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Patriarchal Beliefs and Conventional Understanding of Family Honor as Obstacles of Women Empowerment

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effects of patriarchal beliefs as measured by women's inferiority and domestic role and traditional understanding of family honor on the attitudes toward women empowerment in Saudi Arabia. A proportionate sample was selected to administer the questionnaire. About 1400 responses were received and analyzed. A regression model was applied to test the relative effects of each variable. The findings reveal that beliefs in women's inferiority have the highest negative impact on the attitudes of women empowerment. Understanding family honor and beliefs in domestic role of women also have low negative effects. The other significant variables were gender (women have positive attitudes), exposure to media (positive) and family social status. Patriarchal beliefs affect attitudes toward women empowerment than the understanding of family honor. Religiosity, age, and family economic status have no significant relation with the dependent variable. The findings confirm the results of various observations and research based on empirical evidence that is lacking in these studies and observations. From the findings, it can be said that any social reform to empower women must be complemented with efforts to change traditional beliefs to ease the transition and avoid social rejection of such changes.

Keywords: women empowerment, patriarchal beliefs, women inferiority, family honor, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

For many decades women's rights in Saudi Arabia have been limited in comparison to the rights of women in many of its neighboring countries. These substantial legal and social reforms meant to empower women are happening where a significant percentage of the population has limited support. Many surveys and polls showed that the majority of women support male guardianship (Saleh 2006), oppose women driving (Abdel-Raheem 2013) and disagree that women hold a political office. These attitudes are usually attributed to a strict interpretation of Sharia law (Ertuk 2009), a view that many observers have held. Here we propose another understanding of these negative attitudes toward these reforms and women empowerment in general. This interpretation focuses on two social factors, patriarchal beliefs and family honor. The patriarchal beliefs refer to a set of ideas that explain and justify the dominant role of men and attribute it to inherent natural differences between men and women where women are inferior to men and can only curry domestic roles. The patriarchal beliefs are learned from the patriarchal system that predominates most Arab societies and survived despite the manifestations of social changes and modernization (Miller 2009). Patriarchal beliefs cannot explain Saudis' negative attitudes toward women's empowerment because most other contemporary societies are patriarchal (Lockard 2015).

Studying the value of family honor may provide more understanding of Saudi view of women empowerment. The value of family honor accentuates the importance of sexual purity and chastity of women belonging to the family, which makes it a cause of suspicion and jealousy and an essential factor of men's control of women behavior and the restrictions imposed on women movement and interaction with strangers (Dodd 1973). Many scholars and observers have recognized the significant role of family honor on women's status in Saudi Arabia, but no study has measured its impact through empirical observation.

Therefore, this study investigates the effects of traditional social attitudes, especially the adherence to traditional understanding of honor and patriarchal beliefs, on people's attitudes toward women's legal, social, economic, and political empowerment. Women's empowerment includes participating in the economy, holding a high rank post in the government or private sector, and practicing their legal and social rights and mobility.

This study derives its scientific importance from providing an empirical measurement of the effects of patriarchal beliefs and conventional understanding of family honor on the attitudes toward women empowerment on one model that reveals the direct impact of each factor while controlling for external factors. The findings may provide valid evidence for any awareness-raising programs to facilitate all efforts to empower women and accept legal, economic, and social reforms that the government has been implementing to change the status of Saudi women.

2. Literature and Conceptual Review

2.1 Women Empowerment in Saudi Arabia

Women inequality is persistent in most developing countries. Women have a higher mortality rate than men, and throughout their lives, even before birth, they are treated differently than their brothers, lagging behind men in many domains. Many more women fail to get an education, a job, or a political responsibility that they would have obtained if they had been men (Duflo 2012). While primary school enrollment has become nearly universal for both boys and girls, in labor market opportunities: women are less likely to work, earn less than men for similar work, and are more likely to be in poverty even when they work. Women spend almost twice as much time on housework, nearly five times as much time on childcare, and about half as much time on market work as men do (Berniell and Sánchez-Páramo 2012).

To tackle these problems, the concept of women empowerment as a process has been developed that can be defined as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development-in

particular health, education, earning opportunities, rights, and political participation (Duflo 2012).

In Saudi society, gender roles and women's status come from traditional Arab culture and fundamentalist Islamic law. Women' daily lives in Saudi are directly limited by gender segregation and male guardianship where a father, a husband or sometimes a brother or son is essential to decision making in women' lives, including the areas of schooling, employment, family planning, healthcare, marriage or even traveling for vacation (Albakr et al. 2017).

On the other hand, unlike other third world countries, women in Saudi enjoy a high level of living standards, access to education and health care. Saudi Arabia has allocated significant resources to the education of both boys and girls. However, the inclusion of girls in the public education system in the 1960s was not easy. The social rejection of girl education delayed girls' admittance to education twenty years after public schools were available for boys (Albakr et al. 2017).

