reach only a particular group. Cultural awareness without institutional restructuring is simply a cycle of change that is too slow to be considered empowerment.

The scope of this study was chosen partially while taking in consideration the long argument between the Marxist method and feminist analysis, which was discussed by many, including Hartmann (1979). The feminist perspective puts women in the center and studies the dimensions of women's experience with the world, while the Marxist method is centered on society, economy and class. When Marxism and feminism are combined in one approach it usually results in a viewpoint of women as economic players within the capitalist market. Therefore, the apparent solution is to empower women in the market. Here, we reach the predicament. There is no denying to the need for empowerment of women in the market, but is accessing women's empowerment through women's success as a economic actor and only focusing on the elements which hinder them from doing so enough to give a full view of the issue? McDowell (2014) wrote an interesting commentary on the issue. She pointed out that the wave of theorists who became preoccupied with the economic value of domestic work- and how to address the issue of extra labor for women- has failed to foresee that the value of this labor in sustaining a healthy society. There is no doubt to the importance of addressing the issue of unpaid domestic work carried out by women. But it raises the question of the ability of the Marxist approach to address feminist issues; Pitt (2002) claimed that the Marxist approach has lead to what he called the "Capitalist Mother," where women use their wages to pay for the domestic services for her children. Doesn't that mean the same amount of labor, but in a different sector? Qatar is not a case where women employment has reached a level where Capitalist Mothers is an issue, but it raises the question of the value of employment alone in defining empowerment. Therefore, this study will examine empowerment from both the Marxist and feminist approach. The Marxist approach will be devised in a critic of the structural empowerment, while the feminist approach will be devised

in providing basis for the critic in the narrative told by female interviewees with relevant experience.

Prior studies showed a roadmap to some of the most important dilemmas surrounding Qatari women's empowerment and employment. Therefore, we will discuss other theoretical work that is helpful to the argument in relation to Qatar. Similar to all the studies reviewed, Naila Kabeer (2005) argued that social relations primarily govern access to resources. One of the unique characteristics of the state of Qatar is that it remains influenced by its tribal heritage where the community remains loyal to its leader and his views including social ones. (Ayubi, 1996) Therefore, when it comes to social change, there seems to be a need to make the distinction between the society and its government or royal family as they both seem to have their own weight in deciding how the society will develop. In other words, the government or tribal family seems to have the ability to influence the social change to a direction that could have not come through natural social development. It is considered to be a society that responds to top-down change. However, one must consider that there are many tribes living in Qatar and each has its own significant figures that exert influence on their tribe. The government is required to maneuver around the loyalty of the tribes with caution as it transitions into a nation state. This power dynamic explains the reason behind the importance of the initiatives by the state in opposition to considering motivating a feminist social movement for the same goals of empowerment.

Qatar's legal and social structure is one that is characterized by being top-down oriented. There is limited freedom of speech; therefore, social change commonly stems from a change in the government's or royal family's image or narrative. A good example of that process is Sheikha Mozah's efforts to support

women's education. As any society, these contributions are not easily adopted as the individuals have limited right and access to the decision making cycle. In addition, tribal heritage remains strong in the society where each tribe acts as an autonomous body of people with their own set of social rules. Certain tribes accept the governmental interventions while other simply do not while basing that disapproval on a believed identity and moral system. Therefore, when we say that change in Qatar is top-down, we need to understand that this dynamic is not quite simple. It creates a theme of social struggle for power between the royal family and the tribe icons and leaders. Through the power lens, Rowlands (1997) introduces three dimensions of power, which emphasizes the human relation elements of power: personal, close relationships, and collective. As it implies already, personal refers to the individual inner sense of self; close relationships refer to developing the ability to negotiate; and collective refers to the ability to cooperate for larger impact through a collective conscious. To understand the process of empowerment for Qatari women, we need to understand where they belong in this structure of struggle over power.

In the preliminarily review of literature, it was found that women employment in Qatar was connected to governmental goals (like Qatarization), rather than being a goal in itself. Hence, the policies put in place to facilitate women access to the job market is not structured to facilitate access to the job market to the greatest number of women, but to reach a business/market development goal set by the state. Therefore, we will devise the opportunity structure lens (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Narayan-Parker, 2005) for a better critique of the policies meant for supporting Qataris women's access to the job market. Opportunity structure focuses on the mechanism through which women access resources based on their context. The meaning of access to resource is not only access to job; it also includes access

relevant and credible education and training for respective fields of work. The opportunity structure's definition of resource is important to this research as it looks beyond the surface level policies and examines other variables related to women's access to employment (including social pressure, discrimination and glass ceiling).

Since this research attempts to verge the gap between structural and social empowerment of women, it was important to identify a mechanism to assess women's social empowerment. If we consider access to work force as an indicator of women's structural empowerment, we should consider agency and ability of women to make choices regarding their jobs as the social empowerment concerns. It is assumed that entering the work sector gives access to choice and autonomy due to the power income gives to an individual over others in their community. (Moghadam, 1993) Even though, there is valid power to income, there are other aspects that should be taken in consideration regarding employment, like the choice of occupation and social support or lack of for working women. For that, we look at Kabeer's (1999) dimensions of choice making: resource, agency and achievement. Kabeer sees resources as "the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice" (p.437) Applying this definition of resource on employment, we can say that it is important to think about structural and social elements which play a role in supporting or weakening women's ability to choose a job like laws, policies and social support. From one angle, the laws and policies should allow women the right to take up any job these women deem appropriate. From another angle, employment as a tool for empowerment would only be functional with social and communal support in addition to the legal facilitation and protection. As for agency, "it refers to people's capacity to define their own life-choices and to pursue their own goals, even in the face of opposition from others."(p.438) To apply it

on employment, women should have agency over their choices. These choices should not be available with the price and consequence that would make the choice invalid or outweighed by the consequences that is only imposed based on gender. For example, if a woman has to deal with social ridicule for taking up a particular job because it is the kind of job considered by her society to be shameful for women, then this consequence is gender-based; i.e. men of the same society would not be subjected to it. This is not to negate that women need to participate in the struggle towards their goals. However, the empowering social narrative should exist as well as the empowering legal structure. Lastly, Kabeer's final choice dimension is achievement. If employment is the tool of empowerment, then the power of the income is the targeted outcome. However, is income equal to agency and power over? Here, one must consider the female's control over her income because some patriarchal societies control women's income through pressuring women to spend their income in a specific manner. And that is where the dichotomy between income and empowerment lies.

Finally, we need to consider gender roles and how they influence the structural and social empowerment. Women stereotypical gender roles expect them to assume childcare and household duties. They are also entrusted with running the house and doing chores. Some of them acquire the support of a low-wage helper for the house chore, while the females of the family are the ones entrusted with raising the children and caring for the men in the family. When these women have jobs in addition to their domestic obligations, it is called the 'Second- Shift' (Hochschild & Machung, 2003). The second shift concept puts in perspective that women's domestic work is innately work that has economic value. That economic value comes in perspective when we consider the cost of replacing these women with paid labor and calculating its risks

and prices. To move away from the capitalist perspective of the second-shift, one can look to the second-shift as work that should be distributed among the family members rather than outsourced. This argument is relevant here as the secondary literature shows that there is great emphasize in Qatari state policy on the importance of the family. Taking in account the importance of family cohesion in this region might help in addressing the women question without seeming to threaten dismantling the entire social structure instead of amending it.

