A Comparative Investigation of the Perceptions and Labour Market Experiences of Saudi PhD Graduates Qualified in the United Kingdom or Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This research explores the perceived labour market value of international doctoral degrees on Saudi PhD graduates, from the perspectives and experiences of graduates who gained their PhDs from UK or Saudi universities and sought employment in Saudi Arabia. The study draws on Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital, but expands this to the international context, underlining the importance of global cultural capital (Kim, 2016), balanced against local cultural capital (Jarvis, 2019) in the labour market. The research was influenced by a critical realist approach and adopted a qualitative methodology to inquire into the experiences and perspectives of the graduates. The study was based on 48 qualitative semi-structured interviews, with male and female Saudi PhD graduates in Biology and Management from UK and Saudi universities. The findings indicated that professional development was a key motivation behind PhD study and that doctoral qualifications were believed to lead to positive employment outcomes in Saudi Arabia, although this was dependent on labour market sector. In particular, it was felt that the PhD graduate was valued in the public sector, but was considered overqualified and expensive in the private sector. International PhDs were regarded as especially valuable in relation to labour market outcomes, with international graduates acquiring forms of global institutionalised, embodied, and social capital which were considered to place them in a privileged labour market position. The findings also indicated that gender impacts on PhD study and employment, highlighting aspects of both structure and agency, which reflect recent progressive developments relating to gender equality in the country.

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Acknowledgements

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For my father

Declaration

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is it being submitted concurrently for any other degree or award (outside of any formal collaboration agreement between the University and a partner organisation).

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This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed are my own. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The thesis has not been edited by a third party beyond what is permitted by Cardiff University's Use of Third Party Editors by Research Degree Students Procedure.

Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research involved a comparison of the perceptions, experiences and labour market outcomes and trajectories of Saudi PhD graduates who had received doctoral degrees from UK or Saudi universities and who sought employment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The existing research evidence shows that international students typically view global education as providing them with advantage in the labour market (Brooks and Waters, 2010). This thesis explored whether doctoral graduates – both internationally mobile and non-mobile – share this view in the context of Saudi Arabia, at a time of increases in funding for students to pursue international education as part of wider economic and social development plans, including Vision 2030 (Saudi Government, 2020a). Whilst academic interest in the internationalization of higher education has been on the increase, the focus has largely been on motivations and challenges, rather than on perceptions, experiences and career outcomes, in relation to enhancing employment and career prospects, and on the undergraduate level rather than on doctoral students. Drawing on the perceptions of PhD graduates, in particular, is important as this first-hand account of the value of the PhD, which draws on lived experiences, offers important insights which have not previously been explored, especially in the Saudi context. In addition, whilst there is some literature on Saudi international students, this has tended to focus on those who have studied in the US, rather than the UK. The current research therefore explored the relationship between the national and the international in relation to the perceived value of the PhD and the ways in which these perceptions are believed to impact on labour market experiences and career prospects. It was also important to explore perceived differences in employment and career prospects in relation to gender.

1.2 Background to the topic and rationale

This research focuses on the labour market employment perceptions, experiences and outcomes of graduates following their PhD completion. Employment, labour market or career outcomes refer to the employment situation of the graduates following their PhD study. This includes, for instance, whether they are employed or not, what job they have

and what sector they are employed in. Research on Saudi international students has overwhelmingly focused on students studying in the United States (US) context, dating back to the 1970s (Jammaz, 1972; Rasheed, 1972; Mustafa, 1985; Al-Shedokhi, 1986; Al-Shehry, 1989; Shabeeb, 1996; Hofer, 2009; Shaw, 2010; Kampman, 2011; Taylor and Albasri, 2014; Melius, 2017), although there has also been some limited research on Saudi students receiving educational qualifications from Australia (Alhazmi and Nyland, 2010) and the UK (Alandejani, 2013; Alyami, 2014). These studies have generated important insights in relation to Saudi students' academic and social experiences (Kampman, 2011; McDermott-Levy, 2011; Hall, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Taylor and Albasri, 2014; Alsabatin, 2015; Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Arafeh, 2017; Young and Snead, 2017), the difficulties and challenges encountered during international study (Mustafa, 1985; Al-Shedokhi, 1986; Al-Shehry, 1989) - particularly cultural challenges (Razek and Coyner, 2013) - as well as adjustment and transition experiences (Jammaz, 1972; Shabeeb, 1996; Hofer, 2009; Alhazmi and Nyland, 2010; Tummala-Narra and Claudius, 2013; Melius, 2017; Seppy, 2018). Acculturation experiences and strategies have also been explored (Alyami, 2014), as have decisions and choices about place of study (Yakaboski *et al*., 2017; 2018).

The career trajectories and outcomes of international students has been relatively under-researched and a poorly understood topic. There is little literature in particular on the employment and career outcomes of international PhD graduates (Kim, 2016). This is especially true in the case of career decision-making and trajectories of doctoral scholars from Saudi Arabia. Whilst there has been some research which has touched on employment for graduates in the country, although not international graduates, this has tended to focus on specific sectors such as pharmaceutics (Bin Saleh *et al*., 2015; Al-Arifi, 2019; Alhomoud *et al*., 2019; Alruthia *et al*., 2019), medicine (Guraya and Almaramhy, 2018), health informatics (Alkaraiji and Househ, 2014), nursing (Clerehan *et al*., 2012), engineering (Albadr, 2018), dentistry (Halawany *et al*., 2017) and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) (Guerrero and Meadows, 2015). Several studies have touched on related issues, however, such as the role of scholarships in Saudi Arabia, and particularly the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP), which can have important implications for career outcomes (Almotery, 2009; Denman and Hilal, 2011; Hall, 2013; Taylor and Albasri, 2014). Yakaboski *et al*. (2017), for instance, indicate that in addition to influencing decisions on what and where to study, the funding conditions of employer or government scholarships may stipulate return to the home country, and a specific employment position, as a requirement of funding. Several studies have also explored the experiences of Saudi graduates re-entering the KSA following study in the UK or US (Alandejani, 2013; Alyami, 2014; Arafeh, 2017).

There have been some insights from such studies into labour market outcomes, such as the low employment returns in the country for those with degrees, as well as high unemployment rates for graduates, which have been related to economic diversification and lack of skills (Ahmed, 2016; Mohieldein, 2017; Khan, 2018) (see also Chapter Three). There has also been some indication of increasing competition in particular areas in relation to national or international qualifications, although not specifically in relation to PhDs, and with limited evidence on the added value of international qualifications. Existing literature also suggests that whilst women's education and employment has increased in Saudi Arabia in recent years, women continue to have high levels of unemployment in comparison with males and face numerous challenges in the labour market (Alandejani, 2013; Alfalih, 2016; Naseem and Dhruva, 2017; Alfarran *et al.*, 2018; Sabri *et al.*, 2019). As will be shown, however, there have been swift developments in gender equality in recent years which have led to important advances.

