

Effects of Education on Empowerment of Saudi Women

Ilham Elsayed

Abstract— Accentuating the importance of women contribution to growth and development, this study aims to analyze the effects of education on empowerment of Saudi women. Extensive review to data within the context of Saudi women's education and empowerment were done. Descriptive and quantitative analysis was done for the data collected from variable resources; Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia Central Department of Statistics and Information, Higher Education Statistics Center, Information and Studies Center at Eastern Chamber, Saudi Arabian Monetary agency and Global Gender Gap Report 2016. The study shows that, the number of males and females are almost equal according to 2015 population data, but when it comes to labor force mismatch between them is observed with higher opportunities for males. The research found that, the labor market does not cope with the steady increase in the number of female graduates. Focusing on empowerment of Saudi women, the study proved that contribution of women in business directors, services, and engineering sectors is limited compared to males as the gap widening in both Services and Engineering sectors. The study found that students' enrollment in various engineering specializations is dominated by male. Moreover, females' involvement in technical training, in comparison to males is very limited. On the other hand, the study found that, there is a gradual increase on the number of females joining postgraduate studies recently compare to that previously graduated. The study recommends investment in further education for females by providing more opportunities for females in specialties that required by labor market and hence increase possibilities to empower Saudi women focusing on that directly affects decision making and strategic planning.

Index Terms—Saudi Women, Education, Higher Education Institutions, Empowerment, Gender Gap.

1 INTRODUCTION

MIDDLE East countries have lower levels of women's education and labor force participation than other regions having similar levels of income [15]. As gender discrimination in some of these countries might be collated in family and/or civil laws. Moreover, in some countries women must obtain permission from a male relative, usually a husband or father, before seeking employment, requesting a loan, starting a business, or traveling. In Saudi Arabia, there is a gradual development to support women's involvement in various domains. In 2011 King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz issued a Royal Decree [3] to include Saudi women in all governmental departments by accelerating the creation of women's departments in Agencies that not yet have. His majesty also mandated Feminization and Saudization of industrial jobs that appropriate for Saudi women. Recently, Saudi Minister of labor [2] endorsed that, woman's work is acquired right and that creation of suitable jobs for her is one of Ministry of labor priorities. Moreover, reduction of unemployment rate from 11.6% to 7%, and increasing contribution of women in the labor force from 22% to 30% are two declared objectives of Saudi 2030 vision [12]. This could be achieved by the commitments explicitly emphasized in 2030 vision that focusing on developing mining sector, and rehabilitation of industrial cities, simplifying finance and support of electronic marketing [12]. To achieve these goals and

commitments joint efforts from all parties including higher education institutions are required leading to effective and positive impact on labor market. Nevertheless, rates of unemployment are increasing due to employment opportunities devoted to immigrant workers especially in private sector [8]. This may be attributed to the fact that higher education in Saudi Arabia assign few opportunities to study variable specialties. This situation reflects the necessities of depending on immigrant workers in some fields, which constrain the application of Sawada Program. Albahussein [1] investigated the skills required for the job market in private sector in Saudi Arabia and the ability of higher education curriculum in providing these skills. According to his findings, 78.8% of survey sample consider the curriculum is not suitable for provision of the required skills. Based on his results, the skills required by the labor market include; sincerity and hard work, discipline, ability to work in teams, mastery of English Language and Information Technology. On the other hand, Elmulthum and Adam [5] concluded that, however women education's is following an upward trend, availability of employment opportunities does not keep pace with increased educational chances for females. Furthermore, women have only very rare chances to decide upon vital issues related to them, their families or policy making and that is because of limited opportunities to assign them for senior positions. In Saudi Arabia, specialty offered for females is to some extent limited. Elsayed and Abdelmagid [7] in their study recommend more Engineering specialty for females. Although Saudi females are contributing significantly on both Medical and Education fields, her contribution at decision making levels are limited. Moreover, she is still lagging in many educational specialties such as

• Elsayed Ilhamis currently faculty at King Faisal university, college of Engineering, Biomedical Engineering Department, Chair, PH-+966507825505. E-mail: ielsayed@kfu.edu.sa.

engineering. In Saudi Arabia, there is 24 Governmental universities among them there is only one engineering program offered for females [7]. Biomedical engineering program is a new program offered for females at only two universities. In 2010 Dammam University accepted females for the biomedical engineering program, while King Faisal University enrolled females two years later [18]. Both universities are in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia. They found that, Environmental Engineering program for females was never offered in Saudi. Such specialty is quite convenient for females. Unless more opportunities are given for females the contribution of females in either labor market or decision making will always be remarked as unsatisfactory and below prophecies of 2030 vision. This research focuses on studying and analyzing the potentials that education might impose on to empowerment of Saudi Women.

2 METHODOLOGY

Data was gathered from various governmental and non-governmental agency. Data concerning university graduates and staff members at higher education institution was obtained from Saudi Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia Central Department of Statistics and Information, Ministry of Economics and Planning and Saudi Higher Education Statistics Center. In addition to data obtained from Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency which focuses on unemployment rates and labor force. Moreover, data revealed by Global Gender Gap Reports 2016.

According to the United Nations Development Program publications, Gender Empowerment Measure is composed of three indicators: (i) the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (ii) the percentage of women in economic decision-making positions, including administrative and managerial positions, as well as professional and technical occupations and (iii) the female share of income [4] (Beteta H. C., 2006). For the purpose of this study, the empowerment of Saudi women is analyzed with respect to (i) and (ii) indicators only. Descriptive and quantitative statistics analysis were employed. Graphs and tables were constructed, analyzed and discussed to assess effects of education on empowerment of Saudi women.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Education and skills

Figures 1 and 2 below show that, education attained by both males and females is almost similar with slight variation on skills gained.