Conclusion

Much of the consulted theoretical frameworks show that employment and earning income are considered as the main indicator of structural empowerment for women. From a capitalist perspective, employment leads to income; and income leads to social power. Therefore, other theories were used to complement the structural approach to help show a multidimensional view of the issue of women empowerment in Qatar. In this thesis, I find that Kabeer's power dynamics and the concept of opportunity structure to be more applicable and capable of giving the extra dimensions needed for a better understanding of empowerment. I argue that even though employment is a vital part of empowerment, it should not be studied in the capitalist vacuum of materialistic reality. There are other aspects and measures that need to be taken in consideration like looking closer at the opportunity structure and social power dynamics. The goal should be that the kind of empowerment, which makes employment a free choice with income that provides agency.

CHAPTER TWO

Results

This study adopts the standpoint theory approach, which indicates that it is important to allow the interviewees to feel open to expanding on the issues without self-censorship. These interviews were meant to be more like a conversation rather than an official interview. It was also meant to motivate the interviewees to express their opinions and personal analysis of their experience with the employment and empowerment. Some of them were much more analytical and expressive than others, but the following themes were the ones that most of the informants discussed even though some of them were not directly referred to in the questions.

1. Demographics

The following table shows the demographic profile of the sample. As shown, half of the women were above 30 and the other half was below 30. The only two criterions for the interviewees were age and being a current employee. The marital status of the sample turned out to be half single and half married by chance. To explain the fields of work, education indicates that the interviewee worked in a position in which they were directly related to education like teaching. Administrative entails that the informant worked in an administrative position regardless of the nature of the institution. Oil Industry indicated that the interviewee worked as a professional in oil industry, for example petroleum engineer. Enterprise indicates that the informant worked in private enterprise. Ministry worker means that the informant is an employee in a ministry.

Table 1: Demographic of Interviewees

Code	Education	Field of Work	Marital Status	Age Group
01	MA	Education	Divorced	>30
02	MA	Education	Single	<30
03	BA	Administrative	Married	<30
04	MA	Administrative	Single	<30
05	PHD	Education	Married	>30
06	PHD	Education	Married	>30
07	BA	Enterprise	Married	>30
08	PHD	Education	Married	>30
09	BA	Oil Industry	Married	<30
10	PHD	Education	Married	>30
11	BA	Research	Single	<30
12	BA	Research and Education	Single	<30
13	BA	Research and Education	Single	<30
14	MA	Ministry Work	Single	<30
15	BA	Education	Single	<30
16	MA	Education	Married	>30
17	BA	Administrative	Single	<30
18	BA	Administrative	Single	>30
19	BA	Ministry Worker	Single	>30
20	MA	Administrative	Married	>30

2. Stereotypes and Social Attitudes

- The informants were asked about stereotypes and how they feel that they are being perceived. The main question that they were asked was “What is the general image of Qatari women at work? Then, follow up questions were asked based on the answers they gave. The questions lead to the following topics: male co-workers attitude towards women and women’s leadership, protection against biases, stereotypes about Qatari women’s skills, employer’s biases based on appearance and marital status (job interview experience), and female appropriate jobs.
- All the interviewees who experienced biases from men around them in the workplace or the employers admitted that they don’t know of a measure they could take to overcome these biases. They did not know of a legal authority or an institution or internal policy that could help them. Interviewee 1 and 11 explained that they would go to a powerful family member or a tribe member if they needed help. Most of the interviewees below 30 expressed a strong believe that the men around them would not be happy with a female boss. In the group above 30, Interviewee 18 explained that in her work place their male co-workers pressure women who get promoted. The promoted women get their authority challenged constantly, which makes their work experience more exhausting.
- Almost half of the interviewees were not aware of particular stereotypes that evolved around Qatari women. But the other half reported that the general stereotype was that Qatari women were lazy, incompetent and got their jobs through connections. When they were

asked how they dealt with it, most of them explained that they changed people's perception of them through hard work and putting in the extra hours needed.

- Six of the interviewees explained that when they first applied for a job, the interviewer asked about their marital status, their plans for marriage and childbearing, and their family's approval. One of the recently married interviewees explained that she was worried about telling people at work that she got married because she will have to deal with the assumption that she will perform poorly after she gets married. Interviewee 13 reported that she feels that her boss "checks up on her" more often than they do with other employees. Three of the interviewees below 30 believed that a woman with face cover is less likely to find a job.
- It was interesting to see that the group of women below 30 all agreed that the job market had a gender discriminating approach to hiring women in certain positions and jobs. Most of them expressed that they believed the society motivates women to pursue degrees and jobs in education or administrative work. On the other hand, eight of the above 30 interviewees felt that Qatari women were recently being motivated to pursue all kinds of jobs. But it was observed that most of them believed in innate incompatibility of certain jobs with women's nature. Some of these incompatibilities stemmed in the long working hours or that it required physical labor.

3. Family Expectations

- The interviewees were asked “What do you feel are your obligations towards your family?” In attempt to avoid making these women feel that the interview was an attempt to find flaws into their personal lives, the interviewee was allowed to interpret this question their own way. Most of them understood it in a social sense. Nine of the interviewees ventured into the financial obligation aspect of the question. Most of them saw that a woman is obligated to financially support her parents and husband if needed. Most of the interviewees blamed it on the high living standards in Qatar. Women had to contribute to be able to sustain the status quo of the family.
- Most of the interviewees denied that they had any direct obligation towards their family beyond the usual. But when they were asked about what they meant by the usual, they explained that they have to accompany, obey and work to please their parents. It was observed that they all felt forms of social obligation towards their parents, especially in the form of obedience. It was observed that their actions and level of care given to their parents depended on how demanding their parents are, not on a personal choice.
- The under 30 group of informants were asked as a follow up question, “What do your parents expect you to do with your life?” Most of them said get a college degree and to get married. One interviewees, who is above 30, explained that her family expected women to work. In her family, it was a taboo for a woman not to have a job.

4. Awareness of Rights

- The interviewees were asked to list some of the rights and policies that support women. Most of the interviewees did not seem to be able to list any, but they were all under the impression that the state was providing women with many different forms of support. Some of them listed financial support for widows and divorcees. Interviewee 14 and 20 saw that the legal rights for women in Qatar were lacking.

5. Political Participation Challenges

- It generally seemed that most of the interviewees were not interested in the topic of jobs in the field of politics. Most of them explained that it would be very difficult for a woman to venture into politics because of the social pressure. Some of the reasons that they provided were that: it is a male dominated field, it is easy to psychologically harm a woman, her skills would be undermined, and her family would be pressured and socially ridiculed based on her actions and opinions.

6. Views on Empowerment Policies

- The interviewees were asked, “What do you think of the women empowerment project in Qatar?”
- Interviewee 1 said that women should not be denied what makes them who they are regarding segregation, privacy and conservative dress code. She felt that Qatari women are being used to promote that the state is supporting women, but it is “promotional” and “to show case that the state is supporting women’s rights”. She said, “Women who decide to invest in their families wouldn’t be able to find a job... There are women who would like to be there for their families,

but would also like to work few hours a day when they can, but they wouldn't be able to because the job market is catered towards full time jobs." To her, that meant that the state was not listening to women's needs. The efforts of the state were irrelevant to many women.

- Interviewee 2 saw that the empowerment in its current form is disempowering. She explain, "empowering Qatari women as a notion from the state means that the state gets to play the role of the voice provider and it takes credit for it... It sometimes means making the choice for women."
- Interviewee 3, 7 and 9 believed that there isn't an empowerment project that they can refer to in Qatar.
- Interviewee 4 felt that women empowerment in Qatar was more about filling vocational gaps than about addressing women's issues.
- Interviewee 5, 6, 10 and 16 believed that it was a project that Qatari women had no need for because they received all the rights and privileges they needed. While interviewee 19 believed that it was a notion that has been successful in positively changing women's lives.
- Interviewee 8 explained that empowerment should mean creating an environment for women in, which she does not need to struggle (with family, husband, society, co-workers and institutions) to be able to act on her aspirations. She believes that is not the case of empowerment in Qatar; women face struggles that are gender specific.
- Interview 10 believed that women empowerment is simply an idea that is discussed between the walls of universities and its journals in Qatar. It is not a real project.