In order to contextualise outcomes, it was important to also investigate motivations for PhD study. International study in general has indicated a relationship between motivations and job prospects and career outcomes (Almotery, 2009; Brooks and Waters, 2010; British Council, 2015; Nghia, 2015; Packwood *et al.*, 2015; King and Songhi, 2017). Research on international PhD study specifically has drawn on the experiences of international students or graduates from Australia (Brailsford, 2010; Guerin *et al.*, 2015), China (Yang *et al.*, 2017), Czechoslovakia (Wiegerováa, 2016), Finland and Austria (Moreno and Kollanus, 2013), Latvia (Tarvid, 2014) and has shown that motivations include a range of intrinsic (personal interest, fulfilment and passion for the field) or microsocial factors (the work of the university, faculty and MA experience) and extrinsic or macrosocial factors (professional development, career changes and job offers as well as social climate).

Despite these insights, research into the career trajectories and outcomes of international students in relation to doctoral education specifically remains limited. In addition, as mentioned, there has been little exploration of the distinction between the value attributed to national and international qualifications by employers. In view of the significance of international student mobility for the receiving and sending nations (Universities UK, 2017; Lee, McMahon and Watson, 2018), Sinagaravelu *et al.* (2005) suggest that international student career outcomes deserve further investigation. This is equally true of Saudi students studying in the UK. Furthermore, given the increasing outward mobility of Saudi students, the increasing state investment in the education of students who can return to the country to contribute to academia and the economy

(Taylor and Albasri, 2014; Ahmed, 2015), the heterogeneity of international students as a cohort (Arthur and Nunes, 2014), and the importance of graduate employability to international higher education institutions (Bennett *et al.*, 2015), this is an important gap in knowledge.

It is also worth noting that insights in the existing literature from the graduates themselves in relation to their own perceptions of the value of their PhDs, and the ways in which these impact on employment outcomes has also proved limited, particularly with regards to Saudi graduates. Whilst there has been important research on these issues in relation to Chinese graduates (Gu *et al*., 2010; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015; Gu and Lee, 2019; Zhang, 2019), including research which explores how cultural capital is converted in the labour market in the case of female Chinese international students in a Scottish university (Zhang, 2019) and the experiences of international students from China who graduated from UK universities (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015), there is little research of similar quality which reflects on Saudi graduates' experiences. The current research therefore aimed to address these important gaps in knowledge and to contribute to the field on the employment outcomes, perceptions and experiences of UK and Saudi doctoral graduates in the Saudi labour market.

1.3 Research aims, questions and data collection

The aim of the research was to examine and compare the labour market perceptions, experiences and outcomes of Saudi PhD graduates educated in the UK and Saudi Arabia who sought or secured employment in the KSA. It thus involved a comparison of individuals with the same qualification, but who acquired these in different settings, and thus have different attributes and skills-sets in terms of local or global cultural capital (see Jarvis, 2019). It was also important to examine potential differences between graduates, such as gender, which may impact on employment experiences and outcomes and subsequent employment and career prospects. This allowed the study to transcend mapping details of what kind of employment the graduates have taken up or not and the factors that have influenced their career-decision making to consider how they perceived their career decisions in the context of their doctoral studies. The resulting insights are expected to be of value both to policy makers in Saudi Arabia and host institutions in both the KSA and the UK as well as to career development researchers inquiring into employment experiences and outcomes of international doctoral students. The study is expected to provide insights for the Saudi Government, for instance, that can allow better planning and investment and more effective transitions from academia to workplace, ensuring the provision of work opportunities that boost

graduates' research-producing capacity, thereby benefitting academia and the economy alike. The key objectives of the research were therefore:

- To provide in-depth understanding of how the PhD is viewed by graduates in relation to labour market goals, opportunities, positioning and future career trajectories.

- To enhance understanding about the experiences and perceptions of Saudi PhD graduates at home and abroad, and the significance of national and international doctoral education, as well as gender, to employment experiences and outcomes.

- To inform policy makers and practitioners within higher education and funding councils, as well as the employers of Saudi PhD graduates, about graduate experiences and motivations, to facilitate future developments within international education and to assist in improving support for Saudi PhD students and graduates through better understanding of the insights and experiences of this group.

The main question for the study was:

How do Saudi PhD graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia perceive the value of their PhD in relation to the labour market in their home country?

This was split into three questions:

1. How do Saudi doctoral graduates view the PhD qualification and experience in relation to their labour market preferences and perceived positioning, and how have those views changed since their graduation?

2. In what ways does the international status of the PhD impact on graduate perceptions and experiences of the value of the PhD in relation to early labour market careers?

3. To what extent does gender impact on the labour market experiences, perceptions and prospects of PhD graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia?

The research questions were influenced by the literature review, which helped to highlight key topics, but also important gaps which needed to be addressed. They were designed to examine not just what happens to Saudi PhD graduates from UK universities in terms of their employment and careers (sectors of employment and positions), but also the perceptions of doctoral study in relation to career strategies, and how graduates viewed their international education in terms of their career outcomes and trajectories, five to ten years after their PhD. It was important to allow some time to have passed following the PhD to facilitate an understanding of the value of the credential once they had entered the labour market.

The research was influenced by a critical realist approach and adopted a qualitative methodology to inquire into the experiences and perspectives of UK-qualified Saudi PhD graduates and their career outcomes at home, in comparison to Saudi-qualified Saudi PhD graduates. The study used qualitative semi-structured interviews, conducted by telephone and Skype, and these were piloted prior to the main fieldwork, in order to enhance the data collection process. The sample of 48 participants included 24 PhD graduates from Saudi universities who remained in Saudi Arabia and 24 Saudi PhD graduates from UK universities who had returned to Saudi Arabia for employment. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection method and were believed to offer effective techniques for obtaining rich interpretations and meanings of individual experiences. Interviews were conducted in Arabic, audio-recorded, transcribed and then translated into English by the researcher, providing qualitative data (for further detail on methods, see Chapter Four).

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This chapter has provided an overview of the current study, including some background to the research field, as well as the key aims, objectives, research questions and methods underpinning the current study. Chapter Two provides a discussion of the context of the research, providing insights into the history and culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the economy and labour market, education system and issues around gender. Chapter Three is presented in two parts. Part One looks at the rise of international study and the ways in which this rise has been evaluated. Theoretical explanations such as human capital and cultural capital are examined here, alongside more recent developments which include global cultural capital, local versus global cultural capital and global social capital. It is the latter approaches which were considered most significant in the case of the current study. In Part Two, key themes emerging from the existing literature are explored, including Saudi graduates'

employment in Saudi Arabia, the value of nationally-acquired versus internationally-acquired qualifications, and the significance of gender. The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in knowledge and the current study's subsequent focus. Chapter Four addresses the methodology employed in the research. The critical realist approach is outlined, followed by the research strategy, research questions and methods of data collection. Here, the selection of qualitative interviews is explained and justified, before the sampling approach is discussed. The pilot study, transcription and data analysis, ethical considerations and dissemination of the findings are also covered in this chapter.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the empirical findings from the study. In Chapter Five, graduate perceptions of the value of the PhD in relation to employment outcomes are addressed. This includes a discussion of the motivations behind PhD study, employment outcomes and perceptions on the value of the PhD in securing employment. In Chapter Six, the potential distinction between the value of the international and national doctoral qualification are explored. Here, graduates' perceptions of the different qualifications are examined, before assessing the value of the PhD in relation to institutionalised global cultural capital (IGCC), embodied global cultural capital (EGCC) and global social capital. Finally, in Chapter Seven, motivations behind PhD study and the impact of gender are explored before looking at the impact of the PhD in relation to labour market outcomes, in terms of the job seeking process, occupations held, work environments and issues of pay. Perceptions on recent developments in Saudi Arabia and its labour market are also covered, as well as issues of difference in analyses of gender. Chapter Eight concludes the thesis, by summarising key insights and contributions made, reflecting on research challenges and presenting recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two:

The context of the study: Saudi Arabia

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to the KSA, providing insights into the political, sociocultural and economic contexts surrounding the research. The chapter begins by looking at the country's main geographical, cultural and political features, before outlining key details relating to its economy and labour market. The chapter then moves on to examine the Saudi education system and ends with a brief discussion on important and recent developments relating to gender.

