

**Understanding the factors that influence Emirati  
women career development in Higher Education:  
Case Study from United Arab Emirates**

دراسة العوامل المؤثرة على التطور الوظيفي للمرأة الإماراتية في  
مؤسسات التعليم العالي: دراسة حالة من دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

by

**ABEER NAAJEM JUMAH BAHWAN ALRASBI**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

at

**The British University in Dubai**

**Prof. Eman Gaad  
November 2017**

الجامعة  
البريطانية في  
دبي



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**8 November 2017**

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## **ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH**

Several studies have discussed the position of women in higher education institutions internationally through investigating her career progression and the factors that influenced their advancement to senior leadership positions either in academic or administrative paths, yet, this body of literature lacks any studies on Emirati women's career development in higher education in United Arab Emirates. The purpose of this research project is to explore the success trajectories of a representative sample of first generation Emirati women in a university case study who are currently in academic and administrative senior leadership positions in order to design a career development model that both accurately describes these paths and inspires Emirati women to pursue leadership positions in higher education institutions in United Arab Emirates. This study uses the perspectives of Super's Life Span Life Space theory, Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career theory, and Savickas's Career Construction theory to explore early childhood and adulthood experiences, role model influence, mentoring and networking, and education system critical factors in shaping their career development journey, and the nature of their successful leadership experiences using a qualitative exploratory case study approach.

The new model includes family, society, institutional, and governmental influencers. It also investigates other influences like religion, culture, extended family, and self-development.

## ABSTRACT IN ARABIC

ناقشت العديد من الدراسات القائمة وضع المرأة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي على الصعيد الدولي من خلال التحقيق في تطورها الوظيفي والعوامل التي أثرت على تقدمها إلى المناصب القيادية العليا سواء في المسارات الأكاديمية أو الإدارية، ورغم ذلك، فإن هذه الدراسات تفتقر إلى أي تطرق حول العوامل المؤثرة في التطور الوظيفي والقيادي للمرأة الإماراتية في التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

وعليه، فإن الغرض الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو دراسة حالة لإستكشاف مسارات نجاح عينة تمثيلية من الجيل الأول من الإماراتيات اللواتي يشغلن مناصب قيادية أكاديمية وإدارية عليا من أجل تصميم نموذج للتطور الوظيفي الذي يصف هذه المسارات ويلهم المرأة الإماراتية في تولي مناصب قيادية أكاديمية وإدارية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

ترتكز هذه الدراسة على منظورات شخصية، ثقافية، مجتمعية، وأسرية بالإضافة لنظريات ومعلومات في القيادة النسائية لكشف العوامل المؤثرة مثل قوانين الأسرة، العوامل الاجتماعية، والثقافية، التعليم، تأثير القدوة والإرشاد، التواصل المهني والاجتماعي، باستخدام نهج دراسة حالة إستكشافية نوعية

يطرح البحث نموذج جديد يركز على المرأة الإماراتية والمجتمع الإماراتي بشكل خاص حيث يشمل الأسرة، المجتمع، والمؤثرين الحكوميين. كما أنها تشمل التأثيرات الأخرى مثل الدين، الثقافة، الأسرة الممتدة، التنمية الذاتية، القدوة، والإرشاد المهني.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my parents, Naajem and AlAziza, for believing in me, for their wisdom, for their foresight, and for their endless unconditional optimistic inspiration to me to become a productive, successful, and contributing individual. No words could ever express how grateful and obliged I am for all what they have done and continue to do.

To my sister Sumayya for being my inspiration and strength point in life. To my brothers Mohammed, Ahmed, Ebrahim, and AbdulRahman, thank you for being there for me.

Eternal thank goes to myself. For I have worked very hard on this and regardless of the continues obstacles and struggles that I went through the past four years, I still believed in myself and kept my positive spirt high and made it to the end line. This dissertation is dedicated to me with love, sincere gratitude, and appreciation.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to thank Allah for blessing me with my life and the passion to pursue my dreams.

My mother, you are an incredible mother, friend, and woman whom I share this accomplishment with you in honour of all what you have done for me. Thank you. My family, I am grateful and proud to share my life with you. You have given me a reason for being and achieving because of continuously supporting my journey. I could not have asked for anything more.

I would like to acknowledge my Director of Studies Professor Eman Gaad. Thank you for your patience and encouragement along this journey. I could not have made it without your persistent follow-up.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Study Background**

For decades, literature has shown the struggles that women were facing worldwide trying to get access to education, especially higher education and the employment opportunities that follow. Since 1960's and 1970's, the issue of women's participation in leadership has been recognised as a critical concern in private and public organizations worldwide. It has received considerable attention in the Western context focusing on women's access to high-ranking leadership positions, women who are successful in their positions, and those who are struggling because of different factors (Brown et al., 2000; Klenke, 1996; Ozkanli and White, 2009). Many researchers in different countries across the world started looking into women career development in higher education and analysis these factors (Blackmore, 1999; Klenke, 1996; Shah, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989). Several factors have been discussed in the literature that have a direct and indirect impact on women pursuing their career advancement in academia like for example: institutional policies and regulations (Mitchel, 1993; Siemienska and Zimmer, 2007), work and personal life balancing (Cooke, 2005; Neale and Ozkanli, 2010), self-efficacy (Madsen, 2010; Mitchel, 1993), inadequate mentoring and role model systems (Bagihole, 1994; Mitchel, 1993; Quinlan, 1999), and a lack of networking (Madsen, 2007; Quinlan, 1999).

While, the participation of women remains relatively low, it is showing a level of progression in Arab countries with varying levels of involvement in places such as Oman (Allamky, 2007), Egypt (Kattara, 2005), Lebanon (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011),



Jordan (Zubaidi et al., 2011) where women have more opportunities and chances compared to other countries, particularly in women's involvement in economic and political organisations. This attention comes from the huge gap between the high numbers of women's enrolment and graduates with advanced academic degrees, and the low numbers of women accessing higher-ranking levels of leadership in comparison with men (UNESCO, 2013). Al Lamky (2007) reports that in the Omani labour market, women increased from a mere 3.2 in 1993 to almost 18 per cent in 2007. Tlaiss and Kauser (2011) reported that Lebanese women constitute more than 50 percent of the student population which has been reflected in the employment rate, for example women present around 63 per cent in health and social services and around 62 per cent in education. In their study, Zubaidi et al. (2011) reported that Jordanian women students present more than 50 per cent of higher education students comparing to around 48 per cent of Jordanian women employed in public and private sectors and around 16.5 per cent in the diplomatic sector.

The situation of women's access to leadership positions in higher education institutions is not considerably different worldwide. The underrepresentation of women in such positions is an international concern demonstrated in many studies that have been conducted to investigate women's leadership in higher education institutions in a number of Western countries (e.g., Alexander, 2010; Kraus, 2002; Morley, 2013).

Yet, studies on women leadership in higher education institutions provides evidence of improvements (UNESCO, 2013). In a recent on-going study by Morley (2013), he has found that the highest ranking women in academic leadership positions internationally is in Sweden with 43 per cent of vice-chancellors, whereas in the UK only 14 per cent of vice-chancellorships are held by women, Turkey has 7 per cent, India 3 per cent, and

the worst situation for women is in Japan with only 2.3 per cent meaning that only two out of 86 public universities are headed by women.

The position of women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is not different than that internationally. In addition to the 2021 vision statement of the UAE, which detailed goals on the country's institutional development for education, the UAE constitution reflects the importance of women participating in the country's development through guaranteeing equal opportunities for women citizens in relation to men, as well as a general equity principle. One of the most important policies that the UAE government initiated to support Emirati citizens in general, and women specifically, is Emiratisation. Its main aim is to create working opportunities for Emirati women and men in both the public and mostly in private sectors (Al Ali, 2008). Emiratisation policy was introduced in the early 1990's as a government reaction to the increase of the UAE national unemployment rate especially in the private sector. Godwin (2006) defines Emiratisation as "an affirmative action quota-driven employment policy that ensures UAE nationals are given employment opportunities in the private sector". The UAE government established Tanmia, "The National Human Resources Development & Employment Authority," in 2000 to lead the Emiratisation effort (Tanmia, 2006). Tanmia is a UAE Federal Government Authority with the following main objectives:

- *Create job opportunities for UAE national workforce in both sectors public and private*
- *Reduce the unemployment ratio between the UAE nationals*
- *Enhance the skills and productivity of the UAE national workforce*
- *Recommend relevant policies to the UAE Federal Government*

The most important step that the UAE government took in implementing the policy is by giving all UAE national men and women free access to all possible education levels.

It is worth mentioning that the UAE government established a free education system to all UAE nationals up to the undergraduate degree, and supports those who would like to complete graduate degrees with scholarships and grants inside the country and abroad. It is very important to state that more than 70 per cent of the graduates in the UAE are women and more than 75 per cent of students in the UAE federal universities are also women. Emirati women have excelled in many fields like business, political roles, the military, engineering, information technology, education, and healthcare as well as in law and the diplomatic service (Abdullah, 2016; UAE Year book, 2013). Emirati women hold 22.5 per cent seats in the National Federal Council, 20 per cent in the diplomatic services, and there are eight women holding a Ministerial position. Emirati women also record a 92 per cent completion rate from high school and more than 50 per cent are entering higher education. Emirati women constitute 66 per cent of the public sector of which around 30 per cent are in senior leadership positions and around 37 per cent in the private sector mostly in banking sector (AlBayan Newspaper, 2016; UAE Year book, 2013).

Beside political achievements, Emirati women have also demonstrated that they are capable of high performance and excellence in traditional men fields like engineering, policing, military, and judges. Major Mariam AlMansouri is the first Emirati woman fighter pilot and her sister Aisha AlMansouri the first Emirati commercial pilot qualified to fly as first officer or co-pilot. Mariam entered the UAE military in the hope of new regulations that would allow Emirati women to be fighter pilots, which took ten years. On the other hand, her sister Aisha joined the Etihad Airline program directly after high school (Namatalla, 2009; Ford, 2014). Mariam said “I had to prove myself to my men colleagues by just being determined and showing that I can perform as skilfully as men in the field. It was a dream. It was something impossible that came true” (Ford,

2014). Mariam further added that "as in every culture, whenever a woman enters a men-dominated field, they find the same hesitation, same prejudice and same stereotypical thinking" (Ford, 2014).

"When I was sworn in before His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, I felt very proud, especially since it has proved how much our wise leaders trust women and support their empowerment," said the first Emirati judge Ebtisam AlBedwawi (Zaza, 2009), which gives another example of the UAE government empowerment to Emirati women in all fields. Emirati women also have a strong participation in the business world in managing millions of dollars' worth of financial plans for organizations. Salam Hareb is Chief Executive Officer of Jafza Economic Zones World, Dr. Amina AlRustamani is Chief Executive Officer of TECOM Business Parks, Fatima AlJaber is Chief Operating Officer of the AlJaber Group conglomerate, Raja AlGurg is Managing Director of the Easa Saleh AlGurg Group and President of the Dubai Business Women's Council, and Noura alKaabi is Managing Director of Abu Dhabi's Media Free Zone - all examples of those women who have reached senior leading positions in the UAE business world (UAE Year Book, 2013).

Even though women have relatively successful access to leadership positions in most fields, the situation has not yet been achieved at the same level in higher education institutions. A visit to the three federal higher education institutions in the UAE showed that there is a relatively lower number of women compared to men in higher leadership decision-making positions. Only one Emirati woman is a university president, at Zayed University, yet it is worth noting that there are relatively high numbers who are holding middle to senior leadership positions like department manager, supervisor, college director, dean, executive dean, and vice dean who have been appointed recently at UAE

University, Zayed University, and Higher Colleges of Technology (Swan, 2013) many of whom will likely continue to rise in the university hierarchy based on the latest UAE 2021 vision and new directions of the government to increase the percentage of Emirati women in decision making positions in all fields.

It is important to mention that the literature presents very limited if any information on the position of Emirati women in higher education and their career trajectories to arrive in these positions. Such a gap provides an important rationale for this study in presenting a first insight into selected cases of Emirati women in middle and higher leadership positions in one of the most established public higher education institution in the UAE.

## **1.2 Study Purpose**

The literature on women's leadership in the Arabian Gulf, especially in the higher education field is very limited. One paper that examines the position of women academics from selected Arab Middle East countries. It mainly focusses on those who are in teaching fields such as assistant professors, associate professors, and professors (Afiouni, 2014). The proposed study here on women's leadership career development in higher education in the UAE will be of a high value in presenting a case study of the current situation for Emirati women in one of the largest and oldest universities in the country, a topic that has yet to be developed in educational leadership. Furthermore, it will be a noteworthy contribution as the first study in the Gulf region on women using the social constructivist approach to career trajectories.

Therefore, the importance of this thesis comes firstly from the lack of literature that investigates Emirati women's leadership career development in higher education in the UAE, which created a need to explore the current situation and the factors associated

with it. It will contribute to the international literature in the field, where there has been a high representation of women's leadership studied in many Western countries but not in the Gulf region. It will also contribute methodologically to the body literature as it is using a biographical perspective through a social career constructivist approach to study women's career paths.

It might also rectify some assumption about women in the region, some theories, factors, and models that are considered to be widely valid but may not be fully applicable in this part of the world, considering the noticeable differences between Middle East and Western contexts, for example, social, religious traditions, and culture norms (AlAzmi, 2016; Crabtree, 2007; Greaves, 2012; Hodges, 2017; Moghadam, 2004). However, the study can also confirm some of those general factors that also pertain in the UAE as they do in other countries demonstrating where shared experiences and problems exist. Secondly, the inadequate number of Emirati women in leadership positions in higher education institutions in the UAE compared to other professions in the private and public sectors - as well as compared to the number of women students and graduates with high degrees - needs to be examined in order to pave the way for those who are aspiring to the same career and support them to reach such positions. Thirdly, it is essential to capture the first generation's career trajectories of Emirati women in senior level careers in higher education in the UAE in order to document the leadership journeys they have taken in order to learn from the success stories of Emirati women in order to develop a formal career model which governing bodies and organisations can use in human resource policies, planning and programmes. Finally, it is very important to mention that these Emirati women's trajectories can serve as role models to those women aspiring to pursue leadership positions within higher education institutions either academic ones, which appear widely in the

international Western context, or administrative positions which is mostly the direction of the local path for those in higher education. A model of such trajectories can be used by Emirati women to inform the planning of their own career development in higher education in term of education, self-development, self-efficacy among other internal and external factors.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This thesis aims at understanding the stories behind Emirati women currently in middle and higher leadership positions in higher education institutions through investigating their career trajectories, and identifying the factors that influenced and shaped their career path and leadership identity formation. The main research question is “What are the factors that influence the Emirati women’s successful career development in higher education institutions in pursuing positions to senior ranks?” This question will be investigated through a university case study using the following sub-questions:

1. How do Emirati women describe their career development journeys in higher education institutions?
2. What do Emirati women have to do themselves to move to a senior ranking in higher education institutions?
3. How do the government and higher education institutions support Emirati women moving into senior positions?
4. What are the patterns of Emirati women’s career development experiences compared to that of women in other countries in the literature?

These sub-questions were carefully selected based on the current available literature on the position of women’s career development in higher education institutions in several

Western contexts and a few Asian and Arab countries to find the similarities and differences in order to create an adapted model for Emirati women in particular. Detailed discussion of this literature is covered in the next chapter along with initial comparisons.

The first question focuses on the career trajectory of Emirati women and how they describe their paths. It is mainly focussed on the positive experiences to present a successful role model for other aspiring women in the field, but also any challenges and barriers they faced and how they overcame or met them. These factors include but not limited to the influencing aspects like family, early childhood, adulthood, role models, mentors, gender, culture, and opportunities. It is worth noting here that such factors are rarely covered in the field of higher education leadership for Emirati women except for a study by Madsen (2010), however, it was mainly focusing on Emirati students.

The second question aims on getting more insight into the strategies and approaches that Emirati women had taken during their career to support their path to senior ranking in higher education institutions. Such strategies and approaches might include extra training, further higher education, personal development, self-development, self-efficacy, community service, and personality development.

The third question targets initiatives that the UAE government and higher education institutions offer to support Emirati women on their career development paths into senior leadership positions. Such initiatives might include policies, regulations, and strategies targeting Emirati national and women in particular, further training and support system, as well as career development plans that eventually position women into a leadership positions. As this study is a university case, explained in more detail in chapter three, the examination of institutional policies will focus on the organisation selected for the study, however government policies and regulations will be examined



for the national level since they apply to all higher education institutions that are implementing Emiratization policy.

The fourth question aims at presenting comparative patterns between Emirati women's career development experiences in higher education institutions and women from the Western countries through comparing their career paths, highlighting similarities, and outline differences, which have appeared in several sources for example Bartram et al. (2006) and Scherer et al. (2010).

#### **1.4 Study Approach**

Since the overall aim of the study is to explore the experiences of Emirati women's leadership career development in higher education institutions through an in-depth and holistic examination of their individual trajectories, the qualitative approach is considered to be the most appropriate in conducting this type of research. According to Mutch (2005), qualitative research aims at exploring "lived experiences of the participants to enhance understanding of particular phenomena" (p. 19). Through a qualitative explanatory case study approach, the research focuses on understanding the meaning of relevant phenomena from the participants' perspectives and their reaction to it through "[grasping] the meanings that constitute that action" (Schwandt, 2000). In-depth semi-structured interviews have been used to allow the participants the liberty to present their personal experiences and elaborate on different aspects that arise during the interview.

Additionally, since the main focus of this study is Emirati women's career trajectories in senior leadership positions, a number of career development models like Super's (1957) 'Life Span Life Space' career development theory, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) work on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), and Savickas's (2005) career

construction theory are used together to form the basic foundation for an exploration of their trajectories into senior leadership positions. It is important to note that the majority of career development theories are based on men. Since women's career development is more complex as it involves a combination of attitudes, role expectations, behaviours, and social agreements (Schreiber, 1998), the study will use the work of Astin (1984), Farmer (1985), and Hackett and Betz (1981) to draw attention to the differences of women's career development and the factors that support their successful rise to senior leadership positions. It is important to mention here that this theoretical framework has been designed to be consistent with the study's purpose as well as the main research question and sub-questions.

### **1.5 Study Context**

This study context was divided into two levels: the first level is United Arab Emirates which includes the constitution, the government, and the country's leaders; and the second level is the university as the site chosen to conduct this study.

At an age of forty-seven years, the United Arab Emirates has moved from a society that was struggling to make a living under extremely challenging circumstances to one of the most modernized liberal countries in the Middle East and globally with one of the strongest economic systems, modern excellent infrastructure, and stable unique political systems. When the British announced their withdrawal from the Arabian Gulf region in 1968, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, acted rapidly and took the responsibility of starting consultations with the neighbouring communities to Abu Dhabi - Dubai, Sharjah, Um Al Quwain, Ajman, and Fujairah - to form the federation of the United Arab Emirates in 1971, along with Ras Al Khaimah joining a few months later, that created a special and unique union in the Middle East

region at that time. With oil discovered in Abu Dhabi in 1962, Dubai in 1969, and Sharjah in 1974, the economic system of the United Arab Emirates dramatically and rapidly developed into one of the most stable, unique, and strongest in the region under the close guidance of Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan who was selected to be the first ruler with the support of Sheikh Rashed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai and first Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE.

The political system of the UAE was, and still is based on the sheikhdom system of one tribe ruling each of the seven emirates managing all its related issues (Rugh, 2007). While on one hand, the seven emirates' rulers are represented on the federal level through the Supreme Council that manages the entire country, on the other, there is the Federal National Council (FNC) that is a consultative institution. The first election for the FNC was in 2006 when 20 members were appointed - as it used to be - and an additional 20 members elected from the local population. It was the first time that Emirati women gained access to such high political leadership position making up 22.5 per cent of the FNC members. In 1971, the rulers of the seven emirates agreed to create a system that offered the best of modern administration for all the emirates and at the same time retain traditional forms of government, but one that also maintained a commitment to consensus, discussion, and direct democracy, which created one of the strongest stable political systems in the Middle East (UAE Yearbook, 2013).

Looking at the UAE constitution (1971) will find that the UAE has ensured that equality is the main aspects of all regulation and laws that are directed to the UAE nation women and men. For example:

*Article 14: Equality, social justice, the provision of safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be the bases of the*

*community. Mutual co-operation and respect shall be a firm bond between them.*

*Article 17: Education shall be a primary means of social development. It shall be compulsory in its primary stage and free at all stages within the Union. The law shall prescribe the necessary plans for the propagation and spread of education at various levels and for the eradication of illiteracy.*

*Article 34: Every citizen shall be free to choose his occupation, trade, or profession within the limits of the law, due consideration being given to any regulations prescribed for any such professions and trades. No person may be subjected to forced labour except in exceptional circumstances provided for by the law and in return for compensation. No man may be enslaved.*

*Article 35: Public service shall be open to all citizens on a basis of equality of circumstances between them, in accordance with the provisions of the law. Public service shall be a national service entrusted to those undertaking it. The public servant shall aim, in the execution of his duties, at the public interest alone.*

Looking into the articles mentioned, it gives a clear vision of the supporting system that the UAE government ensured to have in place to guide all institutions. It mainly shows that women are equally treated like men in equal access to education, work occupation, and progression opportunities. Such articles provide an opportunity for women who are aspired to form their career advancement.

The UAE 2021 vision pays close attention by the country's government to ensuring that the nation is ready and well-equipped to face the fast changes happening locally and

globally which include education and knowledge. The UAE vision aim is to be among the best countries in the world by 2021:

In a strong and safe union, knowledgeable, and innovative Emiratis will confidently build a competitive and resilient economy. They will thrive as a cohesive society bonded to its identity, and enjoy the highest standards of living within a nurturing and sustainable environment.

One of the four main pillars of the UAE 2021 vision is “United in Knowledge”. This pillar specifies that “A diversified and flexible knowledge-based economy will be powered by skilled Emiratis and strengthened by world-class talent to ensure long term prosperity for the UAE” (UAE vision 2021, 2015). The UAE government is strongly focusing on building the national human capital to maximize the UAE national participation in the Emirates’ development through nurturing leaders who will guide the country locally and globally. This is going to encourage more Emiratis to enter into higher education and become equipped with the needed knowledge for national development, and on the other hand it will also inspire universities to be ready to build a world-class higher education system to graduate national leaders who will be able to lead the century in the next generations.

The United Arab Emirates’ government has placed considerable attention and effort in providing a first-class educational system through creating policies and regulations that facilitate and regulate the education system to allow access to all Emirati nationals. The higher education system in the UAE is divided into three divisions: government, semi-government, and private. The government’s higher education’s division which is presented by The Ministry of Education is supporting all Emirati students to complete their undergraduate study for free. Furthermore, those Emirati nationals who wish to complete their postgraduate education are also supported by the government locally or

international through a scholarship system that will allow them to benefit from applying to the UAE Ministry of Higher Education. There are three government supported universities in the UAE: UAE University, Zayed University, and the Higher Colleges of Technology. There are approximately 78 licensed higher education institutions ranging from semi-government to private that all provide different levels of university degrees including diplomas, the bachelors, master, and PhD.

One of the most important of the four pillars of the UAE 2021 vision that directly relates to this study's main scope is "United in Responsibility" which focuses on "Ambitious and responsible Emiratis who successfully carve out their future, actively engaging in an evolving socio-economic environment, and drawing on their strong families and communities, moderate Islamic values, and deep rooted heritage to build a vibrant and well-knit society" (UAE Vision 2021, 2015). It is deeply focused on the large and cohesive families as the main core of the UAE society through ensuring the proper security and nurturing environment. It further endorses the important role of parents and elders as influential role models. This pillar directly focuses on empowering Emirati women in society and continuously supporting them to achieve a greater role in all spheres and contribute directly to the country's development. It is clearly stated in the UAE Vision 2021 that "In pursuit of these noble goals, women will be protected against all forms of discrimination at work and in society" (UAE Vision 2021, 2016). Similar to all Arab countries, the UAE is based on Islamic principles: The Holy Quran and *Hadith* (sayings of the prophet Mohammed [Peace Be Upon Him]), which considered to be the fundamental source of the UAE constitution as well as the UAE culture and tradition (King, 1997; Soffan, 1980). Islam is considered to be a way of living as it combines religious and secular aspects of life. It is "a system of belief and law that governs both spiritual and material conditions" (Metcalf and Murfin, 2011).

It provides guidance on how Muslims would manage their personal and professional lives within the society and culture they live in. Islam gives women all their rights equally to men compared to the pre-Islamic period (Jawad, 1998). In Islam, since women are considered to be half of the society, they are entitled to have rights and opportunities equal to men (Adam, 2010; Augsburg et al, 2009). Consequently, women like men, are obligated to have their share of knowledge and education, working opportunity, and legal rights with in their society.

It is very important to clarify here that even though the UAE, similar to all other Arab and Muslim countries are following Islam guidance, yet; it is clear that the practices of equality between men and women as well as the society and culture perspective on those guidelines are different from country to another. This has been clearly stated in the UAE constitutions

*Article 14: Equality, social justice, the provision of safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be the bases of the community. Mutual co-operation and respect shall be a firm bond between them.*

Furthermore, one of the UAE Vision 2021 main pearls is “United in Responsibility” where it shows a main focus on moderate Islam

“We want the UAE’s Arab-Islamic roots to be treasured as a profound and sacred element of our nation’s rich heritage. The nation’s progressive and moderate values of Islam will continue to support its traditions of respect and openness in public and private spaces. A spirit of religious tolerance will forge mutual understanding and acceptance within the country’s pool of diversity. By preserving the core tenets of Islam, Emiratis will face the challenges of openness to the world with

self-assurance, confident that the homogenising effects of globalisation cannot erode their moderate religious values”.

In the past, Emirati women in the UAE had very limited opportunities to perform a significant role in the country. According to Rugh (2007), women’s main responsibilities were to create a family, nurture it, and to certain extent help with the family resources through some home business like sewing, making cheese and milk, keeping livestock like chicken, and selling homemade cooking. Women further were supporting men in cleaning and sorting pearls, and processing fish after diving and fishing trips. It was not until oil was discovered in 1960 and the declaration of the UAE as a country in 1971, that women have started to be visible publicly and have opportunities to be involved in the leadership of the country’s development. In the early 1980’s, the United Arab Emirates, similar to many other Arab countries, especially in the Arabian Gulf area, underwent rapid changes economically and socially that required the involvement of women to participate in the country's development through the vision of its late president, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan who discussed the principle that should govern gender relations in the country:

The means to develop a country and modernise its infrastructure is a magnificent burden that should not be taken up by men only. The loss would be huge, for women will be paralysed without any participation in productivity. It would lead to an unbalanced rhythm of life. Hence, women's participation in public life is required and we must be prepared for it. (UAE Yearbook, 2013, p.231)

This vision has been implemented by the UAE government through supporting and encouraging Emirati women to have an effective leadership role in the development of



the nation. Several organisations have been established to ensure a significant involvement of women in the UAE society through different activities and actions such as The General Women's Union (GWA) which is a key institution dedicated to Emirati women established by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima 'Mother of UAE in 1975 for the welfare of Emirati women and to ensure their involvement in the progression of the UAE (UAE Yearbook, 2013). The GWA also has launched a National Strategy for women advancement in cooperation with the UAE constitution to set an agenda plan for all government institutions within the UAE to empower women and ensure that there is at least one women in every board member of all the organizations in the UAE (UAE Yearbook, 2013).

Since then, many girls and women have had the chance educational access, complete their higher education, and have subsequently started to hold highly ranked leadership positions in government and the private sector, and be part of the UAE process of development (Hewlett and Rashid, 2011; UAE Yearbook, 2013). For example, in 1980 UAE women constituted 3.4 per cent of the labour force; by 1995 this number rose to 13 per cent (UAE Year Book, 2013). In 2010 this figure had risen to 66 per cent in the public sector of which 30 per cent are in senior leadership positions, and 60 per cent of professional positions such as medicine, teaching, pharmacy, and nursing held by Emirati women. By 2006, Emirati women gained the first opportunity to be part of the Federal National Council (UAE Year Book, 2013). According to the United Nation's Gender Inequality Index in 2012, the UAE was ranked fortieth out of 148 countries, and ahead of all other Arab nations which generally have gender based inequalities in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity (AlOraimi, 2011). A survey conducted by the research firm TNS MENA found in 2012 that of 2500 Emirati women surveyed across the UAE, 91 per cent said they were happy

with their overall quality of life. Although Emirati women's achievements are well recognized in all fields in comparison to other women in the region, they remain relatively untapped resources in the UAE, as Emiratis represent only 43.5 per cent of the labour market according to UN figures (UAE Year Book, 2013, p. 168).

A study conducted by AlMarzouqi and Forster (2011) to investigate the underrepresentation of Emirati women in the Information Technology private sector by interviewing 20 Emirati women found out that barriers like long working hours, short holidays, and lower payment compared to government sector, mixed gender environment, husband rejection of such job opportunities for their wives are the main reasons behind the lack of Emirati women in this sector.

A study by Randeree (2009) to examine the Emiratisation policy found that even though the government has secured job opportunities for Emirati women, yet; the UAE social attitudes still have not changed towards women's promotion in the workplace that sometimes-required women to prove that they are capable enough as men.

Another study with fifteen Emirati women by Omair (2010), identified four women's career patterns: progressive, moderate, facilitated, and idealistic. These patterns are based on the women social and powerful level within the community "these powerful women also moved from graduation into senior positions, often across fields and sectors, with their high social status facilitating their progression. They had both physical and psychological mobility. However, these women felt that they were very visible and had a huge pressure and responsibility to do well, because of their family reputation, and their position as role models for the young women of the nation" (Dubai Women's Establishment, 2013; Omair, 2010).

## **1.6 Limitations**

Since the main focus of this study is to explore the many factors and aspects of Emirati women's career trajectories in higher education institutions in the UAE to determine factors that supported their career development, this study possesses many limitations. Creswell (2002) asserts that limitations are to be addressed in advance to clear the "potential weaknesses or problems with the study" (p. 199). Therefore, in this study it is important to acknowledge the following:

- Emirati women in middle and higher academic and administrative leadership positions in higher education institutions are the scope of this study; accordingly, the results cannot be applicable to non-Emirati women.
- Since the scope of this study is Emirati women the results cannot be transformed to women in other Gulf countries, even if they are in the same higher education field given the highly variable conditions of higher education for women in the Gulf region due to some culture, political systems, and policies differences
- Participants are from public higher education institutions in the UAE, not private and semi-public higher education institutions. Accordingly, the results cannot apply to government agencies, private or semi-private institutions
- Since the study focusses on a university case study, aspects of women's experiences there may not apply to other universities in the country, particularly since this university is much larger than the others, more developed, and the university has also achieved a high international ranking
- The focus is on a high education institution in the UAE, which has many unique features, particularly related to women, so the experiences in this

case would be different from those in other Arabian Gulf countries and result cannot be transformed

- The study has been conducted during a period when the Emiratisation policy went into full implementation, so the experiences Emirati women are having now may not apply a number of years from now as the country is still going through considerable nation-building and itself will be different in the coming future.

### **1.7 Organization of the Chapters**

The thesis is divided into six additional chapters. Chapter Two includes a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework that this study is based on. It will be followed by Chapter Three which includes a review of several bodies of literature that are relevant to the topic. These include focus on a literature review through a socio-cultural context on the position of women's leadership career development in higher education, the current literature on career development theories, the position of women leadership career development in the international, regional, and Islamic contexts, and the factors that support women in their career development.

Chapter Four explains the methodology of this study. It will present rationale behind using a qualitative exploratory case study as a research approach for this study. It will also present the methodology that consists of the site and participant's selection, the design of the data collection methods, and ethical considerations. It will also present the pilot study conducted prior to this study and discuss further amendments needed to take place before working on this study.

Chapter Five focuses on results of this study by presenting a detailed life stories of Emirati women's participants. Chapter Six will be a completion to Chapter Five as it

includes discussion of the results presented in the previous chapter. It discusses themes and patterns that evolved from the in-depth interviews mainly and some highlights from document reviews. The chapter concludes with a proposed Emirati women career development model.

Chapter Seven will present conclusions that are drawn from the research findings and results that will contribute into the literature as well as the methodological approach used to conduct this type of study. The chapter will also present the emerging Emirati career development model in higher education institutions as concluded from the previous two chapters. This chapter also identifies a number of recommendations. The chapter concludes with a discussion of future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

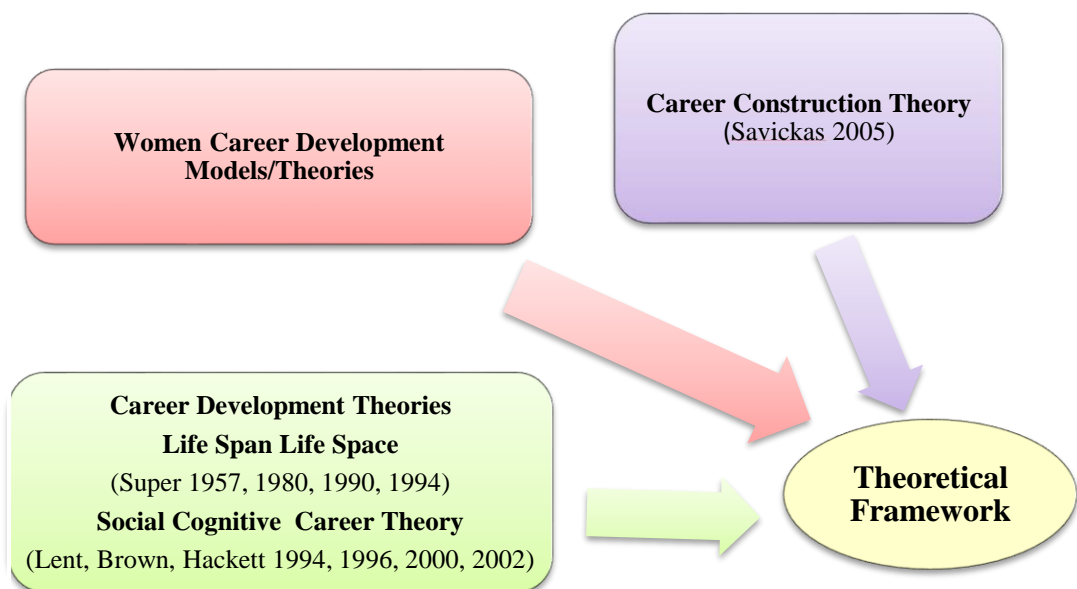
This study aims at exploring the career experiences of Emirati women in middle and senior academic and administration leadership positions in one of the public universities in the UAE, the factors that influenced their leadership career development, and the strategies they employed to achieve success. The main purpose is to record the success trajectories as well as the challenges overcome of the Emirati women who are currently in academic and administrative leadership in order to create a career development model that better reflects the UAE's society and higher education institutions and that can inspire Emirati women aspiring to a leadership position in higher education institutions in the UAE. Accordingly, this chapter will discuss the theoretical framework which this study is based on.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

As Figure 2.1 shows, this study theoretical framework is primarily career development theories through the work of Super's (1957) 'Life Span Life Space' career development theory and drawing on elements from Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). It will be complemented with a social constructivism lens from career development based on the work of Savickas (2005) on career construction theory. Since this study is women focused, it is essential to include the studies on women's career development, like for example; Astin (1984), Cheung and Halpern (2010), Farmer (1985), Knor (2005), Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996), Rivera et al (1999), and Schreiber (1998).