- Interviewee 13 said, “women empowerment is manifested in news regarding successful women and it is related to Sheikha Mozah’s efforts. But, I don’t think men actually give credit to these women for their success.” She explained that it feels that the message wasn’t getting through to men.
- Interviewee 14 felt that empowerment was not there. She proposed that the state provide women with less working hours so they can take care of their families while working and studying, or else family issues will keep being blamed on women’s work and education.
- Interviewee 15 felt that women empowerment was an ambiguous term used term used in official speeches only. “If you don’t show me women struggling for what they get, then the society will never change. It will always be these elite women’s thing,” she elaborated. Similarly, Interviewee 20 saw that it was an ambiguous notion since women don’t have constitutional rights.
- Interview 17 believed it was an unsuccessful notion where women were given so many rights without being prepared for it; therefore, it is unleashing social havoc where women are not navigating well around these rights. She felt that women were using these rights in immature ways.
- Interviewee 18 believed that empowerment for Qatari women was project in progress that is showing great potential.

7. *The Religion Question*

- Most of the interviewees made an automatic connection between religion and social change for women. However, they seemed to unanimously agree that the theology was not the source of the negative social attitudes towards women. On the contrary, few of them quoted stories about powerful Muslim women to emphasize that the social change was a positive one that is moving towards a more Islamic role for women in which women contribute to the welfare of the society.

8. *Societal Pressure*

- The following results in this section came from further discussions on other main questions.
- There was a unanimous agreement that a woman's family should come before work. All the interviewees made the automatic connection between the recent social change for women and their responsibility towards motherhood. Most of them believed that childcare should come first. But some elaborated by saying that men should support their wives in childcare so they can work, while others explained that extended family or the state should provide the right working conditions and support for women to be able to continue working after entering motherhood.
- Social Standards and *tawgeeb*: All of the interviewees agreed that the Qatari society is a rich society with expensive standards to uphold. It was clear that all the interviewees were well off as they discussed traveling and other forms of luxury. But the interviewees below 30 expressed struggle with upholding the standards. Three of the

interviewees explained that they do not anymore try to chase the status quo because it is financially draining. Another aspect of the social pressure that they discussed was *tawgeeb*, which was explained as social visits and gifts that allows you to build social relations and establish status quo. The group above 30 seemed to be more aware of the financial and social burden of it. Most of the women in the group below 30 seemed detached from its norms. It was then explained to me by one of the interviewees that the oldest woman in the house usually carries out *tawgeeb*; and its financial burden falls on her or her husband. “The higher your position is the more of it you have to do,” Interviewee 20 elaborated. All the interviewees who related to its traditions expressed the need to set aside a budget for it from their salaries. Interview 5 and 18 explained that it is also a tradition that is time consuming to them. They explained that it does not only entail attending an event and giving gifts, it also entailed spending time at the event and pleasantly greeting everyone. Otherwise, it would result in social ridicule. On the other hand, men are not expected to stay and greet the same way women are. “A man can go to three different events in one night. He wears the same *thob* and he can spend ten minutes in every event and he would not receive any heat for it. While as a woman, I need to find a dress and pick it wisely based on brands and shops and I need to stay for few hours at minimum and I need to eat from the food or else I will be perceived as arrogant and I need to greet everyone I know which is usually everyone in the event,” Interviewee 18 elaborated. It was clear from other interviewees that the

consequence and nature of these traditions varies from one family to another. Interviewee 19 explained that her family agreed to not follow those expensive norms and give collective gifts to avoid embarrassing any party that is not financially capable.

- Some of the interviewees explained that there was a common belief in the society that there were two factors that affect marriage chance of a Qatari woman negatively: her education and job position. Most of the interviewees noted decrease in marriage chances as one of the negative consequence for women pursuing or working in a field that is not commonly believed as female appropriate. Few of them elaborated by saying that certain jobs do not allow women enough time to manage her house and provide childcare. Interviewee 19 noted that she believed that Qatari women in higher positions are much less likely to get married since men generally do not like strong women.
- Most of the interviewees did not seem to care for the opinions of anyone beyond their immediate family.
- Domestic violence: There is one interviewee who claimed that women could report their family members to the police. But researching the legal system does not show any signs of those laws. She did not mention any form of initial punishment that is carried out on the person reported; but she mentioned that a woman could force a man in her family to formally declare that he will not harm her again.

CHAPTER THREE: DISCUSSION PART 1

Qatari Women Status

The interviewed women opened up the doors for many discussions about society, culture and government. Living standards in Qatar are high. With great wealth and a long traditional leadership came a complex social and political scene even though it is generally stable. However, the society lives with the concern of being over powered by the number of expatriates that immensely exceed the number of nationals. The manifestations of the fear of being overpowered seem to motivate society on an individual and collective level to hold on to tradition, religion, and local pride, while also trying to be the center of the development process. Women, as part of this society, were influenced by how the patriarchal society reacted to these challenges, which created their unique experience and social struggle between the traditional and modern themes. This stage of Qatari women's history is an interesting one because it captures change in the lifestyle of women under a nation-wide struggle to uphold a traditional identity. As we let the views of these women lead the way, we will explore in the following lines some of the issues expressed by the interviewed group of working Qatari women about the social, economic and political barriers they face in relation to the structural empowerment.

Social Status

The social status of Qatari women is strongly influenced by the top-down approach of the state-society relations. Almost all the interviewees felt that women's social status witnessed its greatest transformation due to efforts from royal family iconic female figures, like Sheikha Mozah, and the government's support. When Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa was the Emir of Qatar, one of his wives, Sheikha Mozah, played a strong role in reforming Qatari women's role in society (Felder & Vuollo,

2008). She was the symbol of women empowerment. One of the interviewees said: “After Sheikha Mozah [left the scene], we were worried what would happen to us.” Her efforts were recognized locally and internationally. She is attributed for women’s role shift from being family caregivers to economically active members of society who are earning a living and participating in many jobs, which were previously considered as not feminine. She became UNESCO’s special envoy for basic and higher education as well as ambassador of United Nations. She was one of the first Qatari women to be featured on television in public speeches and interviews. Her accomplishments were considered by most of interviewees as gateways for breaking the taboos for the rest of the Qatari women. However, there are a couple of interviewees that explained that their families’ repeated rhetoric is that the actions of the ‘liberal’ families are not for them to copy and is none of their concern. The implicit issue here is that social status of women is shifting solemnly based on top-down approach. In the words of Interviewee 20, “Everything is bestowed and everything can be taken away if the current changed its direction.” Krause (2009) explained, in GCC, women organizations and initiatives are led by either Sheikhas (royal family members) or rich merchant family daughters. Therefore, these organizations are considered to be quasi-governmental. Peterson(1989) discussed how the Sheikhas were the only group in women in the GCC who had the privilege of inflicting change on their societies. As Interviewee 17 explained that it felt like the iconic figures try to push for a social change so that they can break the taboos for their own sake, not for the masses. It was observed that almost half of the interviewees and most of the interviewed women in their 20s felt negatively towards the ‘bestowed’ social status because these rights were fluid and were difficult to use as concrete basis in their lives and personal development.

