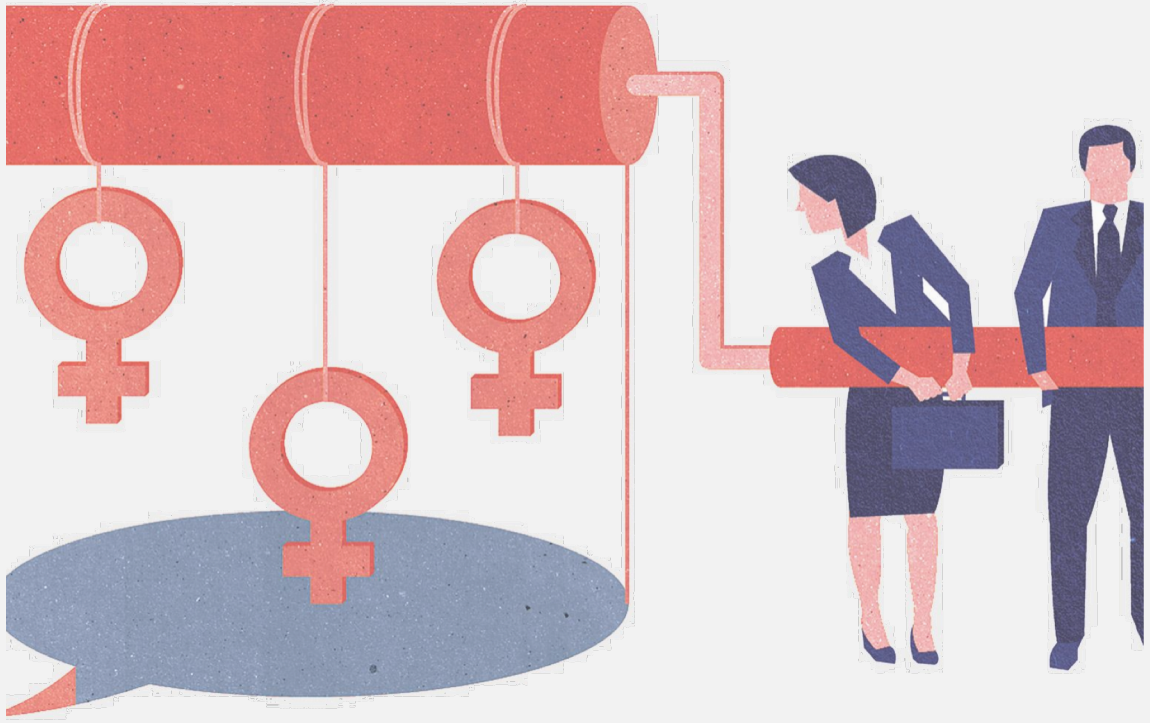
Longitudinal Investigation of Leader Development among Saudi Women Academics: How Does Readiness Matter?