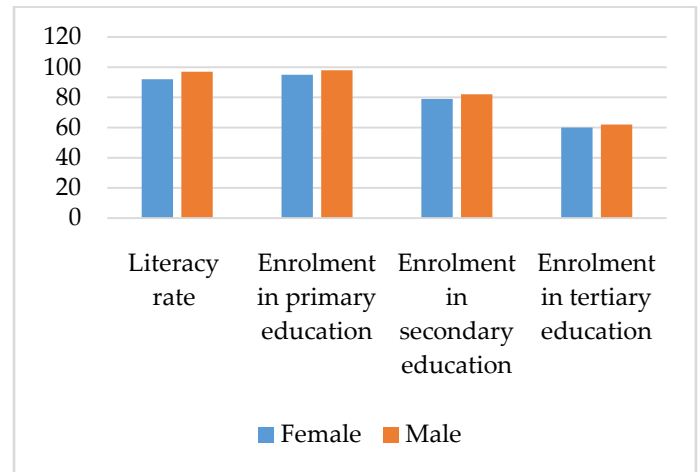


Fig. 1. Educational attainment by gender 2016

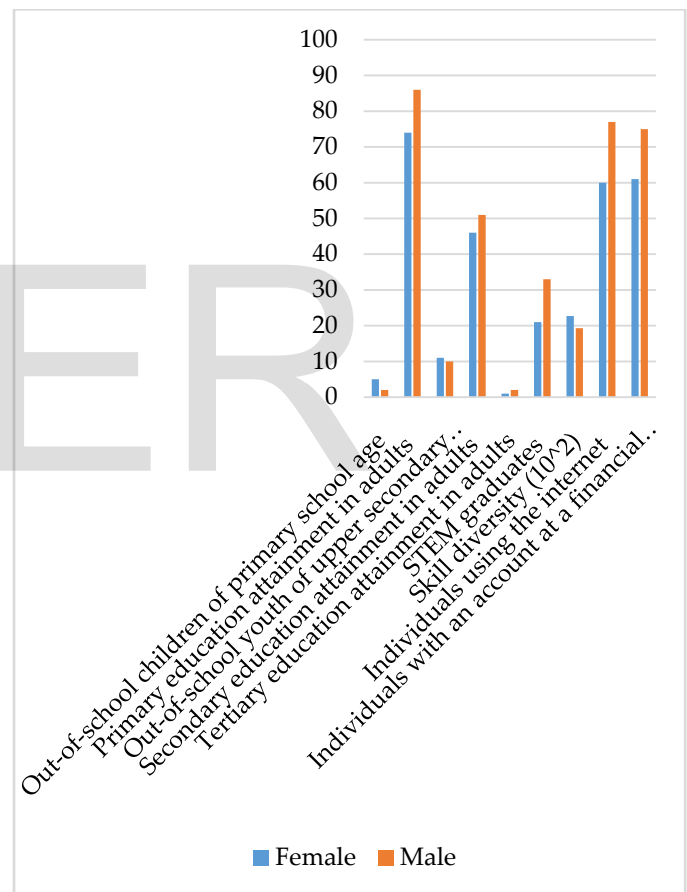


Fig. 2. Education and skills by gender 2016

On the other hand, figures 3 below shows that, there is a considerable variation between number of Saudi male and female graduates from 1999-2013

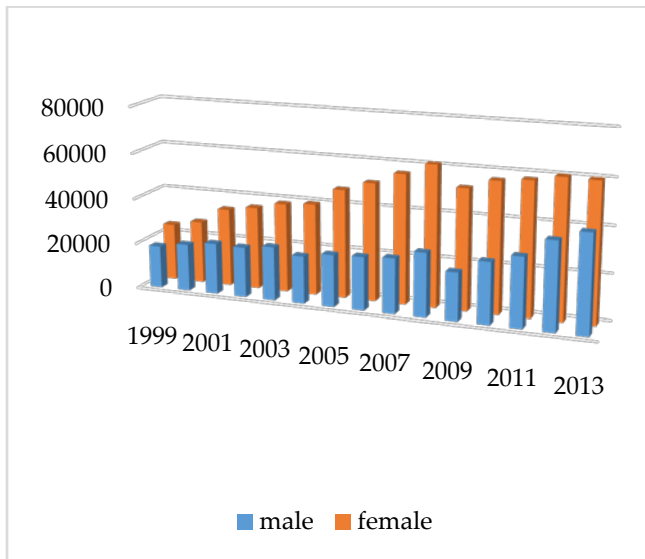


Fig. 3. Number of Saudi Male and Female Graduates 1999-2013

While figures 4,5 and 6 below summarized the stages of post-graduate for government and private educational institutes in KSA from 2014- 2015. They show that, there is a gradual increase on the number of females joining postgraduate studies recently compared to those were previous graduated. Which emphasize the empowerment of women with high prediction to achieve 2030 Saudi Vision goals [8].