The social status of Qatari women is also influenced by the shortcomings of their legal rights; however there seems to be lack of awareness towards the issue. It was observed that most of the interviewees were satisfied with their legal rights and felt quite fortunate, except for two exceptions. Interviewee 20 said that she couldn't find any rights for women in the constitution, which was confirmed to be true. The constitution does not address women or gender in any of its laws. The laws addressing women rights are in the Qatari Family Law and the Qatari Labor Law. The interviewee explained that she struggled with the legal system quite often, which required the presence or consent of her husband in many cases when it came to issues that had to do with her person or her children. For example, her latest struggle was getting her children's passports renewed, which couldn't be done without her husband's presence. The second exception was Interviewee 19 who was generally satisfied with the Qatari legal system, which she compared with the Saudi system and found to be much better, but she spoke against the discriminating laws that hindered Qatari women from marrying non-Qatari men. On the other hand, Interviewee 17 felt that women were abusing the new legal rights. She was mainly concerned with the right of woman to file for divorce and to file a complaint against members of her family, especially men. She observed that women were using these rights for minimal reasons that could be resolved without legal intervention. Qatari women, in her opinion, needed to be educated on how and when to use those rights since they were being given rights that are dramatically different than the rights of the older generations. From a structural perspective, the laws changed relatively in favor of women in the last decade. For example, the Civil Service Act in 2001 (Law No. 1) and the regulations of the Council of Ministers (Order No. 13) established the foundation for gender equality in the workforce. This change enforced equality

between rights and duties of men and women in the workplace. However, the Qatari Labor Law still carries many ambiguities regarding the appropriate employment for women (Article 94). The state, in Article 94, holds the right to define what are the female appropriate jobs. Moreover, the Qatari Labor Law lacks portions to which women can refer to in dealing with any form of discrimination, including glass-ceiling discrimination. Two of the interviewees explained, when they were asked about the retaliating move they would do if they felt that they were being discriminated against in the work place, their answer was that they would reach out to a person with high governmental or tribal position to intervene on their behalf. It was also observed that most of the interviewees were not concerned with the possibility of being discriminated against. At this point, we can see the influence of the legal rights carrying the implicit sense of being bestowed. Most of the interviewees were not concerned with what they deserve in their workplace, even though more than half of the interviewees were aware that there are some positions and jobs reserved for men. It was also observed that most of the interviewees made that automatic connection between women rights and women's role as mothers and caretakers in a sense that they should not conflict. In the state strategy for (2011-2016), women empowerment was listed under family issues. Falling under "Integrating sound social development", it states "women must be given more opportunity to contribute to the economic and cultural world without diminishing their role in the family structure." (p.7, Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016) As women were listed under family issues, only a limited number of issues were addressed which are those in relation to family and children welfare. That included the issue of balancing between work and family life. In Qatar National Vision 2030, there is no mention of women; however, upholding tradition and family coherence is mentioned. In Qatar Family Law,

women's work falls under one of the conditions of disobedience. In Article 69 that covers the conditions under which women are considered disobedient to their husbands, "5. If she works outside the home without the permission of her husband, unless he is abusing his right in preventing her from working." Article 69 in the Qatari Family Law is very controversial. It gives implicit authority for the husband to control the movement of his wife and her work. The Family Law gives her financial autonomy on her property and dowry, but mobility and choice of work remains ambiguous, while the Qatari constitution, as Interviewee 20 mentioned, do not mention women in any of its Articles. The echo of the same issue through these different legal platforms shows that Qatari woman's legal rights are far from becoming concrete basis, which women can lean on. The controversy seems to take shape around the influence of globalization. On one side, the state is facilitating women's education and employment a response to the globalized images of empowered women; but on the other hand, the legal system as (shown in the examples above) is perpetuating for the protection of the traditional identity and social roles as reaction to the local fear of loss of vernacular identity to social globalization.

Finally and in a more implicit sense, the attitudes toward women in Qatar pose a challenge to women's empowered status in society. There are negative aspects of social attitudes towards women like domestic violence, which shows a problem in the way women are viewed in society. Domestic abuse remains a great dilemma in Qatar and similarly in most GCC countries. Kaltham Al-Ghanim (2009) found that "the cultural image of women as weak and dependent, in need of protection of men, lacking authority, and responsible for preserving the honor of men encourages and excuses violence against women, to the point that it is often not even defined as

violence” (2009, p. 91) She also found that only 5% of victims of domestic violence would report abuse to the police. One final important finding in Al-Ghanim’s study was that domestic violence was used in many cases as a tool to enforce social norms and traditions. Another alarming research (Nizam Khan & Abdul Rahim, 2012) showed that one third of the survey subjects, both men and women, found wife beating justifiable. Nizam Khan and Abdul Rahim’s research also showed that education levels did not result in real variation in the male attitude towards women. Men with university level education did not seem to think differently than their peers who had high school degrees. Moreover, the generation of men between 18-29 was the highest in all age groups to justify violence against women. These results show that domestic violence against women poses a real issue for women in Qatar. In addition, there is no specific law in Qatar which address domestic violence or abuse. (“QATAR”, 2015) The efforts to prevent domestic violence remain minimal in Qatar. (Kelly, 2009) The relevant institutions lack the ability to intervene in the family-oriented and discrete Qatari society, and there are a very limited number of campaigns carried out to address the matter. As Rowlands (1997) discussed, power has three dimensions: personal, close relationships and collective. It seems that Qatari women are struggling with both the personal and close relationship modes of power. Based on the above researches, some women’s attitude towards femininity remains negative as they justify the negative attitudes towards them. However, in regards to the group of women interviewed for this research, the younger group and a few of the older felt that they were entitled to more than what the society around them was giving them. Most of them attributed the control to their parents’ beliefs and not to their own beliefs. The older age group had 3 interviewees who did not believe that they were entitled to more than what they were getting. One interviewee said: “Qatari women

are not victims... we are so empowered that it is time for us to empower men.” But this particular interviewee felt that she received support from her surrounding family members. Another interviewee who did not seem to feel that there was need for empowerment for women in Qatar (Interviewee 16) mentioned that her family was very supportive of her choices, to the point that she even married a foreigner, which is socially frowned upon. Interviewee 17 had a different opinion; she saw that Qatari women had easier access to a system, which allowed them to report even their fathers. But, it was observed that she saw it as a negative thing; she saw it as ‘spoiled girls’ were abusing the rights they were given. Therefore, we can say that women who had support from their family members did not sense a need to struggle with the community, while those who did felt the burden of struggling for power in their close relations and society. However, the general results show that Qatari women remain far from a collective power in which they all support each other’s right to access to resource and choice, while the negative attitudes are consistently working against the ones with less understanding families.