2.2 Background to the KSA: History and culture

The KSA, in its current form, was founded by King Abd-al-Aziz in 1932. The Al-Saud family took reign over the country as a monarchy, with the support of a Council of Ministers (or Cabinet), and thus, the political system reflects this hereditary monarchy run by the King (Baki, 2004; Alqassem *et al.*, 2016; Alsuwaida, 2016). A traditional, family way of life characterised the lives of the generation of Saudis born in the 1930s, and this generation was followed by one which benefited from oil wealth, growing access to education and increasing international interaction (Al-Bakr *et al.*, 2017). The country is located in the Middle East along the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and "spreads over more than two million square kilometres covering almost 80 percent of the sandy Arabian Peninsula", with the city of Riyadh as its capital (Onsman, 2011: 520). Neighbouring countries include Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan (US Saudi Embassy, 2019) (see Figure 1 below). The two seasons of winter and summer offer contrasting extremes of temperatures, from below freezing in winter to over 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. The climate plays an important role in education, as the school day schedule is planned around it, with schools often starting early throughout the year, and in the summer, ending before the extreme midday heat begins (Alqassem *et al.*, 2016).

Figure 1: Map of Saudi Arabia and bordering countries [Lonely Planet, 2021]

The official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic, and this is prioritised in the education system and school curriculum (Alqassem *et al.*, 2016), although English is widely used in business (Alfalih, 2016). The latest population figures from the World Bank for 2017 show a population of nearly 33 million (World Bank Group, 2019), although the General Authority for Statistics in the KSA (2020) more recently put the figure at 34,218,169. This figure has grown significantly from seven million in 1975, and 20 million in 2000 (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016). A large proportion of this rapidly growing population is young, with more than half of the population aged 44 years and under (*Ibid*.). The population predominantly resides in coastal areas, with the exception of the popular areas of Riyadh, Mecca and Medina, which are surrounded by desert but well-serviced by highways and airports (Onsman, 2011).

The country is internationally recognised as the birthplace of Islam, which includes the well-renowned holy cities of Mecca and Medina, located in the Western parts of the country**,** subsequently influencing its title as the 'Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' (De Bel-Air, 2018). Muslims reside in the country and Islam is deeply embedded in the social structure and culture of the country, forming the core of the legal system and of government, with Islamic state being based on the principles of the Qur'an (the holy book

of Allah). Thus, the country follows Shariah Law, which is law that follows the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad from the Qur'an (Alfalih, 2016).

The importance of family and its strong relationship with Islam is well-known and documented in a range of sources (Pew Research Center, 2013; Alghafli *et al*., 2014; Alyami, 2014) with the promotion of family life, rules, obligations and laws, and prescribed roles and behaviours for family members. Islam is also an important part of education in Saudi Arabia. According to Alqassem *et al.* (2016: 3), there are several key objectives of education as presented within the country's educational policy, which include:

> …understanding Islam correctly and completely, implanting and spreading the Islamic doctrine, providing students with Islamic values and instructions, acquiring knowledge along with different skills, developing constructive behavioral tendencies; advancing society economically, socially, culturally, and enabling students to become useful in the construction of their society.

Furthermore, Alqassem *et al.* (2016) argue that Islam has also been key to the promotion of education for both genders, resulting in the prioritising of education for all from the 1960s (*Ibid.*), in a gender segregated form throughout the different levels of schooling, and throughout higher education (see also below in section 2.4). Whilst Islam is often criticised with regard to restrictions on women's rights, as well as expectations about roles and behaviour, it is important to recognise that Islam promotes respect for women (Alsuwaida, 2016). It has also been argued that Islam actually liberated women in the past, giving them rights to inheritance, property ownership and education (Aquil, 2011). There have also been important developments which have seen positive changes for women, as discussed below in section 2.5.

2.3 The Saudi economy and labour market

Saudi Arabia has the biggest economy in the Arab world and this has long been reliant on the natural resources in the country; namely oil (De Bel-Air, 2018), but also natural gas (Alfalih, 2016; Melius, 2017). Whilst the non-oil sector has increasingly contributed to GDP, for instance, 90 per cent of its export earnings continue to come from its oil and oil derivative exports (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 2021). Oil therefore continues to represent the most productive aspect of the Saudi economy, being valued at approximately 1.1 trillion Saudi riyals, and providing 43 percent of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016). This also

provides the main source of employment in the country. There are three main sectors within the Saudi economy; the services sector, the industrial sector and the public sector, each encompassing several different industries (Nataraja *et al.*, 2011). The service sector in Saudi Arabia, for instance, is comprised of banks, financial institutions and insurance companies, media and publishing businesses, hotel and tourist services, information technology (IT) companies, health and private educational institutions, retail and marketing and transport companies. The industrial sector includes petroleum, mineral and petrochemical companies, food and agriculture, construction and industrial investment, and manufacturing. Finally, the public sector covers government departments, public enterprises and agencies, ministries and policy-making organisations, as well as judiciary organisations (*Ibid.*), including state run higher education institutions. Other sources simplify this distinction to cover just the public and private sectors, with the service sector and industrial sector forming the majority of the latter (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016).

Uncertainty around future demand for oil has led to attempts to diversify the economy (Hashmi *et al*., 2015; Yamada, 2018) and the introduction of plans for development. In 2015, King Salman bin Abd al Aziz Al Saud assumed the throne and as a leader, is considered a facilitator of positive change who has enabled the introduction of policies promoting the employment of women in similar fields to men (Alsuwaida, 2016). King Salman's son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, now assumes central responsibility for policy making in the Kingdom. In 2016, Vision 2030 - a new development plan - was unveiled by the Crown Prince, which aimed to reduce dependence on oil export and promote investment and growth in the private sector (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Among the list of 24 goals proposed in this plan - which includes an increase in foreign relationships and business partnerships, as well as foreign investment, and the development of public sectors such as health, recreation and tourism - educational development plays an important role. One goal here is to develop the global reputation of Saudi higher education institutions, and to have a minimum of five Saudi universities in the top 200 within international rankings (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). In addition, the funding of international education and training is an important aspect of meeting the objectives of Vision 2030, with the predominant aim here being to "…enable young Saudis to fill jobs in industries currently dominated by expatriates" (*Ibid.*: 49). Investment in education is high in Saudi Arabia, with spending reportedly reaching $56 billion on education in 2014, including infrastructure, resources and teacher salaries (Alqassem *et al.*, 2016). In 2013, Smith and Abouammoh reported that 24 public and nine private universities had been developed in the KSA, with all of the private institutions and sixteen of the public universities having been developed in