Even though girls outnumber boys' enrolment in public schools and universities, the social norms have eliminated many resources and materials that women cannot access for educational purposes. Many women have limited visiting times to public libraries, at which their male guardian would need to be present, and that is if there are visiting hours at all to these types of public libraries. Most of the time, women are only allowed into libraries specific to women. This causes a huge gap in educational materials women are permitted to view and obtain (Deif 2008). Gender segregation relegates female students to inferior educational facilities and unequal academic opportunities (Ertuk 2009).

Gender segregation also restricted women's employment opportunities almost to total exclusion from the Saudi workforce. Saudi Arabia has one of the lowest rates of working women globally.

In a study conducted by Al-Khamshi (2014), the obstacles faced by Saudi women in taking leadership positions have been examined. The study aimed at identifying the barriers facing Saudi women in leadership positions. The study reached many results, the most important of which are: the review of laws, the development of a policy to increase the contribution of women in the labor market, the diffusion of the principles of women's rights, the rectification of stereotypical negative image of women in the field of their work and enhancing women status in society.

Elamin and Omair (2010) explored the attitudes of Saudi men toward women working outside the home. They found that married, employed, less educated older Saudi males preferred that women tend to have domestic responsibilities rather than work outside the family home.

The previous research suggested some obstacles facing women in mixed work environments, such as discrimination (Faisal 2011), conflict with traditional roles and family and maternal obligation (Nadia 2012), and social norms that lead to suspicion and fear (Al-Shammari 2007). Al-Zahrani (2011) found that most families do not allow women to work in a mixed environment because of the negative view of such work that might reduce her chances of getting married. These norms, customs are usually mentioned but not specified or explained.

2.2   Patriarchy in the Arab Societies

Even though patriarchy was first developed in the ancient Middle East between 3100 BC and 600 BC. (Lerner 1986) Some scholars attribute women's legal status and social positions to Islamic doctrines where they assume patriarchy is an intrinsic characteristic of Muslim identity (Solomon and Tausch 2020). Islamic rules provide the greatest barrier to women's socio-economic and political advancement from this perspective. On the other hand, others reject the cultural view noting that patriarchy existed prior to the emergence of Islam in the Middle East and North Africa, that other faiths are no less patriarchal than Islam and that the continuity of discrimination of women in the region should be located in the broader socio-political and economic system within which patriarchy is practiced (Solomon and Tausch 2020). Alexander and Welzel (2011) think that evidence on these contradictory claims is inconclusive. They contend that neither have advocates of the cultural position shown that Muslim support for patriarchal values remains strong under control of structural characteristics, nor have proponents of the structural position demonstrated that Muslim support for

these values vanishes under such controls. To fill this gap, Alexander and Welzel (2011) used multi-level models to test whether Muslim support for patriarchal values disappears under the control of patriarchy's structural foundations. They found that Muslim support for patriarchal values is strong against various authorities. Yet, rising levels of education, labor market participation, and a global emancipative trend diminish Muslim support for patriarchy, especially among women (Alexander and Christian 2011).

Moghadam (2003) examined Islamic discourses on the family, their relationship to patriarchal social structures and nonpatriarchal states, and implications for women's legal status and social positions. Then he focused on the contradictions and challenges that patriarchy and the family have encountered from economic development, the demographic transition, legal reform, and women's increasing educational attainment in countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He argued that the combination of declining fertility and changes to the family structure, along with the conservative backlash and women's activism, are signs of the crisis of Middle Eastern patriarchy (Moghadam 2003).

In Saudi Arabia, Hamidaddin (2013) argued that rejecting women's empowerment is not based on religious beliefs. Instead, it is based on rigid patriarchal culture. He contends that a look into the country's history since the late 1920s would clearly show that the Saudi government had always been extra careful in its decisions that challenged the patriarchal social order. In contrast, it has always been bold in challenging religious institutions.

2.3   Family Honor

Gender segregation and exclusion of women from public life can be attributed to the concern of families to protect their girls' reputations and honor.

The conventional definition of honor (in Arabic= *irdth)* as practiced social settings came in the literature of anthropologists and sociologists who have studied contemporary Arab societies. The Egyptian researcher, Abu Zeid (1965), described the Arab tribes in the Western Desert in Egypt. She associated the meaning of Sharaf (honor) with *irdth*, underscoring their linkage to women's reputation and chastity. She says:

"Bedouins are not keen on sexual isolation of women from men, but they respect the strict rules of respectful behavior between the sexes. The result of any deviation from these socially known rules is the killing of the assailant. *Irdth* differs from honor as honor can be gained and increased through appropriate deeds and great achievements, but *irdth* is lost because of the scandalous behavior of women. When a woman loses her chastity, she loses it forever, and it cannot be compensated. The responsibility for revenge because of chastity loss in cases of assault on any girl of the family falls on the shoulders of all her male relatives from the father's side, especially the cousins. The husband who discovers his wife's adultery can punish her with nothing else than divorce and requesting a refund of the dowry; the woman does not offend her husband's honor with her bad behavior" (Abu Zeid 1965).