The choice of these particular theories comes from them providing a suitable theoretical base that corresponds to the issues represented by this study's research questions. Super's work will provide an understanding of the different roles individuals have in their lives, and focusses on professionally relevant parts of women's complex roles. His work will be jointly used with Savickas's to support additional factors that influence career construction paths, especially for women. Lent, Brown, and Hackett's work will give more insights into the early childhood and adulthood stages of women's lives and its influences on their career development.

*Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework*



### 2.2.1 Life Span, Life Space Theory

Among many theorists who have discussed career developments, Donald Super's (1957) work has gained significant and widespread international attention among career researchers (Fouad & Arhona, 1994; Savickas, 1994; Whiston & Brecheisen, 2002). Super (1980, p. 289) defines career development as "the combination and sequence of

roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime”. The main purpose of his work was to create a career development theory that is “a loosely unified set of theories dealing with specific aspects of career development, taken from developmental, differential, social, personality, and phenomenological psychology and held together by self-concept and learning theory” (Super, 1990, p. 199).

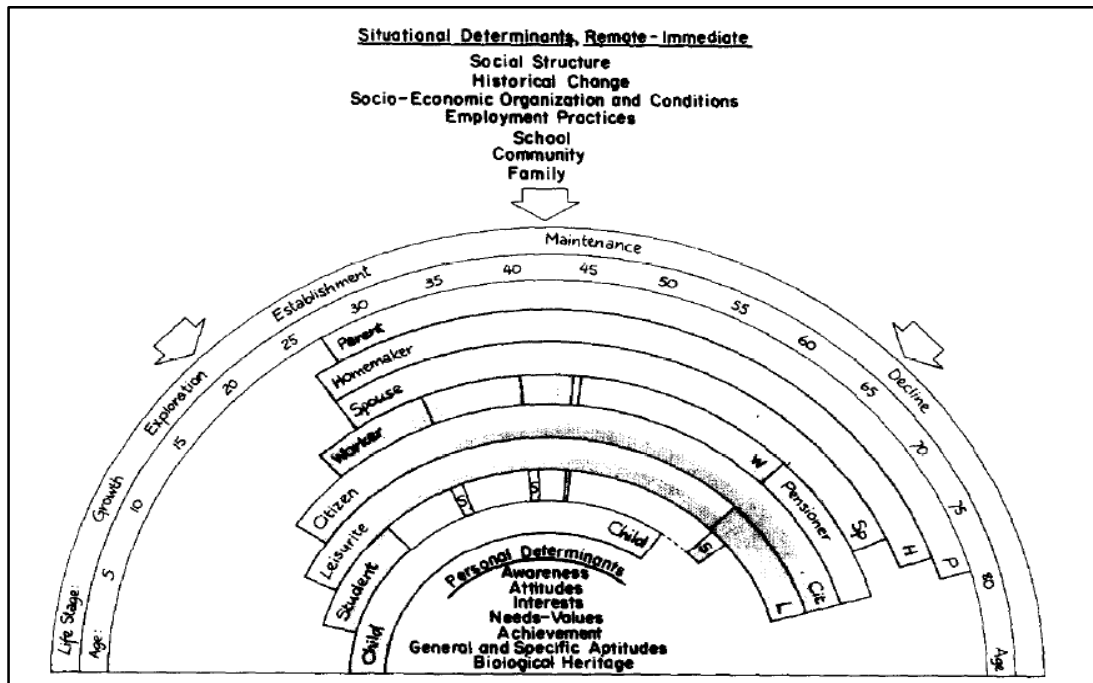
It is not a simple thing to build on Super’s work since there were multiple theoretical changes over the years that included improvements based on continuous data collection that started with “career development theory”, then changed to “developmental self-concept theory”, and finally, to “life span, life space theory”. According to Patton and McMahon (2006), earlier forms of career development theories have been absorbed in Super’s finalised approach to life span, life space theory that presents the process and content of career development. Patton and McMahon (2006) argue that life span presents the process of career development through life stages of vocational development as Super (1980, 1990, 1994) describes them, and life space presents the individuals’ roles during their lives that consider the different contexts of their lives. Super (1980, 1990) depicts the life span, life space theory using a diagram of a rainbow entitled “life career rainbow” (Figure 2.2).

People perform different roles in their lives according to Super’s (1980) life space model. These roles vary from one person to another, as some roles do not apply to some people and some cultural and political contexts. These roles occur in the following order, however, with roles overlapping at times and some performed at the same time: 1) child, 2) student, 3) leisure (which is the role of leisure time and activities), 4) citizen, 5) worker (which also includes unemployed worker), 6) spouse, 7) homemaker, 8) parent, and 9) pensioner. According to Super (1980), these nine roles take place in four



‘theatres’: 1) home, 2) community, 3) school (which includes university), and 4) workplace. Roles interact with each other to create a life with focus for the individual.

**Figure 2.2: The Life-Career Rainbow: Nine life roles in schematic life space.**  
(from Super, 1980, p. 289)



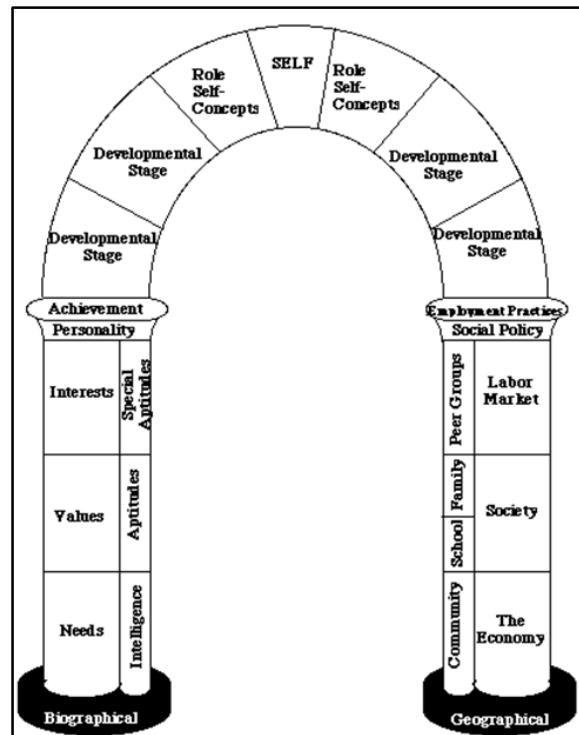
Super et al. (1996) argue that the importance of the individual’s role is determined by three main components: commitment that involves emotional attachment; participation through the amount of time and energy invested in a role; and value expectations that describes the amount of satisfaction and sense of purpose of a role. It is important to note that the main limitation here is that these roles do not adequately reflect the Middle East context where religion, traditions, and culture play importance role in the individual’s life; therefore, these elements will be added to his model for the purpose of this study. Herr (1997) says that the importance of the Rainbow Model comes from the combination of structures that result in the individual’s career pattern, therefore; this model can easily be adapted or modified to other contexts because the categories are so fundamental to general human experiences. In the case of Emirati women, their

life experience contains the main categories in the model and can easily be mapped onto the Rainbow Model structures.

In 1990, Super introduced the concepts of “personal determinants” and “situational determinants” which are a group of factors that influence career development in his second attempt of the model to introduce the Archway Model (see Figure 2.3). The “personal determinants” are personal factors (e.g., interests, values, needs, intelligence, special aptitudes, and aptitudes), and the “situational determinants” consist of contextual factors (e.g., peer groups, school, family, community, society, labour market, and economy). According to Freeman (1993), Super emphasizes the need to understand the interaction among all these elements since they all influence the individual’s career development. Furthermore, Herr (1997) argues that in the archway model, Super intended to depict how the resources, the economy, the family and other environmental factors will influence career development, how these are integrated in the different life stages, and how the individual and decision maker will bring all of these personal and social factors together and organize them in terms self-concept and role construction in society (p. 240).

It is important to add that self-concept is the main linkage in Super’s theory that connects all elements of the life-career rainbow and the segmental model of career development components. Zunker (1994), commenting on Super’s work, argues that “vocational self-concept develops through physical and mental growth, observations of work, identification with working adults, general environment, and general experiences ... As experiences become broader in relation to awareness of the world of work, the more sophisticated vocational self-concept is formed” (p. 30).

**Figure 2.3: A segmental model of career development “Archway Model”  
(From Brown and Brooks, 1990, p. ??)**



Racene (2014) conducted a study to examine women’s career pattern based on the seven ways of women’s career pattern, as defined by Super’s Theory of Career Development. Racene (2014) reported that “women have five interrelated life areas to which they dedicate a lot of their time, energy, duties and attention; they are: job, family, spirituality, civic engagement and leisure time”. She further added that it is critical for women to identify their priorities and to balance between them in each stage to ensure that they will be able to progress with their career.

### **2.2.2 Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)**

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was first introduced by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994, 1996) to understand the career interest, career choice, and performance processes. According to them, the career interest model covers childhood and early adolescence, the career choice model covers adolescence and early adulthood, and the

performance processes model covers the person's first job to later in life. They further emphasize that "within each mode, [they] highlight the socio-cognitive mechanisms that [they] believe exert important influences on career and academic development" (Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1996, p. 373). They strongly asserted that changing social and economic conditions can have a noticeable effect on career development "a complex array of factors such as culture, gender, genetic endowment, sociostructurally considerations, and disability/health status operate in tandem with people's cognitions, affecting the nature and range of their career possibilities" (Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1996, p. 374). Lent (2005) acknowledged the SCCT as an "approach to understanding the career puzzle" (p. 101)

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) framework is based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. According to Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), SCCT is also linked to another theory from Bandura's general framework: Krumboltz's (1979) social learning theory to construct career development. Social learning theory was first formulated by adapting Bandura's (1977) theory in to social learning. Krumboltz's (1979) social learning theory is based on learning process and it suggest that individuals learn about themselves, their environment, and the working world through direct and indirect skills to build their knowledge and experiences. According to Krumboltz's (1979), there are four categories that influence individual's career process: 1) genetic and special abilities that includes, for example gender, ethnicity, appearance, and ability; 2) environmental conditions and events which cover around twelve conditions and events either planned or unplanned to human action, for example education, labour law, social organisations, family, and community influences; 3) learning experiences that explain the unique pattern of learning experiences which result in career path; 4) task approach skills that results from an integration of the first three influences. Mitchell

and Krumboltz (1990) further explain that “social learning theory of career suggests that maximum career development of all individuals requires each individual to have the opportunity to be exposed to the widest array of learning experiences, regardless of race, gender, or ethnic origin” (pp. 167-168).

Bandura’s (1997) Self-efficacy framework is critical as it suggests that individuals’ decision of certain actions that are related to their career development is mostly determined by their self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) defines self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required attain designated types of performances” (p. 391), which also according to him, influences the actions people use to pursue a goal, the amount of effort an individual will put to achieve a certain outcome, the amount of time that an individual will preserve facing challenges, the amount of stress an individual will experience to cope with the environmental changes, individual resilience to adversity, and the individual perception of patterns as self-hindering or self-aiding. Furthermore, self-efficacy provides indication of individuals’ career development to leadership levels as well as the positive impact of leadership aspiration on self-perception (Woods, 2004).

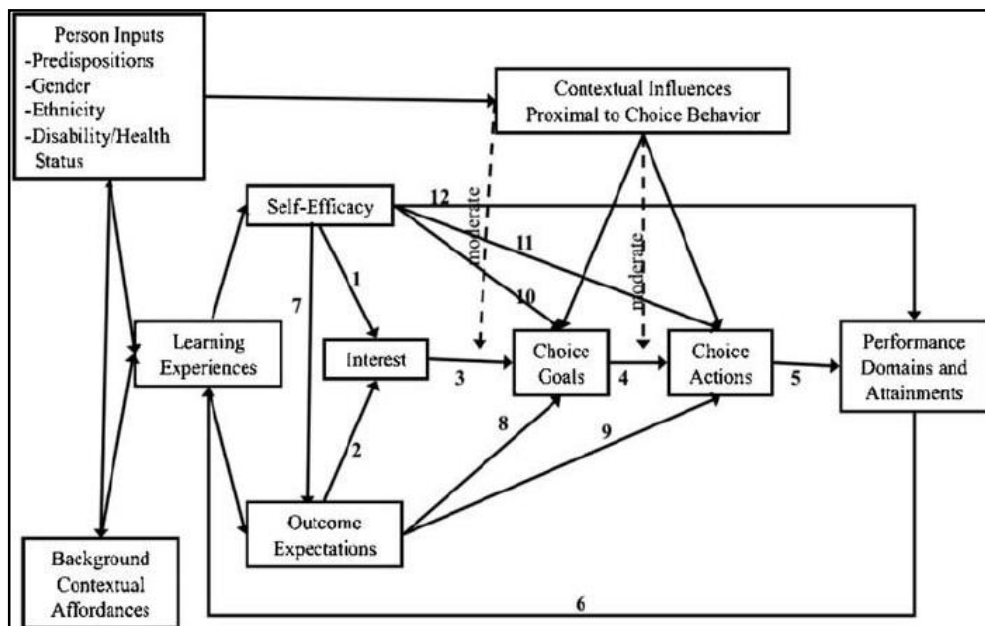
The main addition that SCCT brings to career development theories is a focus on the interaction of individual’s interests, abilities, along with personal and environmental factors shaping career development. In particular, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002) assert that “SCCT was designed ... to help construct useful conceptual bridges, to identify major variables that may compose a more comprehensive explanatory system, and to sketch central processes linking these variables together” (p. 257).

Figure 2.4 presents the diagrammatic SCCT framework that highlights the significant of individuals inputs to the main outcome of performance through a circle of self-

efficacy and learning experiences. Both individuals' inputs and self-efficacy as well as the process of the learning experiences are one of the main factors of this study.

It is worth mentioning here that one very important study that used Super's Life Span, Life Space Theory as well as Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory is that by Chen and Coogan (2007) to discuss internal and external barriers associated with North American women's career development.

**Figure 2.4: Person, contextual, and experiential factors affecting career (From Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994)**



Through these two theories, Chen and Coogan (2007) presented the following conclusions:

- Super's (1990) theory asserts that person's self-concept change over time based on its combination of biological characteristics and social roles played in life which provide an early self-concept

- Super's theory distinguishes the various roles that women would take responsibility of during their life and that would be impacting their career development
- Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994) determined the degree individuals' beliefs in their self-efficacy to successfully develop their career
- Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994) also considered background, social and environmental, and learning experiences as factors influence women career development path

A study conducted by Gibbs (2015) used SCCT as well as Bandura (1986) framework to study women leadership development who went through executive leadership program in academic medicine to results with the main importance of a strong positive influence of self-efficacy in performance accomplishment. Another study utilizing Social Cognitive Career Theory is conducted by Yeagley (2010) to investigate women's perceptions of elite leadership positions (example: top executives, vice presidents, presidents, board members) resulted in pointing out the relation between the elite leadership positions' expectation and self-efficacy. The study also presents a support for the use of Social Cognitive Career Theory proposed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) as a theoretical framework for understanding internal factors that contribute to women's leadership career development aspirations.

### **2.2.3 Social Constructivism**

Lowenthal and Muth (2008) argued that constructivism does not have a clear beginning: "no single person or movement appears responsible for developing or laying the foundation for constructivist theories". The early seeds of the constructivist approach

can be traced to Vico, Goodman, Rousseau, Kant, Dewey, and Vygotsky. While these early thinkers did not label themselves as “constructivists,” their key ideas have constructivist elements. They further explained that social constructivism grew from the work of individual constructivists as well as Vygotsky (1978) and others who took a social and cultural perspective of knowledge creation. Vygotsky (1978) states:

"every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals." (p. 57).

According to Fairhurst and Grant (2010), social constructionism is rooted in symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) and phenomenology (Schutz, 1970). Yet, modern social constructionism can be traced back to 1966 and the publication of Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality*, where the term was introduced for the first time.

Lowenthal and Muth (2008) argued that social constructivism grew from the work of individual constructivists like Vygotsky who took a social and cultural perspective of knowledge creation. Andrews (2012) and Mahoney (2003) also argued that to understand social constructionism, it is important to understand knowledge and how it impacts people's perspectives in creating their own realities. During the 1970's and 1980's, social constructionism underwent different transformational developments because of the impact of many sociologists like Barnes (1982), Knorr-Cetina (1981),



and Latour and Woolgar (1979), to differentiate between social constructivism from the social, cultural and historical on one side and science on the other.

Fairhurst and Grant (2010) argue that the body of literature on the social construction of leadership is now extensive compared to when it started in the mid-1990's by Pearce (1995). It has grown dramatically, especially in the past 15 years, with no sign of stopping. Several studies have pursued social constructivism to study management and leadership (Billsberry, 2009; Meckler and Baillie, 2003). Omair (2010) followed a social constructivist framework in her study to produce a typology distinguishing four types of career development among women managers in the United Arab Emirates. In Fernando and Cohen's (2011) study, they used social constructivism to study women's career development in Sri Lanka through interviewing 24 Sri Lankan women in early, middle and late career.

#### **2.2.4 Career Constructivist Theory**

Constructivism has also been used in the career development field. Among many of the theorists and researchers who used Super's (1975) theory, Savickas (2001, 2002, 2005) is the one who has most advanced his work on career development through combining it with a career constructivism approach to result in his career construction theory. Career construction theory "asserts that individuals construct their career by imposing on their vocational behaviour and occupational experiences" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). Savickas (2005) claims that career construction theory explains the what, how, and why of career development through three main dimensions: vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes.

Savickas (2005) refers to vocational personality as the individual's abilities, needs, values, and interests, which he based on Holland's theory (1997). He argues that

individuals form them in their families and develop them in the surrounding environments of school and other social institutions. Accordingly, Savickas (2005) concludes that vocational personality types represent what an individual will be able to do in a work career. Savickas (2005) argues that the second dimension, career adaptability “deals with how an individual construct a career whereas vocational personality deals with what career they construct” (p. 48). Accordingly, Savickas (2005) defines career adaptability as a “psychosocial construct that denotes an individual’s readiness and resources for coping with current and imminent vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and persona; traumas” (p.51).

It is worth mentioning that Savickas (2005) based this component on the development stages and roles of Super’s (1990) theory which presents continuous career adaptability across the life-span. The third dimension, life themes, presents the interpersonal side of career construction theory. According to Savickas (2005), it focuses on the meaning of career to individuals and why they do what they do in terms of constructing their careers. It presents the stories of self-concepts through vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas that individuals experience during their life stages. Savickas (2005) explains that by dealing with the “what” of vocational personality, the “how” of the career adaptability and the “why” of the life themes, the career construction theory will work best as all three components are integrated and taken into account.

It is important to point out the close similarities between Savickas’s (2005) career construction theory and Super’s (1990) life-span, life-space theory. The most important is the development of self-concept in both theories as discussed previously. Savickas (1996) emphasises that self-conceptualisation is a process that represents the developmental stages of individuals which starts from childhood. He also stresses that

the role of parents and role models in forming the individual's self-concept. Children view the world through their parents' eyes, as they look to parents for guidance and direction. Through children's engagement in different activities and experiences at home or at school, they start forming their self-understanding and build their personal characteristics that will constitute their vocational self-concept. On the other hand, role models that are identified and accepted by the individual influence the future career path from parents and family to the society and surrounding community (Lockwood and Kunda, 1997).

Gronlund (2017) conducted an investigation to study the differences between women and men career through questioning how each construct their career in relation to family and work to find out that women have higher double commitment to work and family compared to men "women tend to be more family oriented emphasizing family-friendly work conditions as important to their [career] choices". Another study by Albertyn et al. (2017) also using constructivist theory approach to examine the impact of coaching on individuals promoted into senior leadership positions to find out transition coaching [mentoring] started too late and did not continue for long enough. Albertyn et al (2017) suggested that transition coaching [mentoring] should take "cognisance of coach-coachee matching; goal setting that includes the organisation's goals; location of coaching session (away from the office); should include reflection and active experimentation; and use assessments and involving the line manager, mentors and the new leader's team in the process".

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of relevant bodies of literature that situate the thesis topic in the international, regional, and local literatures, including leadership studies, leadership in higher education, women's leadership, and policy studies. The chapter will present the bodies of literature that consist of three main sections relevant to women's career trajectories and development into senior leadership positions in higher education. The first body of literature is career development literature and women's career development that focus on a number of key factors: family support, education, networking, mentoring, and role models. The next section is leadership literature including general leadership theories most relevant to this study, leadership in higher education and in the Arabian Gulf region, and women and leadership in higher education in the international context focusing on women's leadership career development that includes important factors for this study including personality, society, governmental policies, and organizational support. The chapter will conclude with a section that focuses on the context of United Arab Emirates including the development of the women's leadership roles that pertain to the country and the position of Emirati women.

#### **3.2 Career Development**

The history of career development study goes back to early 1900's. Parsons (1909) was the founder of vocational career guides in the United States, which later influenced

career development theories and practices in other countries. The later literature in the 1980s and 1990s, following Parsons started to focus on career development content theories (e.g., Holland, 1985) and career development process theories (e.g., Ginzberg, 1984; Super, 1980). It is just lately in the literature that an approach using constructivism, systems theory, and action theory emerged to focus on individuals' career development as well as the work place (Amundson, 2005). In a parallel study, Guichard and Lenz (2005) identified three main characteristics in the career development literature which they divided into an "emphasis on context and cultural diversities, self-development, and constructivist perspective" (p. 17).

Several researchers and studies in the literature developed the concept to include a definition to address career development (e.g., Ginzberg, 1972, 1984; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Miller-Tiedeman, 1988, 1999; Richardson, 1993). However, Sear (1982) suggests a broader definition that incorporates all the concepts and focuses of career development in the previous literature into "career development [as] the total [pattern] of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and change factors that combine to shape the career of an individual over the life span" (p. 139).

Several studies have been conducted to explore and examine career development. For example, Wentling (2003) conducted a study to report on the results of the second phase of a research study on women career development and aspirations in middle management in business firms in the USA using individual qualitative case study. The findings revealed that the majority did not progress as rapidly as they think they should to the positions which they ultimately were aspiring to, yet; they continued to aspire to top management positions as they believed that they will attain these positions eventually. Another study by White (1995) reports on an investigation to women career development achieved in commerce and industry in UK revealed that the majority of

successful women had a high career centrality, working continuously and trying to fit their domestic responsibilities around their working conditions; yet, they are still expected to conform to a men mode of career success.

Since the focus of this study is higher education institutions, it is important to note here that the organizational structure as well as culture of these institutions is different and more complex than others (Ruijs, 1990). It is noticeable that little has been written or published in the body of literature about the differences between these two career paths mostly from the perspectives of what each career path requires in term of skills and knowledge (Kuo, 2009; Mcinnis, 1998; Sale, 2009, White, 2014; Xianming, 2006), yet, it is worth mentioning that there are some academic articles that discuss each separately (Henry, 2006; Tang and Chamberlain, 1997).

Buller (2007) explained that most administrators in higher education institutions usually start their careers as academic faculty within their respective academic disciplines and departments before they eventually move into higher level administrative positions, which results in administrators being trained as researchers and teachers rather than as professional administrators.

Kusku (2003) explained the difference between the types of employees in higher education institutions who “can be divided mainly in to two groups: academic staff, who are responsible for the academic activities of the institutions such as teaching and recache, and administrative staff, who are generally responsible for supporting students, research, and teaching activities”. Because the characteristics of the tasks needed by each group are tremendously different, it is clearly expected that the career path of each group is different and requires a different set of professional development activities. Wilson and Strathe (2006) further explain that the transition from an academic to an administrative position is mostly serendipitous as there are huge differences between

the tasks required from both. For example, Plater (2006) and White (2014) explain that administrators' activities are typically centred around strategic planning, budget administration, financial planning, personal management, policy formation and enforcement, legal liabilities, fundraising, marketing, and space utilization, a few of the many skills, or areas of knowledge that administrators are required to master in comparison with academic positions activities and responsibilities that are mostly around teaching, supervising, research, publications, and curriculum developments.

It is critical here to explain that the career issues in this part of the world – the Middle East– are a little different because of the globalisation impact on higher education institutions particularly in the Arabian Gulf. Although the Middle East region has unique conditions considering different factors that are affecting the higher education system like culture, tradition norms, and rapid socioeconomic changes, however; there is still a huge gap in the literature to investigate this area.

Since the focus of this study is women, the following parts will focus mainly on literature related to women in areas of career development, leadership, and higher education.

### **3.3 Women's Career Development**

While Super (1957) was the first theorist to identify a separate women's career development pattern, it is important to recognise that his work was primarily descriptive. It is worth mentioning that even though the last couple of decades have seen a slight increase focus on women's career development behaviour; limited work has been done to present an explanation of women's career development (Betz, 2005; Brown, 1990; Gallos, 1989; Isaacson and Brown, 1993; Osipow, 1975; Tyler, 1967).

The literature on career development of the 1990s and early into the 21st century did not paid attention to “specific groups” that include gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Brown, 1996) which is a concern also raised by Bimrose (2001) and Patton and McMahon (2005).

Several studies have been dedicated to investigating career development of both men and women, yet; very few have been focusing on the differences between them as the further literature review sections will illustrates. According to Schreiber (1998), the majority of career development theories are based on men, as women’s career development is more complex since it involves a combination of attitudes, role expectations, behaviours, and social agreements. She further asserts that “women’s career development must place women’s career ... in the context of current social norms and beliefs about women’s capabilities and acceptable roles, and must recognize the overt and covert mechanisms that contribute to maintaining these beliefs” (p. 10). Furthermore, Gallos (1989) has pointed out concerns on the missing career models that involve women, suggesting that theorists need to further study and investigate women’s unique career developmental needs and define how women perceive their world, their career choices, and their opportunities.

Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) also highlight the varying support in the literature and research in relation to the different perceptions of women’s and men’s career development. They propose three critical factors that researchers should consider focusing on more in investigations on women’s career development: (1) the differential impact of family responsibilities on men’s and women’s careers (Burke, 2002; Hochschild, 1989); (2) findings from women’s developmental psychology (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976) that suggest a distinctive relational emphasis that may pervade women’s career development (Fletcher, 1996; Kram, 1996); and (3) women’s relative



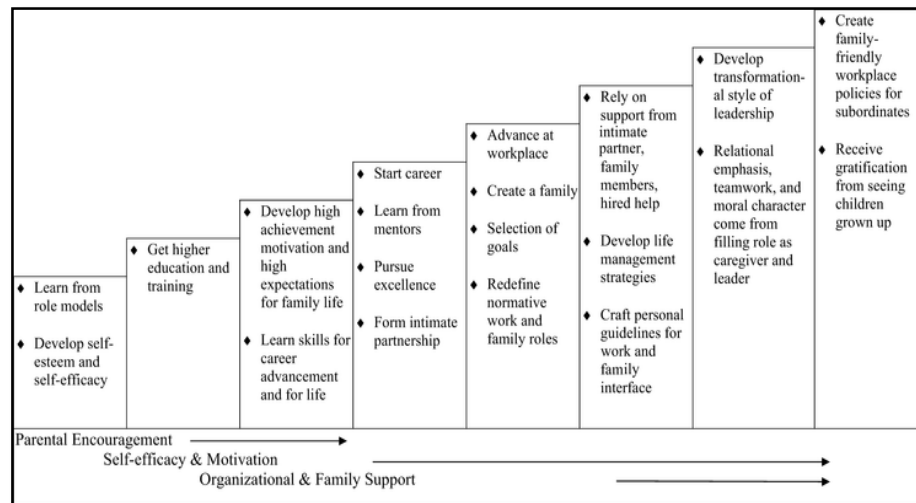
under-representation at higher organizational levels uniquely limiting their career progress (Ely, 1995; Kanter, 1977).

One of the major theorists who also attempted to propose a career development model for women and men is Astin (1984). Her model draws on empirical evidence as well as past theoretical formulations of career development. Furthermore, Astin (1984) emphasises the importance of social and environmental factors on career; therefore, her model is based on psychological factors (work motivation, expectations) as well as contextual-sociological factor (sex-role socialization, the structure of opportunity) and the interaction between them she calls a “socio-psychological” model. It is very important here to note that Astin’s (1984) model draws on Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory as explicated by Hackett and Betz (1981) focusing on a self-efficacy approach to women’s career development. Nevertheless, Astin’s (1984) model has received variable acceptance. On one hand, Poole et al. (1991) supported the importance of the socio-psychological factors mainly socialisation, and they recommended further enhancement of Astin’s model and suggested a framework to link individual development to location in historical time. On the other hand, Farmer (1985), Gilbert (1984), and Kahn (1984) pointed out the limitation of the importance of work and family roles, as well as the focus of Astin’s model on external forces as the shaper of individual’s career development.

An important model presented by Cheung and Halpern (2010) includes the multiple roles of women leaders in a complex world (see Figure 4). The model consists of steps to build self-efficacy and access to senior positions, which consider the first step towards a successful career. They based this model on the success stories of successful women from China, Hong Kong, and United States who managed to have families and successful leadership careers in academia, which is considered to be an unusual

situation in general in most countries. Even though the model is presented for the Western context, it does not mean it cannot be adapted to the Arab world although a model for the Middle East would have to incorporate differences in culture, society, and religion.

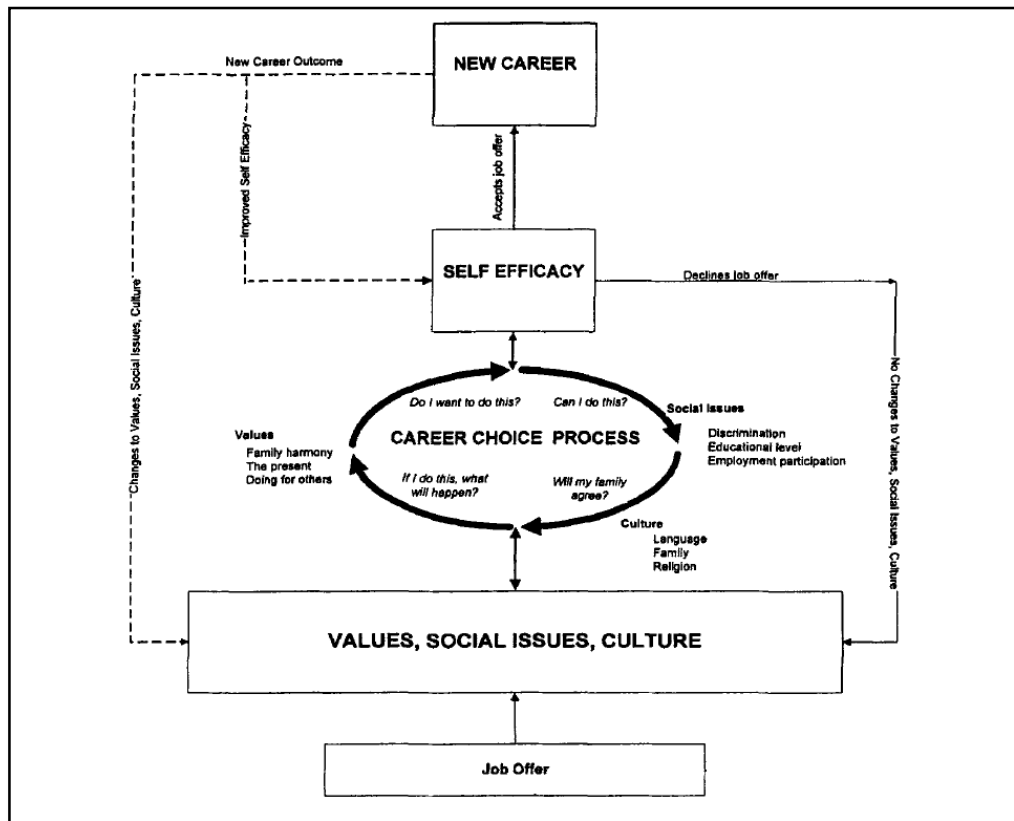
**Figure 3.1: Model of Leadership Development Incorporating Work and Family Roles From Cheung and Halpern (2010, p. 191)**



Cheung and Halpern (2010) suggest three main key stages that women can go through according to their model, which can overlap during the life and career development stages. The first is parental encouragement that mainly involves looking at parents as role models in building women’s self-efficacy. It is worth noting here that this stage draws on Bandura’s (1978) social learning theory discussed above. The second is self-efficacy and motivation which are mainly involved in starting to develop an individual career that includes create their own family, and building higher skills and strategies in career development. The final stage is organizational and family support that overlaps with the pervious stage in terms of receiving the necessary family support to go on with career development and organizational support in providing the needed backing to excel and reach higher senior positions.

Another model has been proposed by Rivera et al. (1999) for Mexican American women's career development. Even though it is directed to women minority in United States, yet; it presents a significant model that could be used to a wider range of women as it covers aspects that could apply to different cultural context.

**Figure 3.2: A Career Development Model for Mexican American Women  
From Rivera et al (1999, p. 95)**



According to Rivera et al. (1999), the model is proposed to help in filling a gap between insufficient theories and existing career development models that are based on “white mens of broad ethnic minority populations”. They emphasised that his model considers a specific factors and issues that are essentially for Mexican American women’s career that are not particularly applicable for other women with different context. Rivera et al. (1999) suggested that their model specifically note certain categories that are the

foundational components of the model and are directly influence the career development of ethnic minority women which also supported by an earlier study of Bingham and Ward (1994). These categories are value, social issues. Furthermore, the model identifies the importance role of family and individual's self-efficacy on career development.