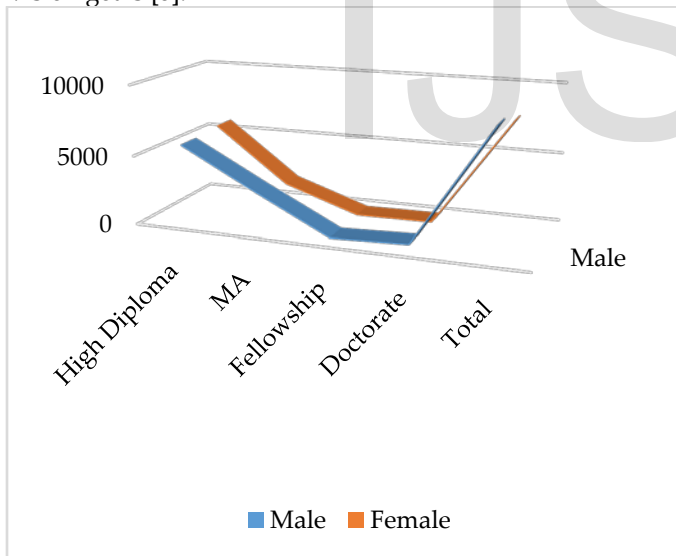


Fig. 4. Statistical Summary on Previously Graduated Post-graduates for Government and Private Educational Institutes 2014-2015

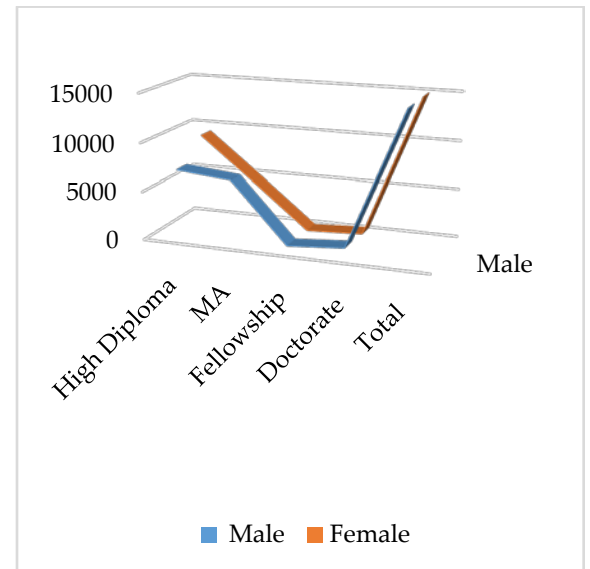


Fig. 5. Statistical Summary on New Post-Graduate Students for Government and Private Educational Institutes 2014- 2015

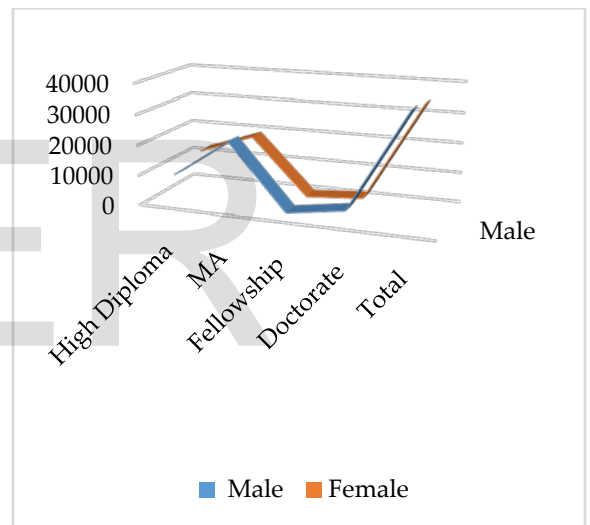


Fig. 6. Statistical Summary on Registered Post-graduates for Government and Private Educational Institutes 2014- 2015

Qualified female graduates have a tangible impact on Saudi society and hence greatly contribute to achieving 2030 Saudi Vision goal to increase contribution of females in the labor market and hence empower them.

3.2 Economic participation and workforce participation

Although, the number of males and females in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are more or less equal[18], economic participation and opportunity data shows mismatch between them with higher opportunities for males as illustrated on Figure 7 below. Moreover, Figures 8 and 9 below that show labor force for male and females in private and public sector from 2005-2015 respectively, emphasize the huge gap between males and females. Both figures indicate consistency with lower participation of females in

both sectors. Which confirm that, the labor market does not coup with the steady increase in the number of female graduates shown in Figure 6 above.