the previous decade, reflecting the scale of the increased state investment in the sector. The changes that have been witnessed in the education sector and the rise in the numbers of new or emerging universities will be discussed further in section 2.4 below.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA (2016) highlights five key challenges that confront Saudi Arabia in relation to the labour market. First, private sector employment is not attractive to Saudi nationals, and as a result, second, there is a reliance on foreign labour to fulfil positions in this sector. Lower wages and less security in the sector has led to some Saudi nationals choosing unemployment until appropriate public sector employment has been secured (Harvard Kennedy School [HKS], 2019). In addition, pay within the public sector is linked to qualifications (Majmaah University, 2019), and may subsequently be more attractive to educated Saudi nationals. The private sector has therefore relied on lower cost labour provided by foreign workers. The growing population in Saudi Arabia highlighted earlier is partly attributable to the large numbers of expatriates in the country (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016). This has led to a drive towards 'Saudization', including greater investment in training and education to reduce numbers of foreign workers (Melius, 2017; Nannapaneni *et al.*, 2019). Programs such as the Nitaqat have been introduced, for example, to encourage private firms to hire Saudi employees, as well as increase the minimum wage for Saudi employees in the private sector, in order to enhance competition with the public sector (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016). The role of education, as mentioned above, is also considered significant in plans for Saudization. It has been argued, however, that there is a large gap between the number of Saudi graduates entering the labour market and the employment opportunities made available by the removal of expatriates, with graduates exceeding the number of jobs available (Nannapaneni *et al.*, 2019).

The third challenge highlighted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (2016) is that unemployment amongst Saudi youths is higher than the Saudi national average for unemployment as a whole. This is partly attributed to limited job-relevant skills, lack of connections (indicating the reliance of the labour market on personal connections), as well as high expectations among youths which leads to greater selectivity, and therefore fewer options. The total unemployment rate (including both Saudi and non-Saudi individuals) in the country was cited by the General Authority for Statistics (GAS), KSA (2020a) as 5.7 per cent in 2019 (based on those aged fifteen years of age and above, with no upper limit stated), although the Saudi unemployment rate for the same year was higher, at 11.8 per cent. Thus, the low overall unemployment rate in the country is attributable to the low unemployment rates of non-Saudi labour. Of all unemployed

Saudis, 62.9 per cent were aged 20-29 years (*Ibid.*), underlining the youth unemployment problem. More recently, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate for Saudis and non-Saudis increased to nine per cent, and the youth unemployment rate (for those aged between 20-29 years) increased to 63.1 per cent (GAS, KSA, 2020b). The fourth challenge highlighted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (2016) is that demand is not being effectively met by supply of labour. As they explain, the traditional reliance on personal networks within the labour markets have meant that employer needs are not being clearly communicated and subsequently matches are not being made between recruiting organisations and skilled potential employees. This is especially the case in the private sector. Finally, labour force participation for women is significantly lower than for men. As they explain:

> Of the 13.5 million women in country, 9.1 million are of working age. Yet only 20.2 percent of them participated in the workforce in 2015, compared with 77.8 percent of men. Saudi Arabia has the largest gender imbalance in labor force participation among G-20 countries…In addition to low participation, females are challenged by high unemployment rates for those who actually seek employment (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016: 17).

The low employment levels of women in comparison to males have been acknowledged in a number of sources (Alfalih, 2016; Alqassem *et al*., 2016; Naseem and Dhruva, 2017; Organisation for Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018; Plecher, 2020). There have been several attempts to address this issue in recent years, for as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017) points out, the economic growth which has resulted from Vision 2030, has provided increased opportunities for Saudi women within employment. As part of the development plan, the goal is to raise women's participation in the workforce from 22 to 30 per cent (*Ibid*.). The GAS, KSA (2019: 1) cite a slight increase in the Saudi labour force participation rate for the fourth quarter of 2019, which has been attributed to an increase in female labour force participation (which they cite at 26 per cent). In the first quarter of 2020, it was shown that whilst Saudi male unemployment levels rose slightly to 5.6 per cent, female unemployment decreased by 2.7 per cent to 28.2 per cent. The decrease in the general unemployment rate was therefore attributed to increasing employment amongst women during this period (GAS, KSA, 2020a). In the second quarter of 2020, the Saudi labour force participation rate reached 48.8 per cent, which was again credited to the increase in female labour force participation from 25.9 per cent to 31.4 per cent (GAS, KSA, 2020b). The rising employment levels of women have led to further social and economic developments, such as the need for childcare. This has brought employment for many caregivers from foreign countries, especially with families

becoming smaller, and shifting away from their extended family networks (Alqassem *et al*., 2016). Nonetheless, lower levels of employment than men continue for women in the country (Mousa and Ghulam, 2019; Plecher, 2020). The situation of women with regard to the labour market in Saudi Arabia is addressed further in Chapter Three (see section 3.4.3).

2.4 The Saudi education system

Following the establishment of the KSA in 1932, education was available to a minority of men; largely those from wealthy families. This is a major contrast with the situation today, where the education system has developed to include 30,000 schools, as well as colleges and universities, and with education being a requirement for all, whether male or female (US Saudi Embassy, 2019). The KSA's educational strategy has resulted in a dramatic increase in adult literacy, as evidenced in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (2017: 10) claim that:

> In 1970, only 8 percent of the adult population of Saudi Arabia was literate. By 2014, over 94.4 percent of Saudi citizens were considered literate by United Nations standards.

Indeed, it has been argued that spending on education in Saudi Arabia, as measured by GDP average, exceeds the global average (HKS, 2019). This has led to high levels of literacy amongst the population, with 95 per cent of adults now literate and 99 per cent of youths (*Ibid.*: 4). The Ministry of Education regulates both private and public education in Saudi Arabia, and the education system is divided into several different levels: kindergarten or preschool, primary, intermediate, secondary, university and college (Alqassem *et al*., 2016). Education was first introduced for girls in the 1960s, with the first state school for girls being established in 1964. The number of girls' schools had significantly increased by the end of the 1990s, with schools in all parts of the KSA, and public education now being free and compulsory for all males and females between the ages of six and fourteen (Al-Bakr *et al.,* 2017). Girls have started to outnumber boys at the secondary and university level (*Ibid.*) and as the US Saudi Embassy (2019: 1) asserts, females today constitute more than half of the six million students enrolled at present in Saudi educational institutions. The OECD (2018: 48) also cite important developments in relation to the expansion of tertiary education, stating that of all countries, Korea and Saudi Arabia have experienced the most significant change, "…going from a gap of 16 percentage points in favour of men among 55-64 year-olds to a gap of about 10 percentage points in favour of women among 25-34 year-olds".

Higher education in Saudi Arabia dates back to 1957, when King Saud University was established, followed closely by the development of six other universities (Alamri, 2011), although higher education was established even further back than this, in 1949, with the College of Islamic Law (Shari'a) in Makkah (Gaffas, 2016). In 1975, the Ministry of Higher Education - a sector of the Ministry of Education - was established to focus exclusively on higher education, and to ensure that higher education responded to the national development plan (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019f). Higher education institutions gradually emerged in the country as a result of different initiatives such as AAFAQ or Horizon to develop the sector, and by 2014, there were 25 public universities, as well as numerous vocational institutions and private colleges which are more vocationally-oriented (Al-Youbi, 2017).