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Outline

- Introduction
- Motivation
- Research Question
- Research Problem
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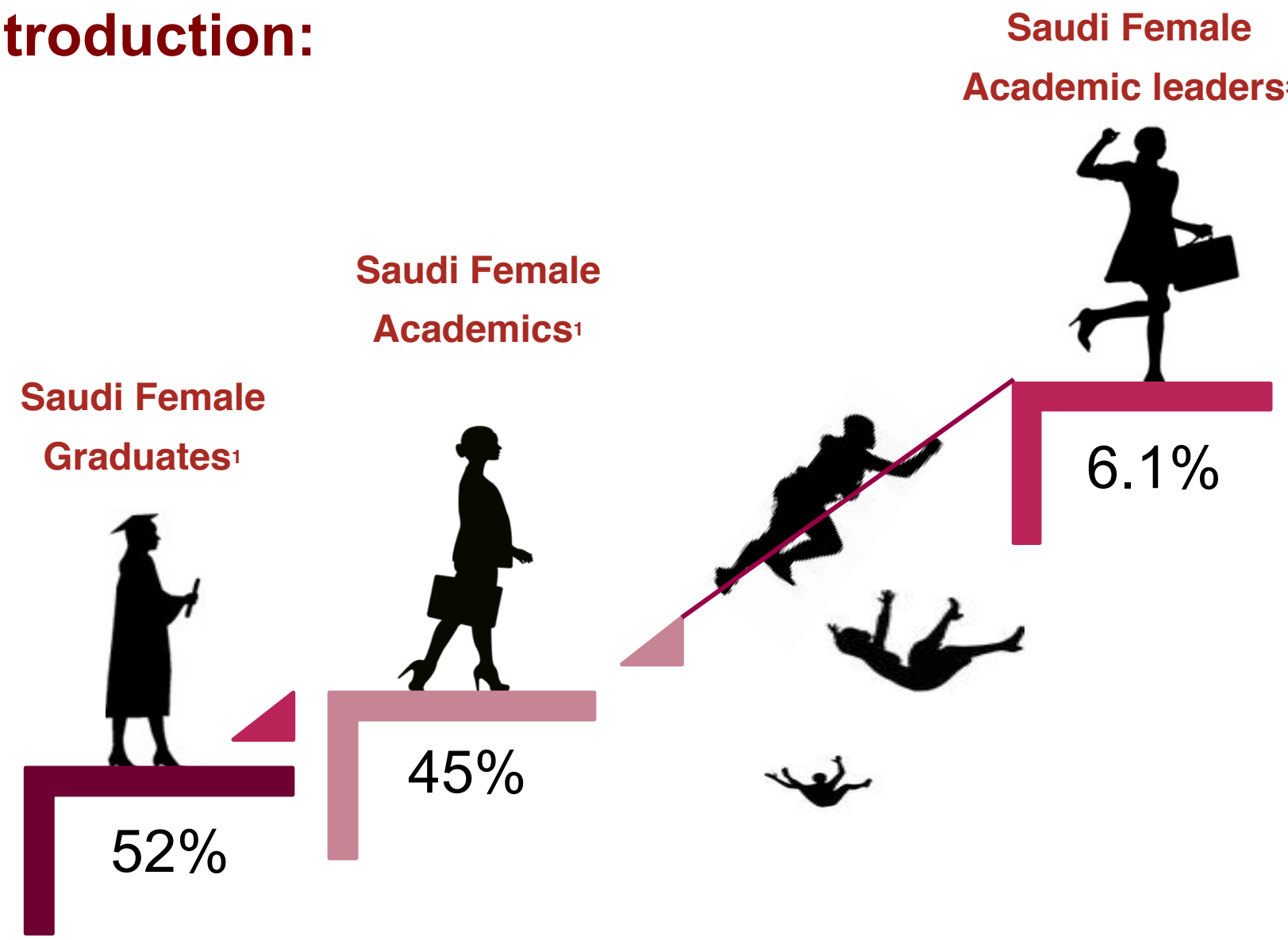
- Research Design
- Analysis and Initial Findings
- Conclusion

Introduction:



1. Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, 2016

3. Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010, cited in , S.H., 2014. Road to leadership: Experiences of Saudi women in higher education. Ann : Colorado State University.

Motivation:

As a Saudi woman academic, I witnessed many social constraints, as well as a high level of qualification, awareness and eagerness, among women in seeking to develop as leaders. This inspired me to thoroughly investigate why women in Saudi Arabia are still excluded from senior roles in the country, save for a few exceptions.

Research Questions:

- How do Saudi women academics' make sense of their experience in their way up to positions of power?

Research Problem:

My main argument WAS

- Women's academic advancement as leaders in Saudi Arabia is entangled within a context of embedded sociocultural constraints, which suggests that leader identity is fundamentally intrapersonal (identity theory approach).
- Consistent with van Knippenberg (2012), this study proposes that one's self-view as a leader might be more important than being part of a group (social identity approach).

Yet, data has contradicted my assumption

The Theoretical Position:

- I incorporate literature on leader identity development (Ibarra et al. 2010; Lord & Hall 2005) and leader developmental readiness (Avolio & Hannah 2009; Avolio & Hannah 2008; Avolio 2016; Best 2010; Graue 2006; Reichard & Walker 2016; Shebaya 2011) through a gender lens (Skinner 2014) to empirically investigate how leader identity is formed over time within the context of political and sociocultural constraints.