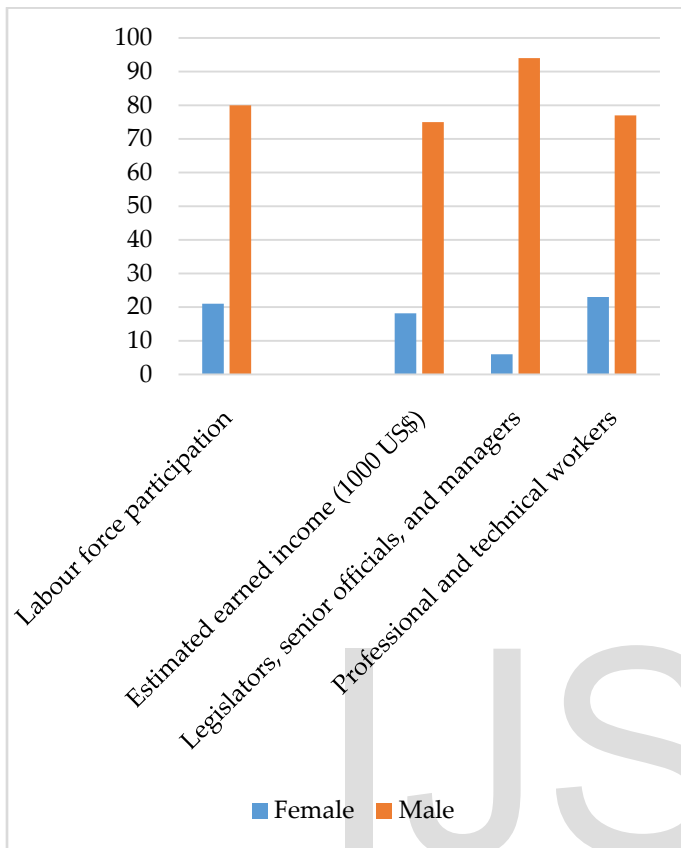


Fig. 7. Economic participation and opportunity by gender 2016

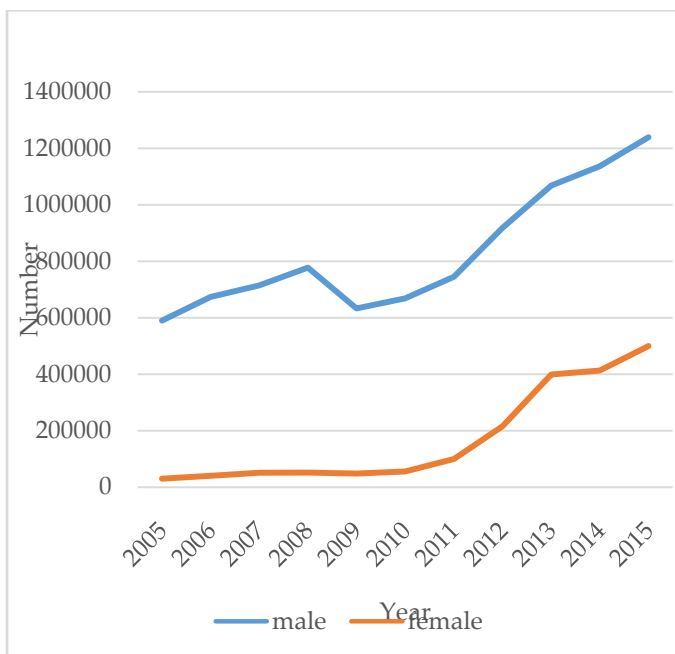


Fig. 8. Labor force in private sector 2005-2015

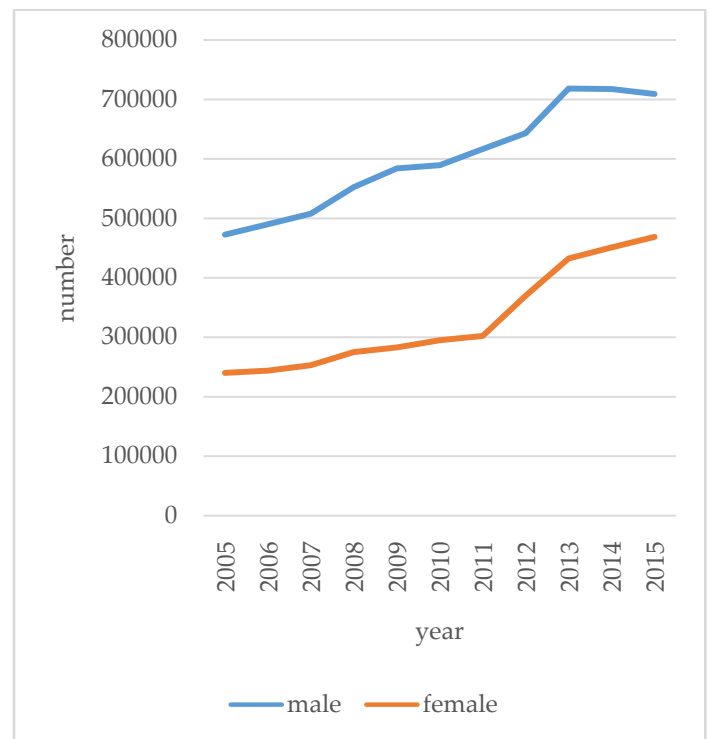


Fig. 9. Labor force in public sectors 2005-2015

In addition to that, Fig. 10 shows employment opportunities for Saudi female staff holding Ph. D degree in higher education institution during the period 2000-2013 steady increase, though, far below male staff members. While, Fig. 11 below shows the percentage of Saudi Ph.D. female staff members from total Saudi staff members, which is still far below male staff members with an average of 23.8%.