Farmer (1985) proposed a model to understand the factors that influence an individual's career development resulting in achievement levels. She also based her model on Bandura's (1978) social learning theory to explain the three sets of interactions among the three levels: background factors (gender, race, social class, school location, age), personal psychological factors (self-esteem, values, homemaking, commitment, success attributions), and environment factors (social attitude to working women, support from teachers and parents). However, in their study, contrary to the work of Astin (1984) and Farmer (1985), Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) emphasise the need to have a distinctive model that focuses on women's issue. They point to main factors involved more strongly in the case of women, that promote a realist approach to career development including the following: individual variables of self-concept, ability, liberated sex role values: background variables of parental support, parents' education level and occupational status, work experience; educational variables of women's schooling and higher education; and adult life style variables of the timing of marriage and number of children which all will be a main focus of this thesis.

A review of women's career development literature will reveal that there are number of factors that influence women's career. As it will be discussed in further details in the following sections, it is worth mention them very briefly as presented by Knor (2005): 1) Governments policies: that play a critical role in supporting and providing gender opportunities (Schmidt and Duenas, 2002; Shapiro and Olgiati, 2002); 2) Family and

work balancing: which provide employees who have family responsibilities a balanced time through providing possible flexible timing and parental leaves (Albrecht, 2003; Collins, 1993); 3) Organizational Support: which provides a system of progress within the organization through mentoring, promotion, career goals, and potential discriminations (Culpan and Wright, 2002; Mattis, 1994; Morrison et al., 1987); 4) Mentoring and Networking: both play a critical role on the advancement of women's career in any institution through the supporting and access to experiences that both offer (Catalyst, 1990; Kanter, 1977; Mattis, 2001; Morrison et al., 1987; Tharenou, 1999). According to Nelson and Quick (1985), mentorship provide women with self-confidence. On the other hand, networking provides a connection tie with other individual for development and skills experiences (Catalyst, 1990); and 5) Self-efficacy: which will be enhance through the supporting training and development system. According to Burke (2002) and Loufti (2001), women need access to professional training programs and appropriate tailored trainings that match their needs that will positively influence their advancement in their organizations.

### **3.4 Leadership**

To start with, the concept of "leadership" could probably tracked back as early as to 500 B.C when Sun Tzu wrote his highly influential book *The Art of War*. As he offered a framework that has been up to current days used in several fields like politics, military, education, and business (Dimovski, et al 2012). Leadership has also emerged in the Middle East as it can be tracked back to the oldest extant story from Mesopotamia, "The Epic of Gilgamesh" and ancient Egyptian history where we find words referring to leadership and leaders in the Egyptian hieroglyphic language. Similarly, in the classical Greek, the word leadership comes from two Greek words, *achein* (to lead) and *prattein*

(to pass through, achieve) (Jennings, 1960). In English, the word leadership has been used for more than 1000 years with no change in its root *laedere* (people on a journey) (Bolman and Deal, 1991).

In the modern period in scholarship it was first used to refer to the political influence in Great Britain in the early part of the 19th century (Bass, 1991), although German social theory contains discussion of the concept beginning in the late 17th century. Some of the earliest scholarly analyses of leadership in Europe are that of Bowie (2000) followed by the most significant and influential author on leadership studies by Max Weber (1947) and Nikezi et al.'s (2012) Model of Transaction and Transformation Leadership Authority which is probably the most influential work that drew on classical scholarship and which in turn provided a foundation for European scholarship of leadership.

Leadership trait theories assumed that leaders were born, not made since they focused on and described the characteristics and abilities of leaders which centred primarily on men (Klenke, 1996). Behavioural leadership was started by Stogdill (in Bass, 1991) which focused on the actions and style of the leader as the important key to determining leader abilities. In 1978, Burns introduced the transactional and transforming leadership model which was influenced by the social theories that emphasise the relations between leaders and their followers. However, most of the modern leadership theories focus on teamwork and collaboration which had application to women's leadership and differences between men and women leaders in organizations (Northouse, 2003)

This brief historical background about leadership indicates that the debate, discussion, and argument about leadership is not new in the modern academic period, however, it began in modern scholarly literature in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, although many English

language authors attribute it to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Porterfield and Kleiner, 2005) in the English language literature.

Because of the quest to learn about and understand leadership, the definition of leadership has been a topic of debate and an enormous amount of research has been conducted to try to reach a definition of leadership (Burns, 1978, Northouse, 2015). According to Klenke (1996), different definitions emerged based on the perspective and standpoint of the researchers involved in term of traits, behaviours, power, politics, management, gender, etc. In 1985, Warren Bennis and Burton Nanus defined around 850 different definitions in their book titled *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*. Furthermore, Meindl et al (1985) argues that regardless of the number of researches devoted to the study of leadership, still scholars are unable to generate an understanding of leadership that both intellectually compelling and emotionally satisfying. Consequently, the concept of leadership remains mainly “elusive and enigmatic”.

The early academic theory of leadership in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was labelled the “Great Man” theory because it focused on the characteristics of the great men leader, with a few exceptions in historical studies that recognised major women leaders like Elizabeth I of the Great England and Catherine the Great of Russia. According to AAUW (2016), we can track women leaders throughout history from the pharaohs of Egypt. These leaders were recognized by analysis of historical events and were believed to have exceptional qualities (Bass, 1991; Denmark, 1993). It is clear in the literature at this period that it did not usually take into consideration women as leaders since women were relatively very few or not visible in society (Jogulu and Wood, 2006). This created a gap in the literature of leadership in relation to women, and as a result, was challenged by women authors by causing a fundamental change in social theories namely, feminist and gender theories. It was not until the 1970’s when women were

included in the sociological and psychological, and most political science studies of leadership (Bass, 1981).

On another point, Klenke (2011) argues that contextualizing leadership has been neglected in the field of leadership for long time, where the focus was mostly on leaders themselves rather than the context and followers. In her book *Women in Leadership: Contextual Dynamics and Boundaries*, Karin Klenke presented the position of women leaders in different contextual situations: history, political systems, business, information technology, media, sports, military, religion, science, and higher education. Klenke (2011) argues that “context influence what leaders must do and what they can do”. Therefore, examining women leadership from these perspective means analysing different these different contexts.

### **3.5 Women Educational Leadership**

Educational leadership, which is the scope of this study, similar to other field; is mainly created by men (e.g., Boyd, 1990; Greenfield, 1986; Hodgkinson, 1978), and is therefore predominantly defined by men, which makes it a topic of enormous debates, controversies, and arguments. It is even more complex for women leaders as they generally struggle more to prove themselves in educational leadership in comparison to men. According to Griffiths (2009), being a woman leader in the higher education context, which is relatively men-dominated, is not an easy job. Blackmore (1999) observes that “when women move into men areas, they remain clustered at the lower level, marginally represented at the middle levels and absent from the top” (p. 93). However, it is important to note that up to this point of time, the field of women in educational leadership has expanded considerably over the last twenty years as Blackmore (1999), Klenke (2011), Reynolds (2002), Samier (2015), and Shakeshaft



(1987) work present; some of whom explicitly bring a feminist perspective and others who take a humanist perspective which incorporates the rights and access of a broad range of minorities and other excluded groups.

English (2008) points out that the formal study of educational administration and leadership was started by Frederik Winslow Taylor (1856-1915), who was the first to use scientific management which is based on the concept of having one best way of doing things. However, the first appearance of women's leadership in higher education practice was in 1972 in the United States through legislation passed in Congress that prohibits gender discrimination in higher education (Klenke, 2011).

Educational leadership studies, specifically those focused on women, have expanded beyond the English-speaking countries of the US, the UK, Canada and Australia where it began, to other parts of Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East. Since this study focuses on women's educational leadership, it is important to draw attention to the current literature on the position of women in the educational leadership field, accordingly, the following section will discuss in detail the position of women's leadership in higher education in number of different countries world-wide. In one of the latest book *Women Interrupting, Disrupting, and Revolutionizing Educational Policy and Practice* edited by Newcomb and Mansfield (2014), researchers reported on the advancement of women leadership during the past 30 years beyond only gender and barriers. In that book, Grogan (2013) reported that despite that gender and gender identity as well as femininities and masculinities have been still the arguments of different studies related to women leadership in sociology, philosophy, psychology and other discipline, but not in education and particularly in educational leadership the link between gender and leadership is getting less interests than it was previously.

Several studies and books have been focusing recently on women's educational leadership especially in higher education, drawing attention to their current situations and success stories. Madsen and Longman's (2014) book *Women and Leadership in Higher Education* discusses four main areas: status of women leadership in higher education, strategies for women's leadership development in higher education, women's experiences and contributions in higher education leadership, and lessons from women presidents in higher educations. Madsen and Longman (2014) argue that there is a serious need for fresh thinking about how progress can and must be made to bring more women in to leadership is critical to the goal of moving societies and work forward in healthier ways. Another book by Eggins (2016), entitled *The Changing Role of Women in Higher education: Academic and Leadership Issues*, highlighted the women's academic educational leadership situation in several countries: China, America, South Africa, Germany, Greece, Malaysia, Italy, United Kingdom, and Switzerland. Eggins (2016) focused on several aspects related to women like networking, glass ceiling, researching, and gender equity.

### **3.6 Women's Leadership in International Higher Education**

Considering that the main drive of this study in looking for a career development trajectory for women's advancement in academic leadership in the UAE, it is essential to explore the international, Islamic, and Arab literatures to get insight into the women's circumstances as well as their success stories that can create an inspiring set of values, role models, and knowledge for younger women pursuing their careers in academia. Throughout the world, women had to fight to get access to higher education which started during the modern historical period in the late 19th century (Siemienska and Zimmer, 2007). Since then, in the 19th and 20th centuries, there is no doubt that a look

at the number of women studying and working in universities around the world will demonstrate a noticeable increase in comparison to men (Siemienska and Zimmer, 2007). Nevertheless, this increase does not present an equal percentage of women accessing senior and executive leadership positions.

This ‘glass ceiling’ creates a rich area for a large number of studies to explore and investigate the position of women in higher education worldwide, including the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, European countries, African and the Middle East and Asian countries. The term ‘glass ceiling’ has first introduced by Hymowitz and Schelhardt (1986) and used to describe “a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities [in societies] from moving up in the management hierarchy” (Morrison and Von-Glinow, 1990, p. 200). In further studies, Goodman, et al. (2003) found that women are more likely to crack the glass ceiling in organizations that have lower management positions filled with women, higher management turnover, and lower average management salary level.

Most of the studies on women leadership in higher education were directly or indirectly focused on workforce diversity, discrimination, employment, as well as gender inequities (Brenhardt et al, 1995), and very little have paid attention to glass ceiling (Jackson and O’Callaghan, 2009). It is important to understand the current situation of higher education and determine what is it that impact this phenomenon and how does it impact the work conditions and the future of higher education in relation to women leadership as well as the employment issue.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, women were denied access to American universities because of the negative social views of women’s intellectual capacity compared to men. As Rudolph (1968) explains, “her faculties were not worth training, her place was in the home, where man had assigned her a number of useful functions” (p. 308). Such a statement

presents the struggle that women went through in the last two centuries to gain access to not only hold a leadership position, but to be educated. It was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that women gained access to university education in many countries (Chliwniak, 1997).

In another study by Dugger (2001), it is found that even though the statistical data of women's enrolment and graduation rates in American's higher education institutions as recipients of higher degrees of master and PhDs outnumber the men, this relationship is not represented on the employment level where there are considerable disparities between them in term of salaries, ranking, and tenure. In a study conducted by Johns Hopkins University (2005), as an outcome of the university committee and the faculty subcommittee on the status of academic women in the university, one area of particular concern was the constant shortage of women leaders. Even in 2005, the university awarded around 49 per cent of its doctoral degrees to women who create a future pipeline of expected women leaders in the university. However, only 36 of 263 chair positions are held by women and only 17 out of 115 department heads are women.

One of the first American authors to investigate the position of women's academic leadership is Shakeshaft (1987) who addresses the need to allow those women in academic leadership to tell their own stories because it will be different from those of men's experiences. In *Women and Educational Leadership*, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) point out that exploring how women lead in the academic field will result in a deeper understanding of educational leadership. In a meta-analysis study of women in academic leadership administration by Shakeshaft and McNamara (1980), they found that the majority of women prefer to continue in their teaching career rather than moving into a leadership level due to several barriers, namely "self-lack of confidence, lack of support, family responsibilities, few role models, and lack of networking".

A collection of studies included in Mitchell's (1993) *Cracking the Wall: Women in Higher Education Administration*, by women from different academic leadership positions demonstrated that there are three main factors that present challenges to women's leadership advancing in academia. The first is structural barriers in term of organizational policies and systems that are mostly related to family leave and promotion processes. The second are social norms and socialization that produce gender stereotypes of strict expectations of what women can and should do, lack of mentoring due to the lack of senior women leaders as role models in academia resulting in women often finding difficulties in gaining access to the benefit of the mentoring system and mostly end up with men mentors. The final factor is the lack of self-efficacy which is more of a personal issue that women face in academia due to a lower level of believing in their abilities and self-confidence as result of sociocultural influences.

The literature in a number of Western countries presents many indications of a gradual increase and success of women moving into leadership levels. First, in American universities (American Council on Education, 2007), between 1860 and 1890 a few women became presidents of private women colleges, which has advanced since 2002 as women reached more than 21 per cent of the prestige high profile American universities starting with Susan Hockfield as president of The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Basinger, 2004). A recent report by Sheridan Project (2009) documents that women hold around 23 per cent of the university presidencies in US, a percentage that has not changed in the past ten years, and that less than 30 per cent of the board members on colleges and universities are women. The authors of this report argue that there is still more to be achieved in this field in order to increase the rate of women's participation in the top management level of higher education. They believe that the success women in leaders will serve as "powerful role models and mentors to younger

[aspiring] women starting out on the path to leadership” (p.6). One of the American authors who is working on exploring and investigating women’s leadership in academia is Susan Madsen through several studies and books. Two of her important studies (2007, 2008) explore the life experiences of women who hold a university president position in the US. Her methodology allowed women to share their stories and their successful moves into this position. Through this study, among others, Madsen recommends that passions of life learning and education, personal development, networking, and communications are among the most important factors in their academic leadership success.

Even though researching educational leadership has a long history in Australia, since it goes back to the 1960s in the pioneering work of Bill Walker (Eacott, 2010), it was not until the 1990s that the study of women in academic leadership gained attention with several initiatives, programs and action plans that pointed out the need for representation of women in senior roles (Lord and Preston, 2009; White et al 2015). These were implemented after the development of several regulations and policies in the early 1980s: the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act (1984) and the Equal Opportunities for Women Act (1986) along with pioneering women holding the first vice-chancellor positions in Australian universities in the late 1980s such as Di Yerbury, the first woman to be appointed as a vice-chancellor in Australian university in 1988 and Fay Gale the first woman vice-chancellor at the University of Western Australia in 1989 (Evelin, 2005). It worth noting that even though the numbers of women and men employees in staff and faculty positions in Australian higher education institutions are nearly equal, they are not similarly represented in managerial and leadership positions. In 2005, women held around 40 per cent of academic positions, of which 23 per cent were vice-chancellors according to the first Australian Vice

Chancellors Committee (AVCC) action plan for women covering the 1999-2003 period (Lord and Preston, 2009; Marchant and Wallace, 2009).

One of the pioneering women researchers in the field of women's leadership in Australia is Jill Blackmore (1999), who discussed in her book *Troubling Women*, women in academic leadership from a feminist perspective which focused mainly on organizational structure as a core challenge to women's advancement in academic leadership in schooling and higher education systems. Blackmore (1999) states "when women move into men areas, they remain clustered at the lower level, marginally represented at the middle levels and absent from the top" (p. 93). Another study by Blackmore and Sachs (2001) in eight universities in Australia found that men benefited more than women from the organizational hierarchical structure which results in more women being excluded from power positions in comparison to men. They also argue in later studies (Blackmore and Sachs, 2007) that mobility, extracurricular activities and undertaking additional responsibilities for promotion are more difficult for women than men considering their other family responsibilities that need taking care of, and as a result, most of those who were promoted into leadership positions tend to be single, or often have supportive or retired partners.

A number of authors have identified several obstacles in women's advancement into leadership levels in Australian higher education institutions: the absence of a supportive environment for women (Lord and Preston, 2009; Still, 2006), a masculine organizational culture (White, 2003), inadequate networking, mentoring, and role modelling system (Quinlan, 1999), work and family imbalances (Carrington and Pratt, 2003; Probert, 2005) and a lack of training for senior academic management roles (White et al 2015). The situation is similar in Canada, the UK and Continental European countries as the general perception in these countries is that higher leadership

positions are mostly filled by men and with far fewer women in such posts. Bloisi et al. (2003, p. 593) claim that men have the advantage of rising into senior positions and that “few women ... have been able to break the barriers for entry into the ranks of senior management and leadership”.

The feminist movement started in the late 1970s in most countries around the world. With the support of laws, policies, programmes and initiatives in various European countries, starting in the mid-1980s, few women have managed to reach high ranks in their career path compared to men in European academia (Appelt, 2004; Brooks, 1997; European Commission, 2006; Morley, 1999). Even though, according to She Figures Reports (2006), the number of women studying is higher than men, it is not significantly reflected in terms of women who pursue an academic career or even reach a higher leadership position. Siemienska and Zimmer (2007) propose number of causes for the lack of women in leadership in academia: institutional barriers that not only do not acknowledge women but also do not promote them; the cultural barriers that produce women’s reluctance in choosing academia as a career because of special requirements needed for this career from a societal perspective; and finally individual barriers in women accepting the cultural belief that they are less talented than men resulting in a lack of self-efficiency.

A study by the OECD (2009) in thirty countries around the world found that women represent around 54 per cent of all graduates, which has increased in the UK by 33 per cent since 1996. This percentage has been reflected in the number of women in academia but not rapidly. In a UNESCO (1993) study, it was found that women are strongly represented in middle managerial and leadership positions, yet the higher positions like deans and vice-chancellors or presidents lack an equal representation of women. It was not until around 1995 that a woman was appointed to a vice-



chancellorship in a traditional university in UK (Priola, 2004). According to the OECD (2007), women represent around 13 per cent of university vice-chancellors, which is the most senior role in the higher education sector.

There is a broad literature that tried to analyse and explore the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions in the UK. In an empirical study by Bagilhole (1993), she interviewed a number of academic women in British universities that allowed her to identify a number of reasons behind the lack of women in senior academic positions which she summarizes as: professional isolation in the workplace; continual challenges by men colleagues; a low supportive system; and a lack of mentoring programs and role models. Some of these reasons were also identified earlier by Kanter (1977) for women in academia finding themselves as a minority isolated in what she calls an “isolated culture,” through either implicit or explicit barriers because of the hierarchical nature of universities, results found also by Kettle (1996), Madden (2002) and Quinn (2003), the traditional male dominated models of management that pervade the institution (Hornby and Shaw, 1996), and the lack of a women role models that aspiring women can follow (Wisker, 1996).

On a positive note, in a study conducted by Walton (1997) who interviewed eleven successful women heads of colleges in several universities in the UK, she found that these women had moved into higher positions as a result of having proven leadership experiences or other spheres. Furthermore, she reported that once these women established their posts they were accepted and seen as capable leaders of their institutions. The main factors that contributed to their career are: stable families and parental influence, career preparations, encouragement from other women, job satisfaction, and some having previous governmental experience.

In Germany, the situation is similar. The German Federal Minister of Education and Research (2014), reported that women chair holders of universities in academia have increased from 8 to 19 per cent since 1995 with around 30 per cent being women in senior professorships. According to Kraiss (2002) and Loderstede (2005), the number of women decreases as they progress up to higher positions in their career. In Kraiss's (2002) study reviewing nine research institutions in Germany between June 1995 and September 1996, she interviewed women and men to identify the reasons behind women's disappearance along the academic career path, concluding that: structural characteristics of the German system makes the shaping of an academic career rather difficult to undertake; women often are excluded as academics in day-to-day academic interaction; and there is a lack of role models because of the few number of women in high academic ranks compared to their men colleagues. These results are similar to results of a study conducted by Siemienska and Zimmer (2007) of approximately one thousand German professors participating in a survey between July 2002 and January 2003.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the King of Sweden circulated a letter allowing women access to pursue their university studies (Powell et al., 2009), women constituted more than 50 per cent of students in higher education (Hogskoleverket, 2008). The number of women students increased 375 per cent from 1976 to 2002 and the number of women professors increased from 5 per cent in 1987 to 14 per cent in 2002 (Schenk, 2007). However, this number is not equally representative in terms of women in senior leadership positions in academia as women disappear along the academic career path (Blickenstaff, 2005; Schenk, 2007). The phenomenon called the "leaky pipe-line" refers to the steady struggle of women in higher education even

though the Swedish Government is providing strong support to have more women in academia (Blickenstaff, 2005; Maatta and Lyckhage, 2011).

Similar to many international higher education institutions, New Zealand has acknowledged the need to address the under-representation of women in senior leadership positions. In New Zealand, women represent around 16 per cent of the associate professor and full professor levels, and only 3 per cent in senior academic leadership (Airini et al., 2011). Sadly, this does not reflect the 26 per cent outnumbering by women student enrolment compared to men students (Airini et al., 2011). According to Ryan and Haslam (2005), this imbalanced percentage will result in higher education institution in New Zealand to continue losing women because of the absence of women role models. Airini et al. (2011) conducted a study with 26 women participants to investigate what type of assistance and hindering women face in their advancement to a senior leadership position, finding the same five factors that are similar to international trends: work relationships, university environment, invisible rules, proactivity, and personal circumstances. Another study by Neale and Ozhanli (2010), examining cross-cultural organisational barriers facing women in senior leadership at universities in New Zealand, found that organizational structures are deeply affecting the progress of women into senior positions because of the continual demanding responsibilities of being a senior manager as well as factors influencing their personal life that produce an imbalance in work and life situations as a main organisational barrier.

Similar to the rest of the world, women in Asian countries are also under-represented as academic leaders. Even though many universities in this region have made it to the ranking of the world's top universities, they still present a relatively low level of women participating as employees and in senior positions. However, it is worth noting that the

socio-cultural values in this part of the world are significantly different as they enforce the treatment of women as subordinate to men. Most of the Asian studies reveal that social norms, values, and traditions emphasises the position of women in family and society as subordinate (Lam, 2006; Lee, 2001; Luck, 1998a, Luck, 1998b).

In a study conducted by Morley (2013), as part of an ongoing research project by the British Council, a number of insights into the position of women in academic leadership in East Asia are presented. In Hong Kong, for example, even though three of the nine universities have made it the world's top 50 and achieved a slight increase in women's access to professor positions from 11 per cent to 13 per cent in 2005/2006, women still are only at a 15 per cent representation level in senior academic positions and no woman as yet is vice-chancellor. In Japan, there are three universities out of 86 public universities in the world's top 50, however, only 20 per cent of its total academic workforce is women, and women head only two universities. In China, there are also three universities in the world's top 50, however, according to Forestier (2012), even though the number of women employed in higher education institutions has grown from 35 per cent in 1997 to 46 per cent in 2009 in comparison to men, women are still not reflected equally in senior positions as women make up only 25.8 per cent of the total. Morley's (2012) study concluded with a serious finding of the reasons behind the absence of women in senior academic leadership in East Asia: the socio-cultural impact of the perspective that "women must not have authority over men". Women are also struggling with no support in moving into senior leadership positions in universities, as they are only now just entering into middle management levels. According to Morley (2012), "women are not recognised for their talents or abilities and are often forced to do lower (middle) level and high volume administrative work, while many more men assume external facing roles that have immediate career gains".

In China, there are two leadership authorities within the higher education system: academic and administrative (Cooke, 2005; Qiang et al., 2009). Even though there is an increase of Chinese women's participation in both authorities since the 1990s, women still lag behind men in both and their participation is still significantly low. In 1998, less than 30 women were university presidents in more than 1000 universities in China (Cai & Wang, 2002; Zhang, 2001). Furthermore, according to the China Education Statistics Year Book (2002) out of the 50,678 professors in the Chinese universities, only approximately 15 per cent are women. According to Cooke (2005), there are many reasons behind this absence of women in the higher education system; one is the few number of women who hold postgraduate degrees that allows them to be promoted to senior leadership positions. Women also do not work as hard as their men colleagues providing the opportunities to be moved into higher positions because of the imbalance between family and work with women focusing more on their families. These findings support two previous studies by Xu (1996) and Zhang et al. (2001). They surveyed women in their early careers in academia and found that the main hindrance in their career development was the imbalance between family and work. Cooke (2005) asserts that such differences in career development between women and men are mainly due to sociocultural expectations and biased policies in favour of men. On a positive note, it is worth pointing out that there are successful experiences of Chinese women who managed to reach senior academic leadership levels allowing for an explore of the factors behind their success. In a study by Madsen (2010) investigating the factors that support Chinese women in developing their knowledge, abilities, and competencies to success as leaders in their universities, she found that family, childhood, and adulthood have a positive influence on women throughout their lives.

Other factors like personal and professional development supported these women effectively during their progress along their career paths.

To conclude, there is substantial research that studies the position of women's academic leadership worldwide especially in Western countries and more recently in developing countries. Not surprisingly, the factors behind this women's absence in leadership positions are similar across a broad range of countries. The most common reasons are: imbalance between family and work, organisational bias policies, demanding working environment, lack of women role models, and many others. However, there are relatively acceptable numbers of women who managed to success in their academic career path progress and achieve higher leadership positions.

### **3.7 Women's Leadership in Islamic and Arabic Higher Education**

Until recently, the status and role of women's in Muslim and Arab cultures and countries was highly neglected. It was not until lately that studies involving women's leadership in Islamic and Arab countries started to address the issue. Oplatka and Hertz-Lazarowitz (2006) argue that any study of women's academic leadership that "ignore[s] important factors such as cultural difference, economic and social political divisions, race and nationality, religion and identity would not only be unrealistic but may present a distorted picture" (p. 3). Because the main context of this study is the women of the United Arab Emirates, it is important to discuss literature that focuses on women's leadership positions in Islamic and Arab countries, which share Islam as a main source of constitutions, laws and policies as well as some of the cultural and societal constructions that impact women's achievements. However, it is obvious that there are relatively few studies in comparison with other regions.

One of the most recognised researchers examining women's academic leadership from an Islamic perspective is Shah (2006). According to her, the educational leadership of women cannot be separated from religion and socio-cultural patterns. She emphasises that to discuss women's leadership, it is necessary to involve the kinds of conflicts that usually accompany their career path development that includes the societal understanding of this situation, life balancing, and self-efficiency. In a study investigating the status of women's academic leadership in Pakistan, Shah (2006) points out that because Pakistan is an Islamic country, the government of Pakistan is based on a religious ideology that guides all public and private practices. Accordingly, the government has endorsed gender mainstreaming that promotes gender equity in all public and private sectors. However, it seems that this promotion is weak. The main assumption is that women cannot be leaders at higher levels especially when followers include men due to cultural and religious factors (Khan, 1973). Accordingly, women are viewed as subordinate and are reduced to a low status with their rights to education neglected based on culture norms. Nevertheless, women's lives in Pakistan vary according to the geographical location, as a Pakistani woman can be "a highly qualified and self-confident professional or modest domesticated housewife, leading to an extremely isolated life cut off from all decisions and information" (Qureshi, 2004, p.3). A close look into data collected from the most developed regions in Pakistan, the Punjab, demonstrates that it is highly men-dominated as women hold only two assistant director positions in universities. A recent study by Shah and Shah (2012) conducted on women found that only public universities in one of Pakistan's regions with around thirty colleges, their findings emphasise the influence of socio-religious discourse, structural constraints such as segregated education system, and gendered discourse even in women's colleges.

In Indonesia, similar to other countries around the world, the percentage of women students accessing higher education is increasing faster than men at around 43 per cent in 2005 and increasing to 47 per cent in 2008 (United Nations Development Program, 2010). According to the Indonesian Directorate General of Higher Education (2009), data shows that around 72 per cent of the faculty in public and private universities are women, yet it failed to record any data on women's leadership status. In a study conducted by Murniati (2012), she reported obtained data from selected Indonesian public universities websites demonstrating that none of the universities has a women president, there are around 4 associate presidents, 5 deans, and 28 associate deans. However, according to Setiadarma (1993) there are 4 women presidents and 63 deans in private universities. Even though the Indonesian government has implemented several practices that support women's involvement in the political level, there are no laws or policies that encourage gender equity in senior leadership positions in higher education institutions (Parnohadiningrat, 2002).

In her study, Murniati (2012) interviewed eight participants who hold high academic leadership positions in public Indonesian universities to explore the success factors for these women that supported them in achieving their current positions. She found that the main factor is the importance of family support. Self-efficiency is also one of the main reasons that support these women - believing in themselves and their abilities to accomplish their goals and reach their target career paths. The study also found that the institutional policies that favour men over women in terms of the promotion system are the main challenge if not hindrance for women in the higher education system. Murniati (2012) points out the clearly important influence of the special socio-cultural values and religious beliefs about women in this part of the world as to how women pursue their career paths especially when it comes to holding a higher leadership position in



societies that favour men over women. In a previous study by Setiadarma (1993) that found the same results as Murniati (2012), she presents several factors that are needed from women who aspire to build their career in higher education decision making and leadership position, for example, formal higher degrees of education, leadership training in higher education management, and families' stability and support.

In another study in a country with almost similar socio-cultural values and religious beliefs, Omar (1993) found in her study a similar position of women's academic leadership in Malaysia as elsewhere in the world and closer in profile to Islamic Asian countries like those discussed above particularly the case of Indonesia. Omar (1993) reported that the number of women holding high academic leadership positions in higher education is still very small in comparison to men, however, women's numbers are higher and increasing in lower and middle management levels. Even though the socio-cultural and religious beliefs of the three main ethnicities in Malaysia - the Malay, Chinese, and Indian - are impacting women who are pursuing their academic leadership careers, most of the universities are working toward a higher level of involvement by women in leadership and decision-making levels. For example, the Senate of the University of Malaya has around 19 per cent of its membership being women.

The situation does not vary in the Arab world. It took women years to gain access to higher education. After World War II, Arab countries were moving into a new era of promoting equalization, economic development, and social welfare for their citizens with education being one of the main 'pearls' to achieve the targets. One of the recent studies of women's career development in academia by Afiouni (2014), examines how women academics from the Arab Middle East pursue their careers. Drawing on successful stories of Arab academic women from Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, and Oman, Afiouni's demonstrated the importance of

individual and institutional factors in shaping women's careers. The stories of the women in the study reflect "three salient institutional factors in the [Middle East] region: Islam, patriarchy, and family centrality, as well as the academic three pillars of research, teaching, and services". The study also highlights the importance of organisational factors in shaping women's careers in academia.

Three recent studies that targeted Saudi women's leadership career advancements and pointed out that even with the recent strategic directions of the Saudi Arabia's policy makers towards enhancement the role for women in public life and into top leadership positions in public sectors, yet; still there are barriers and challenges that Saudi women are still facing and need to deal with. AlAhmadi (2011), AlAsfour et al (2017), and Thompson (2015) highlighted a significant number of social and organizational structural barriers that hinder the advancement of Saudi women career. Among these barriers are limited growth opportunities, family and work balancing due to work loading, and gender discrimination in the workplace. Nevertheless, In January 2013, around thirty Saudi women leaders have been appointment to the Majlis Al Shura (Consultative Council) underlined the direction of Late King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz AlSauod of engaging the Saudi women in the national decision making process of the Kingdom (Thompson, 2015).

### **3.8 Summary**

A considerable body of literature addresses women educational leadership in Western context. An extensive search of this literature reveals a well-documented underrepresentation of women in senior educational leadership position in comparison to the number of women having access to education.

However; there is limited evidence in the body of literature when it comes to women educational leadership in Arab and Islamic context.

Reading through the body of literature highlighted several factors that have a significant direct and indirect impact on women's career development journey in academia like for example: institutional policies and regulations (Mitchel, 1993; Siemienska and Zimmer, 2007), work and personal life balancing (Cooke, 2005; Neale and Ozkanli, 2010), self-efficacy (Madsen, 2010; Mitchel, 1993), inadequate mentoring and role model systems (Bagihole, 1994; Mitchel, 1993; Quinlan, 1999), and a lack of networking (Madsen, 2007; Quinlan, 1999).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the rationale for using a qualitative approach to study Emirati women's career trajectories in higher education institutions and have a holistic understanding of their experiences. Consequently, the first section will discuss the research approach that is used which involved an exploratory case study with a social constructivist paradigm. The second section is the methodology that includes a number of subsections containing the following: site selection, participants selection and criteria of who will be chosen to participate in this study, data collection methods, instrument design, trustworthiness, researcher's role during the study to ensure that biases have been identified and bracketed, ethical considerations and the data analysis process that the researcher used (Burns and Grove, 2003; Glesne, 2011; Parahoo, 1997).

#### **4.2 Rationale for Qualitative Approach**

A research approach can be qualitative and/or quantitative, depending on the nature of the research questions and theoretical framework adopted. Qualitative research is a subjective approach which is, according to Creswell (1998), where the researcher builds "a complex, holistic picture analyses words, reports details views of informants and conduct the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further explain that qualitative research places an "emphasis on the qualities of entities and on

processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (p.8).

In contrast, quantitative research is more of an objective approach of using numerical representation, statistics, and experimental control to quantify the phenomena under investigation (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). Klenke (2008) reports that throughout the history of studying leadership, almost all studies were primarily limited to quantitative methods (except for historical studies), which were “ideal for testing hypotheses, especially with a large sample size”. Yet, she indicates that they were generally “poorly suited to help us understand the meanings leaders and followers ascribe to significant events in their lives and the success or failure of their organizations” (Klenke, 2008, p. 4). In their book *The Nature of Leadership*, Antonakis et al. (2004) emphasise that the quantitative is used “when the phenomenon under study needs to be measured, when hypotheses need to be tested, when generalizations are required to be made of the measures, and when generalizations need to be made that are beyond chance occurrences” (p.54).

