EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT OF WOMEN INSTRUCTOR IN SAUDI ARABIA

ENGAJAMENTO DE FUNCIONÁRIAS INSTRUTORAS NA ARÁBIA SAUDITA

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Abstract
Employee engagement signifies a symbiotic relationship between employees and their organization. The voluntary involvement and commitment of employees are crucial for organizational success and growth. As the business environment grows increasingly complex and volatile, organizations seek innovative ways to enhance productivity and profitability, demanding high levels of competence, involvement, and commitment from their workforce. Instructors are among the most significant professionals for any nation's future progress. The paramount challenge today is not merely retaining talented employees but fully engaging them—capturing their hearts and minds throughout their careers. This study, therefore, attempts to identify and analyse the employee engagement levels of female instructors in various management colleges in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Method: Data were collected from 150 female instructors at management colleges in Riyadh, KSA, using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. The data were analysed using SPSS software. The analysis involved calculating the mean for all questionnaire items to understand the basic response pattern, followed by correlation analysis to examine the associations between the three core dimensions, and multiple regression analysis. Results & Conclusion: The findings

Resumo
O engajamento dos funcionários representa uma relação simbiótica entre os funcionários e sua organização. O envolvimento voluntário e o comprometimento dos funcionários são cruciais para o sucesso e o crescimento organizacional. À medida que o ambiente de negócios se torna cada vez mais complexo e volátil, as organizações buscam maneiras inovadoras de aumentar a produtividade e a lucratividade, exigindo altos níveis de competência, envolvimento e comprometimento de sua força de trabalho. Os instrutores estão entre os profissionais mais importantes para o progresso futuro de qualquer nação. O principal desafio hoje não é apenas reter funcionários talentosos, mas engajá-los plenamente — conquistando seus corações e mentes ao longo de suas carreiras. Este estudo, portanto, busca identificar e analisar os níveis de engajamento de instrutoras em diversas faculdades de administração em Riad, Reino da Arábia Saudita (RAS). Método: Os dados foram coletados de 150 instrutoras de faculdades de administração em Riad, RAS, utilizando a Escala de Engajamento no Trabalho de Utrecht. Os dados foram analisados utilizando o software SPSS. A análise envolveu o cálculo da média de todos os itens do questionário para compreender o padrão básico de resposta, seguido por análise de correlação para examinar as associações entre as três
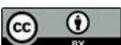
indicate high levels of employee engagement among the participants. A significant relationship exists between the levels of absorption and dedication displayed by these women academics, leading to higher vigor at work. Despite cultural and familial ties, women in Saudi academic institutions have emerged as strong individuals making their mark on the national academic landscape. The Saudi government provides extensive opportunities for women academics across all educational fields, supported by the relaxation of social restrictions and conservative cultural practices, which usher in greater opportunities for education and employment.

Keywords: Employee Engagement. Vigour. Dedication. Absorption.

dimensões principais e análise de regressão múltipla. Resultados e Conclusão: Os resultados indicam altos níveis de engajamento entre as participantes. Existe uma relação significativa entre os níveis de absorção e dedicação demonstrados por essas acadêmicas, resultando em maior vigor no trabalho. Apesar dos laços culturais e familiares, as mulheres em instituições acadêmicas sauditas emergiram como indivíduos fortes, deixando sua marca no cenário acadêmico nacional. O governo saudita oferece amplas oportunidades para acadêmicas em todas as áreas de ensino, apoiado pela flexibilização de restrições sociais e práticas culturais conservadoras, o que proporciona maiores oportunidades de educação e emprego.

Palavras-chave: *Engajamento. Vigor. Dedicação. Absorção.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement, depicted by the physical, cognitive, and emotional investment of individuals in their work roles (Kahn, 1990), has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational performance and sustainability. In an increasingly complex and volatile global business environment, the ability to foster a workforce that is not only competent but also highly involved and committed is a key strategic imperative (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Pfeffer, 1994). This is particularly true in knowledge-intensive sectors such as higher education, where the performance of instructors directly shapes institutional excellence and national development.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presents a compelling context for examining this construct, as it undergoes a profound socio-economic transformation under its strategic framework, Vision 2030. A central tenet of this vision is the empowerment of women and the augmentation of their participation in the national workforce, recognizing them as a vital asset for economic diversification and growth (Vision 2030 Document, n.d.). The higher education sector is a critical lever for this transformation, charged with cultivating the human capital required for a post-oil economy. Consequently, the role of female academics has evolved significantly, with increasing opportunities for leadership and scholarly contribution (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). Recent scholarship notes a tangible shift, with reforms fostering greater female inclusion in academia, yet also highlighting

the persistent challenges and the need for deeper organizational support to fully realize their potential (Alsharif & Smith, 2024; Alahmari, 2023).