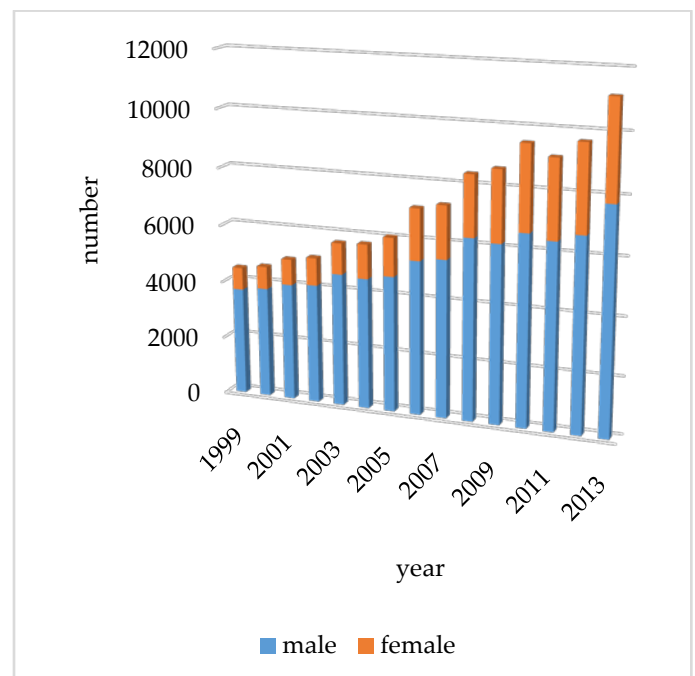


Fig. 10. Ph.D. Staff Members 1999- 2013

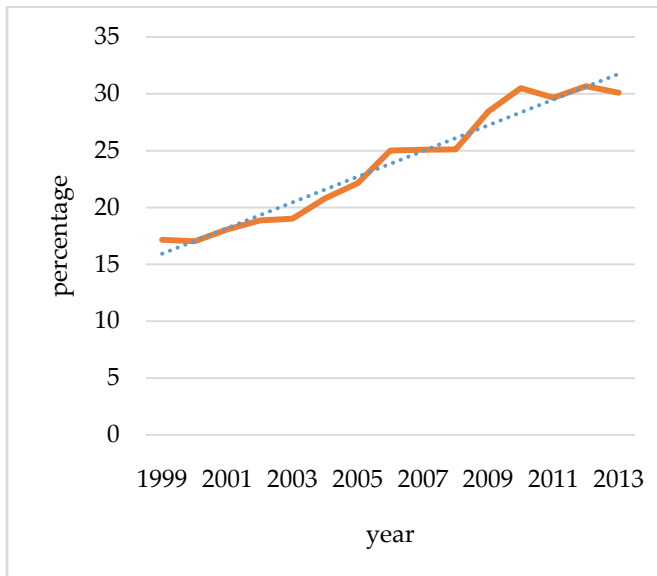


Fig. 11. Percentage of Ph.D. Female Staff Members from Total Staff Members 1999- 2013

As part of the Ministry of Education 's policy on the feminization of educational leadership positions in accordance with the new organizational structure of the Ministry, five female Deans in leadership positions is appointed [14]. Investment in further education for females by providing more opportunities to receive Ph.D. degree from local and international institutes is expected to have a significant impact on quantity and quality of female postgraduates. Hence, they would have great opportunities in the labor market and reflect positively in narrowing the gap between the output of higher education and labor market which is one of the commitments declared by Saudi Vision 2030 and might lead to empowerment of more females.

Although Saudi women strive for advance degrees in education, Fig 12 below confirms that, her participation is still below 60% of males.

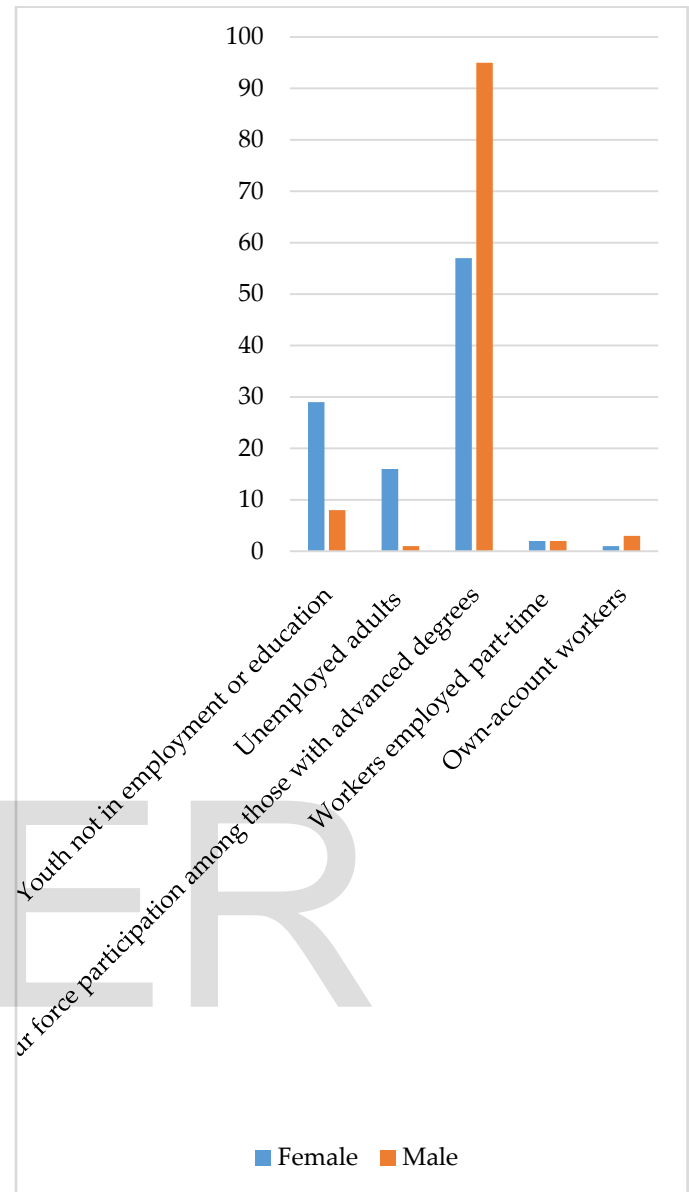


Fig. 12. Workforce participation by gender 2016

Furthermore, figure 13 below, depicts that females are receiving more employment opportunities with slow rate in both services and engineering sectors. However, in business directors the rate is considerably high, which could be attributed to the increase of number of female graduates from relative multi-disciplines [6]. Nevertheless, females' contribution is far below males as confirmed by figure 14 beneath. Although the gap between them is narrowing gradually from 2005 to 2015, females' contribution is less than 50% of that acquired by males.