In 2003, the all-female Princess Noura Bent Abdul Rahman University was created, initially called Riyadh's Women's University, through the amalgamation of 23 girls' colleges in Riyadh (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). The university appointed Princess Johara Bent Fahad Al Saud as the Director in 2007, signifying an important marker in gender relations, as she was the first Saudi woman to occupy such a prominent position in the KSA (*Ibid.*). Education was - and still is - segregated (Alqassem *et al*., 2016), as underlined in Article 155 of the *Saudi Arabia Education Policy*, whilst ensuring the curriculum remains the same for males and females (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). Whilst there has been a significant increase in the numbers of females in higher education, Onsman (2011) states that they tend to be are enrolled in specific subjects such as education, social sciences and the humanities, which Al-Bakr *et al.* (2017) suggests potentially limits their attractiveness in private sector employment. Furthermore, whilst the establishment of the Princess Noura university has provided important opportunities for women within education, it has been argued that the segregated setting for education poorly equips women for later employment opportunities in mixed gender work environments and reinforces the need for segregated environments (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013).

Although higher education is relatively new in Saudi Arabia, being just over sixty years old, there are considered to be two main generations of universities. These include the older universities which date back to before 1998, including King Saud and King Fahd University for Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) (an all-male university), and the newer universities, which have been created through mergers of existing technical colleges (Onsman, 2011). This distinction is considered significant in terms of reputation of institutions, with the older universities regarded as higher-status and comprising of

higher-qualified staff (*Ibid.*). Such difference in reputation has been attributed by Mazi and Altbach (2013) to the newer, emerging universities with less established research infrastructures which therefore focus more specifically on teaching, as well as being located in destinations which are further away from the metropolitan areas. Furthermore, with their relatively new status, emerging universities are under development and confront challenges in attracting well-qualified academics. Given the increasing importance of the world ranking system to Saudi universities (Al-Ghamdi and Tight, 2013), high quality staff are central to the development plans of higher education institutions and global reputation. This underlines the importance of doctoral education for those working within academia across the country as a whole, as also highlighted by Al-Ghamdi and Tight (2013: 10) who explain that regulations have been established by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education:

> …for promoting faculty members to the higher academic positions of assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor. As a result, Saudi Arabian universities and colleges now generally require newly appointed faculty members to have earned a doctoral degree from an accredited institution. Further, promotions from assistant professor to associate professor are each based on those faculty members engaging in 4 years of additional research and further study since receiving their last degree. Staff members with master's degrees can teach, but the institutions where they teach encourage them to obtain doctorates and to leave teaching and enter administration if they are still without doctorates after 5 years.

Those employed in academia are therefore encouraged to acquire doctoral qualifications to continue teaching and facilitate promotion. Furthermore, for newer universities which aim to develop their faculty base, "Special allowances are provided for those who agree to teach at these new universities" (Mazi and Altbach, 2013: 12). These 'university education allowances' and 'security allowances' can include generous compensation for travel costs and accommodation (King Abdulaziz University, 2018; Majmaah University, 2019). Such measures are considered important for developing the international respectability and credibility of faculty members and the university as whole.

In terms of the size of the higher education sector in Saudi Arabia, figures for 2019 indicate that one million students were enrolled within Saudi colleges and universities, which is a significant rise from the 7,000 enrolled in 1970 (US Saudi Embassy, 2019). The huge investment in the education sector to date has therefore resulted in a significant rise in numbers of students and growth of the infrastructure, although it is

worth noting that investment has been strictly controlled to achieve two key aims; “to maintain its distinctive cultural heritage, both as it exists within its borders and the Kingdom as part of the unique Arabian Gulf region” whilst also raising the standards of higher education “in terms of quality and numbers and its status as global force” (Onsman, 2011: 520). Further investment in higher education has been a key aspect of the Vision 2030 development plans, with education being clearly linked with the needs of the economy. As outlined in the official Vision 2030 government paper, the intention is to:

> …redouble efforts to ensure that the outcomes of our education system are in line with market needs. We have launched the National Labor Gateway (TAQAT), and we plan to establish sector councils that will precisely determine the skills and knowledge required by each socio-economic sector. We will also expand vocational training in order to drive forward economic development. Our scholarship opportunities will be steered towards prestigious international universities and be awarded in the fields that serve our national priorities. We will also focus on innovation in advanced technologies and entrepreneurship (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2019: 36).

The impact of global competition in the knowledge economy has also been recognised in Saudi Arabia, with the need to develop the education system to enhance participation in the global labour market and to improve the opportunities of locally-qualified Saudi graduates within employment when compared with internationally-qualified graduates and expatriates (Salem, 2014; Alqahtani, 2015; Mohieldein, 2017). This has resulted in the National Center for Academic Accreditation & Evaluation (NCAAA) in the KSA defining a set of standards to ensure that the quality of education in the KSA corresponds to the highest international standards (Al-Ghamdi and Tight, 2013; Al-Shargabi, 2019). With the plans for developing the education system in Saudi Arabia, came the recognition of the importance of international student mobility (ISM) for developing the standards of education and international credibility of the academic sector within Saudi (through the return of highly qualified faculty members). As a consequence, Saudi students have the option to carry out their higher education abroad, with the rise of scholarships for international study.

Research by Pasztor (2015) argues that funding and scholarships play an important role in ISM. This is especially evident in Saudi Arabia, where international education has developed substantially since the 1950s, partly as a result of scholarships (Ahmed, 2015). Support for international education in Saudi Arabia has also developed

significantly since the 1950s, and despite an increasing number of higher education institutions in the KSA, overseas education remains in demand (Ahmed, 2015). Alqahtani (2015) points out that whilst international study was initially promoted in Arab and Islamic countries, in the 1960s, students could study in Europe and the US. One of the most significant schemes has been the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Scholarship Program, introduced by the late King Abdullah in 2005 (and therefore also commonly referred to as the King Abdullah Scholarship Program [KASP]), with the initial intention of sending 50,000 Saudi students abroad for higher education. It has since exceeded this aim, substantially. Whilst intended to last for only a short period, for instance, it has been extended several times (Taylor and Albasri, 2014), with over $2 billion invested annually in the programme (Yakaboski *et al.*, 2017). As Ahmed (2015: 19) explains, during the academic year 2012-2013, nearly 200,000 Saudi students were sent overseas, 165,908 who were in receipt of government scholarships. Whilst the initial agreement was with the US, the program later expanded to include countries with high standards of education, such as the UK, Canada, Australia, China and South Korea (Denman and Hilal, 2011). It has been suggested that this particular scholarship represents "…the largest fully endowed government scholarship programme ever supported by a nation-state" (Bukhari and Denman, 2013: 2). As Bukhari and Denman (2013) state, the scholarship includes:

> …a monthly stipend for living expenses, payment of all tuition costs and fees associated with their programme of study, expenses incurred for study-related travel (including conferences), a round trip airfare to the host country each year, and even bonuses for outstanding academic performance. All education-related expenses are also tax-free, as there is no income tax in Saudi Arabia. Even spouses of recipients are considered scholarship holders (i.e. they are funded to travel and live with their wife/husband), but it is the KASP scholarship recipient who is formally awarded the scholarship on the basis of academic merit and potential (p.8).