Economic Situation

Qatari women experience a unique economic situation as Qatar has one of the highest GDP per capita in the world. The lifestyle of Qataris is commonly known to be very luxurious, which was also reported by the entire pool of interviewees. The country is also unique in its demographic construct where the expatriates are larger in number than the nationals. It’s a phenomenon that became commonly known as demographic imbalance. The overpowering number of expatriates meant a need for counter measures against the issue. Such were policies of Qatarization. Some of the younger interviewees made the connection between women’s employment and Qatarization process. Interviewee 12 explained that the Qatarization process made it

look like Qatari women were getting jobs simply because of the policies, which required companies to have a particular percentage of Qataris, and not based on their education and skills. It was observed that she felt that these processes undermined the recognition of the efforts of women in pursuing a job through education and training. Over the past 20 years, the number of educated Qatari women bypassed notably the number of educated Qatari men. A state wide report showed that in 2013 the number of Qatari females who graduated from a university in Qatar versus the number of Qatari males who graduated from a university in Qatar was 3:2 (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2016). However, reports (Felder & Vuollo, 2008; "Ministry", 2014) show that the number of educated women in Qatar does not correlate with the number of workingwomen. It seems that a number of them do not reach the workforce. The interviewees explained few issues that they believed hindered women from entering the workforce. The reason most mentioned was the disapproval of the family based on their belief that certain work fields or working conditions (in which, for example, women would work in mixed-gender offices) are not appropriate for women. The interviews also showed variation in the different families and their level of control over the women's education and work field. Some of the interviewees did not recognize any limitations other than those posed by religion; they seemed comfortable with the Islamic religious rules and even believed that Islam motivated women's participation more than what is witnessed at the moment. Some were fast to recognize the common societal biases, but acknowledge that they have easy-going parents. The third group of women was the ones who were unfortunate due to their parental influence. For that group, the parental influence also extended to how their income salary would be spent. Two of the interviewees pointed out that their salaries were drained by their family's needs. It seemed that they had a

general feeling that their absence from home for the sake of sustaining a job was only justified by their ability to contribute to the welfare and even, in one case, luxury of the family. It was also reported by Interviewee 20 that she dealt with cases of Qatari women whose husbands confiscated a ratio of their salaries in return for allowing them to work, but she personally had full control over her income. That could leave women feeling that there is a limited added value to work when their salaries are confiscated. Another form of abuse that they reported was dealing with discriminating standards of the employers. They reported that they personally were asked about issues irrelevant to their skills like their current marital status and their future marriage and childbearing plans. These contradicting experiences show that not all Qatari women live the luxurious experience. There is much to be said about their freedom of choice, financial autonomy and the recognition they receive. Some of the policies that claim to empower women created a sense of unworthiness for these women, and some of them struggled with members of the society acting out on this unworthiness and bestowed rights attitude like a husband who demands a ratio of his wife's income or a parent that interferes with how women of the house use their income. It was not the common case for the interviewees, but most of the interviewees recognized this as an issue that they encountered with friends or relatives.

From a theoretical perspective, there are two points to make here. The first is that the dimensions of choice are offset. There is only a certain group of women who have access to resources (employment, education and training) because their families allow them to do so. They are the same group that has agency and ability to define goals. They are also the same group that felt complete power over their income. It all depended on the mindset of their families. However, most of these privileged women

felt that employment and income were not achievements, but a blessing. While focusing on the opportunity structure, we can see that there are issues with the mechanism of empowerment, which results in an inadequate access to choice. The opportunity structure for Qatari women does not hold within it the elements to create social empowerment for women. Interviewee 20 explained that she believed that no one is obligated to obey the social norms; they just have to be strong enough to not be affected by others. Hence, she was aware (and so were most of the younger group of interviewees) that she had a choice, but one with negative consequences that are difficult for most people to deal with. The top-down policies that facilitated women's employment has taken away the need for collective action, but it leaves behind the lack of power women face in their personal and close relationships. One can say that the artificial leverage that women gained had resulted in what almost half of the interviewees called "the pictorial power" that does not translate in ability to make choices. It resulted in a form of empowerment that does not give women the right ingredients for free-choice or multi-layered social power.

Women in Politics

The political sphere in Qatar is one with very limited access. Most of the interviewees showed that they were aware of this limitation. It was observed that almost half of them seemed satisfied with seeing a female ambassador for Qatar, while the rest seemed to feel no interest in the topic. As one of the interviewees argued, the Arabian Gulf has its own kind of democracy, which she called tribal democracy (a process based on delegating the wisest and the oldest of a tribe to speak for it). The issue with her argument is that such mechanism does not have space for women to voice their opinion, especially in a patriarchal society. But, she made her argument from in a platonic tribal state scenario where women's opinion would be

heard through open-minded community of men. The policy limitations echo the same lack of interest in having women as political players. Association and Private Institutions Law passed in 2004 in Qatar limits the possibility of establishing women's rights NGOs. Expatriate women use informal gatherings to carry out discussions on the matter; however, there is no evidence of Qatari women carrying out the same action (Breslin & Jones, 2010). Moreover, there isn't much online women's right's activism in Qatar. (Seikaly, Roodsaz, & Van Egten, 2014) Very similar to the case in other Arab Gulf States (Metcalf, 2011), any women empowerment initiatives in Qatar were quasi-governmental or completely governmental. Therefore, any of the attempts to empower women –even that of Sheikha Mozah- was a top-down attempt. As mentioned in the above section, Qatari women lack collective experience. The top-down empowerment in Qatar is approached through selective state policy change. For example, the state has rectified CEDAW, yet with many reservations, which they proclaimed contradicts with Islamic Shariaa (Seikaly et al., 2014). Qatar is the third-lowest performing on political empowerment of women with no women representatives in the political arena. (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2014) One of the interviewees commented on the matter by saying: “It would be very hard for a woman to enter the political arena. It would be hard for her and her family... She is not a man. When people attack her, it will not only harm her; it will also harm her family.” This interviewee seemed to see a connection between a daughter's person and her families, unlike that which a son has with his family. She said: “A man would be fine. If people bash him, he will be fine.” In light of stereotypes about the decision-making skills of women and protectiveness over women, the hope for women to reach political participation is dimmer than that for men in Qatar.

The lack of political participation in Qatar has made the collective power of most groups very limited. The top-down approach to empowerment has left the entire pool of interviewees uninterested in their political agency. It seems to be able to channel the empowerment process towards certain aspects of choice, while leaving other aspects of choice to remain out of question and improbable.

The general overview of the status of women in Qatar shows that Qatari women are both blessed and challenged under the welfare state. In conclusion, the strongest influence on the welfare, sense of choice and social power of a Qatari woman is her family. It seems that socially, economically and politically, only the group of Qatari women with supportive parents was capable of accessing the pool of opportunities provided by the state, even if the pool of opportunities is a selective one. However, the great contrast in experience and responses from one interviewee to the next and the lack of civil society groups in Qatar can be an indicator that the issue with the feminine Qatari scene is that there is lack in awareness of others' experiences. There is lack in the collective conscious.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION PART II

Employment: Empowering or Double-Burden Syndrome?

Women in Arabian social constructions are usually deemed for certain social roles. In a traditional sense, a woman's role is to become a mother and do unpaid house work. On the other hand with the growing financial obligations of the families and ever lowering wages, women are expected to contribute to their homes through sustaining employment similar to men. The fix here becomes that women in that sense are required to carry out both roles, which are bread winning and house caretaking, giving her the heavier burden solely depending on gender. Based on the interview results, it seems that the Qatari women face a similar issue but with different dynamics, since they are given many financial privileges by the welfare state, unlike the rest of the Middle East. Their case depends mainly on the high standards of life in Qatar and availability of jobs with high income. In this chapter, we will explore the double-burden in the experience of Qatari women and how it affects their structural empowerment. The first section overviews the financial obligation of Qatari women. In the second section, we discuss marriage chances and how it depends on education, occupation and position choices. The third section overviews the dynamics of the conjecture of the obligation of women toward carrying out childcare and household management. Finally, we discuss a recurring theme in the interviews, which is upholding traditions and what that means for Qatari women.