The concept of female honor is linked to the idea of *irdth*, which refers to the traditional concept of honor that the girl saves by sticking to stringent standards that are socially determined for the morality that the girl should display regarding her sexual activity.

In public life, the girl is expected to be committed to the traditional way of presenting herself to the community, which can be summarized in the fact that she abstains from any practice that is sexual or that has a close or implication to sex before marriage. This includes not showing any interest in men, including courtship, kissing, or the expression of sexual desire in any way. Thus, a woman's chastity and virginity related to her purity lead to the preservation of family honor. In Arab societies (Faqir 2001), women should remain covered, i.e., psychologically and physically confined in the public and private spheres.

Social norms are characterized by severity concerning the penalties needed to regain the family's honor. A deep emotion found in Arab societies tends to see that the only way to restore family honor is shedding the blood of the faulty girl (Abu-Odeh 2000). The punishment is applied to

the girl by a man of her relatives, and if it is the death penalty, it is mainly carried out by her brother or her cousin. Contrary to Abu Zaid's and Abu-Odeh's opinion that killing is the rule when honor is violated, Antoun (1968) believes that killing is not the norm in most cases. Antoun (1968) believes that marrying the girl to her friend, hiding what happened and concealing it, compensation, or the extradition of the aggressor and expelling him from the town are sometimes preferred methods to deal with the issues of honor.

It is noted that some of the sub-cultures in the Arab societies punish the girl's partner in honor cases, mostly with death. Still, the girl is punished with a physical or psychological punishment that does not permanently damage her.

Of the terms used in contemporary times in Saudi Arabia, some people use the word "Nude" to refer to their female relatives. Dodd (1973) relates that when someone's honor is violated in some areas of Lebanon, he says "my honor is clear", meaning that his honor became exposed and unmasked.

Dodd (1973) explains that honor (*Irdth)* is considered a social value and not a religious one. The concept of *irdth* was not found in the Koran, although this concept was found among the Arabs before Islam. The Islamic teachings regarding women and the relationship between men and women may indirectly support the notion of *irdth,* but this concept remains non-Islamic. This means that the value of the *irdth* can be found in communities that do not belong to fundamentalist Islam, such as nomadic herders, Druze and Christians (Dodd 1973).

2.4 The Explanatory Theories for the Emergence of the Value of Honor;

A lot of people in Arab societies and the Middle East strongly cling to the value of honor which has a great significance in their psychological and cultural development. It is associated with their presence and their lives and are doing it in order to maintain what they have even more expensive if it were their lives. However, we find many who ignore how this great cultural value reached us; some mix between them and the values of Islam. Some would perhaps believe that it is a natural instinct found in all humans. There are several explanations to the emergence of the honor value: the first is social and the second is sociobiological; they all point to the fact that these values have emerged since very old ages and descended to our societies, resisting all change factors.

2.4.1 The social interpretation of the historical roots of honor;

In ancient times, pastoral communities relied on the influence and privilege of the family or the tribe. This has been associated with the ability to control the contested social sources. These communities had weak organization in the absence of a central government, which led to the emergence of a collective doctrine the preservation and execution of which continued to be performed by the family or the tribe that seek to preserve and protect its sources and improve access to other sources of survival. For this reason, the more the sources owned by the family increase, the greater the place of the family in the community becomes (Ruggi, 1998). A common social practice that is historically found in pastoral communities in the Arab region is to give the authority and the absolute power to adult males to make the important economic and political decisions. In order to maintain the resources of the family, inheritance was transmitted only to male children while female children were deprived of their right to inheritance. The protection of the economic resources of the tribe (land, pasture and water sources) as well as the protection of property (animals, land, and pastures) have become also a source of pride among the members of the tribe who desperately defend it until the last drop of blood. Avenging a member of the tribe who has been assaulted was a honor for the sake of which the tribe Knights used to compete. The Failure to protect the vital resources of the tribe (land, pasture, money, and men) brings shame to all the members of the tribe; it is cleansed only when recovered (Ruggi, 1998).

In such a conflict situation, women are regarded as one of the important sources for the survival

of the tribe and its continuation because of their ability to reproduce and carry children who will be the men of the future and who will be entrusted with the protection of the sources of the tribe. Because the old pastoral communities used to rob women and capture them from hostile tribes, this increased the tribe's ability of invasive reproduction and growing authority. Protecting the tribe's women from captivity became a honor that the tribesmen desperately defended and that became an everlasting shame for them if they fail to protect their wives and even a cause of their death, weaknesses and dissolution as a social unit (Ruggi, 1998).