Since the main aim of this study is to explore Emirati women’s personal career trajectory in academia and focus on understanding the factors that influenced their career development, qualitative research is found to be the most appropriate. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research is defined as

... an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodology traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

(p. 1)

Gall et al (1996) also defined qualitative research as the

inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational. The dominant methodology is to discover these meanings and interpretations by studying cases intensively in natural settings a subjecting the resulting data to analytical induction. (p. 17)

It is also supported by Mutch (2005) who explained that qualitative research aims at exploring “lived experiences of the participants to enhance understanding of particular phenomena” (p. 19) as it allows a rich data collection to enhance the results of uncovering the participants’ experiences and the emergence of categorises.

As described by Hittleman and Simon (2006), qualitative researchers characteristically are governed by the following research principles of practice: (1) they are concerned with the process of an interaction, rather than its outcomes; (2) study the actions and interactions of individuals that occur within their natural setting, through interviews, observations and/or document analysis; (3) collect data verbally from participants; (4) analyse the data rationally rather than statistically, for the purposes of generating further research questions and conjectures; and (5) view subjectivity as a strength of their research. Lichtman (2006) added to these characteristics that qualitative research is also: (6) holistic in its approach to focusing on the study of a situation in its entirety; (7) fluid and ever-changing since there are many traditions that inform qualitative research; (8) interactive, as the researcher plays a pivotal role in the data collection, analysis and iterative processes; and (9) in-depth, as the researcher looks deeply into a

few elements, rather than looking at the surface features of many. These characteristics combined shaped the basis of a consistent and coherent qualitative study.

Labuschagne (2003) specifies that most of the techniques in the qualitative research tradition place an emphasis on the meanings relevant to the research subjects and provide in-depth thick description of individuals and their contexts. Klenke (2008) further explains that qualitative research “seeks to capture the richness of people’s experiences in their own terms” (p.10). Merriam emphasises that qualitative research focuses on “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (2009, p.5). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) further explained that the goal of qualitative research is to “better understand human behaviours and experiences ... grasp the processes by which people construct meanings and to describe what those meanings are” (p. 38).

Because qualitative research has been proven effectiveness in several other studies addressing similar researches on women leadership in education (e.g., Bilimoria and O’Neil, 2005; Madsen, 2007; Madsen, 2010, Omair, 2010), it has been chosen to be the research approach to conduct this study. It is important to mention here, considering that this study’s research questions are mainly looking into life stories of Emirati women who successfully reached senior leadership positions in higher education through highlighting their experiences and practices, a qualitative method with the characteristics identified here was found to be the best suitable approach to use.

#### **4.3 Exploratory Case Study Approach**

Even though case study can be used for qualitative and quantitative research (Klenke, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), it has been one of the most used methods in qualitative research studies (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2009). Among the five different traditions of

qualitative research that have been described by Creswell (2013), a qualitative exploratory case study approach through a social constructivist paradigm has been chosen for this study since it best meets the study goals, the world of the research subjects, and the nature of their experiences and the meanings they attach to them.

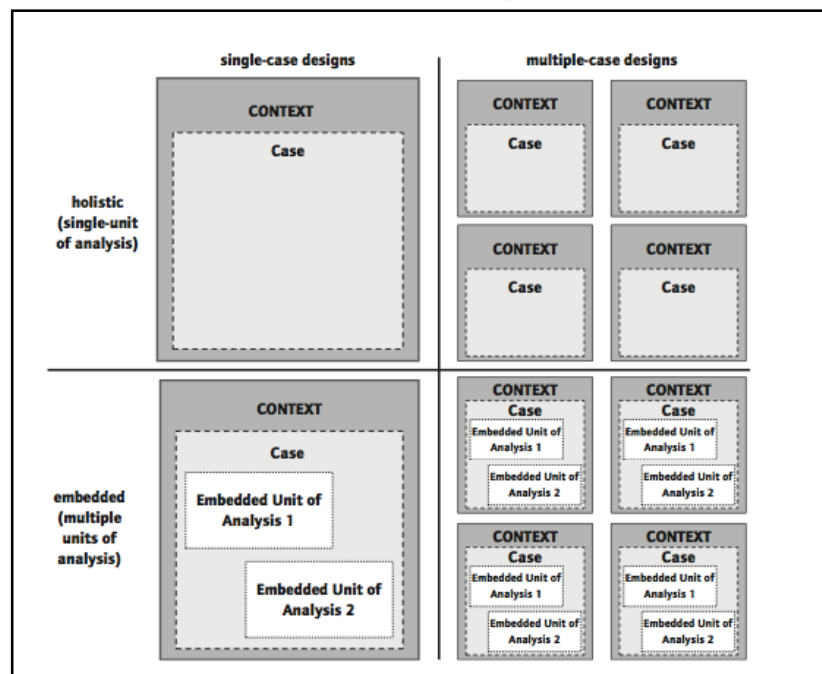
The case study approach focuses on understanding the meaning of selected phenomena from the participants' perspectives and their reactions to it through “[grasping] the meanings that constitute that action” (Schwandt, 2000). Stake (2005) argues that case study is not a methodology but rather a choice of what the researcher is studying. Others, like Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Merriam (2009), and Yin (2003), consider it a methodology or a comprehensive research strategy guiding the design and conduct of a study. Their views are also supported by Creswell (2013) who looks at it as “a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as, a product of inquiry”. According to Stake (1995), the case study approach allows researcher to get closer insight into a particular case, a position taken also by Merriam (2009) in regarding it as a “particularistic study” that focuses on a particular situation or phenomenon to reveal its importance and what it might represent. Hartly (1994) further defines a case study as a “detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of one or more organizations, or groups within organizations, with view to providing an analysis of context and processes involved in the phenomenon under investigation” (p.208).

Yin (1994) further emphasises the need to acknowledge the importance of context when studying a case study, which is also highlighted by Klenke (2008) as an important dimension of this type of method: “the [context] of the case study method is a reason for its selection as the method of choice” (p. 63). According to Yin (2003), case study approach is chosen when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why”



questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. These purposes match the goals of this study where national and organisational context are important dimensions of the research subjects' experience. Yin (2003) presented a matrix of four types of designs for case study as Figure (5) shows. According to his rationale and characteristics of each case study designs, type 2: single case study with embedded unite of analysis or mini cases is the one that is found to be suitable for this study.

**Figure 4.1: Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies**  
(From Yin, 2003, p. 40)



In this type, the general single case study presents the case of the university under investigation in this study, and the embedded mini cases' is of women's career trajectory stories. These embedded mini cases can be selected through sampling or cluster techniques (McClintock, 1985; Yin, 2003).

Yin (2003) further differentiates three types of cases studies: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Exploratory case studies are used to explore a certain phenomenon in the collected data that little has been known about it. It usually follows an open-ended style of interviewing questions to allow the participations to explain deeply their point of view. Such type of case studies usually requires a prior fieldwork on a small scale like a pilot study (McDonough and McDonough, 1997; Yin, 2003). Descriptive case studies are used to describe natural happening phenomena. It is usually used to describe the data collected as it occurs (Yin, 2003). McDonough and McDonough (1997) claim that such types of case studies mostly be in a narrative form. Explanatory case studies are mostly examining the collected data with in depth level in order to explain the phenomena under investigation (Yin, 2003). According to McDonough and McDonough (1997), such case studies result in theory forming as well as set to test that theory.

According to his differentiation, exploratory case study found to be the most suitable when there is little or no previous research on the phenomenon under investigation, which makes this type the most appropriate for this study since little research has been conducted on Emirati women's leadership in higher education.

#### **4.4 Social Constructivism**

The social constructivist paradigm selected for this study comes with the assumption idea that individuals are different, therefore studies have to be designed and conducted differently to accommodate the particularities of the research subjects and the organisation of which they are a part (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). From the social constructionist view point, career is defined as “the interaction with other as she/he moves through time and space” (Cohen et al, 2004). Young and Collin (2004) forward

a very important implication of using social constructivism into career which is the individuals and society's perspective of each other and their interactions with each other.

According to Burr (2003), social constructivism is a broadly used approach as it “draw[s] its influences from a number of disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, and linguistics, making it multidisciplinary in nature” (p. 2). It focuses on individuals' understandings of the world through developing “subjective meaning of their experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Fernando and Cohen (2011) summarized Burr's (1995) social constructivism into five main key points. First, social constructivists argue that the world we experience and the people we find ourselves to be are the product of social experience. Secondly, individuals' understandings of the world are seen as culturally and historically situated and changing across time and space. Thirdly, the construction of knowledge is seen as a negotiated process where certain interpretations are privileged, while others are eclipsed. Fourthly, knowledge and social action go together where particular versions of reality lead to particular forms of action. Finally, individuals continuously construct the social world through their actions, which then becomes the reality to which they must respond.

Burr's perspective is widely shared. Creswell (2013) emphasises that social constructivism relies heavily on social and historical constructions of how individuals understand and view things through interaction with others in the context of these norms. He further explained that constructivist researches often address the “processes” of the interaction among individuals as they focus on the specific context in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants. Similarly, Crotty (1998) argues that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in

and out of interaction between human beings and their worlds, and developed and transmitted with an essentially social context” (p. 42).

This is consistent with Schwandt (2000) who explains that social constructivists’ view knowledge as created rather than discovered through individuals’ interaction with society. Similarly, Young and Collin (2004) stress that social constructivism confers “a range of views from acknowledging how social factors shape interpretations as to how the social world is constricted by social processes and relational practices” of the individual, which means that the model of constructivism will vary across the cultural contexts that it is used in. For this study, the social factors will be a little different from many of those in Western contexts. Young and Collin (2004) further emphasise that individual constructions follow a systematic relationship with the external physical and social worlds. Because the main concern of this study is to explore the participants’ lived experiences and capture a detailed picture of their career development, social constructivism is an appropriate choice to support the achievement of this aim since it is sensitive to culture and different societal arrangements. On a further note, social constructivism has been used in the pilot study of this thesis and has introduced noticeable early results of the impact of social factors like religion, tradition, culture, and extended family on the career paths that will be investigated further in the field of higher education.

This study seeks an understanding of the participants’ views since, as Creswell (2009), notes, “individuals develop subjective meanings of their [own] experiences” (p. 8). It focuses on particular aspects of the context such as culture, religion, and the social setting that influence and shape individual lives and their work that must be identified, described and interpreted in order to understand the current situation of the subjects (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Weick (1995) argues that individuals are part of the

environment surrounding them and their actions create “the materials that become the constraints and opportunities they face” (p. 30). The advantage of using a social constructivist qualitative inquiry is its stress on the holistic approach to the phenomena under investigation and emphasises the situational context in all its complexities (Stake, 1995).

## **4.5 Data Collection**

According to Creswell (2012), there are important steps that need to be considered in the process of qualitative data collection. These steps start with identifying sites and subjects to be studied and to engage in appropriate sampling strategy that will help in exploring and understanding the phenomenon under investigation then deciding on the type of data collecting that will be follow in order to collected the needed data to answer the research questions. Among these steps, gaining access to individuals and obtaining permission as well as designing the suitable instruments are also required attention.

### **4.5.1 Site Selection**

Merriam (2009) explains that unlike other types of qualitative research approach, qualitative case studies has two level of sampling process that need to be addressed and carefully selected. First “the case” that needs to be studied has to be identified – which in this study is the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) as a case and site. Then secondly is sampling within the case itself – as who are the Emirati women in middle and higher leadership within UAEU. Stake (1995) stresses that sometimes selecting a case turns out “to be no choice at all” especially when you are to aim at investigating or evaluating a certain program or an issue. Glesne (2011), Merriam (2009), and Stake (1995) emphasise that establishing criteria to guide site and sample selection is the first

important step to be taken, then to select the case that meet those criteria. Furthermore, Merriam (2009) points out that within each case there are numerous “sites that could be visited .... events or activities that could be observed, people could be interviewed, and documents that could be read” (p. 81). Accordingly, United Arab Emirates University has been selected as the main case for this study for several reasons. Firstly, it is the first governmental university that opened in the UAE providing a quality higher education for Emirati men and women. Second, because it has the highest percentage of Emirati men and women working in different levels, which will allow a good pool for selecting participating sample for the study.

United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) was founded by virtue of the Federal Law 4 in 1976 by the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan (May his soul rest in peace) as the first higher education institution in the UAE that offers higher education to Emirati students with Arab Islamic identity and a focus on intellect, culture, and science. The University’s founding mission was “to realize the aspirations of the society, deepen social ambitions, and consolidate the structural foundations. The University is intended to act as a vital and effective organ in the structure of the Union, contributing significantly to the development of the modern country and utilizing the national resources – the people, the heritage, the values, and economic resources of the United Arab Emirates” (UAEU, 2017). In its early years, through supporting national values, policies, and strategies, UAEU has become one of the leading higher education institutions in the Gulf region with extensive contributions to responding to society’s needs of higher education, international academic development, and research trends. In the first academic year 1977-1978, after the declaration of the university, four colleges accepted approximately 500 students:

- College of Humanities and Social Sciences, known then as the College of Arts
- College of Science
- College of Education
- College of Business and Economics, known then as the College of Administrative and Political Sciences

The College of Shari'ah and Law was established in the next academic year, 1978-1979. Later in the 1980-1981 academic year, the College of Agricultural Sciences and the College of Engineering were established and was followed by the Graduate Studies, Scientific Research, and Publishing in the 1981-1982 academic year.

The university showed a massive growth in student enrolment numbers from around 500 students in 1977-1978 to around 15,000 students in the first semester of the 1996-1997 academic year in eight colleges as the first well-established higher education institution in the UAE.

UAEU currently provides a variety of world-class accredited undergraduate and graduate programmes for around 14,000 students currently and has contributed to the country's development with more than 60,000 graduates in total by 2015-2016 to serve in many sectors of the country that are part of its nation-building process. According to the UAEU 2015 Annual Report, there are 70 men and women Emirati nationals participating in the teaching assistance program that the university has in place to monitor and support the Emirati national faculty. In 2014-2015, the UAEU was ranked number 1 in the UAE, number 4 in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries, number 76 in the world as the first Arab university, and number 385 globally by *The Times Higher Education* BRICS and Emerging Economics Countries Ranking system (2015).

The UAEU (2015) webpage and 2014-2015 Annual Report (2015) present a clear set of vision, mission, values, and goals that have been adopted to guide the university's growth and development aimed at contributing to the country's development as well as the establishment of a strong and enduring scholarly and research culture that make the selection of UAEU a rich environment in which to explore the leadership roles of Emirati women:

*Vision: "Leadership and excellence in higher education and scientific research at the regional and international levels."*

*Mission: "Make a positive contribution to the advancement of United Arab Emirates by preparing graduates for future leadership, providing quality education that meets international standards, developing research solutions in areas strategic to the nation, and collaborating effectively with other organizations to promote knowledge in the society."*

*Values: "Although the Vision and Mission of the University may change over time, we are guided by a set of core principles and values:*

- 1. Respect Values, Heritage and Cultural Diversity: We respect the deep-rooted values and the rich heritage of UAE and seek to sustain them. We also respect diversity in cultures and opinions.*
- 2. Integrity and Transparency: We adhere to the highest ethical principles and pledge to work with integrity and transparency in order to achieve justice and promote institutional trust, credibility and accountability.*
- 3. Spirit of Teamwork: We support one another at work through cooperation and teamwork, and value the rewarding and creative environment that this produces.*



4. *Leadership and Life-long Learning: We foster and support innovation, initiative, excellence and striving for international best practice; we value a focus on student success, life-long learning and sharing of knowledge.*
5. *Effectiveness in Decision-making: We are committed to basing our decisions and plans on evidence and analysis, and adopting efficient systems and procedures.*
6. *Effective Communication: We are committed to effective communication, through a variety of communication methods, with all our stakeholders (staff, students, partners, vendors, and the local and international communities)."*

*Goals include the following:*

1. *Prepare graduates to be pioneers and leaders in their areas of specialization.*
2. *Develop scientific research capacity and innovation in areas of regional and national importance.*
3. *Achieve academic excellence in accordance with academic accreditation and institutional accreditation standards.*
4. *Promote the University's role in the transfer of knowledge and skills to serve the society.*
5. *Ensure that administrative services are provided with a high standard of quality, efficiency, and transparency.*

One of the UAEU successful initiatives to achieve these goals is the National Faculty Development Program that was declared in 2014 to support and increase the number of Emirati men and women faculty as well as leadership positions held by Emiratis

through mentoring teaching assistants (TA) to give them the teaching experiences along with support to get their postgraduate degrees abroad. The objectives of the National Faculty Development Program are:

1. To foster an environment of continuous improvement and development at UAE University.
2. To assist new national faculty member to attain their highest potential in teaching, research and community outreaching.
3. To provide information to chairmen and mentors to work collaboratively with the new faculty member in helping them to improve their performance, and achieve the set goals.

This programme will be the basic focus for this study as almost all the Emirati women who have been selected for this study are graduates of this programme. It also provides an environment that has continued to develop and grow providing many opportunities for Emirati women to form their professional roles and to achieve leadership positions, providing for a large number of participants that allows for an exploration of their not only common experiences but also individual factors and features in their professional lives. According to the UAEU annual report 2014-2015, the UAEU has around 152 Emirati national faculty that represents around 16 per cent of the total university's faculty.

Prior to conducting the research, approval had to be obtained from my doctoral university, the British University of Dubai's review board to conduct the study, then communication with UAE University started to allow access to the university. A proposal letter was submitted to the Vice Chancellor's Office for Academic Affairs to allow contacting and interviewing Emirati women in middle and senior leadership positions within the university. Upon approval, several phone calls and emails took

place with the administrative representative from the Vice Chancellor Office to allocate the appropriate date and timing to meet the participants selected. Among more than around twenty women, seven accepted to take part in his study.

#### **4.5.2 Participations Selection**

Based on Emirati women in middle and higher academic or administrative leadership positions, a purposeful sampling has been used in selecting the study's participants. According to Creswell (2013), this kind of sampling means that participants are selected because "they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon" (p. 156). Patton (2002) further argues "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich [participants] for study in depth. Information-rich [participants] are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (p. 230).

Moreover, many researchers (e.g., Glesne, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002;) additionally point out the different types of purposeful sampling that qualitative inquiries could use. The most appropriate type for this study is maximum variation sampling. Patton (2002) explains that, "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (p. 234). Morse (2007) emphasises that the selected sampling "must not only explicate the dimensional scope of the phenomena of interest, but also enable comprehensive description of the trajectory of the phenomena over time". Therefore, purposeful maximum variation sampling is used in this study since it selects participants with specific characteristics, in this case gender, position in the organisation, and career pattern based on certain criteria.

Sample size is equally important as sampling type. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) argue that sample size in qualitative research is mainly to extensively rich data collected about site and/or participants within the study. However, Glesne (2011) explains that for in-depth understanding, a researcher could either have a smaller sample size or could have bigger sample size for greater breadth and light understanding. Merriam (2009) also advises that “the size of the sample within the case is determined by a number of factors relevant to the study’s purpose” (p. 82). Patton (2002) recommends specifying a minimum sample size “based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon give the purposes of the study” (246). Creswell (2013) also recommends that a study of this kind should include a minimum number of participants who “should provide sufficient opportunity to identify themes of the cases as well as conduct cross-case theme analysis”. Accordingly, I have selected seven participants in this study to give an in-depth and holistic understanding of Emirati women’s trajectory to middle and senior academic and administrative leadership positions.

Accordingly, the participants selected for this study had the following characteristics:

1. The participant is an Emirati woman.
2. The participant currently holds a middle to senior leadership rank in in academia and/or administration.
3. The participant is experiencing systematic career progression that means; she started her career as a faculty and was promoted to a leadership position.

A summary demonstrated in (Table 4.1) presents a demographic overview of the seven UAE national women who participated in this study. All of them are in an age range between their thirties and late forties, and all are from different emirates and cities across the UAE. All are PhD holders except for one who holds a Master degree and is in the process of starting her PhD. All participants are currently holding middle to senior

administrative and academic leadership positions and have held them for one or two years. However, they all have between ten to seventeen years between industrial experiences and academic experiences. It is significant that all of the participants are single except for one who is married with three children.

**Table 4.1 - Participants Demographic Characteristics**

Participants' Pseudonyms	Age	Marital Status	Emirate/City of Origin	Current Position	Years in current position	Total years of experience	Highest Degree
Sara	38	Single	Al Ain	Administration	2	16	Master
Sama	37	Single	Al Ain	Chair	2	16	PhD
Samah	38	Single	Sharjah	Dean	1	11	PhD
Salwa	49	Single	Umm Al Quwain	Assistant Dean	2	17	PhD
Safa	34	Single	Abu Dhabi	Vice Dean	1	14	PhD
Samar	45	Married	Sharjah	Chair	1	15	PhD
Sana	42	Single	Al Ain	Associate Dean	7	10	PhD

#### 4.5.3 Types of Data Collecting

Yin (2003) recommends using a range of data collection methods in qualitative research to provide triangulation and richer circumstantial information: interviews, observations, a documents review, archival records, and physical artefacts. According to Merriam (2009), data conveyed through words is labelled qualitative. It is consisted of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” obtained through interviews; “details description of people’s activities. Behaviour, actions” recorded during observation, and “excerpts, quotations, or entire passages” extracted from various type of documents (Patton, 2002, p. 4).

Klenke (2008) argues that despite the number of data collection techniques, interviewing still remains the most commonly used in a case study, particularly when studying leadership. Of all data collection methods, Creswell (2013) strongly recommends four methods (Figure 6) of which a combination of two, interviewing as well as document review methods, will be used to collect data for this study.

**Figure 4.2: Compendium of Data Collection Approaches in Qualitative Research  
(From Creswell, 2013; p. 160)**

<p><b>Observations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gather fieldnotes by conducting an observation as a participant.</li><li>• Gather fieldnotes by conducting an observation as an observer.</li><li>• Gather fieldnotes by spending more time as a participant than as an observer.</li><li>• Gather fieldnotes by spending more time as an observer than as a participant.</li><li>• Gather fieldnotes first by observing as an “outsider” and then by moving into the setting and observing as an “insider.”</li></ul> <p><b>Interviews</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct an unstructured, open-ended interview and take interview notes.</li><li>• Conduct an unstructured, open-ended interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe the interview.</li><li>• Conduct a semistructured interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe the interview.</li><li>• Conduct a focus group interview, audiotape the interview, and transcribe the interview.</li><li>• Conduct different types of interviews: e-mail, face-to-face, focus group, online focus group, telephone interviews.</li></ul> <p><b>Documents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep a journal during the research study.</li><li>• Have a participant keep a journal or diary during the research study.</li><li>• Collect personal letters from participants.</li><li>• Analyze public documents (e.g., official memos, minutes, records, archival material).</li><li>• Examine autobiographies and biographies.</li><li>• Have informants take photographs or videotapes (i.e., photo elicitation).</li><li>• Conduct chart audits.</li><li>• Review medical records.</li></ul> <p><b>Audiovisual materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examine physical trace evidence (e.g., footprints in the snow).</li><li>• Videotape or film a social situation or an individual or group.</li><li>• Examine photographs or videotapes.</li><li>• Collect sounds (e.g., musical sounds, a child’s laughter, car horns honking).</li><li>• Collect e-mail or electronic messages.</li><li>• Gather phone text messages.</li><li>• Examine possessions or ritual objects.</li></ul>
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#### 4.5.4 Interviews

The credit of the first social survey relying on interviews goes to Charles Booth (1886). He embarked on a comprehensive survey of the economic and social conditions of the people of London and has been published as *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1902). Yet, interviewing could be tracked back to ancient Egyptians who conducted population censuses (Babbie, 1998). Frey and Fontana (2000) commented that both quantitative and qualitative researches tend to use the interview as the basic method of data collecting the purpose is to obtain a rich in-depth account of events or garner a simple point on a scale.

The main purpose of an interview is obtained a specific kind of information from the targeted participants. Patton (2002) explains that researchers want to find out what is “in and on someone else’s mind”:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous points in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing then is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. (pp.340-341)

Merriam (2009) further added that interviewing is necessary when researchers are not able to observe the subjects’ behaviour, feelings, or how they interpret the world around them as well as past experiences that are impossible to replicate. DeMarrais (2004) defines an individual interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant are

engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p. 55). Interviewing has been described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as centred around the participant’s life experiences in which the study is seeking to understand their personal meanings, their experiences, and the phenomena under investigation. Furthermore, they consider interviewing to be the most acceptable approach to study leadership because of the nature of interviewing in providing participants opportunities to present personal experiences in a "flexible, descriptive, interpretive and interactive way" (pp. 29-32), as they distinguish interviewing more as a purposely structured conversation. Interviewing is also supported by Van Manen (2001) for qualitative research that approaches interviews as one of the best means to explore and gather narrative information as a source to develop rich and deep understanding of human phenomena. Merriam (2009) further reinforces the use of interviewing with case study, as it is “the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals” (p. 88) as in the case of this study.

Getting a good interview is not so easy; according to Stake (1995) “each interviewee is expected to have had unique experiences, special stories to tell” (p. 65). Stake (1995) emphasises the need to have a well-designed interview protocol to seek “aggregate perceptions or knowledge over multiple participants” (Stake, 1995, p. 65).

Consequently, this study has used semi-structured in-depth interviews since the main aim of this study is to create a portrayal that best captures Emirati women’s career trajectories into senior leadership positions. In-depth interviewing will seek deep information and knowledge from the participants (Creswell, 2013; DeMarrais, 2004; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002) that usually are related to personal life matter such as “self, lived experiences, values, and decisions, occupational ideology, culture knowledge and perspectives (Johnson, 2001, p. 104). However,



Walker (2011) emphasises that semi-structured type in interviewing is the best technique to allow participants the flexibility of conveying their own experience and achieve the main purpose of this study. Merriam (2009) argues that in this type of interviewing either all or some of the questions are “flexibly worded” to give both the researcher to responds to any sudden situation on hand to gather more information and the participants to respond freely and with depth reflections.

It is also important to note that Creswell (2013), Klenke (2008), and Merriam (2009) recommend using probing questions to elicit more information and clarify the meaning of language and concepts during the conversation more than the original questions do. Furthermore, they emphasise the importance of establishing a rapport with participants prior to asking the questions through a few sentences that establish the connection between the interviewee and the interviewer. This study’s interview questions have been designed carefully to define and explore certain themes and stages in Emirati women trajectories through reflecting back to the theoretical framework, and to allow further exploration to design a model at the same time.

Each Emirati woman participant in this study went through three individual face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews, where each interview took between 60 to 120 minutes. The questions were designed to present a combination of social constructivist and early career development theories from the theoretical framework in term of factors that influence early childhood and adolescence stages along with the early educational background in the first interview as well as the second section. The second interview focused on the participants’ developing their leadership career development from early childhood, through adulthood stages into the present and to possible future developments. The third interview highlighted the impact of organization, religions, culture, and society on their career trajectories. The questions for this section are

designed to follow the career development theories from the theoretical framework to investigate factors and influences that shaped their career including challenges, barriers, and successes.

The interview has been divided into three main sections (Appendix A). Section one interviews are targeting demographic data related to early childhood, parents, siblings, family and extended family, life at school and college, and activities and experiences during that period. The second section of interviews focused on career development and the factors that influences the advancement of their career. The third section of the interviews' questions aimed to focus on organizational, cultural and society impact on participants' academic career advancement along with the women advises for aspiring women who would like to develop academic leadership career.

All the interviews were conducted in English, as all of the participants were highly qualified and were able to understand and communicate in English language fluently.

#### **4.5.5 Pilot Study**

Pilot testing is recommended by Yin (2009) in order to refine data collection and evaluate the interview's questions. Polit et al. (2001) define a pilot study as a "mini version of the full-scale study ... to pre-test of a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview schedule" (p. 467). Creswell (2012) and Merriam (2003) both emphasizes the importance of pilot testing as the key to get good data collected from interviewing. Merriam (1988) explain that researcher "will learn which questions are confusing and need rewording, which questions yield useless data, and which questions suggested by respondents that should be added to the interview's questions set" (p. 56).

Schreiber (2008) procedurally explain that a pilot study can help answer questions such as (1) how many times will interaction or contact with the participants be needed; (2) how long will these interactions take if it runs smoothly or if it does not; (3) how many interviews or observations appear to be realistic; (4) what are issues regarding ethics, anonymity, and so on of these interactions; and (5) are multiple data collectors needed and will they all need to be trained and then examined to see if they can collect the data properly.

Accordingly, an initial pilot study's questions (see Appendix B) were used with two Emirati women in a senior leadership positions prior to conducting this study's interviews with the selected participants. According to Persaud (2012), a pilot study should be "using participants who closely resemble the targeted study population" (p. 2). Consequently, one of the women was senior leader in a government public organisation and the other was in a middle leadership position in academic field in one of the public higher education institutions. It is important to highlight here that both participants were not included in the main study's selected participants.

Conducting a pilot study allowed me to improve my ability to be conversational in running interviews and be more professional in the way I approach participants as well as planning the interviewing sessions with quality use of time, gain more access to participants' experiences and information, and measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the interview's questions for the actual study (Sampson, 2004).

All recommended steps were followed in conducting the pilot study, similar to the planned for the actual interview's questions for this study. It is started with a telephone conversation with the chosen participant requesting an appointment. On the day of the interview, the full interview protocol was followed, introducing the study topic,

informing the participant that all her rights are protected and that all security provisions were being followed.

The evaluation of the pilot results was based on recommendation by Pole and Lampard (2002) which include but are not limited to:

1. Are the questions asked clearly, specifically, and unambiguous?
2. Are the questions following a logical order?
3. Are the questions providing area for different views?
4. Are any of the questions inappropriate from a cultural perspective?
5. Is the time required to answer all the questions with sufficient space for conversations appropriate?

Following the suggestions provided by the participants in the pilot study, some questions were rephrased for better understanding, some questions were removed as they were covered by other questions during the conversation, and some questions have been added as it appeared of importance and will add value to the results.

The first section of the interview was focusing on early childhood and family with initially six questions in the pilot study and has been amended to seven questions adding the following question that appeared to add a very important piece of information related to extended family members and relatives

- *Are there relatives or extended family member with leadership positions (particularly women)? Describe how did she/he influenced your childhood and contributed to the person you are now*

Another question that I needed to add more clarification sentence to explain it as it was not clear during the pilot study's interview and to certain extend created a confusion moment, and the question has been rephrased to be as following

- *Who, if any, influenced your childhood and adulthood life positively and/or negatively (role model)? Describe how did she/he contributed to the person you are now*

The second interviews' section was mainly focusing on career development, and has initially seven questions at the time of conducting the pilot study. It has been amended into nine questions and cancelation of one question that did not add valuable information and was received with awkwardness reaction from the participants. I realised that the participants were adding more information that I did not initially treated as major data. Consequently, the following question has been deleted

- *What was the final push for you in your career?*

Subsequently, the following questions has been added

- *Was there more than one career path? Was it changing significantly?*
- *When did you realize you need to move on to a leadership position in your career? What was going on in your life then?*
- *Can you describe how your parents/family contributed in to your career development path?*

The third section focused on organisational, cultural and Society support to women advancing their career in to leadership positions with eight questions initially in the pilot study and has been increased in to ten questions in the actual study. The following three questions has been removed as they did not present valid or related data to support the women's stories, rather; added a negative vibe and rejection to the women's current position in the UAE

- *What strategies have you utilized to gain acceptance in your organization especially with men? Have the strategies you used differed based on the gender of the stakeholder?*

- *Have you had difficulty getting needed resources or support to get things done in your position? If so, why? What strategies have helped you overcome these barriers to achieve desired goals?*
- *Tell me if you think gender has played any positive or negative role in your academic leadership position. If so, why? If not, why not?*

Subsequently, the following questions has been added as they appeared in the women's additional information and added more clarifications

- *How would you describe the Emirati women career development in moving to an academic leadership position?*
- *How does society perceive women's career development in to leadership positions? Tell me more about the government influence*
- *How does culture influence women career advancement into leadership positions?*
- *Can you describe the kind of organizational support that you have received in your career path to a leadership position?*
- *Did you get any support from your colleagues and/or subordinates? How?*

Another question in the pilot study that created a confusion moment, and the question has been rephrased to be as following

- *In your opinion, what are the difference between men and women in their career development in academia in the UAE?*

The final interview questions' guidance was designed after conducting the two pilot studies and taking in to consideration all the changes, amendment, and clarifications to final version that has been used for the actual interviewing sessions of this study (Appendix A).

#### **4.5.6 Document Review**

Another technique to collect data for a qualitative study as recommended by Creswell (2013), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), and Yin (2003) is a document review. In such a method, several types of documents are examined such as policy documents, related legislation, rules and regulations, publications by participants, as well as websites, press releases, and research reports which are, according to Glesne (2011), important because in order to "understand a phenomenon, you need to know its history" (p.85). According to Merriam (1998) a document review examines "objective sources of data compared to other forms ... Documentary data are particularly good sources for qualitative case studies because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated" (p. 41). Merriam (1998), also, identifies one of the advantages of using a document review being stability of information.

Accordingly, the first documents to be used for this study are from the UAE constitution and the UAE 2021 vision. Also documents about UAEU policies and regulation related to recruiting Emirati women was collected from the university webpage. Furthermore, some documents were collected from published press releases and news stories from the university webpage and newspapers. These documents will be analysed using document analysis guide (Appendix C) which has been adapted from Muhammad (2012).

First of all, articles from the UAE constitution had been looked at to highlight the government policies and regulations that are considered for all the UAE nationals and if any that are particularly directly or indirectly are targeting women. Then a close examination of the UAE vision (UAE vision 2021) was conducted to point out the government continues attention and interests toward the UAE national and especially Emirati women. Secondly, the UAEU policies and regulations was investigated to

identify if any is targeting UAE national as well as Emirati women, especially in term of recruitment, benefits, and opportunities for promoting. Also, some documents collected from the UAEU National Faculty Development Program which is targeting UAE nationals for further development that was investigated and looked closely for any indication if any related to women specifically. The last source for document review was public newspaper that published news articles related to UAE women promotion to leadership positions in higher education.

#### **4.6 Trustworthiness and Reliability**

All scholars have recognized the importance of trustworthiness and reliability when it comes to qualitative data collecting and analysing since it takes a subjective approach as it is subject to the researcher's interpretation (Creswell 2009; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Stake 1995). Creswell (2013) pointed out that he tends to use the concept validation instead of historical words like trustworthiness which is used by most of the qualitative researchers. According to Merriam (2009), trustworthiness [validation] deals with "how research finds match reality?" (p. 213), however, she refers to reliability as "the extent to which research findings can be replicated" (p. 220) and will it yield the same results. Creswell (2013) further explains that "reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good quality tape for recoding and transcribing the tape. Also, the tape needs to be transcribed to indicate the trivial but often crucial pauses and overlaps" (p. 253).