Financial Obligation

For Qatari women, there seems to be a predefined cycle of spending for independent income. When women in the GCC started to earn their own income, they found that they “started to earn greater respect and have a greater voice within their families because they are contributing financial support.” (Kelly, 2009, p. 3) Four our

twenty interviewees, twelve of them reported that they live in families where the girl has to financially support, or at least contribute to the family, especially after marriage. The seventh interviewee believed that Qatari women pursue a job for the purpose of owning more income. It was observed that they believed that money gave them more social power. Only one out of the 15 interviewees mentioned that women work to follow some dreams, and not for the pay. It is important to note that these women mentioned their financial obligation without being asked. They all considered themselves to be well off nevertheless. Only two of the interviewees mentioned that their families at some point in the past had limited income. One of the two attributed the financial issue to her parents' divorce. Living within an Arab culture, financial matters of a family are usually considered very personal. Such could be a sign that these women believe that their finances are a key to more social empowerment that they need. It shows that they sense a need for more social empowerment and they are pursuing that change in their own ways. But, the life standards in Qatar are very high, which makes their quest much harder. Since Qatar has a limited number of nationwide survey centers, up to date statistics are hard to find; therefore we will refer to the most recent survey, which was carried out in 2013. It shows that Qatari families spend per month nearly 3 times that spent per month by an expatriate household. Taking in consideration that nationals are exempted from water and electricity, receive subsidies on education and pay three times average for housing expenses; in other words, the survey results show that Qatari nationals live an increasingly luxurious life. Moreover, an average 11.5%, 5.7%, and 5.1% monthly of the household expenditure is on traveling abroad, clothes and personal care respectively. That is an average of 4 to 5 times more than that spent by expatriates on the same needs. ("*Final*", 2013) It was also noted in the same report that wages and salaries

make up average of 67% of the household expenditure; the rest are subsidies of different forms like services and stipends. Moreover, it states, “The Qatari household monthly average expenditure was QR 49,663.” (p.62) That translates into around 13,700 USD per month. Therefore, it is easy to say that the financial standards of Qatari families are much higher than that of the expatriates who mostly have good living standards. Since the report also informs us that the higher the level of education of the family breadwinners, the higher their income, it is safe to say that women have become an essential financial resource for their families as they have bypassed men in education as the national reports show. Their education has allowed them to provide higher incomes for their families. Turning women empowerment into a matter of higher income for the family is not unusual (Cornwall & Anyidoho, 2010), but it had its repercussions. Taking into consideration the family hegemony in Qatar over women, the higher income meant higher financial responsibility for women as Interviewee 8, a Qatari sociologist, reported. Translating that into power dynamics, the income has given women some voice in the family context. However, without educating the society on the woman’s agency over her money, the family has gained agency over daughters’ and wives’ money. Thus, women are left in a cycle of empowerment that is earned through financial drainage and is not equally fruitful. If income is the achievement aspect of choice, then the individual’s power over their income should be equally important. In the case of women who lack the power in dimension of close relations, income failed to be an achievement and in that sense employment becomes burdensome rather than empowering.

Marriage Chances

Through the interviews, one of the recurring themes was marriage and marriage chances for Qatari women. Marriage chances seemed to influence women choices in many aspects of their lives. The two main matters of concern that were mentioned were gender-appropriate study and work fields. Interviewee 7 mentioned being asked in her current job interview if she minded that the work place and conditions might influence her marriage chances. She did not seem to mind the question as a discriminating concern, but she leaned toward being more offended by how invasive and personal the question was. This particular interviewee is from the younger group of respondents. The recurring theme accompanying marriage for the rest of the interviewees were family expectations. The entire group of interviewees reported that they are either expected by their parents to get married or that the main role of women is to get married and be caretakers of children. Interviewee 1 reported that she chose working in university over working in a different sector to “spare herself the headache” of family pressure. When asked what her family feared from other working sectors, she said that they feared that she would not get married. As Folbre (2006) suggested, women feel fear of taking up jobs that are time consuming due to the fear for their future dependencies (children). In this case, women are conditioned through social chances and marriage chances to take up jobs that allow enough effort and time for childcare. Along those lines, the previously mentioned interviewee gave the example of her sister whose engagement was broken, once she was accepted in medical school. The reason the groom gave was that he wanted to take a wife that has the time for him and his house. Along those lines, reports show that women are not employed with the same capacity or the same fields that they

received education for. (World Bank, 2013) The most recent report on women occupation in Qatar, which was carried out in 2016 said,

“Qatar provides an interesting case where a relatively small share of female university students are in the education field yet a large percentage are employed in the education sector, implying that those who major in education are more likely to find (acceptable) work. Also interestingly, the public administration and defense sector in Qatar is the largest employer of female graduates, many of whom are hired at the lower levels.”(Constant, 2016, p. 15)

The meaning of ‘acceptable work’ can be understood through the survey carried out in 2015 showing that 54% of respondents believed that there were only particular jobs that are suitable for women. (Asghar et al., 2015) These results show that women are influenced by the familial discourse regarding marriage; in other words, Luke’s third dimension power over women. Twisting the will of women to work in certain fields and in certain conditions for the sake of fulfilling a familial expectation of marriage and abiding to the conditions, which are believed to increase marriage chances. The younger respondents reported that it seemed that the job interviewers preferred to employ single women who were basically believed to have less demands than married women. Most of them, as well, were asked about their plans for marriage, which shows that there is a social consensus regarding the pressure of marriage and its conditions.

House Duties and Childcare

To put matters in the simplest terms, Qatari women who are encouraged to take up jobs and erect private businesses are also legally obligated to carry out childcare and house duties. Article 58 of the Qatari Family Law states: “Rights of the husband as against his wife: ... 3. Look after the household and regulate affairs thereof. 4. Take care of his Children and breastfeed them, unless there is a legal disability.” House duties and childcare are emphasized in a range of legal matters as

the obligation of women. Within the context of marriage, women are obligated to be the caretakers of children in all matters other than financial. Even though, women are not legal guardians, the law obligates them to be the sole child caretakers. The Qatari Family Article 68 states: “The husband shall allow his wife to complete her compulsory education, and facilitate continuation of her university education within the State, provided that this shall not conflict with her family duties.” There is a repetitive mention of women’s obligations inside the house, which is left for the husband to define. As CEDAW reported, it is worrisome when a strategy emphasizes a certain solution for the problem, which helps in fortifying the same idea where the issue has originated. The Qatar National Strategy emphasizes work-life balance under the family cohesion part. (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011) When the strategy uses work-life balance for women as a solution or a method of enhancing family cohesion, there is an implicit blame on the workingwomen for not balancing between the work and personal life obligations. There is no attempt here to deny the importance of family life; nevertheless, there is a question that should be raised regarding the work-life balance of men as well. If men and women are equal in their obligation towards the family, then there should be efforts made to help men contribute and support family cohesion.

The reported opinions of the 20 Qatari women interviewed reflected the emphasis on the family oriented role of women. Most of the interviewees reported that they believed that women’s priority role is to be a mother and manage the house. There were also those who blamed workingwomen for the corruption of the new generation and high dependency on maids and servants. One of the interviewees is a Qatari sociologist; she explained that empowerment has taken women out of their homes and has resulted in many misfortunes; she believed that women should have

shorter working hours so they can do their house duties. Moreover, she raised the issue of the tribal traditions. Interviewee 5 mentioned that women are obligated due to tribal traditions to attend social obligations, which she calls *tawgeeb*. In her scenario, even though she was a university professor, *tawgeeb* took up so much of her time and effort. She defined it as a group of social obligations expected of women towards their families and their husbands' family. She believed that men had more freedom in choosing if they wanted be to committed to these social obligations or not. Since this was a novel concept, the rest of the interviewees were asked about it. The younger group felt that *tawgeeb* was the obligation of mothers and married women in general. It only becomes essential for the daughters to be involved in these social activities when they are in the right age for marriage. In that sense, *tawgeeb* is another added obligation to the second shift of married women, but only to a particular group of older women. If we consider that childcare is also another issue that is expected of women, one must ask if the working hours are being deducted from self-care time. Interviewee 5 also reported that she felt that her long working hours in addition to childcare and social obligations exhausted her mentally and physically. The rest of the interviewees who were questioned about *tawgeeb* and social obligations saw the extra effort as normal and justifiable.