This global focus on human capital is powerfully reflected in the national transformation underway in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Spearheaded by Saudi Vision 2030, the nation is undertaking unprecedented social and economic reforms aimed at diversifying its economy and empowering its citizens. A central pillar of this vision is the empowerment of women, increasing their participation in the workforce and unlocking their immense potential as a vital national asset (Vision 2030 Document). Recent studies confirm that these reforms are creating a significant shift, with women's enrollment in higher education and their entry into previously inaccessible professions rising markedly (Alsharif & Smith, 2024). The education sector is a critical enabler of this transformation, with universities serving as the incubators of the future talent pool. Within this context, the role of instructors, particularly women instructors who are at the forefront of educating the next generation, becomes paramount (Alahmari, 2023).

The paramount challenge today, especially in a rapidly evolving context like Saudi Arabia's, is not merely retaining talented employees but fully engaging them—capturing their hearts and minds throughout their careers. Coercive employment contracts are no longer the norm; employees expect more influence, responsibility, and information (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). This trend is supported by research indicating that progressive human resource policies are associated with positive organizational outcomes (Richardson & Thompson, 1991). Moreover, corporate social responsibility and ethical practices positively impact performance, brand goodwill, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement (Tajunnisa et al., 2023). In the Saudi context, fostering a culture of engagement is increasingly recognized as a strategic imperative for both public and private sector organizations to achieve the ambitious goals of Vision 2030 (Alotaibi & Jabeen, 2024).

Organizations with high employee engagement levels are more productive and profitable, a metric that is equally critical for the success of academic institutions (Gallup, 2023). Employee engagement is conceptualized as "a positive employee attitude towards the organization and its values," representing a two-way relationship between employer and employee (Vance, 2006). In the dynamic and hopeful environment of Saudi Arabia's higher education sector, understanding and fostering this engagement is crucial.

Therefore, this study seeks to identify and analyse the employee engagement levels of female instructors in management colleges in Riyadh, KSA. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the understanding of how a key demographic—women academics—is navigating and thriving within the new opportunities created by the nation's transformative vision, ultimately contributing to the success of both their institutions and the broader national goals.

2 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DEFINED

The concept of employee engagement has been defined in various ways but yet clarity eludes the concept between the definitions of academic researchers and practitioners. The industrial experts consider employee engagement as the outcome of the strategic interventions used by the organizations to engage their employees (Wefald & Downey, 2009, p. 142 crossref: James et al 2010). Employee engagement is considered as the result of the various practices adopted by the organizations starting with job or task design, recruitment and selection, progressing to training of the employee, compensating the employee through a well designed reward program resulting in performance management and career development (Vance 2006).

In its simplest form Kahn (1990) defines, "engaged employees" are those who are fully involved in, and enthusiastic about their work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests. The definition is focused on the need to develop in an employee the intrinsic motivation to ensure high levels of commitment to work and organization. The author uses the terms personal engagement and personal disengagement as two ends of a "continuum" where by an employee are bound to their role "physically, intellectually and emotionally" or patently distance themselves from their role respectively (Vance 2006). These concepts are further explored in their relevance and meaning whether to consider engagement and disengagement as opposites or define another concept of non-engagement in the place of disengagement (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006. crossref Macey and Bekker 2008).

The term employee engagement was first introduced by Kahn as the self-utilisation of members of an organisation in their work roles which is expressed physically, cognitively, and emotionally. It led to the classification of employee engagement into the physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Physical engagement

relates to the extent to which employees expend their efforts, both physical and mental, in performing their duties. Meanwhile, cognitive engagement requires the employees to know the vision and strategies of the employers and the performance required of them in achieving the vision. Emotional engagement is based on the emotional relationship between the employees and their employer. It means an organisation needs to maintain a positive relationship by creating a sense of belonging for the employees and encouraging them to trust and buy into its values and mission.