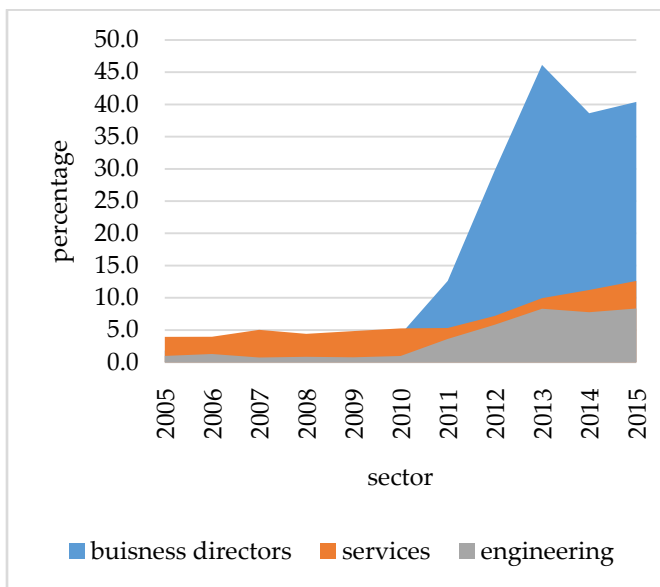


Fig. 13. Rate of Female Employed in Business Director, Service, and Engineering Sectors 2005-2015

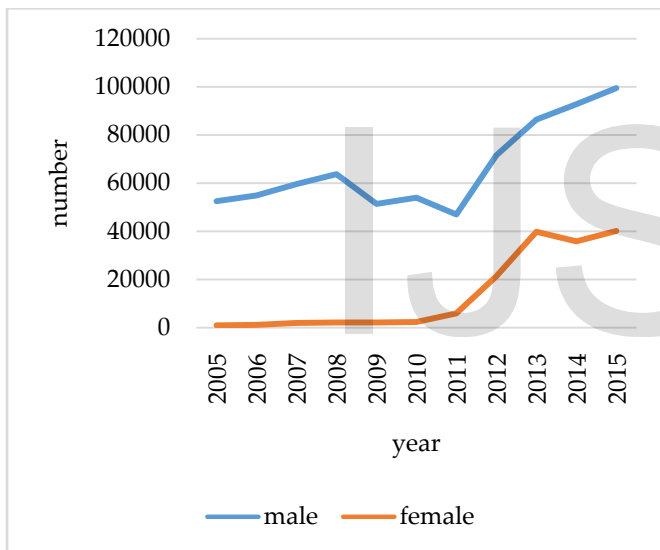


Fig. 14. Managers and Business Directors Employment in Private Sector 2005-2015

Fawzia al-Bakr [11] mentioned that Saudi women achieved in finance and business sector impressive presence, in one week three women were appointed as heads of important financial executives Sectors. Nevertheless, there is still discrimination between males and females, where only the employment of women on a limited range of jobs, even if they found notable exceptions. women do not work in the judiciary and public prosecution, and women constitute only 87 out of 963 diplomatically. However, women are well represented in universities represented, and in health and education sectors [11].

On the other hand, figure 15 below indicated that, the number of graduates from industrial and architecture engineering is increasing during the period 1999-2013, however, students' enrollment in these engineering specializations is dominated by male students [9]. Further

confirmation of very limited opportunities available for females is elaborated in figure 16 below.

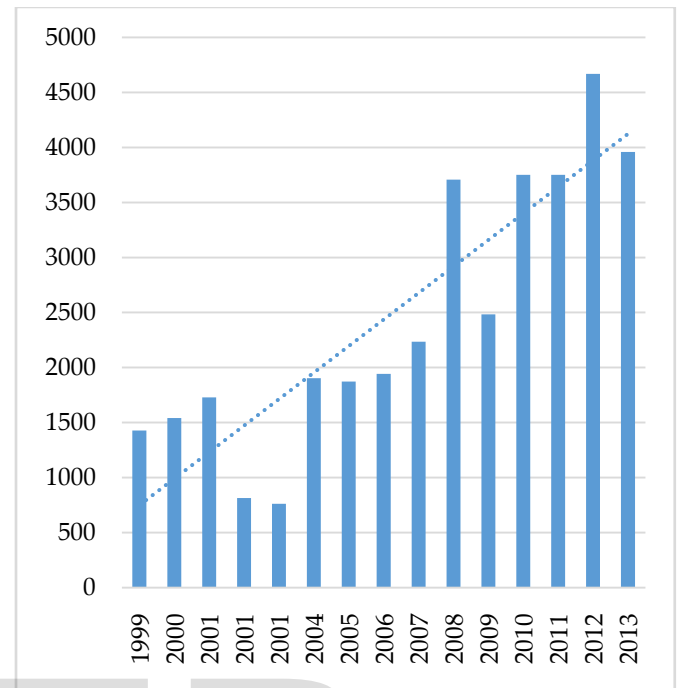


Fig. 15. Graduates of Industrial and Architecture Engineering in Saudi Arabia 2000- 2013

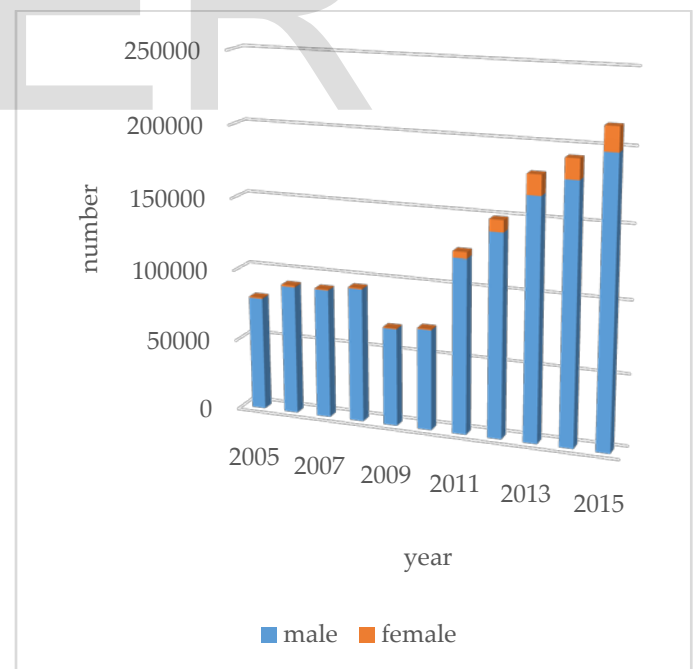


Fig. 16. Employment at Private Sector Engineering Jobs 2005-2015

Results related to engineering sector coincides with the fact of very limited opportunities available for females to study engineering. Data gathered from Ministry of Higher Education [18] shows that, there is 26 Governmental universities among them there is only one engineering discipline offered for females. Biomedical engineering