Reflecting on the evidence, Qatari women seem to be obligated by law to carry out more than simply a job. Their role as caretakers and housewives is emphasized not just socially, but also legally. In this aspect, both structural and social empowerment is lacking. The structural empowerment (manifested in encouragement towards pursuing a job) emphasizes a double role and a double-burden. In other words, a workingwoman, unlike a workingman, is obligated to ensure that her house receives care and nurture, while carrying out the same number of working hours as

men. To translate house and childcare in power dynamics, house and childcare is a service that could possibly provide women with power, if their service is recognized by the society as a choice and priceless service. However, when women are socially pressured to provide that service, it becomes disempowering on both a structural and social level. House and childcare is a choice that a woman should be making and given equivalent agency for. Yet, it was observed that the interviewees, especially the younger group, sought occupation over familial relations as the first gave them a sense of power while the second did not.

Upholding Traditions

One final theme that falls under the same double-burden category is women's role in upholding traditions. It was observed that all the interviewees were concerned at different points of the interviews with the idea of upholding traditions. The way they defined what they believed were traditions was in the most part through family relations. Since Article 21 for 2004 in the Qatari constitution states, that "the family is the basis of the society," we can say that the family structure in Qatar upholds the utmost social power that is both reflected in the laws and the societal reality. Almost half of the young group of interviewees felt that upholding traditions was a burden imposed on them by their family for the society. Most of the young interviewees explained that their parents expected obedience and companionship out of the girls, and not as much from the sons. One of the interviewees explained that there was a Qatari idiom that roughly translates to: "you raise a boy to give him to a wife, but you raise a girl for her parents." There is no doubt that men are subjected to other forms of pressure by their families, but that is not the scope of this study. We focus here on the fact that obligations differ based on gender. The hegemony of the family over its females is also reflected in the issue of domestic violence. In a research carried out in

(2009) by Kaltham Al-Ghanim showed that one of the reasons Qatari women were subjected to violence was disobedient of older family members of men and women. The disobedience usually involved matters as simple as going out and meeting friends. In other words, the family has the power to hinder women from reaching the structural empowerment. The issue of violence shows that the tradition of familial obedience leaves women under the mercy of the empowerment standards of the family. Along the same lines a survey carried out in 2015 with 274 Qatari women showed that 46% of the respondents cited family, culture, norms and religion as constraining factors for them looking for a job. (Asghar et al., 2015) The power of the family in Qatar is thus evident and their ideological influence becomes a rather inescapable matter. The family seems to play either a very empowering or disempowering role for Qatari women. In that sense, the Qatari family cannot be ignored as a target group for education regarding women rights.

Another target should be the governmental narrative The Qatari National Strategy emphasizes the role of women in holding up the traditions of the society. It said that “women must be given more opportunity to contribute to the economic and cultural world without diminishing their role in the family structure.” (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011, p. 17) This statement came in the context of protection of the traditional culture within the process of modernization. The emphasis here seems to be on the traditional role of women that needs to be sustained. Therefore, it could be understood that women are vital in upholding the traditions through upholding their roles and activities within the family. Yet again, there was a lack of emphasis on the traditional roles of men within the family. For empowerment to occur, the power structure has to change. (Yuval-Davis, 1994) Based on Rowlands’ (1997) three-dimensional empowerment, on the personal level,

women have the elements of empowerment. They theoretically have capacity to pursue a job. However, on the close relationships and collective conscious, they are bound by the traditional role and social pressure to remain in it.

One main feature of upholding the traditions and traditional role, which was echoed by most of the younger generation of interviewees, was obedience. Obedience as a manifestation of identity and traditions raises few issues. First, there is the legal right of a man to demand obedience from his wife. The interviewed married women did not seem to have a problem with the issue. They felt that they did not face power struggle in their homes, but they all knew of others who were disempowered by their spouses. But, the method of interviewing is inconclusive when it comes to this point, because there questions did not go deeper into the issue as it was a culturally sensitive topic. Secondly, there is the issue of the domestic violence as a justification to obedience. None of the interviewees mentioned having dealt with domestic violence, but there are surveys that show a different reality. The one research's results showed that one out of every five young men in Qatar believes that husbands are justified in beating wives under certain conditions. (*Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2012, 2014*) Another smaller scale research showed even higher rates, which were 46.1% and 35.4% for males between 18-29 and 30-39 respectively. (Nizam Khan & Abdul Rahim, 2012) There are no recent survey results to show exact numbers of the violence acceptance rates in Qatar. But, again here we see an issue of lack of collective power where women do not have a medium of communication. One of the interviewees mentioned that the reason why there seems to be a balance in the issue of control of a husband is that divorce is facilitated for Qatari women. Nevertheless, the divorce system is much more complicated for women than men. As Amnesty reported, Qatari women are required to go through a long courthouse process that

does not guarantee a divorce while men can obtain a divorce immediately. That is in addition to men remaining the guardians of children, even if they do not have custody of them. Such laws have left women in need of taking written permissions from their ex-husbands to enroll their children in schools and any similar legal processes. (Amnesty International, 2014) Hence, the process will discourage women, as the result of following the procedural system is not conclusive. The fact that a woman is entitled to an uncertain divorce weakens the power of agency given by the system. Thirdly and most importantly, obedience of family and society raises many issues with freedom of choice. Because of that, women are expected to uphold tradition by accepting gender segregation and limitations on mobility. The available survey results of 2011 showed that around 80% of the surveyed parents would want their daughters to be in a gender segregated spaces. (Asghar et al., 2015) One of the interviewees complained that at work, what others believed to be a simple task was an impossible matter for her. Because of her family rules, she cannot receive work calls at home and she can't work extra hours. She cannot travel without a companion. More than one interviewee complained that if she travelled she had to be accompanied by a male guardian. Therefore, it became much more complicated as a task. Adding to that, Qatari women need to take their guardian's approval to travel.ⁱ (Committee on The Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2014) In addition, there is a common practice that builds on a conservative Islamic belief in Qatar, which entails that when traveling, a kin guardian should accompany women. However, the job market does not seem to be moving towards facilitating that matter to women. There are not any benefits for men or paid vacations for them to accompany the women in their

ⁱ These are policies that are implemented, but not mentioned clearly in laws. But there is a clear mention of Guardianship of fathers and husbands in The Qatari Family Laws that would explain these practices.

families, unlike women who would be able to get a vacation to accompany their spouse. One interviewee said that the opportunities are given by the state, but only the more liberal families allow their daughters to make use of these opportunities. All the women of the younger group on interviewees reported that they were discriminated against either by their employer through the interview, or through the beginning of their working years. The reasons reported were very close to the traditional values previously mentioned. Most of them were asked if they had any plans to get married and if they will abandon their jobs for the sake of the family life. Based on the stories they reported, it seemed that the employers preferred single Qatari women from families of liberal mentalities. If we consider employment as a resource, then some of the traditions that enforce obedience on women will be considered as a flaw in the opportunity structure and also a hinder to empowering women to have the power dimensions to make their own choices.