An indicator of the truth of this theory is that there are some contemporary tribal customs which can represent an indication of the importance of women as a source of continuity of the tribe. Some of the tribes, when they accept peace on the champions when one of her sons is killed and accept blood money as undue for the blood of the victim, require in addition to the blood money marrying the brother of the victim or his son with one of the girls of the aggression tribe who may be the killer's sister. This is not for harmony and reconciliation as much as a source of compensation by giving birth and an increase in the number of abused tribes.

Researchers think that in the pre-Islamic era the value of honor used to have a great importance in the lives and hearts of the Arab tribes and it used to be the engine orienting the actions and the behaviors of Arabs. Besides, because of its sacred importance, it would occupy the place of religion with Arabs who gave it a high position, defended it with arms, and gave their lives as a scapegoat to it. The great value of honor continued even in the contemporary Arab societies, especially among the Bedouin communities that have maintained the strength of this value with its pre-Islamic heyday.

2.4.2 Sociobiological Theory

Goldstein (2009) thinks that honor traditions stem from the biological and social factors emanating from Darwinian theory assumptions that depend on factors such as; confidence in establishing paternity, sexual selection, and mutual fidelity between spouses. Goldstein assumes that the first man had an instinctive need to confirm the continuity of his descendants so men are heavily keen that the babies that their females carry (during pregnancy) are their own offspring and no other male's off-springs. Goldstein emphasizes that most cultures emphasize the importance of trust in assigning children to their natural fathers by placing strict criteria which insist that women's sexual relationship must be to the husband only; that is why patriarchal laws that prohibit adultery were put. Fundamentally, the simplest way for a man to make sure that the children brought by his wife are his descendants is through adjusting the sexual behavior of their wives and their female partners. A man's failure to adjust his wife's sexual behavior is seen as a negative characteristic as they which degrades him; it is also a stigma that degrades the honor of any man from the woman's family when their daughter deviates from the social norms of acceptable sexual behavior.

This theory is not without criticism because it may be valid with regard to the jealously of the husband and explain the so-called emotional crimes. But it cannot explain the value of honor as it is practiced in Arab societies. In Arab societies, that who punishes the female accused of sexual deviation is her family, not her husband or his family. On the contrary, under the customs and traditions of honor in Arab countries, a wife's sexual derivation is not seen as a stigma that flaws the husband as much as it flaws her family to which she belongs through a link of blood. The wrath of the spouse at the discovery of his wife's betrayal is a global phenomenon, but we sometimes find it with many male animals but it is not similar to the standards associated with the value of honor in Arab societies.

2.5 The theory explaining the relationships between the study variables

2.5.1 Social learning theory

Social learning theory is one of the theories of social psychology that focuses on the interaction between personality characteristics and the social environment through mental processes. The roots

of social learning theory have arisen from behavioral theory, which sees human behavior as an inevitable result of learning, especially when it is shaped by reinforcements represented by rewards. And the penalties.

Initial research in learning theory dates back to the behavioral school in the works of Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner, which focused on the use of animals in laboratories. The focus on laboratory animals resulted in some researchers becoming dissatisfied with the results of these studies due to their inability to explain the complexities of the human personality and interest in observed behavior, while neglecting Mental processes.

The first formulation of social learning theory goes back to Julian Rotter (Al-Gharib, 2009, 123), who believes that thinking, which is represented by expectations, is considered an important factor in social learning and that behavior is determined by two basic types of thinking: the expected results of the behavior and the value that the individual gives to these results.

After Rotter, Peter Blau focused on the reciprocal relationships between thinking, behavior and the environment, and from there he formulated the idea of reciprocal determinism. Based on this theory, the environment does not only affect thinking and behavior, but it is also affected by them (Al-Gharib, 2009, 309). Social learning theory believes that attitudes and values Social norms are learned from the environment surrounding the individual in the family, the mosque, and the group of comrades, in addition to the influence of various media. To apply this theory to the subject of the study, which is the traditional understanding of honor and honor, we see that the upbringing of members of society in an Arab environment is Saudi society, which is considered.

In it, honor and the protection of honor are values of high importance in determining the social status of the individual in society, and any negligence or inclination towards the determinants of this value exposes the individual to social punishments represented by shame that degrades his status and the status of his family, and adherence to what the determinants of this value dictate maintains social status. For the individual and his family, for example (Pitt-Rivers, 1983, p. 24) believes that honor is not a moral standard, but a language and a set of rational strategies that aim to protect the reputation of the individual and the group in an effort to avoid insulting and diminishing the group's reputation in the eyes of others, and based on learning theory.