program is a new program offered for females at only two governmental universities. Dammam University accepted females for the biomedical engineering program in 2010, while King Faisal University in 2013. Moreover, technical training is quite limited for females. Technical and Vocational Training Institutes in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are Governmental Vocational Training Institutes, Strategic Partnerships Institutes and National Private Training Institutes. Females are involved only in training provided by National Private Training Institutes. Figure 17 below shows number of females and males trained at private training institutes' during the period 2011-2015. The figure indicates that females' involvement in technical training, in comparison to males, is very limited. Hence, more chances for employment are available for males especially in private sector where skill assigned a high value.

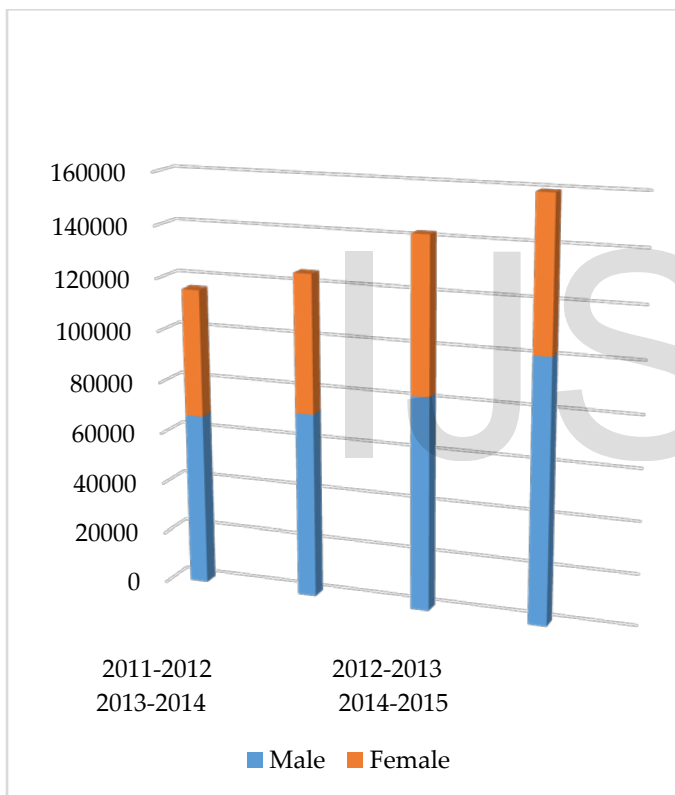


Fig. 17. Number of Females and Males Trained in Saudi Private Training Institutes 2011-2015

3.3 Women's in National Parliaments and Political Empowerment

Figure below depicts the limited political empowerment of women with respect to men. Where the woman representation in both ministerial positions and head of state is zero, while she represents 25% of parliament.

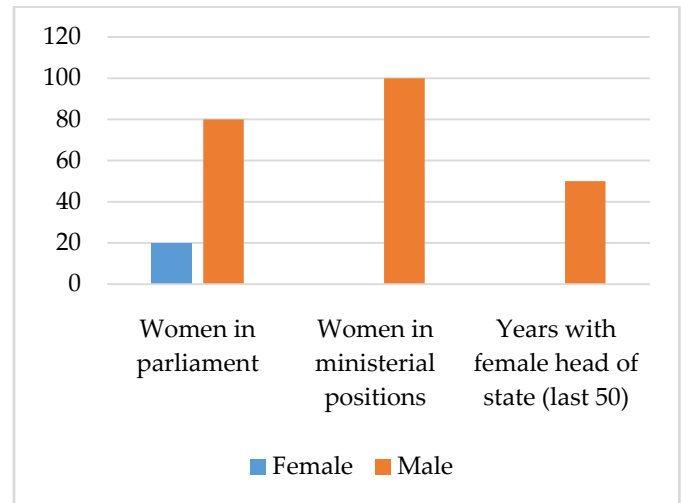


Fig. 18. Political empowerment by gender 2016

Saudi women have made and emboldened steps towards political participation. In 2005 six councilors in part - time female Shura Council (Parliament) were appointed and in 2006 became 12, without eligibility to vote. In 2011, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz announced the entry of Saudi woman member of the Shura Council and legibility to vote. By 2015, woman member enjoys full rights of membership in the Shura Council, and hold a minimum of %20 of the membership seats in parliament. The Shura Council includes 30 women out of 150 members. Moreover, the approval of participation of women in the nomination and election of municipal council so that 22 women were able to reach among 900 women ran as candidacy [14], [11]. In December 2015, for the first time in the history of Saudi Arabia, women won the municipal elections. 13 women won the membership of councils in the primary elections. This is the third elections organized by Saudi Arabia, but the first involving women. In December 2016, 30 women have been appointed as members of the Shura Council for four consecutive years. Equivalent to 30% of the members of Saudi Shura Council [19]. The female members that are highly educated, PhD or equivalent degree, are 75%. While the other 7 members are well educated with minimum Bachelor degree.

4 CONCLUSION

The study shows that, the number of males and females according to 2015 population data for Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are almost equal. Nonetheless when it comes to labor force mismatch between them is observed with higher opportunities for males. The study concludes that, the labor market does not cope with the steady increase in the number of female graduates. The study indicates that contribution of women in business directors, services, and engineering sectors is limited compared to males as the gap widening in both services and engineering sectors. However, in business directors the gap is decreasing, which could be attributed to the increase of number of female graduates from relative multi-disciplines. The study found

that male students dominate enrollment in various engineering specializations. Moreover, females' involvement in technical training, in comparison to males is very limited. Although the involvement of females in variable specialty is increasing, the pace is very slow in some disciplines as Engineering and industrial fields.