Creswell and Miller (2000) have identified eight strategies that are frequently used in qualitative researches to validate data collected and analysed: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, negative case



analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich and thick description, and external audits. Accordingly, this study used two strategies - triangulation and clarifying researcher bias - which has been recommended by Creswell (2013) since he advises using a minimum of at least two strategies to be used.

Creswell (2012) defines triangulation as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, type of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes” (p. 259), which has been introduced by Denzin (1978) in which he proposes four types of triangulation: “the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings”. Creswell (2013) further explains that “when qualitative researchers locate evidence to document a code or theme in different sources of data, they are triangulating information and providing [reliability] to their findings” (p. 251).

Accordingly, firstly within this study, I paid close attention to triangulation through using two processes: different individuals took part in this study and multiple sources of data. In this study, as explained earlier, there are seven Emirati women who took part with describing their career trajectories and through comparing their stories, an emerging pattern of findings were sought. Also, this study used multiple sources of data through reviewing collected documents from the UAE government policies and regulations, the UAE 2021 vision, and the university policies and regulations to be compared with the women career trajectories to confirm emerging findings.

Secondly, clarifying researcher bias has been also paid attention to through using personal bracketing of the researcher’s understanding, personal positioning, previous experiences, and prejudices in order to obtain the real meaning of the participants’ experiences. Creswell (2009) and Merriam (2009) stress that the researcher must understand his/her position in relation to the study and acknowledge any biases or

assumptions. Tufford and Newman (2010) explain bracketing as “a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigour of the project”. They further explain that one of the methods for bracketing is to keep a reflexive journal even before starting the research.

#### **4.7 Researcher Personal Bracketing**

Husserl (1970) defined bracketing as “setting aside of the researcher’s prior experiential knowledge in order to obtain the real meaning of the experience” (p.152). Van Manen (2001) further explained that bracketing has two approaches of researcher involvement: with the data and with analysing the findings.

My understanding as well as my personal experiences and beliefs of the world are based on different factors that contributed to the person I am today. My background, family, religion, education, culture, society, and gender have played a vital role in my personality, thinking, and perceptions of reality, as well as the position I reached in my own career. Therefore, such factors and beliefs have to be identified and acknowledged before engaging in the study to avoid any biases that might arise in developing the research findings.

When I first chose this study topic, I had strong beliefs about and understanding that family, culture, and society play an important role in forming the individual’s career trajectory. I have been raised in a very supportive family that does not differentiate between men and women education and achievements and always encouraged me to be highly educated and participate in many leading activities during my school years. I was the first in my both parents’ families to go to school and reach such a higher education level, to obtain a job, and to reach an academic leadership position that I am

currently in at one of the higher education intuitions in the UAE. Even though I faced many challenges throughout my study and career to reach the position I am currently in, they formed my understanding as part of the factors that contributed to my experiences. Furthermore, being the eldest of my siblings, I had a large leading responsibly in taking important decisions in the family from an early age, a practice that is common in Emirati culture. Helping take care of and guiding my siblings in their studies and career progress, and helping and taking care of the family's budget, as well as important decisions that would have a significant impact on the whole family. Reflecting on all of these personal experiences and these factors through using a reflexive journal, as recommended by Tufford and Newman (2010), helped me to distinguish the participants' stories from my own and ensure that I am not asking guiding questions that I had tested when I conducted the pilot study.

#### **4.8 Ethical Considerations**

According to Creswell (2008), Glesne (2006), and Lincoln (2009), there are several ethical considerations that need to be addressed during all phases of a qualitative research study.

A very important phase is at the beginning of the study, where participants should be informed of the purpose of the study, should not be pressured into signing the consent form, and respect is shown for the participants' voluntary participation and withdrawing from the study at any time (Creswell, 2009). In this study, each of the participants received a clear introduction of the main purpose of the study as well as a full explanation of the consent form (see Appendix C), and then were informed that they did not have to sign the form if they do not agree on it or did not want to participate.

The third phase is during data collecting and analysing, where participants' privacy and identity need to be respected and only disclosed if the participants give their permission to do so (Glesne, 2006). Accordingly, in this study, participants were informed that anonymity and confidentiality would be assured and that their privacy will be secured by the use of pseudonyms. Also, they have been assured that all the recorded data, interview notes, and transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet with the researcher being the only one with access to it, and all raw data and materials will be destroyed after publishing articles and book chapters.

#### **4.9 Data Analysis Process**

According to Yin (2003), data analysis “consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, [and] testing ... evidence to address the initial propositions of a study” (p.109). He further explains that analysing a case study is not easy because of all the different techniques and various tools that can be used, each case study should be treated distinctively according to its defined priorities for what to analyse and why, which also supported by Silverman (2000) and Stake (1995). From the many strategies that have been recommended by Stake (1995) and Yin (2003), this study used pattern matching and cross-case synthesis to analysis the collected data.

Pattern matching strategy used to look for similarities and differences that correspond across the seven main cases in this study through reviewing the documents and interviews' transcriptions. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) emphasize that the patterns are often known in advance from the research questions and literature reviews but sometimes they emerge unexpectedly from the analysis. They stress that patterns are used to apprehend the cases under investigation by trying to understand behaviour, issues, and contexts related to certain cases. Furthermore, they explain that this

correspondence might be expressed in the form of tables or diagrams, to show the relationships among the categories of patterns that emerge. It is important to note that Stake (1995) suggests that the possible categorizing and correspondence can be made before collecting data, which has been partly followed in this study.

The second analysing strategy was cross-case synthesis which has been advanced by Yin (2003). According to Yin (2003), it is a strategy used when the research is dealing with more than one case study as it is a strategy that “treats each individual case study as a separate study” (p.134). He further explains that similar to the pattern matching strategy, a table or a diagram can be created to display the data collected from each case according to some uniform framework. This table diagram can result in presenting similarities and differences among all the cases which will enable the researcher to draw cross-cases overall conclusions.

Because this study is a qualitative and subjective in nature, Yin (2003) argues that using cross-case synthesis strategy should result in a strong argumentative interpretation of the data analysis. He strongly suggests that the research should be well prepared for this challenge and “to know how to develop strong, plausible, and fair argument that are supported by data” (p.137). Furthermore, Creswell (2003) suggests that a detailed description of each case should be first presented to view all the aspects and facts pertaining to a case before aggregated the data into categories and patterns, which according to him will help in developing a conclusion with themes that can be compared to the existing literature, in this case that on women’s academic leadership trajectories.

#### **4.10 Summary**

This study followed a qualitative approach that focuses on understanding the factors that influenced women's career development within higher education through giving these women a chance to talk and discovering their life stories.

Through using an exploratory case study, women were able to share their voices and their success stories because it allows a deeper understanding of this phenomena from the women's perspectives and their reactions to it through discovering the meanings that constitute that action.

The social constructivist paradigm was selected for this study to overcome individuals' differentiation in term of constructing their career and it provided level of understanding the participants' experiences as well as to accommodate the particularities of the research's participants and the organisation of which they are a part.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

As discussed in Chapter One, this study is a qualitative explanatory narrative exploring the career journeys of Emirati women in middle and senior academic and administration leadership positions in the United Arab Emirates, through investigating factors that influenced their leadership career development and the strategies they employed to achieve success. The main purpose is to record the successful trajectories of a representative sample of Emirati women in a university case study who are currently in academic and administrative leadership in order to form a career development model that inspires aspiring Emirati women to a leadership position in higher education institutions in the UAE.

In this study, a combination of two data collection methods were used: interviews and public documents. The main focus is the first section of this chapter that presents the seven Emirati women stories through a narrative explanatory approach, the second section gives a picture of the data collected from public documents that are related to women situation within the UAE. The structure of their stories follows the interview guide's questions that are based on the main and sub-questions of this study to uncover the women's academic career trajectories.

#### **5.2 Participants' Stories**

Seven Emirati women have been selected to participate with their stories in this study. All of them are in middle and higher senior academic leadership positions within their university at the time of conducting this study. The women's interviews covered their childhood, adulthood, early career, and further career development stages. It also has

considered different influencers like parents, education, government, organizations, mentoring, networking, and self-development.

It is important to note here that all women have been assigned different pseudonyms names for the purpose of anonymization.

### **5.2.1 Sara's Story**

Sara is a 38 year old single woman from Al Ain city. She is the eldest among her four sisters and six brothers, all of whom have been raised by their father and mother who are both still alive. They have grown up closer to each other as family since their parents emphasized that they share things, care for each other, and support each other. She feels very lucky and appreciative having such a family as she has been spoiled by her father as she is the eldest and his first baby girl.

Sara used to take responsibility for her brothers and sisters which she refers to as something that was built into the early foundation of her current career: "I think this is one of the things that affected me to be in this position because I used to take control of too many things when I was a child and my family used to encourage me to do things by myself". Sara explains how her parents used to treat her: "they trust me a lot, listen to me, take my advice a lot and treat me as a mature person even that I was still a young teenager" which differentiated her from her sisters. She further adds, "My mother and my father depend on me when they need to go somewhere or have something to do to handle the responsibility at home when they are away". Sara emphasized that such actions from her parent impacted her self-confidence positively and that is the main reason behind becoming a confident person.

In her early years in school, Sara always scored high marks and got to be in the first three places in her class. She always tried to get her teachers' attention by being a good



student and getting high grades and became upset when they didn't pay attention to her: "It is something I have during all my school years that I always be a good student and get my teachers' attention. This is as clear in my personality since I was in school". It is important to mention that Sara's parents were not well educated and they can not read or write: "That's why I can say I helped myself and took care of my study at home". Her parents' main rule was to ensure that everything that she needed was available to support her studies and encouraged her to always get high grades. Sara explained that this was the main influence on her and her siblings to complete their studies especially her mother, "because she didn't want to complete our high school only, but also higher education". Furthermore, she stressed that her parents did not distinguish between her and her brothers based on gender, rather they always support and encouraged her especially since she is the eldest: "they tried to treat us all the same". Even more, she used to help her brothers and sisters with their studies, who looked to her as a role model and she says "they encouraged me, especially the brother who is two years younger than me. I always help him in his studies, he always looks to me that I am smart and a second mother".

Moving to the influence of role models in early childhood, Sara indicated that she had two main role models who she looked to as guides in her early childhood and who had impacted her personality. The first role model is Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the late president of the UAE and the second role model is a far family relative. Sara further explains that Sheikh Zayed had made all Emiratis proud to be from the UAE and that "we need to make him proud of us because he taught us to love UAE". The second role model is a far aunt who used to be a school principal, "even though I didn't meet her much, but I was looking for her because she was very educated as being school principal at that time was considered to be a huge achievement for Emirati women".

Sara emphasized that the main impact of these role models was influencing her to complete her studies and go further and even more “to do something different”.

When discussing challenges, Sara explained that her first challenge was after graduating with a bachelor degree. Her father did not approve a type of job that was mixed in gender, especially since she is the first women in the family to start working: “He thinks no need for work, or I can work in a school as a teacher”. Sara’s dream was to work in the same university she graduated from. It took Sara more than six months, along with her brothers and close cousins, to convince her father using reasons like “she is smart and you should let her. This is normal for ladies these days”.

Initiating her career journey, Sara started eight months after her graduation with a bachelor degree in computer engineering. She started with the simple position at a help desk in supporting departments where her job was to give service support. After three years, she was promoted to supervisor of the same department where she worked with high performance and work commitment; and within another two years, Sara was promoted to department manager and stayed in that position for six years. After that, she joined the Information Technology department as a manager for two years and promoted again to Director to the department for two years followed by another promotion to Executive Director of the whole Information Technology department. Sara continued her hard work to be promoted again to Chief Information Officer after four years. During her career journey, Sara managed to complete her master degree in engineering management, however, she admitted that it was difficult for her to complete her PhD during this period:

“I had the experience to study and work [during studying my master degree] and I found it very difficult. I felt I was under stress and I’m

person who takes things too seriously and I become stressed. So, I said enough with master and maybe I will change my mind later”.

Sara explained that during her early career journey, there were not many challenges as most of her job was only dealing with laptops and software and not much dealing with people. She also indicated that in addition to the hard work and high-quality performance, one of the most important factors to moving along her career journey was her top management support. Sara explained that, explained “I was scared to change [to the new position in the information technology department] ... but I moved with the support of my top management to be in this department to have more experiences”. It was then when Sara started to face many challenges. According to Sara:

“Some people didn’t want somebody else to come to this department and take this high position as some were already here for long time and they thought they should take this position. I asked my manager to move me back to my old position and they [rejected] my request and insisted that [I can do it]”.

Sara went back to her department with her top management vision until she got the highest position. Sara had to face many challenges and learned by herself to do her job without the support of those who she was working with or supervising her:

“I faced lots of challenges because I didn’t take things easily. I learnt because you learn more under stress and challenges. I learn that I must do it myself. Even if I don’t have support from people, I must find my way to learn. I remember I didn’t reach [this position] easily, because sometimes I have people to support me but most of the times I don’t”.

Sara further explained that she faced more challenges during her career journey to reach the current position especially when she first moved in to the current department. The first challenge was not getting any support from the team who started hiding information and papers needed to complete the daily tasks: “so I have to go myself search for information and try to get what I need from the system, which sometimes take longer time to finish the task.” However, Sara worked hard and put more effort into her job. The second challenge was difficulties with her direct line manager who was a non-Emirati and started fighting her because she was afraid that Sara would take her position (many ex-patriates are being replaced under Emiratisation): “she will send me emails at seven or eight at night with tasks that need weeks to complete and request submission the next morning. Only so I say I cannot do it and she can start blaming me”. Sara emphasised that she got support from men more than women during her career. In certain years of her career, she had Emirati and non-Emirati men as direct line managers who all supported and encouraged her to excel in her career: “I believe because the jealousy nature of women, they do not support other women”.

Sara stressed that the main factor that contributed to her strategy in facing these challenges comes from how her parents raised her and her siblings. They taught her to be independent, work hard, and always take care of herself to achieve her goals: “I remember when my brothers and I want to buy a new game, we have to save from our money until we buy it. This helped me and taught me to always try and sometimes to struggle to get things I want”.

Sara emphasised that mentoring played an essential role in her career journey. She had an American line manager in her early career stages who used to support, help, and guide her “He never took my mistakes as mistakes [rather] he always guided and encouraged to learn and continuously sent me to trainings and conference to learn new

things". She further explained that she got to learn more from the new Chancellor of the university who showed a high level of supporting and guidance to all national leaders' men and women which made him a mentor for many national leaders.

In addition, Sara indicated that networking also plays an essential role in her career journey. She explained that it is very important because you get to share knowledge and experiences especially since they always have something new in terms of knowledge and technology to convey. She also added that networking is very important in the education sector as it helps in exchanging experiences in implementing new knowledge and technologies.

However, Sara further explained that society perceives such networking differently. Some would find it inappropriate to socialize and network between men and women, especially since there are not enough Emirati women in these high managerial levels in the Information Technology field. Whereas others found it very accomplishing that Emirati woman have reached this high managerial level. Sara stressed that as long as her family is supporting and accepting of this, she ignores negative comments from society. Sara briefly emphasised the mobility inside and outside the country that is not an issue for her as she got her family's full support.

When discussing role model and influencers, Sara named late president Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, current president Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan as a main role model who she looks to and their achievements in the country. On the other hand, Sara mentioned two women figures that she looks to as role models for the enormous achievements they have accomplished. The first is Noora Al Kaabi who is the Minister of State for Federal National Council Affairs of the United Arab Emirates and Chairwoman of the Media

Zone Authority-Abu Dhabi and twofour54 (which is a government media and entertainment hub to nurture media businesses and professionals). The second women figure is HE Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid bin Sultan Al Qasimi who is the Minister of State for Tolerance and was previously the Minister of State for International Cooperation and Minister of Economic and Planning of the United Arab Emirates. Sara looks highly to both of them as they started their career from an Information Technology field similar to her and have achieved a prestigious high leadership position in the country: “I feel I want to become like them one day”.

Sara indicated that when it came to work with teams of subordinates and colleagues, most of them were very supportive and helpful when needed, except for a few people who would be very difficult to deal with. Sara explained that 50 per cent of her success as a manager is due to her team who will work hard to support her and the department: “even if I am good and I do not have my team support, I will not success”. Further, Sara reported that she would rather work with a team of mens than womens as they do not take any actions or decisions she takes as a manager personally, where womens start thinking personally which impacts their working quality sometimes. However, Sara explained that 98 per cent of her colleagues who are at the same managerial level are very supportive regardless of their nationality. Yet some womens are very tough to deal with, mostly because of competition and that they are jealous and do not want someone else to be better than them, especially since Sara has one-degree higher level than them. Sara said that she ignores such behaviours: “I try to build a good relation, but if I find it useless [to keep trying], I just ignore it and would talk officially workwise”.

Sara further explains that as an Emirati woman who is moving up the organisational hierarchy with her career, she needs to build on her knowledge, skills, and personality

to be able to excel through attending conferences, training sessions, and leadership programs. She explained, “I think in this position technical things are not very important as management and personality, because I am not doing technical tasks rather I am managing staff. I will need to get training on how to be positive, how to say no, and how to manage people”.

When she moved on to the point of discussing personal and work life balancing, Sara admitted that she does not have a balance between her personal life and work life: “I am not [spending time] with my family or myself except sometimes during weekend, and even if I go out with them I keep thinking about work twenty-four hours”. Even though Sara is very successful in her career, she is convinced that she might resign if she got married and had children: “I am a person who cannot concentrate on two things because I want everything to be perfect”. She was not very clear about what will she do if she got in to these situations and she admitted that because of her perfectionist personality she will not be focussing on balance between her family/personal life and work life.

Sara further explained that getting married is not as easy as it was earlier in her life: “When I was studying, I wanted only to study. After graduating, I wanted to work and I did not want to get married because I wanted to focus on my work. But now, work is not stopping me. However, as I become older, I won’t accept anyone because I will need someone who will accept my working conditions who also have a good level of education”. Sara explained that this could be the case of many Emirati women who noticed this very late in their age.

Sara focused attention on Emirati women’s careers in higher education and emphasised that it is not easy as they have to work very hard and differentiate themselves with what

they are doing as they are considered to be a minority compared to Emirati men. Sara explained that “higher education [institutions] are not like other [sectors] where you get automatic promotion. Here it depends on your hard work, how do you do things, and mainly your management support”. She further explained that many Emirati women quit because they might stay in the same position for ten to twelve years without promotion similar to other sectors, where they could be promoted after five to six years.

Sara pointed out that Emirati women used to face discrimination barriers of not being able to move to higher leadership positions where it was only assigned to Emirati and non-Emirati men. However, this has changed lately with new top management changes taken place and starting to give Emirati women more opportunities to hold higher and middle managerial levels within the university. Sara argued that beside the current top management support given to Emirati women, she thinks that more authority and work freedom is needed to support Emirati women in their assigned higher and middle managerial positions especially from their line managers. She further stressed that there are some line managers and supervisors who set obstacles and create difficult environments for Emirati women to stop them being innovative and creative. This contradicts the top management directives. Sara thinks that more confidence and trust should be placed in women and not to assume that they might not be able doing certain tasks just because they are women.

When discussing the advantages and disadvantages of Emirati women working in higher education institutions, Sara stressed that it is a positive advantage. She explained that in this sector there are very few women in higher and middle managerial levels; which mean it is an advantage for the university to have more Emirati women, especially since we have top management support in line with the UAE government support. Sara further added that there is no differentiation in the rules, policies, and



regulations between men and women; it is all about the support of the line managers and the effort and hard working the person will put, “regardless of men or women, it is all about how much you give to the university”. However, Sara argued that there are some managers who prefer men to do the tasks like attending some conference or traveling outside the country in a certain mission. She further explained that “even sometimes I think a woman will be better than man in some tasks”.

Sara identified very important advice for Emirati women who aspire to build their career journeys in higher education to start first with two main factors:

“Regardless of the challenges they will face, they must be patient and confident to be able to continue. Sometimes they also need to ignore because if they stop for everything, they won’t have time to work on themselves. They will need to make their work the answer to people’s doubts on them”.

Sara further added that the team is as important as these factors. They either have to build a new team who will work with the same strategy or change the current team. They need to start working on changing the team and give them time. If they don’t, they need to choose the people who they can work with:

“I think when I go to a new place, what always scares me is the team I will work with not my manager. Because I deal with the manager less than when I deal with my team. If I have the [right] team, I will succeed and my manager cannot do anything because at the end I succeed and [achieved] perfect work. But I do not have the [right] team, then here is the big challenge”.

Sara concluded that for any aspiring Emirati woman who is aiming for the highest managerial positions within higher education to start from the bottom and gradually grow instead of jumping to higher managerial positions directly: “I believe one of my success [in my career journey] that I did not jump, [rather] I started as staff then moved on the higher managerial positions”. It will help them understand everything related to the field throughout the organisations. Sara added that “she needs to develop her qualifications, not only through knowledge, training sessions, conferences, and education; but also, work related behaviours and attitude”. She also emphasised the role of family building woman’s career journey to higher managerial positions especially if she is married. Sara argued that husbands, brothers, and fathers play an essential role in supporting women in her career if they believe in her: “I noticed that some women in my team, cannot go to training and conferences because they are not allowed by their families”. Another factor that Sara found very important during building a career journey is mentoring and role models, “who really provide managerial guidance and support”. Sara further asserted the importance of having good friendship relationship support outside work who also can perform the role of mentoring.

### **5.2.2 Sama’s Story**

Sama is a 37 year old single woman from Al Ain city. She had a very normal childhood growing up with very caring and supportive parents. Her father was and is still following up on her to ensure that she is achieving in her life: “he is always, always, always behind me, pushing me for the next step, to achieve more in either my education of my professional life”.

As for the influence of role models in early childhood, Sama identified two individuals she had who she looked to as guides in her early childhood and had impacted her

personality. The first role model is her father, who continuously supports her and always is taking further steps to encourage and support her with her study. The second role model is a school teacher. Sama used to look at her as a role model and a person that she wants to be like in future: “I see her and I want to be at her place. I want to teach the nation, I want to teach students”. Sama reported that the main impact of these role models is influencing her to complete her study and go further with her professional life.

Initiating her career journey, Sama described it as fast growing since the first year of employment. She started her career in the university directly after graduation as a research assistant: “I was helping the faculty members in their research plus being responsible for delivering the general education session”. Sama followed her dream with her father’s support to complete her master degree in the same university she was working in, and after she finished it, Sama travelled to Oxford University in the UK to complete her PhD degree after five years. When she returned, she worked as a full time assistant professor, then was appointed as Assistant Dean for the Student Affairs Unit. After a year, Sama was promoted to the position of Director for Studies, and within six months, was promoted again to Head of Residential College for two years. Sama then resigned from that position and moved back to a full time assistant professor and academic chair of a department to put more effort into research.

Sama indicated that there are three factors that helped her during her career. First, her personality and character played a major role in getting her the highest leadership position she got to so far: “I think one positive aspect of me is my personality and character” especially because she was studied abroad for her PhD degree.

“Being PhD student in a foreign country for more than four years gave me a lot of skills and experiences in interacting with different cultures, people coming from different background. It opened my mind a lot, in term of what I want to bring for the UAE, what kind of things I can tailor for our community, without crossing the religion boundaries”.

Secondly, Sama explained that being an active person and always looking for challenges is another reason that helped her reach higher leadership positions:

“I like challenge and really would like to serve this country from my heart. I always try to do the best I can, otherwise I will go and ask for help from my colleagues. I will not say no for help or feel shy to ask for information either from people that have better experiences than me or go through other resources”.

Thirdly, Sama emphasized the importance of self-development; she always looked for opportunities: “whenever I see a chance for development in my career I join it. Either its related to my field of experiences or any field of leadership”.

When discussing role model and influencers, Sama emphasized that all her achievements go back to her parents who ensured to build in her the inspiration to succeed and face challenges to reach the highest possible level in her career. She always looked to her father as her first role model: “he is always, always, always behind me, pushing me for the next step to achieve more in either my education or my professional career”. Sama further explains that her father is still following her progress even after she reached her current leadership position: “he will call me daily to check on what I did”. I never keep barriers with my father and always share my daily events with him

and get his advice and support. Whenever I face any difficulties, I always go back to him “to ask what should do? How should I deal with these incidents?”

The second role model I have is my best friend. She is from Lebanon and used to be my instructor when I was still an undergraduate student in the university: “she taught me on of the courses in my last year and we became really good friends”. She encouraged me to pursue my master degree and get a job with the university and then to pursue my PhD degree: “she is the one who did the first communication with the university and supervisor abroad to get me registered”. Sama further adds, “I am very happy to have my father and my best friend who push me to be successful in my career, they are my role model as well as my guide”.

When she talked about the influence of role model in early childhood, Sama said, “When I was little child in school, I was looking to my teacher as a role model who I wanted one day to grow up to be like her in future”. She further added: “I used to play a teacher role with the family and neighbourhood children. I always saw myself as a teacher, but did not imagine that I won’t be a school teacher and will teach in a university level”.

When it came to organizational support, Sama indicated that she is grateful for being a UAE national as there is a lot of support that the UAE government is providing to its nation: “after I finished my master degree within the university I was working in, I visited the Vice Chancellor office requesting a scholarship to complete my PhD degree which he supported me”. According to Sama, “the university supported my professional development through tuition fees, accommodations, attending conferences”. Furthermore, Sama further added, “as a scientist, I am always in need of special machines for sample analysing which has been provided by the university”. Sama

asserts that “I am really grateful for my university, because without them I will not proceed with my career. It is not only the degree but also the need to update my knowledge, to learn more, and develop my skills. So, I think this is really related to the national development program within UAEU”.

Sama explained that during her career journey, there were many challenges that she faced from people around her especially those who saw her as still young in her career and achieving a number of successful stages early. Firstly, mostly only men IT specialists were around her; secondly later she was superordinate to many expats who were not used to an Emirati woman; thirdly she was sent in as a change agent when a number of Emirati women were being promoted to different leadership. According to Sama, they started to fight her through blocking her activities and distributing wrong information about her. Sama did not fight back; rather, she focused on her career and continue to ignore such people: “I would ignore and continue my path; however, others need to be confronted in a nice way because you will see them daily”. Sama reported that these challenges made it easy for her to understand people and how to deal with them: “Now I know what they are trying to say or do but I do not show it to them. I will treat them nicely but I will be very clever in dealing with them”. Sama explained that she developed this strategy of dealing with these types of people:

“When I used to be outside the college working in the Student Affairs administration, everyone showed me their true personality. So, when I returned to college, I knew X, Y, and Z, what they can do because of the way they dealt with me when I was outside the college. But now I already knew what is X’s behaviour, Y’s behaviour, and Z’s behaviour. So, I behave normally but I do not believe or trust anything they say. You know, there is a difference with dealing with people, respect,

respecting the younger before the older, respecting the janitor, before the manager. This is the base of all games”.

Sama pointed out that there used to be a large number of Emirati women joining higher education which is the same nowadays, however, they are leaving quickly “for better salaries, better jobs because in academia you do not get paid well comparing to other industries in the market and those who stay are either because they want to proceed with their academic career or they really want to interact with students and continue their research career”. However, according to Sama, others stay because it is their comfortable zone and they do not like change.

Sama claimed that there is no increase in the number of those who join the university: “yes, we can see some new faces, but we see many of those faces who disappear after a while or even they do not come back when they travel abroad as UAEU employees through TA program”. Sama acknowledged her wish to “see more proportion of women than men in UAE University”. Sama strongly recommended the plan of attracting more Emiratis, “maybe by giving them an active leadership role as we previously had a women Dean of Students Affairs and General Secretary, however, now we do not see many in key leadership positions within the university. Also, increasing salaries and giving more benefits”. Sama explained that the education sector is one of the least paid in the market which is the main reason that many Emiratis do not stay but are moving to higher paid sectors.

Sama concluded the discussion with future plans of moving to higher ranking levels within the university. Sama stressed, “I have strategy, I have a plan to higher positions like Dean, Director, and even a national Minister in relation to my field of experts”. She further explained that her aims mainly depend on “what skills you have, why do

you want to hold this high position” and what are you planning to achieve and give back to the community and the UAE.

### **5.2.3 Samah’s Story**

Samah is a 38 year old single woman from Sharjah. She is the youngest of two daughters of a single mother. Although her mother is uneducated however, she raised her two girls to value education “she did all her best for my sister and me to be as good as we can in education and insisted that we go for higher education level”.

Samah and her sister have grown up with a very caring and model mother who always followed up on their studies: “she made a friendship with all our teachers to follow up on our studies and ensure that we improve our education”. She further added “[my mother] was taking care of our education and everything of our lives, but she kept insisting that we have to go for higher education. Also, we had private tutoring who helped us in our studies which my mother prepared for us a planned schedule for each tutor”. Samah emphasised that her mother caring of and insisting on higher education could be because she did not complete her studies when she was young and that impacted her so seriously that she ensured that we will be well educated. Samah affirmed that “my mother would have been a good educated woman if she completed her study”. Samah asserted that her father was not involved in their growing up and that her mother played both roles of parents with support from her grandfather to ensure that “we really do not miss fatherhood nor we miss anything in our life”.

In her early ages in school, Samah was very focussed on her studies because her mother was very insisting on education and put a huge attention on Samah and her sister to complete their study. However, Samah explained that they did not participate in many activities because of their mother’s protective attitude towards them and insisting on



the main focus being on their studies. However, Samah explained that even though it was a short experience of participating in school activities, she learnt to be more organized, respect time, and interact with others.

When discussed the influence of role models in early childhood, Samah indicated that she had two who she looked to as a guide in her early childhood and who had impacted her personality. The first role model is her mother whom she looks to as a true leader (from her perspective at that time): “she put all her personality and character in our behaviour”. Samah explained that her mother was her early childhood inspiration for all what she has learnt in life. The second role model is a woman Dr. who is a friend of her mother. Samah indicated that “I always meet her when she visits my mother, I look to her when I was in kindergarten and would like to be like her”. However, Samah affirmed that her mother is her all-time role model even until now. Samah added that there was another woman doctor from her father’s side of the family whom she looked to especially since she was the first woman to hold a PhD degree in the family. Furthermore, Samah indicated that because of her mother, the surrounding environment was always with Emirati women who have different leadership positions in schools and in the community which gave her more encouragement to complete her studies and achieve higher education and leadership positions.

When discussing challenges, Samah identified the first very important incident of struggle in her life when her mother became divorced at an early age and had to raise Samah and her sister alone with only help from their grandfather until he passed away. This incident impacted Samah positively to take decisions and to be strong in facing any problem in life.

Samah further specified that the first challenge in her career was after graduating from high school. She explained that “as soon as you graduate from high school, you don’t know what you want because as a high school student you want to study everything”. Samah further added that her mother is from a conservative family that does not allow women to work with men for example in engineering or traveling abroad. She started studying agriculture science which she did not like much and was struggling the first year, but this was the only choice her mother gave her who “tried to help me and told me to continue and maybe I will like it”. Later, Samah asked her mother for permission to study abroad in a new distance learning university opened in Egypt, which she her mother did not approve of, but she agreed to give Samah a chance by letting her enrol.

“She gave me what I want because she knows I will come back. She paid the tuition, books, and private tutor to come in house to study and I enjoyed studying accounting. But one day I wake up and decided not to go. She said she is ok with whatever I want but not to say home. So, I decided to go back to the UAEU to study psychology and after 2 months I changed again back to agriculture where I found new friends to help me enjoy the major and advised me to pursue this as a career since it is new major and will have more opportunities and they promised to help me and support me on whatever I missed”.

After graduation, Samah’s friend told her about an opportunity of an opening for a teaching assistant in a university, which she applied for it. The teaching assistant opportunity was part of the National Faculty program that involved intensive courses in Arabic English, and Mathematics. The program also involved travel abroad to graduate schools which Samah faced a challenge with. Samah’s mother initially refused the traveling idea and did not want Samah to travel at all: “I asked for my sister and her

husband to convince my mother, until one day she accepted the idea but insisted that she will travel with me until I settle down and she feels that I am secure enough”. After finishing her master degree, Samah came back and worked for a year and got a job offer, but she decided to back to complete her PhD which she finished in 3 years.

“Then I came back to the unvisited as an assistant professor for 1 month. After that I got an offer to hold an administration position of assistant dean for students’ affair, which was very challenging since I do not have any administrative experiences. After 3 years, I got another promotion to an assistant dean which I spend in it a year, then I hold the position of vice dean for 6 years. It was even more challenging getting more and more with administrative work. In 2014, I have been promoted to the position of dean which I am currently holding”.

Samah added that she is a member of several committees in the university as well as in the community in different ministries and municipalities within the UAE.

Further in discussing her career, Samah reported that she always had a plan to reach higher positions which has been her case since she started her first job: “because life is moving, and I always work for the next promotion. My goal is to get full professorship, however, with my deanship, I do not think I get enough time to do as much research”. She further explains that “because academic professional is to be academic. administration positions will not stay for every but your academic life, it is for you and will stay for you”.

When discussing role models and influencers, other than her mother, Samah named two role models that impacted her during her university studies in the UAE and abroad. The first role model was her instructor in undergraduate studies who used to be a vice dean

and then dean until she retired. According to Samah, she was “very helpful and supporting students”. Samah had the chance to meet her and interact with her personally when starting her first job with the university. The second was a friend who used to study with Samah abroad preparing her PhD: “she was a grandmother who was doing her PhD and she was taking care of me and continually help, support, and advise me”.

Samah indicated that mentoring is very important especially for those who work in a certain careers or positions or the first time: “I learned everything by myself, it will be easier if I had a mentor because then I can learn from their experiences and thing will be very easy”. Samah further argues that

“...mentorship is very essential especially in the early career’s stages. Most of us came [back] from United States [after finishing master and PhD degrees] to the UAE which is a different environment, the way we studied there is very different than here. So, having a mentor to give guidelines would have made things easier. I wished I had a mentor that gave me advice early at the beginning of my career to focus on certain aspects. I could have promotions earlier than now”.