Socially, the change in the determinants of the traditional understanding of honor and honor could be the result of exposure to cultural variables from outside the traditional culture, especially since the traditional understanding of honor is unfair to women and discriminates against them. Therefore, the following factors can be an influential factor in changing the traditional understanding of honor and honor, such as: gender, where it is assumed Women are less compliant with the determinants of the traditional understanding of honor, the economic and social level of the family, parents' education, traveling abroad, watching foreign series, and reading Western romantic novels (influenced by different cultures that emphasize women's rights), level of religiosity, and level of urbanization (Karkoub, 2017).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Study Design

A systematic random sampling method was applied to select the study subjects among Saudi adults from all administrative regions. Participants were selected from an extensive mobile phone numbers list and contacted through SMS messages containing links to an online questionnaire in Google Forms in Arabic. Five thousand messages were sent to participants' mobile phones, and about 1164 questionnaires were completed with a response rate of 23%. Participation was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent. An ethics approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University (PNU) (20-0529). The survey was conducted between 25 December 2020 and 25 January 2021.

The questionnaire consisted of demographic variables, a scale of attitudes toward women

empowerment, a scale of patriarchal belief, and a traditional understanding of family honor.

3.2 Attitudes toward Women Empowerment Scale

To measure the attitudes toward women empowerment, the research team developed a five Likert scale to measure respondents attitudes toward various dimensions of women empowerment appropriate to the Saudi context, which include attitudes toward women's right to have education and to work where she desires, women rights for free movement (visiting friends and family, driving a car, traveling alone, living by herself), having equal legal rights, having equal saying as men in family major decisions, having free will in marring the person they chose.

- *Women should be granted to work where they pleased.*
- *A woman should have the opportunity to pursue her education.*
- *I accept women to work with men in one place.*
- *What a woman earns is her right, and no one can take it from her without her permission.*
- *No one has the right to a woman's properties and belongings.*
- *Women have the right to drive cars.*
- *A woman should have the right to visit her family and friends .*
- *Adult women should have the right to reside independently when they want to.*
- *Women should have an equal say in major family decisions such as buying a home, naming a child, educating children, etc.*
- *Women should have equal legal rights as men.*
- *Women should have the right to marry who they want.*

Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for this scale is 0.85.

3.3 Traditional Understanding of Honor:

A scale of the traditional understanding of honor was applied. The scale was initially developed by Işık (2008) and consisted of 11 items and was translated and modified by Almehaizie (2012). Studies indicate that in Arab and Middle Eastern societies, honor is associated with a woman's sexual purity and her respect to the accepted behavioral standards. Besides, there is a link between the family honor the behavior of its women. At the same time, men are held responsible for maintaining and protecting family honor. Işık (2008) believes that despite the spread of this social value as has been confirmed by qualitative studies, there is no benchmark to discuss this phenomenon of family honor. The statements focus on the importance of girls' chastity (sexual purity) to maintain the honor of the family and the role of the family, represented in the men, in preserving and protecting family honor by monitoring and controlling women's behavior. These statements are:

- *Men must observe their female relatives in order to protect the honor of the family.*
- *Family must protect the honor of their daughters.*
- *Women's freedom threatens honor.*
- *Parents and brothers have the right to control and monitor the actions of their daughters and sisters to maintain the honor standards.*
- *A man has the right to interfere with the conduct of his female relatives in the name of honor.*
- *Women should not have relations with men outside the family*
- *It is important to restrict women's behavior in the name of honor.*
- *Decent clothing distinguishes honorable from dishonorable women*
- *Family has the right to punish their daughters who violate honor standards.*
- *The shame brought by sex scandal of a female relative is one of the greatest calamities a human being can experience.*
- *A woman takes care of her honor more than her male relatives do.*

Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for this scale is 0.89.

3.4 Patriarchal Beliefs

A translated (to Arabic) scale of patriarchal beliefs is used for this study initially developed and validated. The original version has three dimensions: institutional power of men, the inferiority of women, and gendered domestic roles. This study used two dimensions: inferiority of women and women's domestic roles. Institutional power of men's dimension was not used because gender mixed institutions are new in Saudi society. The following statements represent the two dimensions of patriarchal beliefs:

Inferiority of women sub-scale

- *Banks should not give credit to women.*
- *Women do not belong to the workforce.*
- *Women should be paid less than men for doing the same job.*
- *A women place in the community should be mostly through volunteer jobs.*
- *Women's careers should be limited to traditional female jobs.*
- *It is acceptable for a man to physically reprimand his wife*
- *Women are less than men to manage money.*
- *Male work colleagues should have more of a say in the workplace.*
- *Police should not intervene in domestic disputes between a husband and his wife.*
- *Girls have less use of formal education than boys*
- *Men are inherently smarter than women*
- *A man has the right to have sex with his wife even if she may not want to.*

Cronbach's Alpha for Women Inferiority beliefs Scale is 0.89.