Research Design and Data collection:

leader developmental readiness

(Avolio & Hannah 2009; Avolio & Hannah 2008;Avolio 2016; Best 2010; Graue 2006; Reichard & Walker 2016; Shebaya 2011)

Phase 2 10 semi-structured interviews

Potential ethical issues in gathering stories.

Phase 1

Informal interviews, observation (during)

30 semi-structured interviews (after)

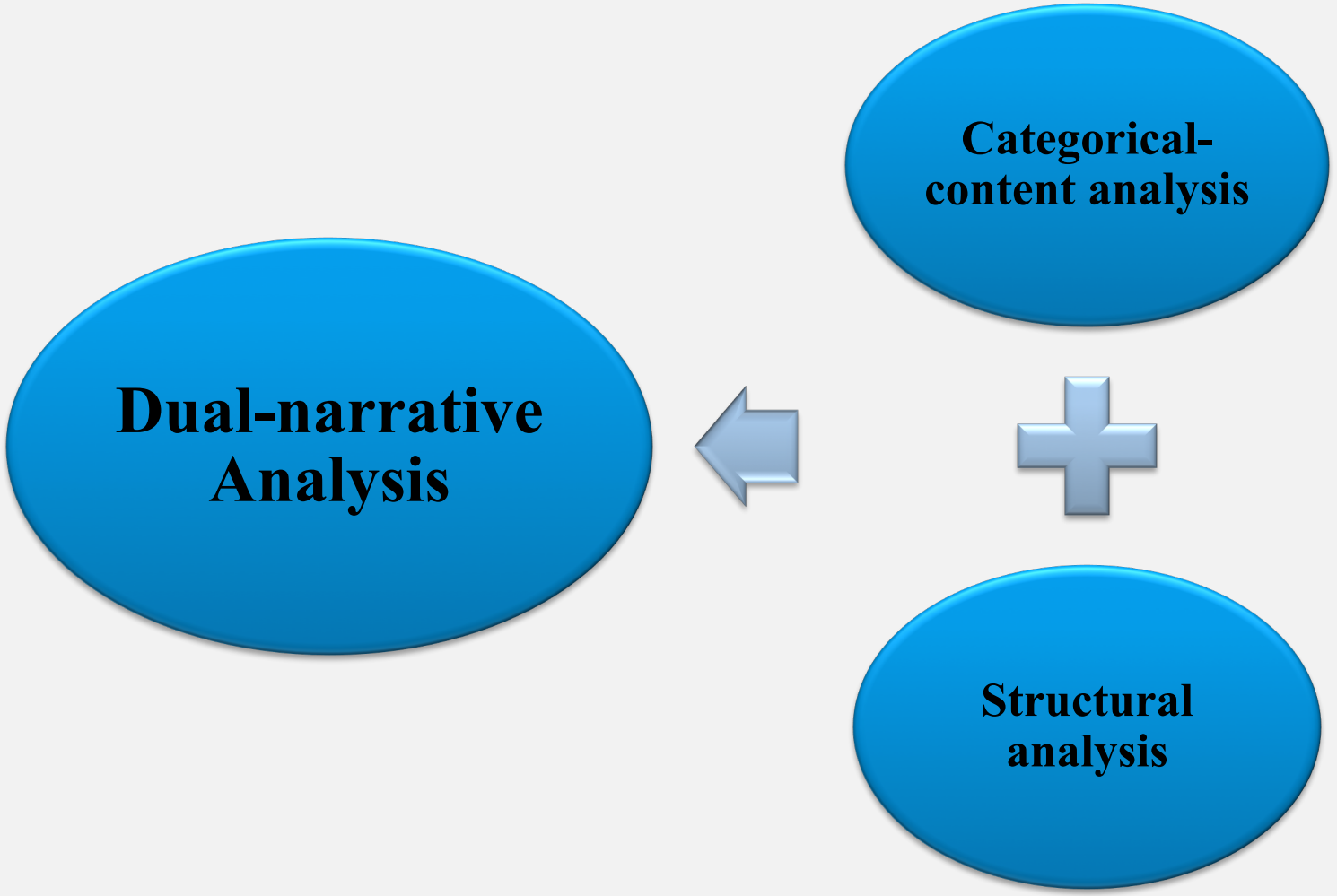
leader identity development

(Ibarra et al. 2010; Lord & Hall 2005)