Samah indicated that when it came to work with subordinates’ and colleagues’ teams, most of them were very supportive and helpful when needed: “lots of colleagues around me and they are very helpful when I need something, both men and women”. Though she emphasised that problems happen, and you have to face some challenges and struggles during your career: “problems are everywhere but you have to face them. If there is not challenges, you will not succeed”. However, Samah further explained that she has faced such challenges with both men and women because “sometimes it is challenges from both. Even men are sometimes sensitive and try to create problems for

no reasons and in the other hand, some women are jealous. But if you know the key to each person, you will get over it". Samah indicated that she developed this skill of dealing with people through her earlier studies years either in the UAE or abroad.

“First of all, I lived in a hostel when I was studying in the UAEU and we there were girls from all emirates with different mentalities for four years, and then when I travelled outside I communicated with lots of communities: Chinese, Armenian, Americans, Indians, and that enriched my communication skill when dealing with others. So, I know how to deal with X, Y, Z not because I am smart, it is just because of my learnt experiences”.

Regarding networking, Samah thought that it is very important especially in an academic career as well as being easy: “As soon as you commit in any committees, you will know people. As soon as you do something for them, they will do things for you in return and that will create a culture of networking and exchanging”. Furthermore, Samah explained that it is very acceptable in Emirati community nowadays for women to network which mainly depends on the way they approach it “it always goes back to your personality, character, values, and the way you interact with others, especially men”.

When moved on to the point of discussing personal and work life balancing, Samah asserts that she maintains such a balance: “as soon as go from this door, it is me. I leave my office around 3:30pm and I go to the gym to exercise for 1 hour then I start my life with family, friends, and fathering. I am a social person and I like being around people. I never take work home unless it is very urgent. I prefer staying at work to finish than taking it home”.

Samah explained that a career in higher education is not easy especially for academics as it depends on hard work and putting more effort in since promotions are not automatic as in some other sectors: “it is hard to find a woman who is associate or professor which is very sad. In administration, it is easier, and we have lots of Emirati women in the university, but at the end it is administration not academic. I do not know why they do not promote more into senior administrative positions”. However, when we discussed barriers that might stop women from developing their leadership careers in higher education, Samah pointed out that there are no barriers: “we used to have Dr. AlShamsi who was a General Secretary which is a high leadership position within the university. It is the way you work hard to [achieve]. I do not think there are any barriers”. Furthermore, Samah pointed out that the university supports faculty traveling to attend and present in conferences within their specialisation to keep them up to date with all what is newly happen in their field, however, Samah explained that further personal and skill development is needed through training and workshops especially for administrative part which are not offered most of the time.

Discussing advantages and disadvantages of Emirati women working in higher education institutions, Samah stressed that it is an advantage since there are few Emirati women in higher education which gives those few a leading role to model for other aspiring women. Samah further added it is a huge responsibility for her being one of the first in administrative leading the path for other aspiring women: “it is scary, very scary because now I am taking the lead and I have to put a very good impact because any mistake will affect lots of women coming after me. Because I always look for perfection in my work, it is putting a lot of stress on me”.

Samah recommended a very important piece of advice for Emirati women who are aspiring to build a career in academia to first focus on research: “don’t forget your

professional academic life with administration. Administration life is important but professional academic is more important. Do as much research as you can, publishing papers will stay for you because your name will be there on all research”. The second advice is to achieve a “balance between personal and work because stress can [be] hard [on] you”.

Samah concluded that for any Emirati woman who is aiming to build an academic career to always focus on having a clear goal and put in place a strategic plan that can be followed to achieve goals. Most significantly, it is important to write these goals down and keep crossing all the achieved accomplishments to move on to the next goal. Samah further added that “she need[s] to be patient and positive, very positive” because it is a life time journey that she needs to build very carefully through completing her study, attending workshops, training, and get involved in several committees, volunteer in the community with different projects to build a good network”. Samah also emphasised the role of family in building a woman’s career journey in higher education especially if she is married. Samah argued that families play an essential role in supporting women in their career if they believe in them. Another very important factor that Samah emphasised for Emirati women is the importance of mentoring and role models in certain stages in their lives to provide guidance and support.

#### **5.2.4 Salwa’s Story**

Salwa is a 49 year old single woman from Umm Al Quwain, however, she is currently living in Al Ain city. She comes in the middle among four sisters and four brothers, who have all been raised by their parents who both are still alive. They have grown up closer to each other as family since their parents required them to share things, care for each other, support each other, and get all the education possible. She feels very lucky

and appreciates having such family, especially since her parents are from an older generation who do not read or write, yet they value education and its importance.

Salwa's parent raised her and her siblings to be closer to each other and put a lot of effort into their education:

“I am lucky that they have a high concern for education and especially my mother who knows that we will not go anywhere unless we are educated. So, they put lots of efforts on education and they found that this is the only path that we need at that time”.

Salwa explained that at that time, there were very few opportunities in government schools that were managed by the Kuwaiti government in the region before the establishment of the UAE. She emphasised how luck they were at that time compared to the older generations of their family who did not have any education opportunities especially for women. Early in the 1980's the UAE government took over the education system and started a new tracking system for science and art choice in high school which Salwa had noticed: “we were only 3 in class who choose the science track”. After finishing high school, Salwa joined the UAEU which is the only university in the UAE at that time: “I must emphasise that it's my parents' passion and investment to ensure that we have the highest education achievements and work with professions, which was the case for all of us brothers and sisters. They pushed us a lot”.

Salwa explained that she was a little bit surprised at her parents' passionate about educating them and ensuring that their children get the highest possible university degrees, considering that they did not have any examples in their life or around them to look for as an influence for their decision: “they had that strange concern for education that they do not allow us to stay home for even one day even if we are sick. Not for any



sickness you will sit at home, unless you cannot walk or move”. Furthermore, Salwa indicated that she was extra lucky to have her elder sister who used to help her with her studies: “I am lucky to have my elder sister, she was independent and helping my mother a lot, doing everything at home. She was also helping us with education”.

In her early years in school, Salwa was taken care of by her elder sisters since all sisters were going to the same school. At that time, Salwa started building her own personality and character to be more independently with the support of her elder sister and started depending on herself. Later on, Salwa started to play the same role with her younger sister through taking the responsibility of supporting them until they eventually started depending on themselves: “I remember I was with my elder sister at school and was taking care by my elder sister for 6 years, later I had to build my personality and character to be independent which I started doing from grade 7 and later, I have to switch my role to be responsible person to take care of her younger sisters”. Furthermore, Salwa indicated that she was an active student in school who used to participate in many activities such as educational camps and school activities during vacations and weekends which were fun and most importantly was the main reason for building her current character and personality. Salwa’s parents were very active in supporting and pushing her and her sisters with their study and ensuring that they always focus on their gaining their education.

Discussing influence of role model in early childhood, Salwa indicated that a role model should not be a person who demonstrated a huge achievement but rather who left an inspiration on others’ lives. Salwa mentioned that her eldest sister is her role model in life:

“She was doing everything. She was taking care of us at home, at school, and at the same time was helping my mother at home and taking care of my father work. We can say she was the manager who does everything. After she finished her school, she directly joined the university graduated as a teacher for grades 1 to 6. Because of her talents and skills with us at home, she succeeded in her job and reached the position of head school. After that when she decided to complete her higher education. She was already married with children and working at the same time. You can imagine the situation in those days and the many difficulties women were facing. So, for us she is the role model”.

Moreover, Salwa emphasised that her relative played a significant role in her life through her uncles who were working in different ministries in Abu Dhabi. She explained that they used to encourage them to work hard and focus on their studies and school to achieve: “which we did not see as inspiration at that time but later we found that they were there to protect and help us. We even realise that they helped my mother and father a lot in making us succeed”.

When discussing challenges, Salwa stated that her first one was in school being the third of only three students in her high school class studying science track. Adding to that, the other two students were expatriates, and that created another level of challenges: “I was the only local in the class and my interaction was very limited with them, as they were only focusing on education and no concerns on anything other than school and achievements in school. So, I did not have a social life with my classmates”. Salwa stressed that this had another impact on her when she joined university, and after that she faced her second challenge of starting to learn how to interact with other students.

Moving to university life, Salwa started overcoming the challenge she faced in high school. Even that at the beginning it was a bit challenging: “it was another door opened for me; I found myself in the middle of around 40 students in class from different emirates, expats and local, who came from completely different backgrounds and environments across Abu Dhabi to Fujairah”. However, Salwa started to trust herself and took the role of class leader and get back her confidence from all that she had learned in school and with her sisters. According to Salwa, being smart and talented was the power that university students used to look for in the class leader which she sees as a shift from school to university. Salwa added: “I discovered I had these powers but I needed someone to empower me and maybe I found these “resources in the university’s community”.

The second challenge that Salwa indicated was culture differences when she travelled abroad to complete her studies, as she had to cope and depend on herself in everything which has contributed to her character development as she learnt taking responsibilities of herself and others when needed. The third challenge that Salwa faced was the different decisions that have been taken in the university that do not seem to be heading in the right directions, and the challenge that she confronted in trying to voice her opinion with the correct ones. Salwa explained that it was not an easy to counter their views and she found that most of those who were involved were mostly learning by practicing: “the first time I see it as a waste of time, but later I discovered that I have to let them try since they do not believe me and when people go through the wrong direction and discover it they will get back to you”.

When discussing with Salwa family influences during her university study years, she emphasised that because of her parents she was independent by that time: “what my family imparted to me when I was young helped me a lot when I went to university

especially that I was living on a hostel away from them. They saw that their concerns and passion about education has been raised and has been shifted from them to me. Therefore, the trust that they built in me, I had to use it perfectly and built my personality and character to achieve something in my life and study". Salwa eventually achieved high grades with her university studies scoring second among her graduating cohort and the first Emirati national to be awarded by HH Sheikha Fatema Bin Mubarak the 'Mother of Emirates' award. Salwa explained how her personality and character had changed from school to university:

"I was very shy, maybe because I have not experienced my talent and I did not have the opportunity to show but at the university I was extremely empowered to the level that we sometimes imposed our ideas on the education system. We were lucky at that time to have our teachers at the university who believed that we were talented enough to negotiate and discuss certain issues with them".

Salwa further explained that her four brothers were also very supportive even though one of them had a concern about her disciplinary choice because she chose engineering, however, he did not force nor insist on changing it. Another brother was very supportive, and he even commented, "it's good that you want to do this, and do not worry because life is changing a lot especially in this young country. Within five years you will finish, and you do not know how the country will look like then, you might see it in a different phase". Salwa summarised this background of her family contributing heavily during her studies in school and university:

"They contributed first in developing my personality and character because they gave me the right and space to decide, they provided

advice but never interfere with my decisions which was a unique and challenging for me at the same time. Later, they helped me in continuing my education through helping me whenever I had difficulties [of course] beside the financial support because engineering needed lots of equipment at that time and we had to buy all of our things plus books that I needed a lot of them. Even more, both my brothers and father use to bring the equipment and engineering materials, and even laptops that have been introduced in the last couple years of my study for my friends who could not bring these things. I was lucky for having these people around me who always supported me and ensured that I had all what I need to complete my study and achieve”.

When discussing the society’s reaction to Salwa’s education especially at that time when girls were generally being not encouraged to go to school, Salwa stated that it was not an easy choice even with her parents’ support. She explained that with her discipline choice of engineering, it was even more difficult for society generally to accept a woman in such a discipline and interacting with men all the time rather than being in a discipline that was considered more appropriate for young women. According to Salwa, it was her biggest challenge as a shy and quiet girl to study and work in this field, but she insisted on completing her engineering studies especially since her parents and brothers did not force her to change it to an more accepted discipline.

Salwa started with a group of 40 students who ended up with only 20-25 graduating who had to face society’s resistance to the idea of an Emirati women doing engineering and working as an architectural engineer and being with men all day on sites: “The idea was not that easy to be communicated with society at that time, but we were a group

for students with strong character and personality and we had good communication with faculty members, managements, and decision makers. We had a powerful position to talk about our discipline, our worries, and challenges”. After graduating, Salwa went on to complete her higher degree especially since she was recognised as one of the top performing graduates. However, this time she faced family and social restrictions because she wanted to do her graduate degrees abroad in the United Kingdom or United States. She was strongly encouraged by her family to find a job and work, which she did for couple of years before joining the university back in the Teaching Assistant program which then allowed her to travel to do her master and PhD degrees. After gaining her master degree which considerably added to her experience and knowledge, Salwa returned back to the UAE to work as an instructor teaching for a year and then travelled back again to complete her PhD degree which took her around three years with the same TA program through the university.

The studying abroad experience have added to Salwa’s character and professional career through all the stages and challenges she went through: “I realised that I need to take the responsibility of everything. Defining my path, setting my targets, achieving them. This helped me not only in my career but also in my social life that I should take the responsibility of any decision, anything I am doing, and I have the right to set my own objectives and target”.

Salwa further stressed that a reason behind leaving her first public job and traveling abroad to complete her graduate degrees is that during her bachelors degree, she knew she wanted to be a university professor and teach university students: “I used to help my friends when we were studying our bachelor degree. I used to finish my projects and study quickly that why I used to have time to help my friends. I used to conduct classes and help them with their study and projects. I experienced being a teacher before

even graduating, so it is always I my mind”. After that, Salwa had several positions in both academic and administrative fields besides her teaching duties. She took care of students and alumni as Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, then as department Academic Chair which was the most challenging for her since she was assigned to accreditation. Salwa stressed that “it was challenging because someone else has set the target not me and I have to achieve it with a task that involved more than 400 students and about 30 staff with a target set by the university management”.

Salwa emphasised that the main factor that contributed to her strategy in facing these challenges comes from her mother who raised all her children to be educated. She taught her to be independent and work hard. She always pushed Salwa and her siblings in their education: “my mother is a factor for all her kids’ success”.

When discussing role model and influencers, Salwa named late president Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan as a main role model whom she looks to for his enormous support and achievements for the country. Salwa emphasised the importance of mentoring and that mentoring played an essential role in her career journey. During her study stage, Salwa had an assigned mentor who was very supportive and talented. She further asserted that “we should not ignore experienced people at all, we should always keep in mind that those who are older than us knows more than we do and those who have went through lots of challenges, have rich experiences and knowledge to learn from”. Salwa explained that despite her very independent personality, mentors are very important in her life, “even if they do not always give something solid, but at least they open for you the horizon for you to see all the possible opportunities. They do not have to feed you, but they let you know”.

In addition, Salwa emphasised the importance of networking especially in the higher education field. She explained that it is a way of communicating diverse experiences and sharing knowledge between different institutions and experts in the field as it creates another level of support. She added that she does not agree with the concept of a ‘women’s environment’ [gender separation] especially when it is related to education and work as she explained that “I believe in separation [in certain levels] but not when we are old enough to know what is wrong and what is right. Yet, networking at all level is very important and it should not be with women only”.

Moreover, Salwa explained that mobility is another factor that is important and needs a close attention. Even though she is originally from Umm Al Quwain, she managed to settle nearby the university to reduce the impact of mobility. However, she asserted that she always moved between her family’s house and hers all the time to ensure that she is giving enough time to her family and her job through balancing her personal life and work life.

Salwa specified that working with subordinates’ and colleagues’ teams were one of her good experiences as she had support from everybody with colleagues and top management who were not acting only as managers but also as mentors at the same time, especially since she was the first Emirati woman faculty member in this college.

When moving on to the point of discussing personal and work life balance, Salwa admitted that she has not yet achieved a proper balance: “I always forgot myself and this is a challenge I have, I do not focus on myself. However, I give my family enough time through dedicated weekends, vacations, and summer holidays. It is only me that I forget to take care of”. Salwa acknowledged that she forgets herself but is always happy to help others which she finds satisfying.



When discussed the society's view of Emirati working women in higher education institutions, considering that women are being in different places, traveling, networking, and communicating with men on a daily basis, Salwa clearly explained that at one time the community very conservative about women working and even especially with men; however, Salwa emphasised that "my grandmother's generation was more of open community and everyone is interacting with everyone. Now days, [the UAE] society went back to the original. The society is accepting women to work everywhere. I remember my grandmother had a shop at home selling everything [which was accepted and normal at that time]".

When discussed organisational support, Salwa emphasised that the university is progressing continuously since it is a dynamic institution and everything is moving forward, and things are always improving and changing for the better creating opportunities and greater achievements, however, the support is limited "not in terms of resources but in term of changing certain programs especially those that support national faculty members which have been established more than 20 years ago" and yet who did not change along with all the dynamic changes that taking place in the university. She further added, "this could be because of the small population of national faculty members compared to the whole academic faculty, so the impact of their arguments is very limited". Salwa additionally added that there is an urgent need to rethink the real needs of faculty members to improve and develop their careers as the institution needs to be flexible enough in the way they support faculty needs: "for example, some faculty might need financial support to buy equipment, other might need support in term of manpower to help them, and others might only need time. Faculty members are the only ones to decide what types of support they need, which is not financial all the time". However, Salwa explained that this cannot be considered an

organisational barrier, rather a matter of rethinking the way to develop this program to accommodate the different changes happening around it inside and outside the institution.

When discussing the advantages and disadvantages of Emirati women working in higher education institutions, Salwa stressed that there are not any disadvantages [from her point of view] rather many advantages. She explained that one issue will be the disconnection from non-professional life as almost everybody will be fully engaged in academic life. However, she further added that advantages will be being closely connected with the international educational market, the knowledge based economy, international academia and that one can become well known internationally. Salwa emphasised that she sees it as an overall advantage for women community locally and globally academically and personally.

Salwa further stressed that there is not any differentiation between women and men in the university as both are receiving the same opportunities, however, she emphasised a very important issue of commuting between home emirates and Al Ain, where the university is located, for most faculty: “at the end the faculty member will have to sacrifice either social life, their family, or their health and this is because they are not settled in one location. From my point of view, sometimes I feel that expats are in better shape than us because they are settled here but for us we have to leave for the weekend, leave for our families and come back.” Salwa added that to tackle this issue, government needs to consider those who are working in the university to be citizens of this city so they can settle properly and invest better rather than sacrificing at least 3-6 hours a week on the roads.

Salwa endorsed a very important piece of advice for Emirati women who aspire to build their career path in higher education institution: “I encourage all women and men to join academia because it is a good opportunity to create the change they want in the community. They need to get their highest academic degree, focus on research, and improve teaching skills by closing the gap between research and teaching. They also need to focus on training and professional development”. Furthermore, Salwa explained that they should have “high managerial skills and know how to use power and authority that has been given to them. They need to know how to be a good role model for other faculty members through good managerial skills as well as committed to good level of ethics which is very important above all”. Yet, she also explained the importance of the role of family support during this journey.

Salwa concluded that for any aspiring Emirati woman who is aiming to the highest managerial positions within higher education to start from the bottom and gradually grow through focusing on getting her higher degrees, focus on self-training and development, work on improving her teaching skills, and focus on research and publishing to position herself locally and internationally in the field of academia.

### **5.2.5 Safa’s Story**

Safa is a 34 year old single woman from Abu Dhabi. She is the second child after her elder brother among five brothers and sisters, who all have been raised by their father and mother who both are still alive, well educated, and raised their children to be independent and highly educated. Safa feels very lucky to have such parents who are supportive and caring.

Safa explained how her parents were continuously focussed on her and her siblings through implanting Islam and religious values, instructions, and concepts from early

age. They ensured that responsibilities were distributed among all of them to assume responsibilities early on and build their strong personalities. Safa further added that her parent ensured that they treated all their children equally without any discrimination between her as a woman and her men siblings.

In her early schooling, Safa spent a few years abroad because her father continually travelled to complete his graduate degrees (Master and PhD) and because of this her parents were closely attending to her studies. Safa explained that “they focused on encouraging me to study hard, especially in subjects like Mathematics, Arabic and English which opened for me huge opportunities in the job market later on”. When Safa returned to the UAE, her parents focused most importantly on the Arabic language as well as culture and traditions to ensure that Safa and her siblings are rooted in their own country despite the fact that they spent most of their childhood abroad.

When discussed the influence of role models on her career path, Safa asserted that her father is her role model and she is following his steps and guidance. She further added that “he was very independent and built himself from nothing and has developed this in me to always work on building myself professionally and academically”. Safa referred to a statement that her father always used to tell her: “if someone can do it, then you can do it”. She further added that she continuously is using it as her guide in her career path. The second role model that Safa is looking to is her mother whom she always looks to for guiding, caring, and support in terms of religion and behaviour as her mother always emphasises these aspects of her children.

Initiating her career path, Safa followed her father’s steps. She started as a lecturer at the UAEU then travelled to complete her master degree for two years and then another three years to complete her PhD degree. Safa got her father’s full support to travel since

her elder brother was also abroad at that time completing his graduate degrees. Safa further emphasised that her parents and especially her father was very supportive of his daughters' higher education, starting with Safa and insisted they all completed the highest degrees in their field. After finishing her studies, Safa moved to work for two years in the industry between different organizations in the field of Information Technology. After that, Safa returned to the UAEU as an assistant professor and got different administrative roles to reach a vice deanship following her father's steps.

Discussing challenges during her career path, Safa indicated that most of the challenges were external. The first was the absence of Emirati women to look to in terms of a leadership model, which created a mission for her to create her own style since she was the first in her field. The second challenge was when she dealt with subordinates, colleagues, and top management. Safa indicated that she had a full support from the top management who believed in her and trusted that she would pave the way for aspiring women in her field. She further added that she also received good support from her colleagues as an Emirati joining the field and most of them gave her advice and support that she needed. However, there were a few who were very sensitive and not supportive at all as they saw her as threatening to their positions because she is Emirati and they are expatriates. It was the same with subordinates, as some were very helpful and ensured that they supported her, however, a few were very insecure and did support her. Safa explained that she had one strategy to face these challenges: "I acted very professional with all of them and tried to build relationships to get them into my side and build a productive environment". She further added that the main factor that contributed to her strategy in facing these challenges came from her parents and especially her father who taught her to take full responsibility for her work, work hard, be independent, and achieve her goals.

Safa stipulated the importance of mentoring in her career path. She had an advisor who was mentoring her in graduate studies and support it her with guidance, yet she further added that later on the challenge was that there was no longer any mentoring support when she entered her working career since there was no Emirati women in her field. Safa insisted that mentoring is an essential factor to building a successful academic career path since you learn from their experiences and knowledge in shaping your own without the need to go through the same challenges and difficulties.

Safa indicated the essential role of networking in building a successful academic career through sharing knowledge, academic and administrative experiences, and the latest information in her field. On the other hand, she explained that such networking should be within the field of work especially for Emirati women like formal meetings, sessions, and conferences with clear agendas only as she does not encourage or support other types of networking [many forms of *wasta*, or gatherings] that do not have clear work-related agendas.

When moved on to discuss personal life and work balance, Safa stated that she makes sure to balance time between her academic career and her personal life at home with her family: “when I leave work, I make sure to leave anything related to work behind unless I am on a tight deadline. I always dedicate weekends to spend it with my family and for myself”. She further added that it is much easier when you are not married: “being single, it is easier to have a balance between work and personal life, but I think when I get married it will be tough. I do not think I will quit my job, but I will need to have a different strategy”.

Highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of Emirati women working in higher education and especially in academic paths, Safa indicated that the only disadvantages

from her point of view is the unnecessary networking that she sometimes does not feel comfortable with and the time required as it is a fast-moving career that needs continuous input to keep on a successful path. However, there are many advantages that are in favour of Emirati women such as there being only a few in fields like Engineering, Information Technology, and medicine which gives them the advantage of being role models for coming generations. Safa addressed the issue that society nowadays supports Emirati women compared to years ago by explaining that there is no longer any differentiation between men and women:

“The leadership of this country are strongly supporting Emirati women and ensuring that she participates in fields especially in academia. Most families, parents, and UAE community are recognizing the importance of Emirati women participation in all areas and they continuously support their daughters to achieve higher academic degrees as well as working positions”.

Though, Safa argued that higher education institutions could support more Emirati women in academic careers through promoting more nationals and especially women into decision making positions that will help in improving and developing the education system. She added that providing the facilities for children will help in minimising the high turnover rates especially for married Emirati women as well as reconsidering salaries and compensation compared to other industries which attract nationals rather than keeping them within academia. Furthermore, Safa added even though there is good support and encouragement for academic conferences, there is not enough supportive training for “soft skills” in terms of leading, budgeting, and other abilities that are necessary in many administrative responsibilities that need to be handled at the level of deanship.

Safa concluded with a recommendation for Emirati women who are aspiring to build a career path in academia: “trust yourself and your abilities, studying hard and focusing on your academic profession through publishing before thinking of moving to administrative, work hard, give your work full time needed to achieve it perfectly”. Safa also insisted on the importance of having a good mentoring system to support and guide their careers either through choosing someone or being assigned one at work.

### **5.2.6 Samar’s Story**

Samar is 45 years old from Sharjah. She said she had a very normal childhood growing up with a very supportive family who took care of ensuring that Samar and her siblings were getting a high level of education and achievements in their lives, which is something Samar is following up with her own children. Samar is married with four boys, three of whom are studying in university with one still in school.

At an early age in school, Samar was dreaming of becoming a teacher in a university which is something she worked toward during her all studying stages. She used to work very hard and focus on her studies through her parents support and who continue showing concern for her studies. Besides focusing on her studies, she used to participate in many activities in school which “added a lot to my character and personality and my way of thinking and achieving”.

When discussed the influence of a role model on her career path, Samar stated that her first role models are her parents who built her character and personality and focussed on her career. The second role model that Samar has been influenced by is her supervisor in master and PhD degree programmes who she looks to as an example that she wanted to be like in terms of research and teaching at a university level.



Initiating her career path, Samar started with no experience, so she targeted working in industry for a few years to gain an experience and knowledge of the market in public and private organisations. During that time, Samar did not forget her dream of moving to an academic career. She started by completing her master and PhD degrees abroad and when she came back to the UAE, she joined a private university. She worked there for around 10 years doing academic teaching and administrative work as an acting Dean. After that she moved to UAEU into her current chair position.

When discussing the challenges, she faced during her career path, Samar indicated that even though she got a full support from the top management, the main challenge she faced was dealing with subordinates and colleagues. She explained that she received a high level of support from many of her subordinates and colleagues, “who I always go to ask questions, clarifications, and advise about things I do not know especially at the beginning”, yet; she further added that there were few who looked at her as threats. Samar emphasised that the strategy that helped her overcome these challenges came from her strong character and personality and what she had learned from her parents.

Highlighting the importance of mentoring, Samar affirmed that it had an essential impact on her career path. Her role model during her graduate studies she looked to as an example. Her supervisor helped her plan her academic career path and guided her long the right steps to follow. Samar additionally added that “she built in me a personal ambition for academic career and guided me to the first step toward it”.

When discussing personal life and work balance, Samar explained that since she is married with children, she needed to have continuously planned balancing techniques to be able to balance her personal life at home with her family and work for her academic career. Samar divided her day into three sections: “morning at work, and

afternoon to take care of my kids and husband, and evening hours to work on research”. She further explained that “I do not take work with me home, as I ensure that my time at home is for my family and myself”.

Responding to the advantages and disadvantages of Emirati women working in higher education institutions, Samar stressed that there are no longer any barriers for Emirati women to build their career paths within higher education, as the university supports attending and presenting at local and international conferences. Samar added: “the university creates a healthy environment for research, personal developing as well as gaining experiences”. She further reported on the Emiratization policy that was introduced by the government and is followed by all public and private institutions to ensure good access for Emiratis to higher leadership positions through providing the right environment. However, Samar urged that there is still a disadvantage that might face Emirati women who would like to build an academic career path which is family responsibilities and their ability to have a successful personal life as well as successful career which goes back to having a good strategy and techniques to balance them.

Samar concluded with advice for Emirati women who are aiming to build an academic career path to “be self-motivated to complete to higher educational and career level, work hard, and ensure to have a good balance between personal life and work”. Samar also stressed the importance of focusing on research and publishing to gain an academic promotion if “an administrative career is not for you, rather it is serving your university and community. However, an academic career is what will stay for you and will path for you a recognized academic position in your field”.

### **5.2.7 Sana's Story**

Sana is a 42 year old single woman from Al Ain city. She is the middle child between three sisters and six brothers who have all been raised by their father and mother who both still alive except for Sana who has been raised by and lived with her auntie. Even though Sana has been living away from her parents because of family circumstances, they continue to support and take care of her. She feels lucky that she lived with her auntie who wasn't married as she got her full attention and care, plus her parents' support and care.

Sana further explained that due to her unusual circumstances growing up, her parents ensured that they provided a private tutor to help her with her studies in several subjects especially Arabic, English, Mathematics, and Religion which was not available at that time, even though both her parents and her auntie are not educated. They also, along with her auntie, ensured that she was provided with the right environment to study. Sana took this as her childhood's challenge to prove herself and achieve a higher level of education especially since all of her brothers and sisters only completed high school.

In her early years in school, Sana was very focussed on her studies and developing her personality and character to prove herself to her parents and auntie. She used to be a leader in her classroom and role model to her classmates and used to take part in many kinds of school activities. Sana admitted that she developed a very important skill of taking the responsibilities of completing any task assigned to her even if it was difficult. She further added, "I was lucky to have teachers at that time who used to support students with talent and work on developing their skills and encourages them to success and achieve more". Her auntie used to encourage her to read: "she gave me many different types of books most are even older than my age. I used to find difficulties

reading many words, but she used to help me and encourage me to read which developed my character, my personality, my language, and my thinking”. She stressed that her teachers’ support along with her auntie’s care helped her to develop a strong determined person who also looked forward to achieving new successes in her life.

On the topic of role models influential in early childhood, Sana reported that in her childhood there were no women role models to look to: “we used to look to other students in higher levels as role model that we want to be like them. We did not have any examples at that time. Mostly we look to teachers and parents”. However, she further added, “my auntie used to be a role model for her massive knowledge even that she did not complete her study. Because she loved reading in all field, she was very knowledgeable which was something I wanted to be”. Sana also explained that when she was in university, she started looking to public figures as role models: “even [though] Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed is a man, but he was a role model to many people and I was looking for his active motivated personality as a leader that I wanted to be”. She also mentioned other role models of Islamic figures like Omar Bin Al Khatab and Ali Bin Abe Taleb whom she admires through their life stories and looked to for examples in of leadership events. At a later stage in her career, Sana said that she looked to the Dean of her college who was also her supervisor as a role model: “he was very active person who always has plan for future projects even when is still working on one. He always uses opportunities and create great achievements out of it, very ambition and confident who I learnt from him how to be successful in my career”.

When discussing challenges in early stages of her life during her studies, Sana addressed several challenges that she faced. The first was the death of her auntie: “when my auntie died, I lost my support in live even though my parents were still alive. But she was the one who raised me and helped me to be the person I am now”. I felt like I

grew up 100 years, and that I was fully responsible [for] myself”. Sana further added that it took her time to get over this incident and get back to her normal life of depending on herself and completing her studies to get her PhD. The second challenge that Sara face was pressure from her family to get married at an early age: “They started pushing me to get married where I wanted to complete my study and get my PhD degree. They kept urging for a period then they stop talking to me about it since I got my auntie’s support.” The third challenge that Sana faced was to travel to a Western country to complete her PhD: “it was a serious issue for my family and they refused it totally. No matter how much I tried to convince them, they insisted that it is out of discussion. However, I managed to negotiate it to an Arab country which they accepted after months on a condition that my brother will travel with me until I settle down”.

Initiating her career journey, Sana started directly after she finished her bachelor degree and worked as a lecturer for a year. Because her first target was to complete her studies, Sana applied to travel to complete her graduate degrees through the National Faculty Program in the university and finished her master degree in 1998 and her PhD in 2006. She as appointed as an assistant professor upon her return to the university and then was promoted to Associate Dean of Students Affairs in 2007, which is a position she holds until now along with being a member of the university council where she was the first Emirati woman to reach this position. As part of her responsibilities within the university, Sana was heading several academic and administrative committees serving the university and students. Besides her university leadership positions, Sana is part of different society’s committees to sever different organizations and ministers. However, Sana indicated that it was not an easy journey: “I took me lots of efforts and hard working to prove myself and achieve being an Emirati woman and in a men oriented environment. But I got a good support that enabled me of reaching the leadership

position that I am currently in”. Sana stressed that many factors contributed to her strategies in facing different challenges in her life, her auntie and parents came first with all what they have added to her personality and character being dependent, hardworking, and up to her responsibilities:

“It is because of my auntie and my parents that I am very dependent on myself in everything and always make sure that I take any responsibility to the end. Even siblings are depending on me in many takes which shows how much they trust that I will be able to accomplish them. Such trust gave me confidence that I can take any responsibility and I know I will be able to complete it and motivated me to take further harder responsibilities to challenge myself and others that I am capable of achieving. Furthermore, traveling for my graduates’ degrees and attending different international conference added a level of culture acceptance of different religions, ethnics, and state of minds which allowed me to meet different people and learn different from their experiences that added to me during my career journey”.

Moving on with her career journey, Sana emphasised that besides being influenced by her auntie, her parents, and her early childhood, she has the UAE government support for all Emiratis and especially Emirati women through providing the supportive regulations, policies, and opportunities to allow them to excel and reach higher levels of leadership. Sana explained that “even [though] we have the government’s support, we also have the support of the UAE society who started looking differently to women and started to support them through encouraging them and giving them the opportunities to be promoted”. She further added that “the UAE environment is very

active and motivating, which always pushes everybody to move on and work harder and achieve more”. Sana further added that “there are still few individual[s] in the society who still do not support women and always create barriers to fail them”.

Sana emphasised the significant role of mentoring in her early ages as well as in her career journey. She indicated that her auntie was her mentor in her early years until she passed away during her graduates’ study years. Sana explained: “she was my mentor who assisted guiding me through my whole life through advises and supports”. However, later one during the developed stages of her career, “I had my supervisor and the dean of the college as my mentor who continue to support me in front of other in the university, gave me opportunities to excel, prompted me, and guided me to leadership positions within the college, university, and community”.

Additionally, Sana emphasised the importance of networking in her career journey as it has an essential role in sharing knowledge and experiences with colleagues and experts in the field, as well as creating a support system for career development. Yet, she explained that “even [though] we still have some who do not support this for women and find it unappropriated to socialize and network between women and me, but there are those in the society who started recognizing the importance of it for everybody including women in all field, especially women in higher education”. Sana stressed that it is always the family support that would help women in this through trusting, accepting, and understanding the importance of networking which help Emirati women ignore any negative reactions from the society.