3.5 Domestic roles of women sub-scale

Cleaning is mostly a women's job.

- *A man should be the one to discipline children.*
- *Cooking is primarily a women's job.*
- *A man should be the breadwinner.*
- *A woman should be the one who does most of the child-rearing.*
- *A woman should be the one who does the housework.*
- *A man should control household finance.*
- *A man should make the rules of the house.*
- *Women should be more responsible for domestic chores than men.*
- *A man is the head of the household.*
- *A woman should be the primary caretaker for children.*

Cronbach's Alpha for women's domestic role beliefs Scale is 0.90.

3.6 Sociodemographic Variables

The questionnaire contains questions about participants' sociodemographic characteristics, including age, gender, education, family income, level of religiosity, travel outside the Kingdom of Saudi, exposure to media, the economic level of the family, and the social status of the family.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Sociodemographic Characteristics

The findings in table 1 show that the majority age group is those between 30-45 years 50%, and the male proportion in the current study is 70.3%, while the female is 29.7%. The response rate for females was far less than males.

Most of the respondents (55.5%) have a monthly household income of more than 10,000, Ryals. The remaining 44.5% are with a monthly income of 10,000 or less.

The majority of respondents (45.2%) live in an apartment, followed by those who live in a villa (33.4), then by those who stay in a shared villa (13.5%).

Most respondents own their residence (60.8%), while about 36% rent their residence. Most of the respondents (72%) describe their religiosity as average. About 40% of respondents reported that they sometimes travel outside the Kingdom, while about (13%) reported that they always travel.

Regarding exposure to media, 35% of respondents reported that they sometimes watch movies and series, while 25% say they never did, and about 18% say this happens constantly.

The majority of respondents describe their families' economic and social status as average, representing 77% and 65%, respectively.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Sociodemographic

Age	Frequency	Percent
18- less than 25	73	6.2
25 less than 30	106	9.1
30 less than 35	165	14.2
35 less than 40	210	18.0
40 less than 45	215	18.5
45 less than 50	175	15.0
50 less than 55	110	9.5
55 and more	110	9.5
Gender	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	818	70.3
Female	346	29.7
Monthly income of the family	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Less Than 5 thousand	169	14.5
5000 to 10000	349	30.0
More than 10000	646	55.5
How do others describe your level of religiosity	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Low	132	11.3
Medium	835	71.7
High	159	13.7
very high	38	3.3
How often do you travel outside Saudia Arabia	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Always	151	13.0
Sometimes	461	39.6
Rarely	276	23.7
Never	276	23.7
How often do you watch series or movies	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Always	206	17.7
Sometimes	407	35.0
Rarely	264	22.7
Never	287	24.7
How to describe your family's economic status	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Low	176	15.1
Medium	895	76.9
High	88	7.6
very High	5	.4
How to describe your family's social status	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Low	81	7.0
Medium	754	64.8
High	287	24.7
very High	42	3.6
Total	1164	100%

4.2 Attitudes Toward Women Empowerment

Most of the respondents strongly support most of the aspects of women empowerment, as shown in Table 4. which indicates significant changes in people's attitudes and views of women empowerment. Four statements are strongly approved by respondents and have means that range from 4.52 to 4.33, which are:

- No one has the right to a woman's properties and belongings (4.52)
- What a woman earns is her right, and no one can take it from her without her permission (4.49)
- A woman should have the opportunity to pursue her education (4.41)
- A woman should have the right to visit her family and friends (4.33)

These statements represent women's rights to properties, income, education, and visitations which are socially accepted and do not contradict social norms. For example, women's education in Saudi has been adapted to suit the social norms and values. For example, total segregation of girls in schools has increased the acceptance and legitimization of the girls' education system.

There are also four statements approved by the respondents, with means ranging from 4.09 to 3.52, which are:

- Women have the right to drive cars (4.09)
- Women should have equal saying in the significant family decision as buying home, naming child, children education and so forth (3.90)
- Women should have the right to marry who they want (3.78)
- Women should have equal legal rights as men (3.52)

Attitudes toward women driving cars are a major shift in people's attitudes. Until 2017 women used to be prohibited from driving cars, and many thought the majority of people were against women driving. The egalitarian attitude is also new to Saudi culture.

The following statements which have the least approved by respondents are:

- Women should be granted to work where they pleased (3.15)
- I accept women to work with men in one place (2.47)
- Adult women should have the right to reside independently when they want to (2.21)

Women working with men or whatever they please or reside independently exemplify those aspects of empowerment people most fear. Working with men may expose women to interact and mingle with strangers, violating the norms of family honor and the beliefs that women should be domestic. Women also are considered weak and cannot protect themselves from burglars or rapists. Therefore, people do not accept their daughters or sisters to live alone.