Where Kahn (1990) focuses on the role of employee in his definition Erickson (2005 as quoted in Macey and Schneider 2008). Maslach.et.al 2001, Crossref Saks 2015), considers engagement as positive engagement and personal efficacy in an employee; whereas Hkanen et al (2006) raise the construct of job demands which results in stress and burnout as the possible consequences of job disengagement. Macey and Schneider 2008 have also observed the antecedents and behaviours that arise out of the working conditions leading to consequences that determine the organizational value thereby fixing the onus on working conditions as the prime driver of employee engagement. Hkanen et al (2006) have identified the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in a model as given below:

Figure 1

Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement (Adapted from Hakanen et al., 2006)
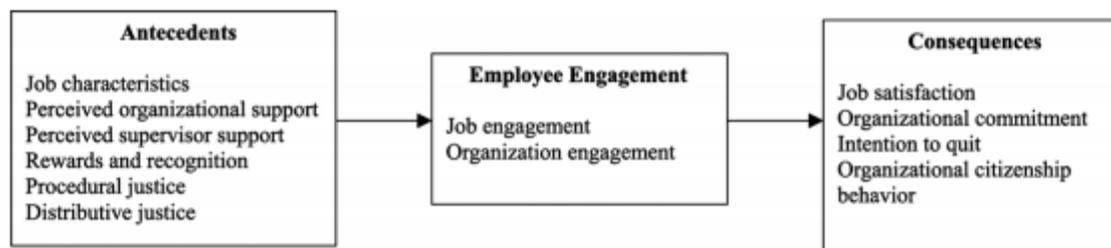
Most of the antecedents identified rise out of the organizational and structural factors where as the consequences are the individual outcomes. Thus the employee engagement is considered as the positive outcome of the organizational initiatives which are ensconced in the organizational policies, practices, procedures and systems. On the other hand the work of Schaufeli et al. (2002) suggests that engagement is not based on the organizational effort alone but requires a positive state of mind characterizing vigour

dedication and absorption. This train of thought is further enhanced by the inclusion of the construct of discretionary effort, which refers to the will of an employee to involve in employment irrespective of the antecedents or consequences (Frank et al., 2004). An engaged employee is opined to feel responsible and committed to the cause of the organization resulting in superior performance (Britt, 1999, 2003, cross ref: LePine and Rich 2010).

Employees are more likely to stick with an organization when they are happy in their roles. Employee engagement is facilitated by a favourable work environment, wherein staff members feel emotionally invested in their work and have a strong sense of dedication and devotion towards the firm. Because they find their work relevant and fulfilling, engaged employees are more inclined to stick with the company. (Padmavathi, T. 2023)

3 DISCRETIONARY EFFORT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Research on employee engagement has emerged from the pioneering works of Maslow (1954 crossref: James et al 2010) who identified the serendipitous role of recognition of employee by the organization and its consequent effect of job involvement. The lighting experiments undertaken in western electric may be taken as the first of their kind in the study of employee discretionary effort triggered by engaged state of mind. Employees perceived value in his organization is said to trigger his discretionary effort. Discretionary effort has been defined by Macy and Schneider (2008, crossref Saks 2008) as an extra role effort or behavior displayed by an employee which may be considered as going above and beyond the call or the regular job requirements. An engaged employee has an intrinsic desire to contribute to the organization and therefore is internally motivated to perform. Such a drive may not arise out of any perceived physical or financial benefit . It is more of an individual's choice than the result of any external motivational factor.

Employee engagement is considered as a significant prevailing variable in the relationship between job demands and burnout because it can influence the level of stress experienced by individuals when facing high job demands. (Basir, M. I 2023)

The folk theory calls engagement as a simple opposite dimension of disengagement which is extended to the loyalty of an employee to stick to the

organization (Macy and Schneider 2008). On the other hand the social exchange theory considers engagement as the result of a tactic exchange that occurs between the employee and the organization in terms of a voluntary discretionary effort displayed by the employee in return for appreciation and value showed by the employer. (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Shore & Shore, 1995, crossref James et al 2010). Thus the employee discretionary effort may also be called as adaptive discretionary behaviour though it may be considered only an outcome of the feeling of being positively engagement but not engagement itself (Saks 2008). The willingness to exert discretionary effort may be labelled as behaviour intentional variable which entails intention to stay and perform (Peirce and Dunham 1987 crossref James et al 2010).

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual roots of employee engagement, though popularized in the late 20th century, are deeply embedded in earlier psychological and organizational theories. Long before the term was formally defined, the underlying principles were foreshadowed in seminal works on human motivation and attitude formation. Abraham Maslow's (1943) "Hierarchy of Needs" theory, for instance, laid the groundwork by proposing that fulfilling higher-order psychological needs, such as esteem and self-actualization, is crucial for unlocking an individual's full potential and commitment—a core tenet of engagement.