Sana indicated that she had a good collaboration with her supervisors and subordinates who all were very supportive and assisted her with new tasks especially when she was promoted to a leadership position in a new environment. She further added that for any

successful job, “I ensure to work with my team, involve them, and give them credits for their achievement. It is always a team success not leader alone, because leaders lead people without making them feel that you are leading them rather part of the team”.

Moving on to discuss personal life and work balance, Sana admitted that she does not have a good balance between her personal life and work life: “I could not balance between my personal life and taking care of myself and my family and between my work-related life”. She further added that her main focus was on working and her academic life: “work is always winning and getting most of my time”. However, Sana stressed that she tries to dedicate time for her family: “I always make sure that I do not take work home for weekend which I devoted to family and myself. I also ensure that summer holidays are only for family”. Sana further explained that because work was her main target, she missed the chance to get married earlier: “when I was young in school and university, I was very focus on my study and then to get a proper job and completing my graduates’ degrees. Even [though] my family was pushing and forcing me to get married, I did not accept it and focused only on my career. Now, I am trying to make this my new target, however, it will not be as easy as it used to be when I was still young in university as I will not accept anyone”.

Sana stresses that Emirati women in academia need to put a huge amount of effort into distinguishing themselves since they are a minority in men orientated society: “even [though] Emirati women have the government support ... the men dominated environment sometimes create a hinder to women especially at the beginning of their career”. She explained that men do not face as many challenges as women in building their career: “men challenges are less than women since it is a men dominated society. Women need to distinguish themselves in many levels [family and work]”. Furthermore, Sana emphasised a very significant challenge that women face from other women:



“women also face another challenge from their colleagues’ women who are hinder each other instead of supporting each other”.

Sara explained that “it is very easy for a woman to prove herself in the UAE as she has the [support of] government through regulations and policies, but she needs to depend on herself to face other challenges and overcome them. She needs to use all possible opportunities and move on with their career”. But she also insisted that “women do not need to lose their femininity and personality as women and develop masculinity personality to prove herself. Rather to face all the challenges and prove that she can use all possible opportunities given to her by the government”.

When discussing organisational support, Sana accentuated that the most important for each organisation to have a good retention rate it needs to provide necessary support: “in academia, it is very important to have a record of research and that the first support an organization could offer: time to conduct and publish research papers”. She further added that there are other supports that academicians require: “attending conferences, training [sessions], and professional development is also another significant need that university should provide and support academicians and staff to ensure the continues development of its employees as well as a good percentage of retention”. Furthermore, Sana emphasised that academic’ salaries compared to other sectors in the UAE are considered to be very low which is something the university needs to look into and try to find a solution for in order to keep its employees from leaving.

When discussing the advantages and disadvantages of Emirati women working in higher education institutions, Sana emphasised that it is mostly advantages “as we have very few Emirati women in academia with lots of opportunities and great support from the government. Furthermore, all organizations in public and private institutions are

now directed by the UAE government to give and allow Emirati women to senior leadership positions included higher education institutions”. She also added that the UAE government stressed the importance of Emirati women involvement especially in the senior leadership positions as long as they are qualified and capable.

Sana draw attention to the fact that there is no differentiation between Emirati women and men in opportunities to reach senior academic leadership positions within higher education because of government support, however, she emphasised that it all depend on qualifications and abilities.

Sana offered a very significant piece of advice for Emirati women who aspire to build their career path in higher education:

There are different checkpoints for Emirati women to follow in order to “be able to achieve a leadership position within higher education institution through completing their graduate education, then build and develop their character, personality and skills, acquire a good networking and mentoring system, hardworking and continues self-development, involvement in the community through different committees and projects, and learn how to grab opportunities and use them for their development and success”.

Salwa concluded that for every aspiring Emirati woman who is aiming to the highest leadership positions within higher education is to gradually grow through focusing on getting her higher degrees, focus on self-training and development, work on improving her teaching skill, and focus on research and publishing to position herself locally and internationally in the field of academia.

### **5.3 Documents**

The UAE government acknowledges that women are the country's future key to prosperous and stable development and is consciously working towards this goal through strategies and policies. For example, in December 2012 the UAE Cabinet directed that all UAE organizations and government agencies must include Emirati women on their boards of directors (UAE Yearbook, 2013). Accordingly, there have been many appointments of Emirati women to leadership positions within the federal higher education institutions in the UAE. Dr Muhadditha AlHashimi, is the first Emirati woman to become a director in the federal Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), and Tarifa AlZaabi is the first Emirati woman appointed as dean for student services and success (Swan, 2013). Dr. AlHashimi has explained that "It's a misconception if people think a family life hinders people from progression" (Swan, 2013), which is a misconception that has been believed in all organizations across the UAE for a long time. Dr. AlZaabi pointed out that "women like her and Dr AlHashimi are 'paving the way' for future role models among Emirati women" (Swan, 2013). In the following year Her Excellency Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid AlQasimi, the Minister of International Cooperation and Development, was appointed the President of Zayed University as the first Emirati woman to hold such a senior leadership position in the federal higher education institutions in the UAE. These three ladies were the pioneers in the UAE movement toward empowering Emirati women in senior leadership positions in higher education institutions.

It is important to report that visiting the webpages of the three federal higher education institutions in the UAE will result in noticing a high percentage of recently appointed Emirati women in middle and senior leadership positions at both academic and administration levels. For example, in Higher Colleges of Technology, Hamsa

AlAmmari who is the director of Al Ain Women's College, Safia AlRaqabi who is the director of Fujairah Women's College, Dr Tarifa AlZaabi who has been promoted to director of Dubai Women's College, Dr. Ayesha Abdullah who is the Executive Dean of the Business Division, Khulood AlMualla who holds the position of Deputy Vice Chancellor for Administration, and number of chairs and managers across different colleges and administrative departments (HCT, 2017). More examples are in United Arab Emirates University like Dr. Shamma AlFalasi and Dr. Asma AlMenhali who both are members of the University Council, Dr. Aisha Abushelaibi who is a Vice Dean of College of Food and Agriculture, Dr. Asma AlMenhali who is a Vice Dean of College of Science beside her position as a University Council member, and number of chairs and heads across different colleges and administrative departments (UAEU, 2017). More examples are in Zayed University like Maytha AlAli who is Director of Strategy and Future Department, Fatima AlDarmaki who is assistant Provost for Student Affairs, Shamsa AlTaie and Fathiya AlKhamiri who both are Directors of Students Affairs, Nadia AlKabanji who is Director of Information Technology Department, and Hessa AlMarzooqi who is Director of Human Capital Department (ZU, 2017).

These changes reflect the soundness of the latest approach of the UAE government toward empowering Emirati women as part of the UAE national vision especially in the higher education institutions. Even that there is not enough attention to Emirati women in literature especially in relation to their career development, yet; it is worth mentioning that Emirati women are becoming a focus of number of research although it is not a huge amount yet.

The Dubai Women's Establishment (2013) presented an important report that identified possible policy barriers if any that would restrict women from progressing to senior

executive levels in both sectors public and private with sixteen women in top managerial positions, twelve of them are Emirati women. The women came up with four set of recommendation for government, employers, women, and men that reports as following:

***For Government***

- *Introduce a quota for gender diversity; start with public sector boards, influence the private sector of need to change. Of the 13 women who discussed this, four supported a quota, six would possibly support some intervention, but three women were against it.*
- *Limit the number of board directorships that one person can hold, and time-limit seats.*
- *Allow foreigners to be NEDs of Emirati businesses to take advantage of diversity.*
- *Require all new directors to take a corporate governance programme.*
- *Mandate transparency of board membership.*
- *Set up mechanisms to build and develop a pipeline of potential women directors.*
- *Promote a list of qualified candidates to those appointing directors.*
- *Privatise more public-sector organisations to improve governance, which would thereby create more director seats.*
- *Continue to improve UAE education to best international standards.*
- *Encourage more Emiratis to go into private*
- *sector careers.*
- *Improve official maternity leave, give women a right to return to their posts within 12 months, and rights to flexible working for mothers of young children.*

### ***For Employers***

- *Set up talent management structures for women and men.*
- *Increase training opportunities for women; set up formal mentoring schemes.*
- *Train middle managers to stop stereotyping roles and genders, to remove blockage.*
- *Provide confidential career counselling.*

### ***For Employers***

- *At work, stop stereotyping women and job roles, understand the lack of fairness in current systems, and stop excluding women in the workgroup.*
- *As fathers, bring up daughters and sons equally, send both overseas for postgraduate education.*
- *In family businesses, let daughters as well as sons get experience in the firm, without special treatment, so that they would be fully knowledgeable about the business.*
- *As husbands, provide more support at home; have a better understanding of women's need to travel and work long hours, and women's needs for career fulfilment.*

### ***For Women***

- *Throughout career, understand themselves and their goals; choose a career that they have passion for; work very hard ("don't be average!"); balance their career and their culture, and treat others with respect.*
- *For young women: choose studies that lead to a good career, continue with lifelong learning, have strong self-belief and don't take no for an answer.*
- *For mid-career women: build up expertise and profile, taking care about the first impressions that they make. They should develop good teams, develop*

*political skills, find a good mentor, continue networking, and keep an eye on the strategic perspective of their careers.*

- *For women at the top: sit on a smaller board to gain experience; leave a legacy of their leadership, and help other women.*
- *For women as mothers: bring up daughters and sons equally, and protect their family time when they are working.*

### **5.3 Summary**

This chapter presented the detailed stories of the seven Emirati women who participated in this study. They shared their life experiences, thoughts, feeling, memories, and opinions of what they have gone through and lessons that they learned over their lives from early childhood, through teenager years, to adulthood, and further to their leadership positions within higher education institution.

All women tend to focus on their families' support, especially their mothers through giving different examples of what mothers have been doing. Even in some cases fathers figure will appear as an encouragement influencer, yet the women kept going back to the role of their mothers in their lives. It is very important to point out here that in several stories extended family member influences appeared very clearly through uncles and aunties and their significant roles on the women's upbringing and some of their life main decisions, which is considered to be very normal practice in this part of the world. The women also spoke very highly of the critical importance of role models in supporting their career development and they describe the negative impact of lacking them in their lives especially at later stages during the start of their professional careers. The women also pointed out how they looked to their parents, and their mothers in particular, as their all-time role models.

The women also identified a very important point of their life stories related to their character and personality formation. They explained that their families, and mainly their mothers, have been the main influencers in developing their characters and embedding positive and constructive features that played a critical role later on in their careers and helped in developing their strong personalities. It is clearly evident that the women have used the two concepts of character and personality as synonyms at certain points, since the same factors mostly affected both.

Education has been highlighted as the main target that women have been working toward as well as being encouraged and motivated by parents to pursue and complete. One can see from their stories that all the women participating in this study completed their masters and PhD degrees abroad in Western countries with the support of their universities which they came back to work at after graduating. Noticeably, few of the women have had some struggles with their parents because of the society's traditions and culture to travel outside the UAE for their graduate studies, however, eventually all of them managed to travel at the end.

It is very important to highlight a very critical point that has appeared in all women's stories which is their career development in higher education organisations between academic and administrative careers. Although all the women realized the differences between them and the importance of having an international academic career which would be mainly built through academic research publications and presenting in international conferences to pursue higher professorial ranks, they are still captivated with their administrative positions. Few of the women admitted the differences and highlighted that they are working toward building their academic career similar to how they built their administrative career.



The women have spoken very positively of the huge support and encouragement they received from the UAE government and their top management in the university to pursue their higher education studies and build their leadership careers which was presented in policies, regulations, initiatives, and programs that were directed to UAE nationals including women.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings from the documents and stories presented in the previous chapter, then compares these discussions with the theoretical framework and literature review from chapter two wherever it is possible to consider whether they are validated or contradict current research. The main purpose is to examine comparatively the factors that influenced successful trajectories of a representative sample of Emirati women in a public university case study who are currently in middle and senior academic and administrative leadership positions in order to frame a career development trajectory path that inspires aspiring Emirati women to a leadership position in higher education institutions in the UAE.

The chapter starts first with a section that gives an overall summary of the emergent themes then moves on to present in detailed the themes extracted from the collected documents and women's stories by drawing on similarities and differentiations through discussing and comparing the emergent themes and the current literature where it is possible to form an Emirati career development trajectory model.

#### **6.2 Emergent Themes**

The interviews with the participants in this study as well as the documents examined UAE constitution, UAE vision 2021, UAEU profile, and public documents like newspapers produced nine themes that highlighted their career trajectory in academia. They described the essential role of family and extended relatives in supporting them

through developing their academic career and providing the stable environment for them to excel. Very noticeably, mother's influences have been standing out as significant role in the lives of these women. The participants highlighted the importance of education in putting the first step toward building their academic career as well as its impact on shaping their career path. They also pointed out the link between their education journey and the role of their parents and especially mothers' on achieving it. The participants articulated the fundamental impact of role model, mentoring, and networking in creating a core supportive system throughout their career advancement stages. They also voiced out the positive impacts as well as the negative results of not having role model, mentoring, and networking as part of their career development stages.

The women reported on government and organizations' regulations and policies that all are paving the path for them as well as also reporting on some of the challenges that faced them either from culture and some individuals within organizations. The women stated the importance of self-efficacy and self-development through personal abilities that prepared through their career journey. They further specified that they had to work harder and be more determined in overcoming these challenges in pursuing their academic career path, and mainly the essential of personal and work balancing which is not the same with their men colleagues considering other responsibilities they have as women.

### **6.2.1 Theme one: Family Background and Childhood**

According to the findings of this study, the first theme extracted from the participants' stories is family and childhood background. The study has established that this is the first factor all women in this study had reported when they were asked about their

backgrounds and early childhood. They highlighted the importance of stable families and parents' roles in shaping their character and personality as part of their career development.

It is important to explain here that family, meaning extended family structure, is comprised of husband and wife, children and grandchildren, parents of the husband and wife (grandparents) and their children (brothers and sisters, their children, and grandchildren), uncles and aunts, their children, and grandchildren. Therefore, the word 'family' in this part of the world includes the parents and relatives, both close and distant (AlTunaiji, 2012, p. 154). Such a multifaceted form of family has its impact on women's lives, as well as their career development. Most of the cases, this impact is positively in term of the support, encouragement, and inspiration that they provide. However; sometimes it is a negative impact that could present a hinder level for women's education and career development.

Most of the extended family traditions (these vary across the UAE), culture norms, and practices are based on family weekly gathering mostly during weekends, which are the type of gatherings where many types of discussions and opinions are exchanged related to daily events and activities that take place between family members being parents with the daughters and sons, or among the extended family members. Parents in particular, are continuing to be a source of consulting and advice to their children no matter what age or professional level they reach (Moghadam, 2004) which is not a matter of lack of adult development or ability to think independently, but rather a society tradition and culture norms that almost all families in the UAE are still living with.

Walton (1990), Madsen (2010), and Murniati (2012) have confirmed that one of the most significant factors that contributed to women career development is stable families

and parental influence. They emphasised that when family prepare a secure stable environment, it will encourage their daughter to achieve and move on with their career successfully. All seven Emirati women in this study came from modest stable family backgrounds with parents who were very caring, supportive, encouraging, and strongly advocated their daughters' upbringing and ensured that they do not discriminate between their daughters and their sons, treating all of them equally in all aspects through providing the supporting and caring environment. "I feel very lucky to have such parents who are supportive and caring" Safa declared, "because they focused on encouraging me". Samar commented that "I [managed] to overcome challenges because of my strong character and personality and what I had learnt from my parents". Sara also added "they [my parents] trusted me a lot, listened to me, took my advice a lot and treated me as a mature person even that I was still a young teenager".

It is essential here to note that the UAE government recognized the important role of a stable family and its impact on the country's future by establishing the first indicator of the Vision 2021 'United in Responsibility' policy which aims at creating confident nation through prosperous families, women's empowerment, active and strong Emirati society, and progressive and moderate Islamic values and traditions (UAE Vision 2021, 2016).

It is very important to also note here that all women in this study emphasised the positive constructive influence of their mothers on their lives and on their career trajectories. They highlighted that their mothers were their sources of support and guidance. They also stressed that their mothers were their first and solid role models from whom they built on for most of their values and beliefs. Safa shared that "she focused on [me] and my siblings through implanting Islamic religious instruction and concepts from early ages." She also added that "my mother focused most importantly

on the Arabic language as well as culture and traditions to ensure that my siblings and [I] are rooted in our country”. A number of studies have reported this finding where women leaders have been interviewed and affirmed the role of mothers in their lives and as a source of self-confidence (Madsen 2010; Robinson, 1996; Coutu, 2004; Matz, 2002). Additionally, all women in this study pointed out that their mothers ensured that religion, spirituality, and traditions are the most important basis upon which to build their identity as it influences their self-confidence and personalities, as discussed in following themes.

On the other hand, fathers and brothers have also had a share of influence on some of the women’s childhoods and were described as great supports. Safa explained that one of her uncles “is very independent and built himself from nothing and have developed this in me to always work on building myself.” Salwa also explained how her four brothers were very supportive and continue to encourage her especially with her studies in engineering which was a very rare field for Emirati women back then.

Another important point to add in relation to this theme of family that did not appear in the literature surveyed, yet it is an important factor in this part of the world. Considering the special culture of Arab countries in general and the UAE in particular, close and far relatives have their share of influence on family members’ lives especially women. Salwa referred to her uncles who played a significant role in her life through strong persisting encouragement “which [I] did not see as inspiration at that time but later [I] found that they were there to help my parents in protecting and making [me] succeed”. Similar findings also arose in Sana’s story who had been taken care by her auntie even though her parents were alive: “for certain family reason, I have been grown up with my auntie who was not married and took me as her daughter. She along with my parents ensured to provide me with the right healthy environment to live and have been the

reason for my achievements”. This role for extended family members has been pointed out in Luke’s (1998a, 1998b, 2000) studies, who can be a source for additional support for women to enable them to break through some of the social constraints in order to pursue their careers.

### **6.2.2 Theme two: Education**

The second most important theme to emerge from the findings of this study is education. Many studies have showed the importance of education in building strong successful career paths especially for women (Madsen, 2007, 2008; Setiadrma, 1993; Murniati, 2012). Further studies also indicated a clear noticeable high percentage of women entering for education in comparison with men (Siemienska and Zimmer, 2007; Dugger 2001; OECD, 2002; Hogskoleverket, 2008; Airini et al., 2011). This is an evident also in the women who participated in this study. All parents in this study have been presented as having an elevated attention to education and its importance for their daughters’ careers. However, it is significant to point out that all parents in this study are illiterate and did not have any type of advanced education except for Safa whose father holds a PhD degree and was teaching at the same university. Salwa at one point explained, “It surprises me the passionate of my parents about educating us considering that they themselves did not have any example in their life or around them to look for as an influence for their decision”.

It is clear that all participants’ parents had provided a strong supporting system to educate their daughters and they did not deny them their right to get educated. Salwa also added that “I am very lucky and appreciate have such parents especially that they are from the old generation who do not read or write, yet value education”. It is important to explain that most of the women during 1950s and 1960s in the UAE did

not have any type of appropriate formal education which explains their persistence toward ensuring that their daughters have the highest level of education which appears almost in all stories in this study. The first school for boys was opened in the early 1950s and it took more than ten years later for the first school for girls to be opened in the UAE (Abdelkarim, 2001). Such a situation presents a strong support for women of the UAE to encourage their daughters' education and assure that they reach the highest possible level of education. The UAE government is highly aware of the substantial role of education and are continuously accentuating it. Therefore, the UAE constitution declares clearly that both men and women are equal in their rights and obligations. It ensured the equal opportunities to education is provided to all. Furthermore, the second UAE Vision 2021 indicator is 'United in Prosperity' which underlines the UAE commitment to ensure a secure first rating free education to all Emiratis, men or women, in line with the UAE constitution (UAE Vision 2021, 2016).

Salwa explained that "I must emphasise that it's my parents passionate and investment to ensure that we have the highest education achievements and work with professions, which was the case for all of my brothers and sister. They pushed us a lot". Even in some cases, for example for Samah and Sana, whose parents were initially not very supportive of their daughters traveling outside the UAE to complete their Master and PhD degrees because they were frightened about what would happen to their daughters in foreign countries, but eventually they accepted the idea and were very supportive and encouraging later on. All seven women in this study have travelled abroad to complete their Master and PhD degrees and came back to work as academic having the full support of their parents.

It is noteworthy that religion and Islamic education has its substantial part in the women's early education at home and of course at school. According to all participants,



all parents ensured that religion and Islamic instructions were the first education to be taught in very early stages even before school. Sana noted that “[my parents] ensured that they provided a private tutor to help with my study in many subjects like Arabic, English, Mathematics, and especially Religion”. Safa also added that “[my] mother was the one who ensured the Islamic instructions as well as culture and traditions are rooted in me and my siblings”.

It is important to explain here that knowledge and education are highly emphasised in Islam. It encourages all Muslim to educate themselves with knowledge of their religion as well as other divisions of knowledge through education. It holds the individual with high esteem and exalted his position (Adeleye, 1983). Several Quran verses praise educated people, encourage original thinking, and personal investigation. The first verse of the Quran was a command to Prophet Mohammed to read ‘Iqra’ “Read. In the name of your Lord who created, created man from clots of congealed blood. Read. Your Lord is the most bountiful one, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know” (Quran, 96:1). Also, other Quranic verses which advocate knowledge and learning “Allah will raise to high ranks those that have faith and knowledge among you. He is cognizant of all your actions” (Quran, 58:9). Additionally, Islam strongly encourages the education of women both in religious and social domains. Jawad (1998) explained that “there is no priority for men over women in relation to the right to education. Both are equally encouraged to acquire education, from the cradle to the grave”. Further, Jawad (1998) emphasised that Islam will view the neglect of these rights as murdering personalities “so, like her men counterpart, each woman is under a moral and religious obligation to seek knowledge, develop her intellect, broaden her outlook, cultivate her talents, and then utilise her potential to the benefit of her soul and of her society” (p. 20).

### **6.2.3 Theme three: Role Models**

Role Modelling has been put forward as the third main factor impacting Emirati women in their career journeys to leadership positions in academia. Savickas (1994, 2005) stressed in his career construction theory that role models have a critical influence in forming the individual self-concept and those role models inspire the future career paths of these individuals as they are building their career trajectories.

The seven women in this study have confirmed that they had several role models in their lives in different stages of their career development. According to them, role models have played a meaningful role in their career lives through the support and guidance they provided on different levels, which has been documented in several studies as one of the important factors in supporting women in their career development (Carbonell and Castro, 2008; Komires et al, 2006; Daresh, 2004; Gibson, 2004; Lockwood and Kunda, 1997). According to these studies, role modelling is considered a guiding and supporting formal and informal system to women in their career development through providing them chances to enhance their knowledge, skills, and leadership. Randeree and Gaad (2008) stated the importance of role model “it is important for women in the middle East as well as Emirati women to have role models in order to encourage them, as well as their families into understanding that their participation in society is desirable and welcome”

It is noteworthy that parents are always the first role model and mentored these women, as described in their childhood and early years of their adulthood. Parents and especially mothers are the first people these women looked to as role models. As Samah declared “she is my all-time role model. She has put all her personality in our behaviour. She taught and inspired us.” On the other hand, Sama and Safa stated that their father is

their first role model along with their mothers. Sama explained “he has impacted my character and personality. He is always, always, always behind me, pushing me for the next step to achieve more in either my education or my professional career”. Similarly, Safa explained that “he was very independent and built himself from nothing and he developed this in me, to always work on building myself professionally and academically. He is my role model in everything I do in my life”. The role of parents as first role models is a common feature in the research. Bandura’s (1978) social learning theory and Savickas (1995, 2005) career construction theory have presented the parental role modelling as the first stage in building an individual’s self-concept and that children view the world through their parents’ eyes, as they look to parents for support and direction.

On a cultural level, because of the unique culture of the UAE, it is striking how extended family members and relatives also play a part in being a role model. In Sana’s and Sara’s cases, their aunties and uncles have been their role model beside their parents. In both cases the women looked to their aunties and uncles as a source of guidance. Sara explained, “my auntie used to be as school principle, and even though I did not meet her much but was looking up to her because she was very educated and a school principle at that time considered to be a tremendous achievement for Emirati women”. Sara further added that “she inspired me to insist on completing my study and to do something different”. Sana also added “my auntie was very knowledgeable even though she did not complete her study, which is something I wanted to achieve”. Salwa explained the role that her uncles played in their early life as very significant: “they used to push us to work hard and focus on our studies which we did not see as inspiration at that time but we later found how much it helped and supported us”. Additionally, Salwa added that her elder sister was her role model in early childhood:

“she was doing everything between taking care of us, helping my mother at home, taking care of our father’s business and completing her study. She was and still a great inspiration for me”.

It is also significant to note here that public figures as role models have played a critical impact on the lives of women in this study. Because of the very exceptional culture of the UAE in term of the relations between the nation and its leadership, many Sheikhs’ names have been put forward as role models for women in this study like the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashed Al Maktoom, and Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan for the momentous role that they are presenting to the country that inspires the nation to follow their leads and steps.

The foundational aspect of the public role model concept is the psychological process that allows personal influence to occur. Bandura (2001, 1986) describes two pathways of communication systems that shape how individuals think, feel and behave toward others: the direct or explicit path of informing, enabling and motivating; and the indirect, or socially-mediated, pathway of influences from the media and community settings. In contrast to the public relations scholarship of unilateral (one-way) or bilateral (two-way) organization-public relationships (Grunig, et al 2008; Ledingham, 2008), social relations in social cognitive theory are, as defined by Bandura to be “triadic reciprocal causation” in which personal, behavioural and environmental determinants all interact to influence each other.

However, women in this study have also identified a very important deficiency of role models in later stages in their career when they entered the career path development. Sana indicated the lack of role model to look to “we did not have any example in the community at that time, we mostly look to our teachers and parents” which has been

documented in many studies (Quinlan, 1999; Shaikeshaft and McNamara, 1980; Bagilhole, 1994; Wisker, 1996; Kraiss, 2002; Ryan and Haslam, 2005) that describe the negative impact of an inadequate availability of a role model system especially as they initiate their career path. Women in this study pointed out the lack of women role model availability especially in their fields of expertise to look for and follow their steps.

However, it is essential to point out that nowadays, the number of Emirati women role models has increased in many fields, including those that are generally regarded as men-dominated, providing examples for those who aspire to build their careers not only in education, but in other fields like business, politics, media, medicine, engineering, aviation, the military, policing, and others. For example, Sara mentioned names like Her Excellence Noora Al Kaabi who is Minister of State and a member of the Federal National Council Affairs and Sheikha Lubna bin Khalid Al Qasimi who is Minister of State for Tolerance and previously Minister of Economic and Planning of the UAE, “I feel I want to become like them one day”, said Sara.

#### **6.2.4 Theme four: Mentoring**

Several studies have suggested the significant role that mentorship plays in building successful career development as it enhances early stages of career development through providing a variety of functions that support, guide, and counsel (Levinson et al, 1978; Kram, 1996; Roche, 1979; Vertz, 1985).

All the women in this study asserted the important value of mentorship on supporting their career development, yet they all brought attention to the fact that they had a lack of mentoring in very early stages of their career where they really needed guidance and support in their fields other than what their parents could do as mentors in earlier years. Various studies (e.g., Quinlan, 1999; Bagilhole, 1993; Wisker, 1996; Kraiss, 2002; Ryan

and Haslam, 2005; Mitchell, 1993) have highlighted the deficiency of mentoring in women's educational leadership careers and explained the negative impact of this on those women who are building their academic careers. These studies emphasised that the lack of mentoring is also considered one of the barriers that in some cases slow the advancement of career development stages for women. This has been evident in this study.

Samah reported that mentoring is very important especially for those who work in specialized careers or field for the first time "most of those who studied abroad and came back facing a different environment for doing things and having a mentor would help in guiding on doing things in a better way. I wished I had a mentor that would give me advice at the beginning of my career to focus on certain aspects. I could have promoted way earlier than now". Safa, as well, insisted that mentoring is an essential factor in building a successful academic career since one learn from others' experiences and knowledge in shaping one's own career without the need to go through the same challenges and difficulties: "there was not any mentoring support when I entered my working career since there was not any Emirati women in my field".

Salwa, Sana, Samar, and Safa had their study supervisors as mentors who supported them with guidance to build their career and ensure to follow certain steps especially at the very early stages in undergraduate studies. Salwa explained that the role of mentor should not be neglected: "we should not ignore experienced people at all, we should always keep in mind that those who are older than us especially in work field know more than we do and those who went through lots of challenges have rich experiences and knowledge to learn from". She further explained that despite her very independent personality, "mentors open the horizon for you to see all the possible opportunities. They don't have to feed you, but they let you know". Both Sana and Samar ensured

that their graduate studies supervisors added a lot to them through guidance and support. Sana said, “I had my supervisor and the dean of the college as my mentor who continue to support me in front of others and gave me lots of opportunities to excel, believed in me, motivated me, and guided me to leadership positions within the college, the university, and the community”.

On the other hand, Sana and Sara have their role model as their mentor as both explained that it had an essential impact on their careers particularly in early stages. Sana indicated that her auntie was her mentor until she passed away: “she as my role model and my mentor who assisted and guided me through my whole life with advises and supports”. Sara, too, had her auntie the school principal as her role model.

#### **6.2.5 Theme five: Networking**

Most of the women participating in this study emphasized the importance of networking especially in academic careers in providing them with channels for sharing and gaining experiences with colleagues and experts in their field as well as creating a culture of knowledge exchange, which has been noted in literature body. Many studies have highlighted the essential role networking plays in career development success (Balletine, 2000; Baugh and Scandura, 1999; Bruegman, 1995; Burt, 1992; De Janasz and Sullivan, 2004; Gould and Penley, 1984; Higgins, 2001; Luthans, et al, 1988; Michael and Yukl, 1993).

Furthermore, several studies have proposed the example of networking channels that individuals can have access to through membership in professional associations, participating in community and society projects, and social gatherings within and outside the organization which many studies have regarded as a supportive system for career development success as well as opening up further opportunities for individuals

(Kleiman, 1994; McDermott, 1992; Richardson, 1993; Roane, 1993; Sonnenberg, 1990).

Even though all participants spoke highly of networking and its importance, they also pointed out that in UAE society there is some resistance socializing between men and women for any type of reason. They also discussed how they are not fully benefiting from networking as men usually do, a point also covered in the literature (Collins, 1983; Finlay, 1986 Thompson, 1990). Research has shown that women have difficulties accessing the networking system (Moore and Webb, 1998) for a number of reasons, the main ones in this study are religion, culture, and society. The women in this study explained how in Emirati society some will accept and support it as they understand its importance and there are those who will find it to be an inappropriate practice.

Sana explained, “even that we still have some who do not support this for Emirati women and find it unsuitable to socialize and network between women and men as they find it inappropriate, yet; there are those in the society who started to recognize and understand its importance in creating a supporting system for career advancement”. However, Sana stressed that it is family support that would help women to pursue it through trusting, accepting, and understanding the importance of networking which will help in ignoring any negative reactions from society. Salwa and Safa viewed networking from a different perspective as they both supported the same idea yet; through a professional channel like conferences, and academic associations. As Salwa explained, “I believe in separation [in certain forms of networking] but not when we are old enough to know what is wrong and what is right and [have our families full support]”. Samah also expressed this view as she explained that “nowadays it is acceptable in society for Emirati women to network yet it is also depending on their personality in keeping a professional networking”.



Sara further explained that UAE society is reacting with different perspectives: “some find it very inappropriate to socialize with men especially that there are not enough Emirati women in the higher managerial levels in the field of Information Technology, where other found it a very recognizable achievement that [I] as an Emirati woman reached such level”. Sara also had the same view as Sana, pointing out that it all goes back to the family support, trust, and acceptance. It is critically important point out that the UAE society has gone through a rapid and significant transformation with social changes over the last 30 years both economically and culturally from a strictly traditional society into a modern society where many traditions are still important and practise but to different degrees in different families and tribes (Schvaneveldt et al, 2005)

It is also worth mention that there are many studies that highlight the inadequate availability of networking channels (Madsen, 2007, 2008; Quinlan, 1999; Shakeshaft and McNamara, 1980) as women in this study have mentioned unless it is available through their organizations.

#### **6.2.6 Theme six: Work and Personal Life Balance**

Work and personal life balancing is the sixth theme that emerged from the women’s stories in this study. Almost all the participants reported that they have an imbalance in work and personal life in favour of their work which consumes almost all of their days. Super (1957) described the different roles in life an individual will have to perform in his life span theory in which the different roles that women are obligated to take other than men. For women who are pursuing both their professional academic career and their personal and family life, balancing these two high priorities is considered to be one of

their major challenges (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2001; Rosynsky, 2002; Thompson & Beauvais, 2000).

Sara admitted that she is not spending enough time with her family as work is using all her time: “I am not [spending time] with my family or myself except sometimes during weekend and even when I got out with them, I keep thinking about work.” Sana also described the same challenge: “I could not balance between my personal life and taking care of myself and my family and between my work-related life. Work is always winning and getting most of my time”. Furthermore, Salwa described the same problem: “I always forget myself as [I do not focus on having my own time]. However, these women also try to find solutions through deducted time for themselves and their families to create some sort of balance between their work and personal life. Salwa said, “I try to give my family enough time through dedicating weekends and vacations to spend it with them”, as well as Sara who stressed “I always make sure that I do not take work home for weekend and vacations which I devoted to family and myself”.

On the other hand, both Samah and Samar have managed to balance work and personal life through following plans that ensured that a time is given to balance their different roles in life as women. Sama explained that “once I leave work, I leave work behind and focus on myself and family, I am a social person and I like being around people. I never take work home”. Samar who is the only married women in this study reported that she does not take work home: “I ensure that my time at home is for myself and family. I have three slots in my life, morning at work, afternoon for my kids and husband, and evening for myself”. As well, Safa does not take work home: “I ensure that I dedicate weekends to spend it with my family and myself”. However, Safa further added that it is easier if you are not married: “being single, it is easier to have a balance

between work and personal life, but I think it will be tough when I get married as I will need to have a different strategy to manage this balancing”.

It has been reported in several studies that career development theories and models were initially created for men and not necessarily for women (e.g., Burke & McKeen, 1993; Gutek & Larwood, 1987; Marshall, 1989). According to the literature, the work of Astin (1984), Farmer (1985), and Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) were among several studies that argued for having a distinctive career development model that focuses on women which takes into consideration the different roles and factors that influence women’s advancement in their careers to higher leadership positions. Accordingly, there are many studies that pointed out the imbalance situation that women in academia are having between their work and personal life (Neale and Ozhanli, 2010; Cooke, 2005; Shah, 2006) which has been evident in this study.