The presence of a family member is particularly important to the scholarship requirements, and an unmarried female must be accompanied by a brother, father or uncle, who will then also become a scholarship holder, even if not studying in the destination country (*Ibid.*). In addition to government-funded scholarships, many higher education institutions in the KSA provide employer sponsored funding for their employees to study abroad (Yakaboski *et al.*, 2017).

Whilst the KASP has been the most significant scholarship in the country, Bukhari and Denman (2013) point out that the history of scholarships in the country dates back to the 1920s. They highlight three key stages in the country's scholarship history. The Foundation Period of 1927-53 indicates a time prior to the establishment of the first university where Saudi students were sent to Egypt – a country with similar religion and language – to gain educational qualifications. On the return of these initial students, a second group were sent abroad for study, this time to the UK, and then a third, to Italy, to study specific subjects (telecommunications and aviation) to bring the knowledge back to the country. Later in this period, further groups of students were sent to other countries to study in particular areas. The second period from 1954-2004 which Bukhari and Denman (2013) refer to as the 'Growing Period' saw the development of international study opportunities for postgraduate students. It also saw the establishment of public universities in the country. Finally, the 'Expansion Period', from 2005 to the date of the authors' publication saw the launch of the KASP, which was introduced to establish a more skilled Saudi labour force in order to develop the economy. This particular scholarship, as noted above, provides generous financial provision for students, and is considered to have contributed to the desire to study abroad. As Bukhari and Denman (2013: 8) state, alongside the generous financial support, "…the prospect of studying overseas also has a growing 'social appeal' among Saudi youths, particularly in terms of becoming a 'global citizen'". The gains to be made from international study, including this idea of the global citizen or identity, will be touched on again in Chapter Three.

Scholarships can have important implications for employment and career outcomes (Denman and Hilal, 2011; Hall, 2013; Taylor and Albasri, 2014). Yakaboski *et al*. (2017), for instance, indicate that in addition to influencing decisions on what and where to study, the funding conditions of employer or government scholarships may stipulate return to the home country, and a specific employment position, as a requirement of funding. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the scholarships has been to provide education and training which may then facilitate development in the KSA. In order to ensure that this obligation is met, particular subjects which are crucial to the country's economic development have been encouraged, as determined by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education (Van der Wende, 2017). Thus, medical/health and engineering sciences are considered of great importance and are supported by funding, followed by information/communication, computer science and basic sciences. Other subject areas such as business studies, accounting, management and finance are also encouraged, but more often entered into by self-funded students (Ahmed, 2015). Whilst these are the most popular subjects, Saudi students have also enrolled on humanities and social sciences courses, as well as the arts (most commonly females), with significantly lower

enrolment in subjects such as agriculture, science education, media studies and so on (*Ibid.*). In addition to stipulations around subject areas and degree types, there are additional requirements of Saudi students who are approved by the government for funding. Study at a reputable institution, for instance, is a requirement of scholarships, with applicants being guided towards prestigious international universities for study abroad (Saudi Government, 2020b).

Pasztor (2015) argues for the need to recognise the diversity of the ISM population in receipt of scholarships, particularly in relation to social class and cultural capital, and in challenging the assumption that international students simply represent a 'migratory elite'. It is possible to see that government funding schemes may be regarded as promoting the interests of the latter in some ways:

> Because the allocation of such prestigious scholarships is dependent on 'exceptional achievement', access is limited to a very selective group of (socially advantaged) applicants able to build up considerable educational achievements into their Curricula Vitae. Here, the social structure of the competition is 'hidden' behind the highly competitive nature of access to these scholarships (Pasztor, 2015: 839).

At the same time, such scholarships are also offered to those with limited resources, or limited capital (in all forms). This often comes with restrictions or obligations, where governments provide the opportunity for international education via funding, with the requirement to return, in order to "…prevent any potential brain-drain of talented young people who could be tempted to leave for better career opportunities, potentially leading to a win-win situation for both" (*Ibid.*). This obligation has been an important driver in the country's development, resulting in rapid change and a "…sharp increase in entrepreneurship, new ideas, and new institutions of all sorts" (Ahmed, 2015: 20). Such requirements, however, may mean that choice is restricted for individuals in terms of country destination, institution and career options following study (Pasztor, 2015). Recent changes to the third stage of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques' overseas scholarship program, known as 'your job first and then your scholarship', have a direct impact on the employment and career outcomes of the applicants. As the Saudi Ministry of Education (2019a: unpaged) explains, rather than graduates seeking jobs after the PhD, the job is provided first. Thus, the "…scholarships are determined by offered jobs, the study seats, disciplines and academic levels". The process of receiving these scholarships involves the announcement of the available jobs within government sector institutions which are linked to development areas of strategic importance. Candidates

are then invited to put in an application, and overseas scholarships are awarded with guaranteed employment on their return. As such, this particular scholarship relates directly to public sector employment.

In terms of gender, Ahmed (2015) underlines the importance of recognizing the support that women have received in opportunities for international higher education. Referring to the KSA's scholarships programme, she explains that the country's commitment to women's education is demonstrated through the sponsoring of a male relative accompanying a female who has been awarded a scholarship, as discussed above. Thus, the scholarship programme has ensured that religious customs and expectations are adhered to, whilst also promoting education for women. Furthermore, the generous scholarship programmes which sponsor a family member, also mean that many women have been able to study where their partners have been awarded a scholarship. As Jamjoom and Kelly (2013: 10-11) state:

> More than 20% of those students benefiting from overseas scholarship programmes are women, who often accompany their husbands on overseas study programmes and end up enrolling in degrees themselves as a way of occupying their time and seeking out company in a foreign culture. Such enrolments can, and do, turn into useful degrees, equipping women to compete in the professional sector upon their return to the Kingdom. There are also (a smaller number of) women who take the initiative to avail themselves of overseas appointments and whose husbands accompany them to foreign universities.

It was thus deemed important to determine the situations of women on scholarships to the UK in the current study, and whether they had engaged in doctoral study whilst accompanying their husbands, or had been the drivers of the study themselves.

2.5 Gender and recent developments

Exploring gender relations and differences in relation to employment outcomes in Saudi Arabia requires an understanding of the social and cultural contexts at play. These have been touched on above in relation to employment and education, but it is also important to acknowledge the impact of the recent changes that have taken place in the country in relation to gender. Vision 2030, for instance, as mentioned earlier, has had an important impact on society as a whole, but the changes have also been particularly significant in the lives of women, as will be demonstrated below.

Similar to the history of gender in many other countries, including the UK, within Saudi society, male heads of family have tended to be the main actors in the public sphere, with females predominantly adopting responsibility for the private sphere. Such gendered roles and expectations have been argued to have affected women's employment opportunities (Al-Asfour *et al*., 2017), and the requirement to travel with a male guardian (Hennekam *et al*., 2018). This latter practice, however, is considered necessary to protect and keep safe the females in the family (Altamimi, 2014) and is more of a social custom than a legal requirement (Al-Bakr *et al*., 2017). Moreover, and relating to the current study's focus, it has been suggested that whilst male guardians are a requirement of international study, this is rarely enforced (*Ibid*.). At the same time, it is important to recognize that there have also been positive outcomes from such a practice, especially where family members have been supported to study alongside females in international contexts, thus providing educational opportunities for more Saudi nationals. Also cited as important in relation to gender in Saudi Arabia is the achievement of employment through close networks and personal relationships, where Hennekam *et al.* (2018) suggest females have benefitted less than males during selection practices, performance appraisals, hiring decisions, mentoring and networking.