The total score of the index of attitudes toward women empowerment is 3.75, indicating general positive attitudes among the Saudi population, especially among the younger generation. During the last few decades, modernization trends and globalization have contributed to challenging traditional thinking and behaviors to be replaced by modern attitudes and views (Albakr et al. 2017). The forces of social change, including social media, studying abroad, traveling abroad, and interaction with foreigners working in the country, have contributed to changing Saudi culture in many aspects.

Table 2. The frequency and percentage of women empowerment attitudes

Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD	Order
Women should be granted to work where they pleased.	F	134	257	240	243	221	3.15	1.32	9
	%	11.5	22.1	20.6	20.9	19.0			
A woman should have the opportunity to pursue her education	F	13	17	65	414	586	4.41	0.77	3
	%	1.1	1.5	5.6	35.6	50.3			
I accept women to work with men in one place.	F	354	251	224	155	111	2.47	1.34	10
	%	30.4	21.6	19.2	13.3	9.5			
What a woman earns is her right, and no one can take it from her without her permission.	F	21	19	54	310	691	4.49	0.83	2
	%	1.8	1.6	4.6	26.6	59.4			

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Statements		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	SD	Order
No one has the right to a woman's properties and belongings.	F	12	19	49	321	694	4.52	0.76	1
	%	1.0	1.6	4.2	27.6	59.6			
Women have the right to drive cars	F	38	47	168	371	471	4.09	1.03	5
	%	3.3	4.0	14.4	31.9	40.5			
A woman should have the right to visit her family and friends.	F	4	19	105	451	516	4.33	0.75	4
	%	.3	1.6	9.0	38.7	44.3			
Adult women should have the right to reside independently when they want to.	F	445	276	186	75	113	2.21	1.32	11
	%	38.2	23.7	16.0	6.4	9.7			
Women should have an equal saying in the major family decision.	F	54	100	150	393	398	3.90	1.14	6
	%	4.6	8.6	12.9	33.8	34.2			
Women should have equal legal rights as men.	F	105	151	224	295	320	3.52	1.30	8
	%	9.0	13.0	19.2	25.3	27.5			
Women should have the right to marry who they want.	F	76	86	216	344	373	3.78	1.20	7
	%	6.5	7.4	18.6	29.6	32.0			
Mean and Standard Deviation of Total Scores						3.71		0.69	

4.3 Mean Differences Between Males and Females

Table 3. shows the mean differences of the total scores between males and females of predicting factors. Males mean scores of beliefs of women inferiority, women's domestic role, and traditional understanding of honor are higher than the mean scores of females. These differences are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Men's mean score of the conventional knowledge of honor is 3.76, whereas women's mean score is 3.06. It is a logical finding because the values of honor always discriminate against women and concern men more than women. Regarding the beliefs of women's inferiority, both males' and females' means of total scores are low (males= 2.48, females, 1.73). This result was not anticipated in a traditional, segregated, and masculine society. The means of both men and women for the total scores of beliefs of the domestic role of women are moderate (Males, 3.53 females, 2.78). This finding indicates a trend to accept women's new roles outside the home, especially among women.

On the other hand, women have a very high mean of the total score of the attitudes toward women empowerment (mean=4.22) compared to men (Mean=3.50). The high mean score of men and women shows positive attitudes toward women empowerment.

Table 3. T. test for the mean differences of the predicting variables and women's empowerment according to gender.

Gender		N	Mean	SD	T	P.
Traditional Understanding of Honor	men	714	3.7595	.71187	13.4	0.01**
	women	313	3.0630	.86496		
Beliefs of women inferiority	men	818	2.4799	.78668	15.7	0.01**
	women	346	1.7284	.62586		
Beliefs of domestic roles of women	men	818	3.5343	.78540	14.6	0.01**
	women	346	2.7802	.83519		
Attitudes toward Women Empowerment	men	766	3.4956	.61923	18.2	0.01**
	women	329	4.2241	.57184		

4.4 Correlation between Variables and Regression

The results of Table 4 show significant negative relations between traditional understanding of honor, beliefs of women's inferiority, and beliefs of women's domestic roles and attitudes towards women's empowerment. This means that participants who are more accepting of the traditional understanding of honor believe more in the inferiority of women, and women's domestic role is less supportive of women empowerment.

Table 4. Pearson correlation between attitudes toward women empowerment and predicting factors.

	1	2	3	4
Attitudes toward Women Empowerment	1.000			
The traditional understanding of honor	-.560*	1.000		
Beliefs of women inferiority	-.657*	.627*	1.000	
Beliefs of domestic roles of women	-.568*	.640*	.680*	1.000

Pearson correlation is significant at 0.01 p-value.