Further deepening this understanding, Herbert Kelman's (1958) research on attitude change distinguished between mere compliance and genuine internalization. His work revealed that internalization, where an individual adopts a belief because it is congruent with their own value system, is a powerful, intrinsically motivated process. This early insight anticipated a key differentiator of engagement: it cannot be mandated, but must be internally adopted by the employee, making it a deeply individual yet organizationally critical phenomenon (Saks, 2006).

The formal conceptualization of engagement began to take shape in the 1990s. William Kahn (1990) provided the first academic definition, describing personal engagement as the "harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles," where people physically, cognitively, and emotionally employ and express themselves during work. This was a departure from earlier concepts like job satisfaction, focusing

instead on active, holistic involvement. Subsequently, Bevan et al. (1997) highlighted that engagement occurs when employees show enthusiasm and are willing to apply discretionary effort to achieve organizational outcomes.

The turn of the millennium marked a significant advancement with the work of Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002). They operationalized engagement as a persistent, positive, work-related state of mind characterized by its three core dimensions: vigor (high energy and mental resilience), dedication (a sense of significance and enthusiasm), and absorption (being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work). This tripartite model, measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), provided a robust framework for empirical research and has become a dominant paradigm in the field.

Parallel to academic research, practitioner tools emerged to measure and manage engagement. The Gallup Q12 survey, developed and widely disseminated in the early 2000s, identified twelve key workplace elements linked to high engagement and business performance (Gallup, 2008). This instrument underscored the importance of factors like clear expectations, necessary resources, and opportunities for development.

Contemporary research continues to build upon this foundation, exploring the nomological network of engagement. Recent studies have consistently linked high engagement to critical outcomes such as enhanced job performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), increased innovation (Parke et al., 2023), and lower turnover intentions (Memon et al., 2024). Furthermore, the antecedents of engagement are now well-established, with Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory positioning it as a key mediator between organizational resources (e.g., social support, autonomy) and positive organizational results. The discourse has evolved from defining engagement to understanding its dynamic drivers, contextual moderators, and long-term sustainability in the modern workplace.**Women Instructors of Saudi Arabia**

Women in Saudi Arabia and their role in economic and employment participation has been much discussed and described in various academic circles. Higher education in one area where the Saudi Arabian women have made significant progress to the extent of getting past the proverbial glass ceiling to occupy positions of leadership in higher education. (Alsubaie and Jones, 2017). The first university of Saudi Arabia King Saud University was established in 1957 which opened its doors to women in 1962 with an aim to provide female teachers to the female students. (Ibid)

King Abdullah Sponsorship Program (KASP), which was launched in 2005, with aim to encourage female Instructors to teach in the women's wing of universities. (Alsuwaida, 2016). Fully female managed universities like Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University, were established conferring on the females of the kingdom an equal status of that of male (Almansour and Kempner 2016 cross ref Alsubaie and Jones, 2017). Thus women Instructors in Saudi Arabia have slowly stepped out of the realms of home to emerge as academic leaders in the education sector of Saudi Arabia. Al Ghamdi (2016) in her dissertation titled "The Empowerment of Academic Women Leaders at Saudi Universities and Its Relationship to Their Administrative Creativity" states that though in most Universities women Instructors may occupy positions of power in the administrative system are yet not fully empowered to take independent decisions. Al Moamary et al (2019) established that women in Saudi Arabia in academic institutions were found more in the middle management levels and had "better authenticity of leadership skills". These observations call for conferring better empowered roles to the women Instructors in the Saudi Arabian Academic Institutions. The women employees of these academic Institutions need to have higher levels of engagement to undertake these roles of responsibility and power. The present study therefore is aimed to understand the levels of employee engagement in terms of vigour dedication and absorption.

5 ROLE OF VIGOUR, DEDICATION AND ABSORPTION

Schaufeli et al (2002) state that Vigor is represented by comparatively by higher levels of enthusiasm and "mental resilience" while at work , which may be witnessed in the willingness of an individual to persevere at work in the face of patent difficulties. Dedication according to the authors is displayed by an innate "sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration pride and challenge" felt by an individual at work. Absorption the final dimension of the construct of employee engagement demands deep involvement and absorption into the work which in other words is refereed as 'flow' denoting a state of 'focussed attention and effortless concentration achieved by an individual with harmonious interaction of mind and bod. Absorption suggests effortless involvement at work and intrinsic enjoyment. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990 cross reff: Schaufeli et al (2002)). The tri concepts of vigour dedication and absorption were measured by the Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES). Where vigour is considered as one dimension of the

engagement continuum; exhaustion maybe the other. Similarly dedication is often offset by cynicism at work. A negative correlation is particularly expected between exhaustion and vigour, and between cynicism and dedication since they represent opposite poles of the activation and identification dimensions, respectively. Thus based on a theoretical analysis (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2001), two underlying dimensions have been identified of work-related well-being: (1) activation, ranging from exhaustion to vigor, and (2) identification, ranging from cynicism to dedication.