Going back to a point that was mentioned above, a majority of the interviewees explained that within Qatari society there is what is called *twgeeb* traditions; these are social obligations that would require time and expenses from women and men, but in different levels and forms. One of the correspondents explained the logic behind the traditions by saying that the woman carry the burden of taking care of her own family and then of the family of the husband. They also reported that these social obligations increase after marriage. The norms related to *tawgeeb* seem to also have social consequence where those who do not adhere to it suffer consequence in the form of societal pressure. In entails a system of exchange of visits and gifts through which both men and women represent their respect, care and social status. But one of interviewees reported that for women showing these qualities was far more difficult than for men. Women were expected to follow certain set of

behaviors and to dress in a particular way that appeases to the community, which was both more time and money consuming than that performed by men.

Conclusion

The double-burden is the result of an over powering group of obligations delegated to one group of the society based on gender originating from cultural and traditional role of women. In the case of Qatari women, women are expected to handle financial contribution, child and house care, and upholding traditions (obedience), while the job market prefers single women with fewer obligations and constrains. The interviews showed that these ideologies were reproduced within the context of the families, which seemed to hold the upmost power over women. These ideologies being supported by the Qatari Family Law and the 2030 Strategy, which emphasizes multiple concurrent roles for women, will leave women with a double and maybe even triple burden that is reproduced through legal and social system.

SUMMARY

The focus of this study is structural and social women empowerment in Qatar through employment. It aimed to give a holistic view Qatari women's social struggle through reflecting and contesting their experience with the structural empowerment manifested in employment. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed us to see into the experience of Qatari women from a different perspective. It allowed insight into what they saw as important. The insight gained from the interviews was contrasted with socio-political knowledge gained from secondary resources to provide a critique of the empowerment process and where it is lacking. The secondary data gave empirical base for the self-reported experience of the interviewees.

The theoretical basis of this study was synthesis of different theories. It builds on the long argument between Marxist theory approach and the feminist theory in the sense that it puts value on the importance of employment; however, the way it approached the issue is through putting women at the center instead of the economy at the center of the argument. Then it builds on few other concepts to help shape and understand how the experience of these women has been influenced by the structural empowerment and employment. The first of the theories is the top-down approach to empowerment and the state feminism. The second is the dimensions of power: personal, close relationships and social. The third is the opportunity structure and finally the dynamics of choice: access to resource, agency and achievement. Using these theories to reflect on the personal experience and structural empowerment few things. It showed us that structural empowerment without social empowerment can create a system that is disempowering or dysfunctional for women. The top-down approach to women empowerment in Qatar does not guarantee a healthy opportunity structure. The mechanism of the empowerment process failed to reach women who

struggled with their social power structure. The greatest issue with power that most of these women faced was with their close relationships where their families either allowed them access to choice or deprived them. The mechanism of women empowerment in Qatar needed to build around a better understanding of power dimensions and how to penetrate through them so that women can have the full dynamic of choice. It was also observed that even employed women who had a family that allowed them to access resources and have agency did not enjoy a sense of achievement due to the top-down approach to empowerment, which deprived them from a sense of accomplishment and worthiness.

In the results section, the input for the interviews is displayed thematically based on the topics most repeated by the interviewees.

The discussion part of this study was organized in two chapters. The first covered employment as a tool to structural empowerment and its influence on social empowerment in the social, economic and political themes of life. Firstly, the analysis demonstrated that the social status of women in Qatar was influenced by the social transformation from traditional to modernity. The legal rights witnessed some positive change, however, it did not resonate across all legal platforms. The Qatari Family Law is still ambiguous on many issues concerning women and gives rights to male guardians that negatively influence the choice dynamics for women in regards to employment in specific and in life in general. It also touched on the issue of attitudes towards women and how some issues pose a future threat for women like domestic violence. It was observed that most of the interviewees seemed to feel irrelevant to violence, which shows the lack of social and collective power in the community of women in Qatar. The second section discussed the financial aspect of employed women's life and how related policies plays out in their empowerment. The

discussion covered the issue of Qatarization and how it influences women's perception of their achievement. It was observed that most of the interviewees had a sense of unworthiness that originated from the Qatarization process that took away from the recognition they get for their work. The third section covered the political life and women's aspirations towards it. It was observed that most of the interviewees were uninterested in contributing to the political arena or saw it as a dead-end for women.

The second chapter of the discussion covered some of the challenges posed on employed women due to working conditions and social pressure. The themes covered by this chapter were introduced through the interviews. They are the issues most commonly discussed by the women interviewed of both ages. These themes were: marriage chances, house duties and childcare and upholding traditions. Some of the interviewees explained how education and employment directly influenced their marriage chances, which is an important element to the families of these women. House duties and childcare was reflected upon through the interviews and the legal system. Finally, some of the unique aspects of the Qatari traditions were discussed. This chapter debates the possibility of a case of a double-burden or a second-shift for Qatari workingwomen. It shows some of the dynamics that the mechanism of empowerment has failed to address that resulted in pressure on women and negative influence on their well-being.

Through the interviews and the critique of the structural empowerment, the research comes to conclude that structural and social empowerment complements one another. Employment is a vital tool for structural empowerment. It opened up the way to these women to acquire social power. However, the empowering effect of employment came to a halt due to the lack of social empowerment. Some aspects of

structural empowerment were limited to a particular group of women from families that supported them. Those who were not as fortunate were left behind by the structural empowerment because they lacked the social support. This research explains that some of the pressing issues with social empowerment in Qatar are the traditions that takes away choice from women, discriminating gender narratives perpetuated by families and employers, women's financial agency (beyond the legal system), and women's collective conscious and ability to make demands. There are also few pressing issues with the structural empowerment including ambiguity of the legal system and the lack of protective laws for women in the public or private sphere.

CONCLUSION AND REMARKS

Empowerment of women in Qatar is a young project that is unrecognizable by a good number of interviewees. Some rejected the need for one and the rest couldn't recognize what it was. But it remains important, as we have seen that these women are facing their own set of challenges that hinders their development towards their personal goals. Moreover, the interviewed sample showed limited to no sense of collective consciousness. By raising awareness on women issues in ways that are relatable to them, we hope that it opens the door for a collective understanding of struggle that could lead up to these women understanding their value to the state and what they could demand. From an empowerment project angle, these women should be motivated to collectively discuss their issues through a context-appropriate medium where they could learn more about one another. Moreover, the empowerment discourse needs to include more than the elite women (a certain class). Due to the cultural sensitivity, the issue of class was not addressed in the questions. However, the issue of class showed implicitly in some of the interviews where women pointed out that females of the royal family or particular families lived in different conditions. Social class in Qatar is blurred out by the wealth distribution practices and subsidies. Working members of the society cannot be considered as a class as two women working in the same positions can have very different living standards (which was observed in the samples of this study). Therefore, for lack of better knowledge, what made up that elite group that benefited from the structural empowerment is believed to be the culture of the tribe or the family whom they belong to. Finally, the last issue we could mention here is the lack of sense of deservedness and achievement; it must be addressed through creating a community of women that supports one another and celebrates their own skills and success.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Empowerment processes can be studied in multiple ways. The common point between all of the approaches of empowerment is that they are multidisciplinary and they should not be approached from only one aspect, and definitely social empowerment should always be part of the argument. For further research we suggest a longitudinal study, which can cover all areas and levels of empowerment as proposed by Alsop and his fellow researchers (2006). It should be a research that would devise both quantitative and qualitative methods of study that can identify specific approaches to empowerment that could overcome culture and traditions without posing a threat to the national identity of the state.

Another form of research could be addressing the religious question. Discriminating gender roles should be studied with an Islamic lens to examine the possibility of positive social change within the boundaries of the Islamic societies. As most of the interviewees believed, there are many misconceptions spreading about female gender role in Islam that should be addressed and discarded.

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