It is worth reporting here that all women in this study are not married expect for one, which raises a serious concern. Because of their focus on building their career and the amount of effort, working load, and time they have to put into it, the women either neglected or postponed their marriage plans and creating their own families. For example, even though Sana had some pressure from her family to get married at early ages, she refused: “they started pushing me to get married where I wanted to complete my study and get my PhD degree. They kept urging for a period then they stop talking to me about it”. However, Sana confessed that after reaching this level in her career, she is starting to think about marriage and building her own family, yet, she is very careful with her choices now as she will not accept the same of what she would accept when she was younger: “when I was young in school and university, I was very focus on my study and then to get a proper job and completing my graduates’ degrees. Even though my family was pushing and forcing me to get married, I did not accept it and

focused only on my career. Now, I am trying to get this my new target, however, it will not be as easy as it used to be when I was still young in university as I will not accept anyone”. Safa also presented a similar opinion as she added that it is much easier when you are not married: “being single, it is easier to have a balance between work and personal life, but I think when I get married it will be tough. I do not think I will quit my job, but I will need to have a different strategy”.

It is well evidenced in the literature that in the case of women, they have some difficulties balancing their work commitments and their plans to create their own families. According to Beri and Beri (2013), the main reason for women to remain single is that they enjoy the opportunity of building the career without draining the huge efforts and commitment of marriage and its responsibilities: “you remain free to put in long [working] hours, work on the weekends or whatever else you have to do to be successful”. Oppenheimer (1988) suggests that for some individuals starting a family might threaten their career goals as in the case of Sana who refused her family’s insistence to get married because she wanted to complete her studies and build her own career.

#### **6.2.7 Theme seven: Self-efficacy/Self-development**

The seventh theme that emerged from the women’s stories in this study could be, to a certain extent, the most vital theme: self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) defines self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments”, which also according to him, influences the actions individuals use to pursue a task, and the amount of effort they will expend to achieve a certain outcome. He further explains that it is directly relevant to understanding the changes individuals will undergo for a career in terms of attitude and behaviour. Closely

related concepts to self-efficacy are self-confidence and self-development. All of these concepts are mainly focused on the individual's abilities, attitudes, and capabilities to take decisions that can influence the behaviour, cognitive abilities and personality, along with external environmental factors and how do these factors influence their career development path.

All the women in this study strongly spoke of the personal commitment to self-efficacy as well as self-development as an ongoing progression to advance in their academic careers. The first and most substantial self-development they identified is higher education. They all identified education as the first step in their career development and which also helped in creating a basic self-efficacy level. They also described reaching the PhD degree as a goal in their academic leadership development. Sana, for example, explained that "there are [many] checkpoints for Emirati women to follow in order to be able to achieve a leadership position within higher education [that starts with] completing their graduate education." This achievement was identified in Rayle et al.'s (2005) study that found that the level of education women achieved in their career affected their self-efficacy because it is directly related to their abilities to maintain a high level of self-esteem in facing negative stereotypes in pursuing their academic leadership career path.

Furthermore, all women in this study ensured that developing skills, acquiring needed knowledge, being hardworking, continuous self-development, training and workshops, commitment, and patience are all very important for those who are aspiring to build their academic career. They added that academia is a special kind of career path that requires extra effort, extra hard work, enormous focus on research and improvement in teaching skills, and continuously being involved in conferences and publications. Siemienska and Zimmer (2007), Madsen (2010), and Murniati (2012) all strongly

emphasised the importance of personal development as a trigger for self-efficacy and self-confidence. In her study, Madsen (2010) outlined the significant connection between understanding an individual's personal career journey and the effect of continuous learning, personal advancement, and development of self. On the other hand, Murniati (2012) emphasised that women need to work harder than men to development themselves and advance in their leadership career, which is not necessarily the same for Emirati women at the same rate as Western women considering the strongly high UAE government's support and encouragement for women. Redmond et al., 2017 has found that the importance of self-development for women's advancement in leadership positions in higher education requires ongoing personal development.

Salwa stressed that women have “to start from the bottom and gradually grow through focusing on getting higher educational degrees, then to focus on self-training and development, work on improving teaching skills, and focus on research and publication to grant an academic position locally and internationally”. Sama also had this view: “whenever I see a chance for development in my career I join it. Either it is related to my field of experts or any field of personal and leadership”.

The women in this study further added that trusting themselves, their abilities and capabilities and not accepting any cultural nor organisational discrimination is the most important criterion for them to work toward advancement besides working for themselves personally and professionally. As Sana explained, “it took me lots of efforts and hard working to prove myself and achieve being an Emirati woman in a men oriented environment”; which also has been supported by Sara who proclaimed that “regardless of men or women, it is all about how much you input toward [yourself]”. They also argued that using available opportunities is critical in their career

advancement to keep moving on with their development to differentiate themselves and excel in a men-oriented society. As Sara explained: “.... she need to depend on herself .... to use all possible opportunities and move on with her career”. Yet, it is worth adding here that the UAE is a far less men-oriented society compared to many Western countries, as in the last few years Emirati women have excelled far faster and at a greater rate than men due to the UAE government policy and supportive families and society, if we consider that the UAE is only 45 years old.

All women in this study highlighted a very important self-efficacy that all women need to have which is self-motivated. They all insisted that their plans start with being self-motivated and being personally committed to building their academic career path. Mitchel (1993) found that the lack of self-efficacy is more of an individual issue that women face in academia due to a lower level of belief in their abilities and self-confidence. Siemienska and Zimmer (2007) also defined the individual issue of women who accept the cultural judgment of women being less talented than men which results in a lack of women self-efficacy.

#### **6.2.8 Theme eight: Academic vs. Administrative Career Path**

This theme has emerged directly and indirectly in some of the women’s stories as they pointed out their involvement in administrative leadership positions and to certain level they were neglecting or not putting enough effort towards their academic career path on a scholarly route

All the women’s stories within this study have started their careers as administrative staff, and after their graduation with a PhD worked as assistant professors for a few years to hold positions like chair, assistant dean, associate dean, vice dean, and dean moving from a short academic career to the administrative path. However, the women

in this study recognize the importance of building their academic careers. For example, Samah explained that “because life is moving, and I always work for the next promotion. My goal is to get full professorship, however; with my deanship, I do not think I get enough time to do as much research”. She further explains that “because academic professional is to be academic. Administration positions will not stay forever but your academic life, it is for you and will stay for you.”, which also supported by Salwa who said, “engaging in academic life will connect you with the international academia, knowledge based economy, and you will be well known internationally.” This view was also taken by Samar who asserted that “administrative career is not for you, rather it is serving your university and community. However, academic career is what is will stay for you and will path for you a recognized academic position in your field”. Sale (2009) explains that faculty members are then needed to make the choice of whether to “dedicate most of their effort to excelling in their discipline through research or to dedicate most of their effort to service to their institution through progressively more responsible administrative assignments”.

### **6.2.9 Theme nine: Government and Organization Support**

This theme has emerged on two levels starting first with the UAE government level and is followed up with institutional and organizational levels on the regulations and policies impacting Emirati women’s career paths.

All women spoke highly of the UAE government’s support to nationals in general and Emirati women particularly in terms of dedicating regulations and policies that encourage, support, and guide them to be employed and to achieve successful careers in all fields. The UAE constitution declares that men and women of this nation are equal in their rights and obligations (UAE Constitution, 1971). Equal opportunities are



offered to all based on their qualifications, abilities, and capabilities to hold certain positions (UAE Constitution, 2017). Furthermore, in support of the constitution, the vision of late president, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, have been influential, particularly the principle that should govern gender relations in the country:

The means to develop a country and modernise its infrastructure is a magnificent burden that should not be taken up by men only. The loss would be huge, for women will be paralysed without any participation in productivity. It would lead to an unbalanced rhythm of life. Hence, women's participation in public life is required and we must be prepared for it. (UAE Yearbook, 2013, p.231)

Sana pointed out that “the UAE government supports all Emiratis and especially Emirati women through providing the supportive regulations, policies, and [creating] opportunities to allow them to excel and reach different levels of leadership”, a view which is also held by Safa who added “the leaders of this county are significantly [encouraging] Emirati women and ensuring that they are contributing in all fields including academia”. The same view was voiced by Sama and Samar. Sama declared that she is “grateful for being a UAE national as there are considerably a lot of support that the UAE government is providing to its nation”, and Samar reported that “the Emiratization policy that has been introduced by the UAE government and has been followed by all public and private organisations to ensure a good access for all Emirati to employment as well as advancement to higher leadership positions through providing the right environment”.

Emiratisation is one of the most important policies that the UAE government initiated. Its main aim is to create working opportunities for Emirati women and men in both the public and mostly in private sectors (AlAli, 2008; Peach, 2009). Godwin (2006) defines

Emiratisation as “an affirmative action quota-driven employment policy that ensures UAE nationals are given employment opportunities in the private sector”. Consequently, the same has been implemented in all public and private organizations across the UAE and particularly in academia. There have been many appointments of Emirati women to leadership positions within the federal higher education institutions in the UAE.

Dr. Muhadditha Al Hashimi, is the first Emirati woman to become a director in the federal Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), and Dr. Tarifa Al Zaabi is the first Emirati woman appointed as dean for student services and success (Swan, 2013). In the following year Her Excellency Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid Al Qasimi was appointed the President of Zayed University (ZU) as the first Emirati woman to hold such a senior leadership position in the federal higher education institutions in the UAE. The same changes took place at United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). Sara pointed out that after the new top management changes took place, more Emirati women were assigned to middle and higher managerial positions like Chairs, Assistant Deans, Associate Deans, Vice Deans, and Deans. The women participating in this study present a sample of those assignments.

Accordingly, both Salwa and Sara have emphasized the considerable role of top management in the university in creating the needed support mechanisms to pace their personal development, publications, and consulting for the community. Sara explained that “the new top management changes taken place and started to give Emirati women more opportunities to hold middle to higher managerial positions in the university.” Salwa expressed a similar view: “top management were not acting only as managers, but also as mentors at the same time especially that she was the first Emirati women

faculty member in her college who also has been promoted till she reached the position of Assistant Dean in short time”.

Several procedures at the university has been formed to create a supportive system for all UAE nationals through a professional development system and funding to attend international conferences. Sama gave this an example of support she received: “the university supported my professional development through tuition fees, accommodations, and attending conference” which all are part of the National Faculty Development Program that has been initiated to support all UAE nationals to pursue their graduate studies and then be an active contributing member of the university community. Sama also asserts that “I am really grateful for my university, because without them I will not proceed with my career. It is not only the degree but also the need to update my knowledge, to learn more, and develop my skills. So, I think this is really related to the national development program within the university”.

However, Sara thinks that more decision-making powers and work freedom is needed to support Emirati women in their positions especially from their line managers. As she explained, there are some line managers and supervisors who set obstacles and create a difficult environment for Emirati women to stop them being innovative and creative, which contradicts top management directives. Sama, Sara, Salwa, and Safa presented a concern about organizational support as they have proposed additional supporting mechanisms that the university could provide to ensure maximum benefits. Sama pointed out that there used to be larger number of Emirati women joining higher education, however, many have left “for better salaries or better flexible jobs.” Sana also pointed out that academics’ salaries are considered very low compared to other industries in the UAE which means that the university needs to look in to other possible options of benefits to make it more desirable field and to keep a higher faculty retention,

which Sana suggests could be a continuous personal and professional development program and time off to conduct research and publishing since it is the core of the academic career. On another note, Safa argued that the university could support more Emiratis in academia through promoting more women nationals to higher decision-making positions that will help in improving and developing the educational system considering that the Emirati women have proven to be highly capable to hold such positions. Salwa further added that considering the dynamic nature of the field of higher education field, yet the supporting system in term of the national faculty program is still a bit old. She explicated that there is an urgent need to rethink the mechanisms to be flexible enough in matching each academician needs being financial support, manpower, or time off for research.

#### **6.2.10 Theme ten: Challenges**

The challenges theme emerged as it was distributed over the entire trajectories of the participants rather than just being an issue at some stages. Even though all the women have a successful academic career trajectory, they also underlined some challenges that they face and had to overcome. There are considerable similarities among the participants as they all came from relatively the same culture background as well as working for the same university.

Culture has its share of influence on the career development of women in this study. It has different levels of impact on careers, for example, national and organizational as well as multi-layered such as values, beliefs, and society (Taras et al, 2009). There are noteworthy differences between women's and men's perceptions of women's roles and participation in society. All participants' families in this study are from the pre-oil and pre- national unification period which reflect a different conservative culture standpoint

than the new generations after oil and the establishment of the country. The perspective of women socializing with men as natural was not a point of discussion and almost all families have restriction to a certain level.

Samah explained that early in her adult life, she had to study a different major than the one that she wanted because “[my] mother is from a conservative family that does not allow working with men like engineering or traveling abroad.” This forced Samah to study a different major. It was the same situation with Salwa who explained that in an early period of time “we had the UAE society very conservative with women working in the first place [let a side] working with men”, However, she further explained that “my grandmother’s generation was more open society and accepting women’s working [than my mother generation]. The UAE society is started to go back to its original where accepting women to work everywhere like my grandmother who used to have a shop and selling everything”. However, Sana further added “there are still few individuals in the society who still do not support women working and always create barriers to fail them”.

As discussed in earlier themes, some families do not allow their daughters to travel abroad which was mainly influenced by the culture that used to restrict such practices as in Samah and Sana’s cases. Sara faced the same situation with her father who rejected the idea of his daughter completing her studies: “he thinks no need for work, or I can work in a school as a teacher.” She further explained that he was not approving of any type of job that has a connection with or involves socializing with men. Sana faced a different cultural challenge as she was faced with family pressure to get married at a very early age: “they started pushing me to get married which I wanted to complete my study and get my PhD degree. They kept urging me for a long period of time”. Moreover, Sana also faced the challenge of convincing her family to allow her to travel

to the US to complete her graduate degree as “it was a serious issue for my family and they totally refused it. No matter how much I tried, they insisted that is it out of discussion. However, I managed to negotiate it to an Arab county that they accepted after months on a condition that my brother will travel with me”.

More challenges have accrued on an organizational level with subordinates, colleagues, and sometimes supervisors during their career advancement that Sama, Safa, Sara, and Samar have highlighted. Organizational structure and its impact on women’s advancement in academic leadership has been documented in number of studies as one of the main challenges. Blackmore (1999) argued that “when women move into men areas, they remain clustered at the lower level, marginally represented at the middle levels and absent from the top” (p. 93), which might not be the same case here as Emirati women have been granted access to higher leadership positions. Yet it is still applying to them in terms of working with a number of individuals within the institution. It also has been found in Neale and Ozhanli’s (2010) study, as they pointed out the deep impact of organizational structure on women’s progression to senior leadership positions because of the continual demanding responsibilities of being a senior manager as well as the disturbing reaction they get from their men colleagues.

Sama explained the serious aggressive behaviour she faced from her colleagues who looked at her as being too young to hold such a position: “they started blocking my activities and distributing wrong information about [me]”. In the other women’s cases, they were viewed as threats. Safa indicated that “there were few who were very sensitive and not supportive .... they saw [me] as threatening to their positions considering that [I am] Emirati and they are expats.” Samar also faced difficulties with those who looked at her as threats to their positions. Sara’s case had two challenges hierarchically, from her subordinates and from her supervisor from the first day she moved to

department: “the team started hidden information and papers needed to complete the daily tasks, so I have to go myself search for the information and try to get what I need from the system which sometimes take longer time to finish the task”. On the other hand, her direct supervisor was non-Emirati who started fighting her because she was afraid that Sara would take her position: “she will send me emails late at night for tasks that needs week to be completed and submitted the next morning, just so I say I cannot do it”, which has been proven in literature by Mostafa (2005) who pointed out the significant differences between men and women perceptions of women’s roles and participation in society.

Further challenges have been identified that women in this study have encountered. The participants indicated that the most challenging factor was the lack of role model and mentors in advanced stages of their career development. It has been highlighted in various studies the negative impact as a challenge for women from lacking support, mentoring, and role model during their career advancement (White, 1995; Mitchell, 1993; Quinlan, 1999; Bagilhole, 1993).

Safa explained, “there was not any mentoring support when [I] entered my career working since there was not any Emirati women in [my] field.” Samah, also expressed this view: “I wish I had a mentor who gave me advice early at the beginning of my career to focus on certain aspects. I could have been promoted earlier than now”.

### **6.3 Summary**

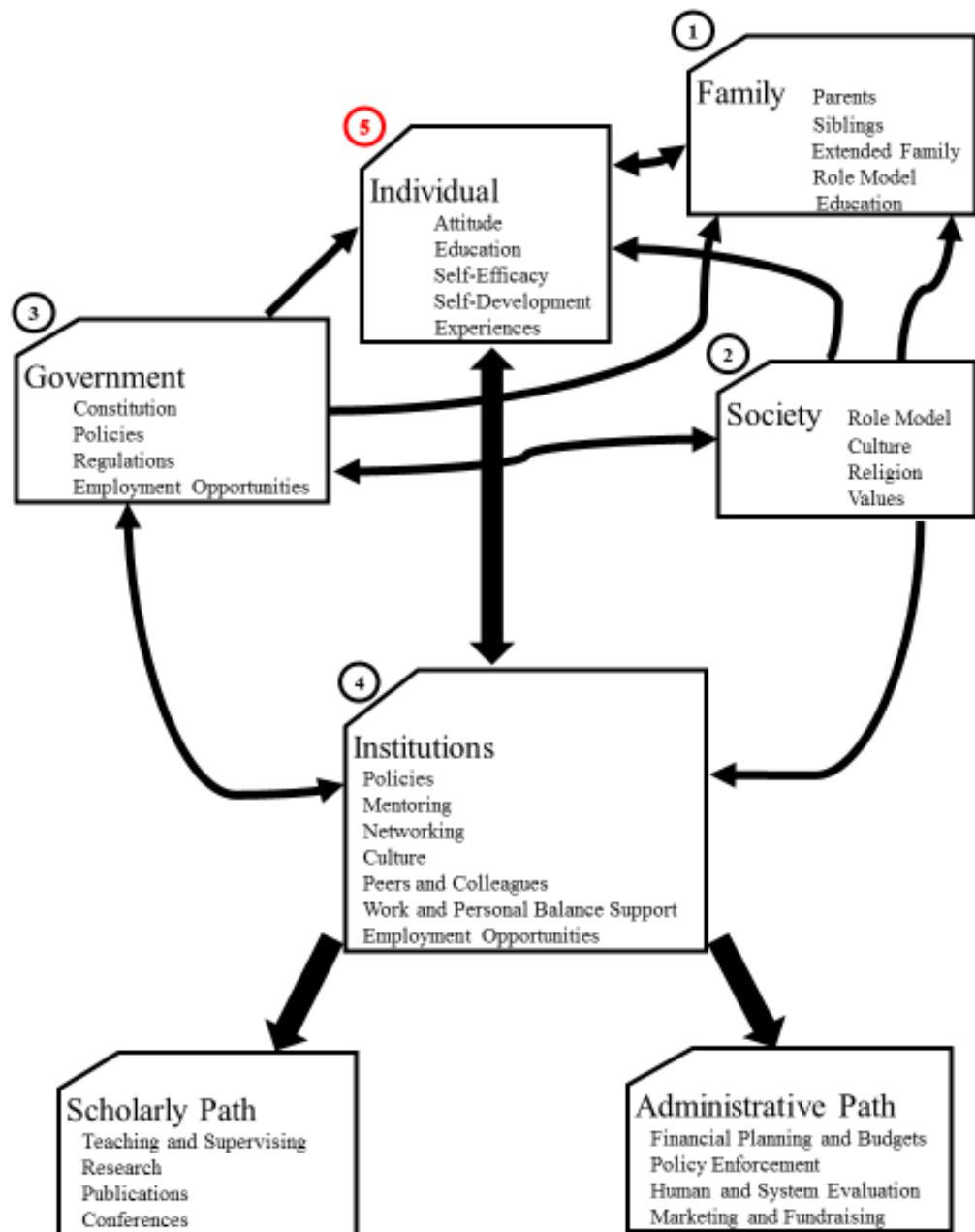
The aim of this study was to explore the position of women’s career development in higher education through investigating, comparing, and documenting their career trajectories being the early generation to attain positions within public higher education institutions in the UAE in comparison with that presented in the international literature.

Such a study will provide deeper insights into these women's experiences and would contribute to the development of higher education in the UAE by creating an understanding and a successful career advancement model of their trajectory as well as pave the way for aspiring Emirati women who will follow the same career.

Based on the findings of this study, I developed the following model (Figure 6.1) that explains the career trajectory of Emirati women in higher education. As discussed in this chapter, there are ten themes that have emerged at different levels of impact on women's career development and have influenced and shaped their career trajectories. It is worth mentioning that the chart has some similarities with both Cheung and Halpern (2010) and Rivera et al.'s (1999) models among the international ones that have been proposed in Western contexts. However, there are some specific details and factors that are related to Emirati women in particular that appeared in this study. This includes siblings, extended family, culture, society, religion, values, and constitution.



**Figure 6.1 Emirati Women Career Development Model in Higher Education institutions**



## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter will present first the conclusions and possible recommendations drawn from the findings and discussions as they relate to different levels: theoretical level, policy and education system level, institutional level, and methodological level. It will conclude with a number of future research suggestions.

#### **7.2 Conclusions**

The Emirati women in this study shared their career stories through giving a holistic picture starting from their early childhood up to the senior positions they currently occupy in their higher education organisation. It is very noticeable from the findings a confirmation of the influence of all discussed themes in chapter five as key roles in developing their career.

One very startling finding is that being women did not pose a limitation or challenge for them to build their career in higher education. On the contrary, they were receiving a huge amount of support from their families, the society, the government, and top management in their institution. They talked very positively of the government support and the policies that do not differentiate between them and men in gaining the same access to education and job opportunities. The women felt that they should honour their country and its support by giving back to society and present themselves with the highest abilities locally and internationally.

### **7.2.1 Theoretical Implications Conclusions**

The findings of this study showed that the synthesis of Life Span and Life Space Theory and Social Cognitive Theory along with social constructivism career theory offered a suitable foundational framework to explore Emirati women's career development trajectories. It presented a basis to connect the individuals' experiences in the university case and give a biographically holistic view of the first generation of Emirati women reaching senior positions in higher education institutions.

The theoretical framework used in this study provided an opportunity for differentiating between the UAE and the international considering the different factors that are influencing women in the UAE who are building their careers and those who are internationally foremost: culture, parents, extended family members, religion, and government support.

### **7.2.2 Policies Conclusions**

The findings emerged in this study from discussion of several types of documents like the UAE constitution, the UAE Vision 2021, official newspaper articles, and the university policies and regulations which shows that the policies nationally are very well developed. There is an overall support for all UAE nationals regardless of being women or men through offering and supporting all aspects of a high standard of living. All UAE nationals have equal access to education and job opportunities in the market providing they have the needed abilities and qualifications to perform their jobs. The same is articulated on institutional levels with the same supporting policies and regulations. However, it is noticed that the implementation of these policies and regulations on the departmental and supervisory levels are the ones that need more attention.

Several incidents were reported by the women in this study about facing some challenges with their supervisors or colleagues on a departmental level especially expatriates who were either neglecting opportunities and resources from women or overloading them with tasks to be completed in a short period of time to create issues and problems for them by not completing their assigned tasks.

Consequently, it is recommended that institutions have to create a level of procedures to carefully monitor the implementation of the governmental and institutional policies, to support women and provide them with the backup they need to complete their assigned tasks.

### **7.2.2 Practical Conclusions**

This study provides unique insights into Emirati women's career development in higher education institutions. The findings that emerged show a level of focus on certain practices on several levels from institutions, society, and individuals themselves.

- Emirati Society: On one hand, many aspects of the culture are highly supportive of women, as well as Islamic values, work ethic, attitudes towards work and other people; but on the other, a lot is changing, and lot will continue to change with high modernisation. The society needs to create more understanding of the socio-economic and globalization changes that are currently taking place around the world and in the UAE particularly in the coming years. Accordingly, further support for women needs to be taken into consideration to ensure that women are fully taking part and contributing into the UAE growth.
- Institutional Supporting System: On one hand, there are several policies, regulation, initiatives, and supporting programs on place to provide women with the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs and help in advancing

them to higher leadership positions; but on the other, the mentoring system is still fairly weak and needs development to be able to provide the needed guidance and advice for those new aspiring women who are just starting their careers in higher education. Institutions need to identify and develop strategies and programs that focuses on areas of strengths and attend to areas of weaknesses to ensure that full support is given to women and to ensure that these women are fully contributing to their institutions. Universities need to prepare a well-developed professional advancement plan for women that includes programmes, workshops for academic and administering career paths, grants and research foundations directed to women's studies scholarship. An international ranking journal directed towards academic and administrative career paths in higher education is a recommended as a starting point to support this research field since there are so few publications about the UAE, Arabian Gulf, and Middle East region.

- **Individuals Self-development:** it is very obvious from the women's stories in this study that they all are very concerned with their career and are always working for the next step in their advancement plan, yet, almost all of them are still confused about the two career paths within higher education: academic and administrative. Women need to focus their efforts and hard work, and decide on which path they are more committed to instead of dividing their energies between the two paths. Considering the very limited number of scholarly women at high professorial ranks in the UAE and Middle East, a further self-development toward this career path is required from women in higher education to build a solid international body of literature that truly represents the position of women in this part of the world compared to the massive

literature on Western women academic and administrative fields, especially higher education.

### **7.3 Further Research**

Considering the very limited literature on women in the Middle East generally and the Arabian Gulf and the UAE in particular as well as some of the obstacles on small number of participates and limited access to public higher education institutions, this study proposes a foundation for future research to be conducted on women's career development in higher education and other fields. There are several areas that could be investigated, such as the following:

- Studies using a larger sample of universities in the UAE through involving public and private universities.
- Studies using diverse samples of women through comparative studies between Emirati women and Arab, Gulf, and Muslim women to investigate possible differences – if any and then with Western countries.
- Comparative studies between Emirati women and Emirati men through investigating the impact of influencers and factors emerged from this study, comparing the similarities, and examining the differences.
- Comparative studies that could use different career levels of women and possibly men like the faculty level at all ranks, graduating students who are aspiring to work in higher education institutions, and Ministry of Higher Education employees.
- On a methodological level, future proposed studies could use more qualitative methods: questionnaires, observations, journaling, individual documents, and

focus groups to gain more reliability of the theoretical framework used in this study and give more credibility to themes emerged in this study.

- A mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative could be used for more validity and reliability of the theoretical framework used in this study and give more credibility to themes emerging in this study.
- On a theoretical framework level, and considering the uniqueness of this study that looks into deep understating of women life, a hermeneutic, phenomenology or life history approach, or one that uses a socio-cultural identity model will give deeper insights into women's' life stories and reveal more information and knowledge that would help in deeply understanding the current situation of women pursuing their career advancement.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A Interview Guide – Semi Structured (Women in senior Academic and Administrative leadership positions)

Please share with me some of your background information in terms of age, marital status, current position (years), and education.

#### **Early childhood & Family**

1. Tell me about your childhood and your parents/family
2. Tell me about your education
3. Who, if any, influenced your childhood and adulthood life positively and/or negatively (role model)? Describe how did she/he contributed to the person you are now
4. Are there relatives or extended family member with leadership positions (particularly women)? Describe how did she/he influenced your childhood and contributed to the person you are now
5. Could you describe for me a family and/or personal incidents that lead to struggles? And how they affected you personally?
6. What strategies have you developed along the way to handle family and/or personal issues?
7. Could you describe how this background contributed to the person you are now?

#### **Career development**

1. What was your career path? Describe how you prepared yourself?
2. Was there more than one career path? Was it changed significantly?
3. How long did it take you to reach this position?
4. When did you realize you needed to move on to a leadership position? What was going on in your life then?
5. What factors do you believe have contributed to your career development?

6. Did you have a mentor/role model that helped guide your career, and if so, what effect did mentoring have on your career development?
7. Can you describe how your family/husband contributed in to your career development path?
8. Could you describe changes, if any, in your personal, professional life to accommodate your career development? How did you handle them?
9. What strategies have you developed along the way to balance family, personal, and professional during your career development?

### **Organizational, Cultural, and Society Support**

1. How would you describe the Emirati women career development in moving to an academic leadership position?
2. How does society perceive women's career development in to leadership positions? Tell me more about the government influence
3. How does culture influence women career advancement into leadership positions?
4. What organizational barriers (implicit and/or explicit), if any, do you believe Emirati women face in moving on to an academic leadership position in the UAE? Have you encountered any? Describe how you overcame them.
5. Can you describe the kind of organizational support that you have received in your career path to a leadership position?
6. Did you get any support from your colleagues and/or subordinates? How?
7. What do you think are the general advantages and/or disadvantage (if any) to being a woman in this profession?
8. In your opinion, what are the differences between men and women in their career development in academia in the UAE?
9. What advice would you give any woman who wants to pursue an academic leadership position in higher education?
10. Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

## **Appendix B**

### **Pilot Study - Interviews Questions**

Please share with me some of your background information in terms of age, marital status, current position (years), and education.

#### **Interview # 1**

- Tell me about your childhood and your parents/family
- Tell me about your education
- Who, if any, influenced your life positively and/or negatively (role model)?
- Could you describe for me a family and/or personal incidents that lead to struggles? And how they affected you personally?
- What strategies have you developed along the way to handle family and/or personal issues?
- Could you describe how this background contributed to the person you are now?

#### **Interview # 2**

- What was your career path? Describe how you prepared yourself?
- How long did it take you to reach this position?
- What was the final push for your career?
- What factors do you believe have contributed to your career development?
- Did you have a mentor/role model that helped guide your career, and if so, what effect did mentoring have on your career development?
- Could you describe changes, if any, in your personal, professional life to accommodate your career development? How did you handle them?
- What strategies have you developed along the way to balance family, personal, and professional during your career development?

### **Interview # 3**

- What organizational barriers (implicit and/or explicit), if any, do you believe women face in moving on to an academic leadership position in the UAE? Have you encountered any? Describe how you overcame them.
- What strategies have you utilized to gain acceptance in your organization especially with men? Have the strategies you used differed based on the gender of the stakeholder?
- Have you had difficulty getting needed resources or support to get things done in your position? If so, why? What strategies have helped you overcome these barriers to achieve desired goals?
- Tell me if you think gender has played any positive or negative role in your academic leadership position. If so, why? If not, why not?
- What do you think are the general advantages and/or disadvantages to being a woman in the profession?
- From your perspective, had you been a man, would the institutional, family, and personal barriers you just described have been different? If so, how?
- What advice would you give any woman who wants to pursue an academic leadership position in higher education?
- Is there anything that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

**Appendix C**  
**Document Analysis Guide**

(Adapted from Muhammad, 2012)

Date Source / Document Typed		
Summary		
Connection to Research Questions	Description	Frequency
How do Emirati women describe their leadership career development journeys in academia? (covers: family, parents, role model, mentors, networking, work/personal life balancing, culture)		
Theme derived from data		

<p>What do Emirati women need to do themselves to move to a leadership ranking in academia? (covers: self-efficacy, self-development, education)</p>		
<p>Theme derived from data</p>		
<p>How do higher education institutions support Emirati women moving into leadership positions? (covers: government and organizations)</p>		
<p>Theme derived from data</p>		



What are the patterns of Emirati women's leadership experiences compared to that of women in other countries in the literature?		
Theme derived from data		

## **Appendix D**

### **Letter of Consent Form**

The British University in Dubai and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received a document which describes the procedures, possible risks, and benefits of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. Knowledge of your identity is not required. You will not be required to write your name or any other identifying information on the research materials. Materials will be held in a secure location and will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

I have been asked by **ABEER NAAJEM AL RASBI** a **Doctorate student at The British University in Dubai** to participate in:

A thesis research on **“Understanding the actors that influence Emirati women career development in Higher Education Institutions: Case Study from United Arab Emirates”**

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this research is to explore the position of women’s academic and administrative leadership and career development in higher education in the UAE in terms of their academic path, challenges they face, how these challenges affect their leadership career development, and most importantly, what significant experiences and influences throughout their lives have shaped a successful leadership style. This includes the factors that have inspired and affected them in reaching their leadership positions, and how they manage their positions. This paper will present a career trajectory case studies of Emirati women from UAE who are in academic and administrative leadership positions in higher education institutions from the perspective Super’s (1957) ‘Life Span Life Space’ career development theory and drawing on elements from Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), with complement of social constructivism lens from career development based on the work of Savickas (2005) on career construction theory to explore exploring early childhood and family experiences, the role model influence, critical factors in shaping their leadership style, and the nature of their successful leadership experiences through using a constructivist grounded theory approach.

#### **Interview process:**

It will be one to three interviews for around one to 2 hours (as per the agreement with the research) held in a place chosen by the participants.

I will be using a voice recorder upon the agreement of the participants and in case they do not agree a notes will be taken. The interviews will be transcribed and a copy will be given to the participants for their approval. The tape, interview notes, and transcription will be kept in a locked cabinet and the researcher will be the one with sole access to it. Upon completion of the thesis, the tapes and original transcripts will be destroyed.

I have read the procedures specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this experiment and the personal risks to me in taking part.

I agree to participate by taking part in this interview during the time period agreed upon at UAEU – Al Ain – United Arab Emirates or any other placed agreed by the research and the participants.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this study at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the experiment with the researcher named above or with:

**Dr. Eugenie Samier, Director of Studies (Supervisor)**

**Faculty of Education at The British University in Dubai**

**Telephone number: 04-3914343**

**[eugenie.samier@buid.ac.ae](mailto:eugenie.samier@buid.ac.ae)**

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting:

**Abeer Naajem Al Rasbi**

**Email: [abeer.alrasbi@gmail.com](mailto:abeer.alrasbi@gmail.com) or [110002@student.buid.ac.ae](mailto:110002@student.buid.ac.ae)**

I have been informed that the research material will be held confidential by the Principal Investigator.

I understand that my supervisor or employer may require me to obtain his or her permission prior to my participation in a study such as this.

**NAME (Please type or print legibly):** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_