Context (Saudi Arabia):

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Data Analysis:

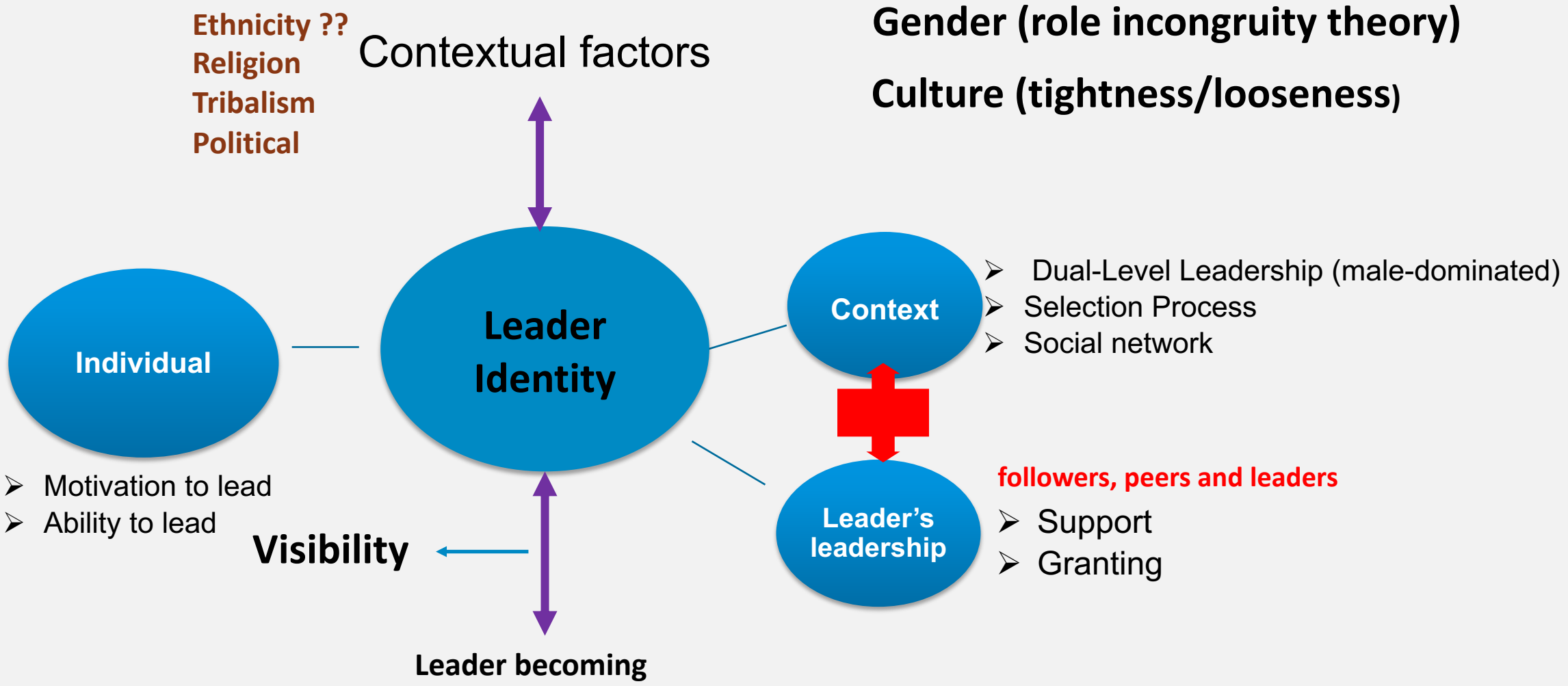


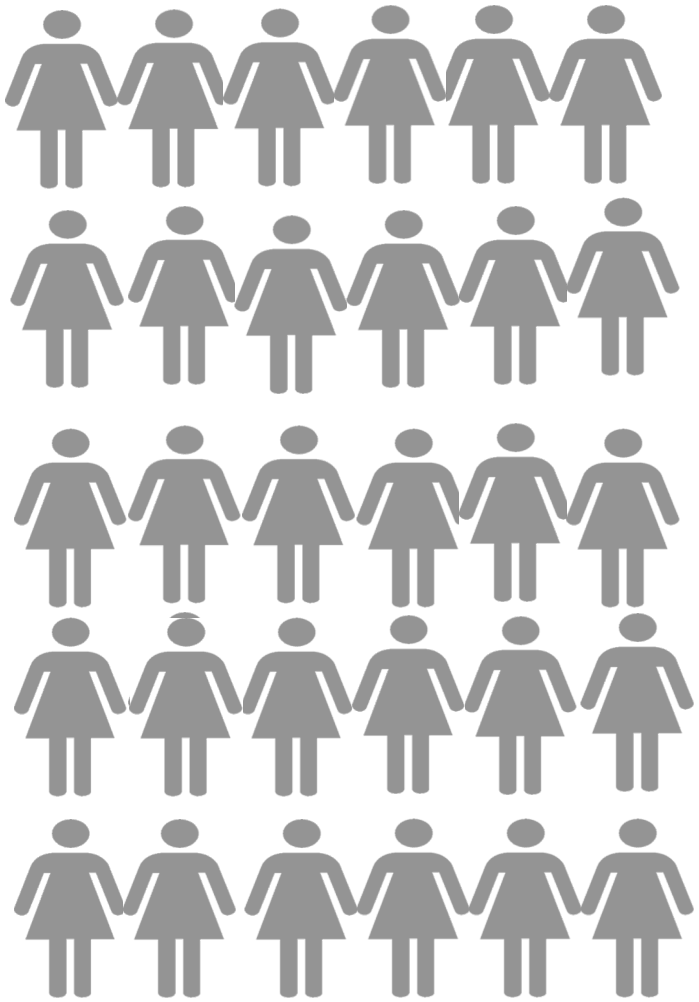
Highlight key themes within, and between, participants.

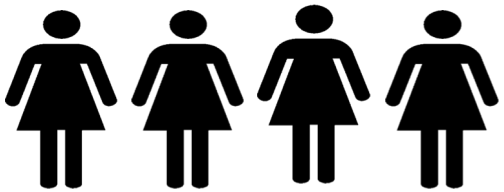
The narrative as a whole

Categorical-content analysis:

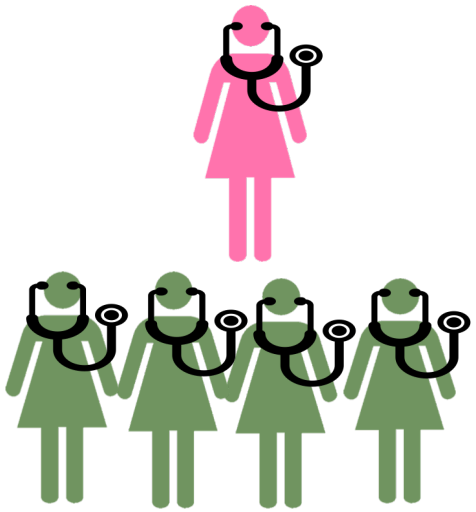
Framework of Leader Development in tight culture (gender lens)







Dual-level leadership
Gender-segregation



Gender-neutral workplace

The necessity of life and death situations created a visibility paradox, whereas women in tight religious cultures is allowed to directly work with men in this context.

Categorical-content analysis- Initial findings:

- Preliminary findings suggest

✓ Saudi women's ability to claim and grant leadership roles is **context-dependent.**

✓ The level of readiness to emerge as leader varies from one individual to another depends on the nature of the context in which the organization operates in consistent with (Avolio, 2016).

✓ Yet, initial findings reveal gender inequality practices that impact Saudi women's advancement are institutionalised within the country's higher educational system.

✓ Accordingly, **gender segregation among some university faculties plays a vital role in hindering women's visibility as legitimate leaders.** Surprisingly, observations during interviews illuminated an element not previously proposed in the study framework: the effect of ethnic categorisation on shaping Saudi women's experiences, a theme explored further.

Conclusion:

- This study assumes that how women leader's develop in tight culture is somehow linked to the readiness of the context in which leadership is unfolding.
- In the case of Saudi women academics, there is growing evidence that new socio-political reforms in SA are changing perceptions toward accepting more women in elite positions (Rheault 2007); however, there is a long way toward the social legitimacy of women academics.

Questions

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