Therefore the present study studies the role of the three core dimensions of vigour, dedication and absorption on the female Instructors belonging to different management institutions of Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study takes vigour as the dependent variable and absorption and dedication as the independent variables on premise that individuals who have high levels of dedication and absorption and work display high levels of vigour at work. The hypothesis adopted is:

H1: There is a significant impact of dedication and absorption on vigour at work.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework (Independent Variables) (Dependent Variable)
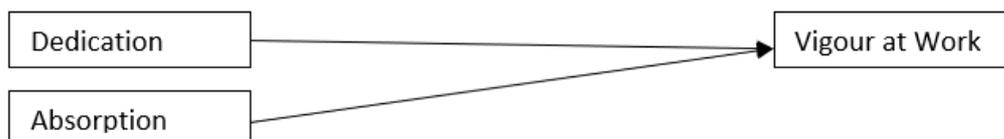
This framework guided the methodology, where the UWES was used to measure these three dimensions, and statistical analysis (correlation and multiple regression) was employed to test the hypothesized relationship.

6 METHODOLOGY

The data is collected using the Utrecht scale of work engagement from the female Instructors of various management institutions located in Riyadh, KSA using simple

random sampling. The sample comprised of women with more than two years of experience at their place of work.

7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data is analyzed using the SPSS tool. The pattern of analysis comprises of identification of mean for all the items on the questionnaire to understand the basic response pattern of the female Instructors. Further a correlation analysis is done to understand the strength of association between the three basic dimensions, followed by multiple regression analysis.

The preliminary demographic data analysis identified that 74% of the female Instructors are married and have at least one child. All the female Instructors have support systems at home to help them with domestic chores and live with extended family. The timings of work according to them are highly flexible and allow them some privileges in view of their domestic commitments.

Table 1

Mean & SD

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
VI1	150	3.98	1.256
DE1	150	4.72	1.148
AB1	150	4.83	1.172
VI2	150	4.35	1.258
DE2	150	4.35	1.194
AB2	150	4.18	1.204
DE3	150	4.42	1.172
VI3	150	4.05	1.360
AB3	150	4.31	1.216
DE4	150	5.18	1.159
AB4	150	4.35	1.317
VI4	150	4.27	1.197
DE5	150	4.37	1.162
AB5	150	4.10	1.180

VI5	150	4.39	1.015
AB6	150	3.95	1.345
VI6	150	4.31	1.249
Valid N (list wise)	150		

Inference:

All the mean is above 3.95 showing a highly positive response on a five point scale. The women Instructors are found to have positive responses in relation to their vigour dedication and absorption levels showcasing their positive opinion of the work environment and work roles.

Table 2

Correlation

Variables	Vigor scale	Dedication scale	Absorption scale
Vigor scale	1	0.634**	0.660**
Dedication scale	-	1	0.640**
Absorption scale	-	-	1

** Denotes significant at 1% level & * denotes significant at 5% level

Inference:

Perfect correlation is also seen between all the variables as the p value is <0.001.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.512	1.709		2.640	.009
Dedication scale	.423	.088	.359	4.781	.000
Absorption scale	.431	.075	.431	5.744	.000

a.Dependent Variable: Vigor_scale

Table 4

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.715ᵃ	.512	.505	3.365

a. Predictors: (Constant), Absorption scale, Dedication scale

Inference:

Dependent variable taken as Vigor scale and independent variables taken as Dedication and absorption scale. As the p value is <0.001, there is a significant impact between dependent and independent variables.

Multiple R value is 0.715, R square value is 0.512 and P value is <0.001**. As the multiple correlation coefficient is 0.715, it measures the degree of relationship between the actual values and the predicted values of the vigor scale.

The coefficient of determination of R-square measures the goodness-of-fit of the estimated Sample Regression Plane (SRP) in terms of the proportion of the variation in the dependent variables explained by the fitted sample regression equation. Thus, the value of R square is 0.512 simply means that about 51.2% of the variation in vigor scale is explained by the estimated SRP that uses dedication and absorption scale as the independent variables and R square value is significant at 1% level.