Although, the results of this study show that females are gaining more educational opportunities, her representation in effective position is limited. Education is a key factor affecting her selection for any position, but still it is not the only dynamic factor in economic decision-making positions, administrative and managerial positions, professional and technical occupations as well as seats in parliaments.

Gender equality and women's empowerment by supporting them in education, health, economy, community participation and involve them in development processes is obligatory. Nevertheless, 2016 Meeting of Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) Women Leaders: Management Development, shows that Saudi empowerment is very limited compare to international standards [13]. According to Saudi Social Development Indicator, Saudi women empowerment is only 2% compare to other GCC states that hits 23%, international standard equivalent to 53% and 76% in developed countries [13]. This study stress on the findings of previous studies [5], [8], [9] [10], [11] that emphasizing investment in women's capacities and empowering them to make their own choices, and stresses that their empowerment is crucial to the goal of sustainable development of kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi women are empowered partially, by gaining more shared leadership, decision-making, and access to government and community resources. It remains the role of women in Saudi Arabia is very limited and subject to certain religious interpretations, not necessarily approved by all Muslim scholars. She is still having no right to drive cars and work in some jobs.

To achieve empowerment of women, it is recommended that women continue to empower themselves through attaining higher educational levels and more training and development. Women should establish their own organizations in different working institutions to make their voice heard and bring about the desired benefits of education for themselves, their children as well as their communities. It is highly recommended to increase number of graduates in specialties that required by labor market to involve more females in different specialties that directly affect decision-making and strategic planning depending on clear effective swift plans to cope with imperative strategies of Saudi Arabia 2030 Vision.

REFERENCES

- [1] Albahussein S., 2006, "Skills Required for Private Sector and Role of Higher Education Provision: An Empirical Study," *Economic and Administrative Sciences Journal*, 22(1): 1-24.
- [2] Alyamamah Saudi News Paper, 2015, "Women's work is an acquired right and a priority for the Ministry of labor," Article 1114140: <http://sites.alriyadh.com/alyamamah/article/1114140>
- [3] Alyaum Saudi News Paper, 2011, "Feminization Feminine Shops Outlets and 52000 Jobs in Education," Article 3014386: <http://www.alyaum.com/article/3014386>, Sept. 09, 2016
- [4] Beteta H. C., 2006, "What is missing in measures of Women's Empowerment," *Journal of Human Development*, 7(2): 221-241
- [5] Elmulthum N. and Adam N., 2010, "The Gap between women education and Empowerment: the case of Sudan," proceedings of 30th IFUW (ex-GWI), Mexico: <http://www.graduatwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/elmulthum.pdf>, Browsed March. 09, 2017.
- [6] Elmulthum N., Albisiry L., 2016, "Higher Education Specializations and Labor Market in Saudi Arabia and University Graduates Challenges: Case Study Eastern Region," *Journal for human and Social studies*, Center for scientific research, 3 (26): 133-149 (in Arabic).
- [7] Elsayed I. S. M. and Abdelmagid I., 2016, "Suitability of Environmental Engineering Program for Female in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study on King Faisal University," *International Digital Organization for Scientific Information*, Middle East Journal of Scientific Research, 24 (11): 3604-3610.
- [8] Elsayed I. S. M. and Elmulthum N., 2016, "Potentials of Achieving Saudi Vision 2030 Goal to Empower Saudi Women," *International Journal of Current Research*, 8 (12): 42716- 42726.
- [9] Eman Aman, 2017, "Empowerment of Saudi women in the energy sector and 2030 Saudi Vision," <http://arb.majalla.com/2017/03/article55257686/%D8%AA%D9%85%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A9>, Access April 21, 2017
- [10] Eqbal Z. Darandari, 2009, "Quality Assurance as an Empowerment Tool for Women: A Case from Saudi Arabia," http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/darandari/Research%20Papers/Inqaahee2009_Quality%20Assurance%20as%20an%20Empowerment%20Tool%20for%20Women.pdf, Accessed June 2017.
- [11] Fawzia al-Bakr, 2017, "Political representation for Saudi women," <http://www.al-jazirah.com/2017/20170223/ar2.htm>, Accessed April 21, 2017
- [12] Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030: <http://vision2030.gov.sa/> browsed Oct. 15, 2016.
- [13] Meeting of Gulf Corporation Council Women Leaders: Management Development, 2016.
- [14] Ministry of Communication and Information Technology SA, 2015, Women in Saudi Arabia, <https://www.saudi.gov.sa/wps/portal/SaudiPages/Pages/saudiWomen>, Accessed April 21, 2017
- [15] Roudi-Fahimi F. and Moghadam V. M., 2003, "Empowering Women, Developing Society: Female Education in The Middle East and North Africa," Population Reference Bureau:
- [16] Saudi Arabia Central Department of Statistics and Information, Ministry of Economics and Planning, Statistical Year Book for 2015: <http://www.stats.gov.sa/ar/413-0>, browsed Oct. 18, 2016.
- [17] Saudi Arabian Monetary Fund: <http://www.sama.gov.sa/enus/pages/default.aspx>
- [18] Saudi Higher Education Statistics Center: <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/ar/> browsed September 20, 2016.
- [19] Shura Council of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016, "Shura in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: A Historical Background,"
- [20] World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2016: <http://reports.weforum.org/feature->

demonstration/files/2016/10/SAU.pdf, browsed March. 09, 2017

IJSER