Whilst such cultural practices may have had an impact on women's participation in Saudi society, it has also been argued that it is a common misconception amongst western societies that Saudi women are isolated or confined to the home (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the USA, 2006; Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013), and important developments have also taken place over recent years. Over the past two decades in particular, women's participation in education and the labour market has grown significantly, subsequently leading to women increasingly juggling domestic and childcare duties with professional advancement. Jamjoom and Kelly (2013: 3) sum up the changes that have taken place in relation to gender in recent years, for they suggest that whilst men once dominated "…professional work, as well as all kinds of political, economic and social authority", the situation has changed significantly, with women:

> …carrying out important roles across all of these spheres. There are female doctors, female university teachers and professors and female business women. Today's Saudi women work in the scientific laboratories, in the press and other media and in factories.

This positive progress has developed even further since the work of Jamjoom and Kelly (2013). It is worth mentioning here that international conventions relating to women's rights and freedom from discrimination, such as the 1979 United Nations Convention on

the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), has been ratified in many countries since its introduction in 1981, including in Saudi Arabia in 2012 (Moghadam, 2013), and this important step appears to have marked key changes for women in the country. As Melius (2017: 43) explains: "In 2013, the late King Abdullah appointed 30 women to join the municipal council elections, allowing women to vote and run as candidates for the first time". Women's labour market participation has also been gradually increasing over recent years, especially in relation to entrepreneurship and higher education employment (Al-Bakr *et al*., 2017), with a shift away from domestic duties (and such chores increasingly being adopted by maids and cleaners) (Altamimi, 2014) and women's representation within senior positions also rising (Al-Bakr *et al*., 2017) (see Chapter Three for further information on women's employment situation within the country). In addition, women have more rights in general, for instance, in relation to driving (Amnesty International, 2018).

It is also worth noting the considerable pace of development which has occurred over the years in relation to female education in the KSA, for as Jamjoom and Kelly (2013) state, at the time of their publication, graduate study levels amongst women in higher education in Saudi Arabia were 48 per cent of those in university, placing them at a comparable level to the USA and Western Europe at 50 per cent. Furthermore, they assert that during the period of 1990 to 2004, enrolment rates for females in universities in the KSA saw a growth of 512 per cent. The developments in higher education have also seen a growing number of women not just studying, but working in the sector. Whilst higher education employment has increased in general, with Jamjoom and Kelly (2013) citing an increase of 175 per cent in numbers of faculty members in universities in the KSA from 1990 to 2009, the rate of increase for female faculty members has been much higher than for males, with a 242 per cent increase compared to 152 per cent for the same period.

It is also important to acknowledge, as Alqahtani (2015) states, the need to avoid an overly-deterministic view of gender relations in Saudi Arabia, with men as oppressors and women as subordinates. Saudi men do not all fit the stereotypical image of the oppressor, and women cannot simply be considered submissive, with many continuing to demand their rights, and with differing views amongst women as to how to achieve empowerment (*Ibid*.). It is also important to acknowledge issues of variation in behaviours and practices amongst different families and communities in the country. As Altamimi (2014) explains, the more traditional communities tend to more strongly adhere to conservative practices. Issues of difference amongst women are also relevant in

relation to class and employment opportunities and experience, with women from higher classes expressing agency more easily (Hennekam *et al*., 2018) (see Chapter Three).

It is evident, then, that there have been important efforts to improve gender equality at the formal, legal and policy level (Hennekam *et al.,* 2018), and these have had a significant and positive impact on the lives of Saudi women. Women in particular have been shown to regard the changes positively. In one study, for instance, which sought to understand the perspectives of male and female Saudi university students with regard to changing gender roles, female students were more optimistic than males about changes occurring in the country for women and believed that things would improve further in the next five years. The changes were viewed as advantageous in terms of professional lives, and part of wider global developments (Al-Bakr *et al.,* 2017). Progress in relation to gender relations is ongoing and changes still need to be made (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013; Al-Bakr *et al*., 2017). In particular, it is suggested that the informal level of cultural traditions needs to be addressed to ensure greater equality for women (Hennekam *et al*., 2018), but the considerable developments witnessed in recent years indicate important and positive steps towards gender equality in the country.

Chapter Three:

International student mobility and employment for Saudi graduates

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in two parts. As discussed previously, international student mobility (ISM) has increased significantly in recent decades (see Chapter One), and in Part One of the current chapter, explanations of this trend are explored. Here, globalisation and the role of positional competition are discussed, before focusing specifically on two main theories which dominate the debate; human capital theory (Becker, 1993) and Bourdieu's (1977; 1986) ideas around cultural capital and habitus. The limitations of these approaches are then outlined, before discussing the value of utilising more recent theoretical developments in relation to global cultural capital (Kim, 2011; Igarashi and Saito, 2014; Jarvis, 2019), in relation to employment perceptions, experiences and career prospects for international PhD graduates. The chapter then looks more closely at employment and the labour market, with Part Two providing an overview of existing literature on Saudi PhD graduates' labour market outcomes in Saudi Arabia. This literature remains limited, but several important insights have emerged, and these have been categorised into three key themes: Saudi graduates' position in the Saudi labour market; the distinction between national and international qualifications, and the significance of gender issues. The chapter concludes by summarizing the core insights in the literature, and identifying the key gaps, which paved the way for the current study.

Part One: International student mobility: key patterns and conceptual explanations

3.2 ISM, global developments and competition

International student mobility (ISM) has progressed a great deal from its colonial history, where international students completed their doctoral studies in world-leading universities as part of colonial arrangements, often returning home to prestigious and well-paid positions (Rivzi, 2010). Today, the globalisation of higher education (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Findlay *et al.*, 2011; Tremblay *et al.*, 2012; OECD, 2018) has been

linked to substantial growth in international student mobility. Globalisation refers to the wider technological, economic and scientific movements and developments which impact on higher education, and include:

> …information technology in its various manifestations, the use of a common language for scientific communication, and the imperatives of both mass demand for higher education (massification) and societal needs for highly educated personnel (Altbach, 2004: 5).

Phelps (2016: 2) suggests that developments in communication and transportation technologies which have emerged alongside globalisation have "blurred the lines between nation-states and given rise to what has been termed 'transnational space'". This has been exacerbated by the growing number of partnerships between educational institutions and industries (Edmondson, 2012), and the potential value attached to international educational experiences by employers (Molony *et al.*, 2011; European Commission, 2014; Yakaboski *et al.*, 2017), although the latter is also subject to debate (see, for instance, Gardner *et al.*, 2008; Shiveley and Misco, 2012; Tomlinson, 2018).

Marginson and van der Wende (2006) argue that higher education has been particularly susceptible to transformation and adaptability associated with globalisation as knowledge is highly portable in global contexts. Thus, the relationship between knowledge and globalisation is an important one, where knowledge is central to globalisation and where it facilitates the transmission of knowledge and promotes the 'knowledge society' as fundamental to future prosperity and success. Higher education institutions therefore become central in increasing participation in the knowledge-based world economy (Thomson and Walker, 2010), and in facilitating global relationships and the cross-border flow of "people, information, knowledge, technologies, products and financial capital" (Marginson and van der Wende, 2006: 4).