8 DISCUSSION

Women in Saudi academic institutions have emerged as strong individuals making their mark on the national academic scene, despite cultural and familial ties. This study clearly indicates high levels of employee engagement among them, showing a significant relationship between absorption and dedication leading to higher work vigor. The Saudi government provides extensive opportunities for women academics across all educational fields. The relaxation of social restrictions and conservative cultural practices has ushered in greater opportunities for education and employment.

Women receive unemployment benefits for two years post-graduation. They can be selected as Teaching Assistants (TA) through an entrance examination after graduation. Universities fund female instructors for Doctoral and Post-Doctoral studies with full scholarships for four years. They are sponsored for training, conferences, and learning abroad for promotion and upgradation. Seniority allowances, pensions, and incentives for research publications (covering 50% of research costs) are provided, with rewards for publications in reputable journals at management's discretion.

Female instructors also enjoy gender-specific benefits. While their workload is similar to male counterparts, they experience comparative flexibility. They are entitled to 60 days of fully paid maternity leave, followed by six months at half-pay and another six months at one-fourth pay. This one-year maternity leave can be extended to a second year

without pay. Similar benefits apply for marriage. Widows receive four months of paid leave, aligning with Islamic tradition. Additionally, women academics enjoy general benefits like pensions and seniority allowances.

Universities can build leadership potential in female instructors with innate capabilities by designing training programs for academic administration roles. Al Ghamdi (2016), through her doctoral thesis, identified higher creativity levels among Saudi women instructors. If channeled correctly, this creativity could rejuvenate the female academic system and significantly contribute to the kingdom's academic landscape.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

While this study provides valuable insights into the employee engagement of women instructors in Saudi Arabia, it also opens several avenues for future research to build upon these findings.

Expanding Demographic and Geographic Scope: Future studies could include a more diverse sample, incorporating female instructors from other regions of Saudi Arabia beyond Riyadh, from various academic disciplines beyond management, and from different types of institutions (e.g., public vs. private universities). This would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Recent research by Alsharif (2022) on women in leadership across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) underscores the significant regional variations in workplace experiences, suggesting a need for a broader intra-national analysis.

Exploring Antecedents in Depth: This study established a significant relationship between dedication, absorption, and vigor. Subsequent research should investigate the specific organizational and personal factors that act as key drivers for these dimensions. Qualitative studies, through in-depth interviews, could explore the lived experiences of these academics to identify precise policies, leadership behaviors, and cultural factors that most strongly foster engagement. For instance, the role of inclusive leadership and psychological safety, as highlighted in recent studies (e.g., Khan & AlAsfour, 2023), could be critical antecedents worth exploring in the Saudi academic context.

Investigating Mediating and Moderating Variables: Research could examine the role of potential mediating variables, such as perceived organizational support or psychological capital, in the relationship between job resources and engagement.

Furthermore, exploring moderating variables like leadership style, years of experience, or specific familial support structures could provide a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which engagement flourishes. Recent work by Basir et al. (2023), which you already cite, provides a strong foundation for examining such complex models.

Longitudinal and Post-Pandemic Research: A longitudinal study design tracking the engagement levels of female instructors over time would be invaluable. This could reveal how engagement evolves throughout their careers, particularly in response to major life events (e.g., marriage, childbirth, promotion) and ongoing national social reforms. The post-pandemic shift towards hybrid work models also presents a new area of inquiry, as studies like Smith & Johnson (2023) have begun to examine its impact on academic work-life balance and engagement globally.

Comparative Studies: Comparative research between male and female instructors within the same institutions, or between Saudi female instructors and their counterparts in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, could yield insightful cross-gender and cross-cultural perspectives on engagement dynamics. A recent comparative study by Al-Harbi & Lee (2024) on academic resilience in the Middle East demonstrates the value of such a cross-cultural approach.

10 CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence of high levels of employee engagement among women instructors in the management colleges of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The findings robustly demonstrate that dedication and absorption significantly predict vigour at work, confirming the dynamic interplay of these core dimensions. This high engagement occurs within a supportive and evolving framework of government initiatives and institutional policies, aligned with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which have significantly facilitated the academic careers of women (Alotaibi & Khan, 2023). The results paint an encouraging picture of the evolving academic landscape in Saudi Arabia, where female instructors are not only participating but are deeply invested and thriving in their professional roles. As the kingdom continues its transformative journey, these engaged women academics are poised to be central figures in achieving the nation's educational and developmental goals, embodying the "vigour, dedication, and absorption" necessary to shape the future of higher education.

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Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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