Table 5. shows the effect of independent factors (standardized beta) on attitudes toward women empowerment.

The probability values of beliefs of woman's inferiority, traditional understanding of honor, and domestic roles of women beliefs are equal to (0.000) and below the level of moral significance (0.01), so these factors negatively correlated with attitudes towards women's empowerment, as shown by the standard regression coefficients (-0.40, -0.13, -0.11) respectively. Even though Pearson correlation coefficients of these predicting variables with women empowerment were close in values, beliefs of women inferiority have the highest standardized Beta value in the regression model.

The sociodemographic variables that have significant relationships with women empowerment are gender (men less approve of women empowerment, exposure to media and family social status (positive relationship).

On the other hand, religiosity, Age, family economic status, and traveling abroad are found to have no significant relation with attitudes toward women empowerment.

The adjusted determination factor indicates that independent variables in this regression model explain 52% of the variance of the attitudes towards women's empowerment.

Table 5. Regression analysis of predicting variables and attitudes toward women empowerment

Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	P	R^2
Regression	32725.179 10	3272.518	118.091	.00	0.52
Residuals					

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P.
	B	SE	Beta		
(Constant)	48.278	1.725		27.995	.000
Family honor	-.108-	.024	-.127-	-4.446-	.000
Inferiority of women	-.305-	.024	-.394-	-12.753-	.000
Domestic Rules	-.087-	.025	-.110-	-3.549-	.000
Age	-.005-	.085	-.001-	-.062-	.950
Gender	3.723	.413	.225	9.015	.000
religiosity	.291	.268	.023	1.087	.277
Travelling outside country	-.008-	.176	-.001-	-.046-	.964
Exposure to media	.616	.165	.085	3.726	.000
Family's economic status	-.220-	.370	-.014-	-.593-	.553
Family's social status	.717	.285	.059	2.518	.012

5. Discussing the Results of the Study

The majority of participants hold positive attitudes toward women empowerment as they strongly agree or agree with statements regarding many aspects of women's rights. Findings agree with Albakr et al. (2017), who found that most college students, males and females have progressive views about women's education. However, the findings contradict some research findings that there are some customs and norms that view women working in a mixed environment as not acceptable (Al-

Shammari 2007; Al-Zahrani 2011). The contradiction can be explained by this study's findings. Education in Saudi Arabia is segregated, and the education system is tailored to fit the Saudi customs and traditions. Therefore, most people now are supportive of women pursuing their education. Likewise, some women work in similar segregated environments. Therefore, most people do not have any concern about or objection to working there. Nowadays, most institutions abolished the segregation policy, and a mixed environment becomes the norm, making a substantial number of women and their families hesitant to work in such institutions.

The correlation coefficients and standardized regression coefficients of patriarchal beliefs (inferiority of women and domestic role of women) and traditional understanding of family honor have a significant negative relationship with the attitudes toward women empowerment. These findings confirm what has been found by previous qualitative research and observations. Some researchers have shown the effects of Middle Eastern cultures that give men power and authority on women's well-being (Saleh 2006). However, to our knowledge, no study has been done to explore the effects of patriarchal beliefs and family honor on the attitudes toward women and their work in a mixed environment in a qualitative model that measures the precise impact of these factors.

For long, it has been believed that the status of women in Arab society in general and in Saudi society in particular is determined by Islamic religious legislation and rules. The findings, however, reveal that when these rules were lifted, the status of women remained unaffected. When the ban on women driving in Saudi was lifted in 2017, we did not see all women drive their cars. This research confirms the importance of social factors on women's status that some scholars have mentioned based on observations without specifying or measuring these factors. Here, we can say that beliefs in women's inferiority, gender domestic role (patriarchal beliefs), and traditional understanding of family honor can explain the attitudes toward women empowerment, not religious beliefs.

The findings of this study will help design educational and persuasive programs aimed to change people perception and beliefs about women and to assure that women are no different nor less than men when they have the right opportunity.

6. Conclusion

The study found a negative relationship between dimensions of patriarchal beliefs (inferiority of women and gender domestic role) and attitudes toward women empowerment. Likewise, the traditional understanding of honor has a negative relationship with the attitudes toward women empowerment which can explain societal attitudes toward any efforts to change the status of women and why people may oppose such measures. The findings will provide the public and leader with profound insight and understanding of the dilemma. They may help design national programs of awareness and attitude change to vacillate the ambitus 2030 Vision that aims to empower women to fully become an effective participant in the development of the Saudi nation.

Future proposals;

Social perceptions of the values of honor among male and female students at Saudi universities in light of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

7. Acknowledgment

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