Van der Wende (2017) suggests that whilst definitions of globalisation and associations with higher education have tended towards the positive or the progressive, focusing on a speeding up of interconnectedness, and increasing opportunities, there has been growing recognition of the limitations too. These include inequality, exclusion, negative impacts on social cohesion and, more recently, the belief that globalisation could be weakening. As she explains, there has been growing debate and criticism about internationalisation, especially in relation to border controls and immigration, but this has also been seen in higher education. Internationalisation in higher education refers to the increasing commercialisation of higher education and competition for recruitment of

international students, as well as preparing students for a more globalised world (Robson and Wihlborg, 2019). Nonetheless, there has also been prejudice against foreign students, particularly in countries like Australia, South Africa and Russia, but in the UK, especially following Brexit discussions, questions have been raised around the benefits and costs of international students.

It is also worth noting the impact of recent global events which may limit the growth of international education. In particular, the current COVID-19 pandemic which began with a viral outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and spread around the world (Marioni *et al.*, 2020), leading to numerous deaths and significant social, economic, political and health consequences worldwide, has had an important impact on higher education. Responses to the virus have varied significantly between countries, and this has also been the case in relation to higher education specifically, with differentiation of impact between institutions. The institutions least affected by the pandemic have been those with flexible systems and infrastructures, which have enabled swift response and ability to adapt quickly and efficiently (Ogden *et al.,* 2020), with those less well-prepared resulting in complete shutdown (Martin and Furiv, 2020). Nonetheless, despite differences, university closures have been a common response to containing the spread of the virus (Murugesan and Chidambaram, 2020). Whilst it is unclear as yet how the pandemic will truly impact on international higher education, in general, it has been suggested that the pandemic does not mean an end to international education, but rather it has been an important event accelerating changes already underway, particularly in terms of technological developments and the provision of more flexible forms of educational delivery (Martin and Furiv, 2020; Ogden *et al.,* 2020).

Research has also highlighted the influence of the neoliberal paradigm, which is associated with individual economic rationality and a weak state, controlled by the free markets. It therefore supports policies of liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation, the rolling back of the welfare state and a reduction in the role of the state (Kandiko, 2010). The neo-liberal perspective often coincides with the perspective of competition where the globalization of higher education is perceived to result from neo-liberal influences, reinforcing competition through withdrawal of state support and emphasis on global trade (Shields, 2013). In the UK, for instance, the recruitment of international students has been a priority of UK policy since the emergence of the Thatcher government, and the increasing recognition of the financial benefit – rather than burden – that international students provide to the universities, state and economy (Lomer *et al*., 2018). Thus, there has been a shift from higher education as public good to a commodity to be purchased for individual benefit, and its subsequent significance as a source of

revenue with the decline of financial support from the state (Shields, 2013). The reliance on this income by the UK economy and universities has increased the requirement for the UK to compete in international education in the global context (Lomer *et al*., 2018).

The emphasis on competition has led to an increasing global differentiation of the higher education system, which has resulted in particular university degrees being attributed as more valuable than others (Findlay *et al*., 2011). It has been argued that such differentiation, however, could be more accurately regarded as a consequence of "a withdrawal of state funds and a shift to offering a marketable international commodity to students who are expected to perceive the value of education as lying beyond the nation-state" (*Ibid*.: 120). Indeed, there has been a trend towards the increasing privatisation of higher education institutions, which have become more reliant on the market (Castree, 2010; Radice, 2013). Privatisation within higher education is not new and tends to involve funding and management by the private sector, but it has become increasingly significant for many countries (Tilak, 1999; Martell, 2012), including in Saudi Arabia (Saudi Government, 2020a). In recent years, in the UK in particular, for example, there has been a substantial increase in student fees and the outsourcing of services to private bidders in order to cut costs and make a profit (Martell, 2012), and in Saudi Arabia, recent revisions to Vision 2030 have meant the privatisation of universities in the country (Council of Universities' Affairs, 2020).

It is difficult to overlook the importance of the role of competition within the global education system and labour market, as it has become a key component in the operation of educational institutions. Globalisation processes and the rise of the narrative on the knowledge economy (Lopez-Levya and Rhoades, 2016), as well as neo-liberal ideologies, have reinforced the importance of competition in our societies and embedded competition within the operation of educational institutions (Naidoo, 2016). Governments have responded through the promotion of global excellence, creating an industry in which higher education becomes a service to sell within the global marketplace (Lomer *et al*., 2018). In the UK, for example, there has been the development of frameworks - such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) - to monitor, regulate and promote excellence and competitiveness within higher education on a national and global level, largely based on research performance (Horta, 2009). In addition, such status competition is evidenced through global rankings (Naidoo, 2016) which provide positional advantage.

The work of Brown (2000) on Positional Conflict Theory demonstrates the significance of global positional competition in the context of international education and employment

outcomes. As Brown (2000: 633) explains, positional competition involves how people stand in relation to one another within hierarchies which may be either implicit or explicit. Thus, it highlights the ways in which "social groups and individuals mobilize their cultural, economic, and political powers and assets to attain higher social status beyond national boundaries" (Kim, 2011: 112). It is also important to note here that whilst competition can provide opportunities and advantage, it can also yield inequality and the unequal distribution of capital (Marginson, 2013; Lopez-Levya and Rhoades, 2016; Naidoo, 2016; Lomer *et al*., 2018). With the structure of competition changing from the domestic to more international competition, a global perspective of positional competition becomes significant. From such a perspective, the international PhD operates as a positional tool which has the potential to generate higher status and enhanced opportunities in a competitive labour market. The value attached to PhDs in the employment context, however, may be dependent or conditional on the employment sector or industry, job level or country of employment (Molony *et al.*, 2011), the country of international experience (Shiveley and Misco, 2012), the institution (Lomer *et al.,* 2018) or individuals' ability to demonstrate the transferability of international experiences (Gardner *et al.*, 2008). Ahmad *et al.* (2017), for instance, who conducted research on the reasons behind Kurdish students choosing particular countries for postgraduate study, found that obtaining a world recognized qualification was a key motivation, as well as attending an institution offering world class education because of the perceived advantages these would provide. This apparent preoccupation with attending a world-ranking university has been noted elsewhere as one of the key motivations for international study (Marginson, 2006; Findlay *et al*., 2012; Brown *et al*., 2016). Indeed, "Over time increased participation levels in HE have driven up demand for access to the 'best' universities within an imagined or rank-listed world hierarchy" (Findlay *et al*., 2012: 120).

Looking further at motivations, it has been shown that enhanced employment opportunities are considered an important driver for international education. Research by Almotery (2009), for example, which examined the expectations, motivations and experiences of Saudi students in the US, showed that international study was considered an important stage in securing good jobs or career success. The employment and career opportunities that international student mobility can provide for the students has also been cited as an important motivation in research by Brooks and Waters (2010) on international student mobility. They highlight how international students are motivated by the desire to gain credentials which provide status, both socially and economically, in their home country, therefore leading to better job prospects. Returning to Almotery's study (2009), drawing on interviews with fifteen students, it was found that professional advancement was key to students' decisions to undertake international study. It is

notable that their expectations were based on evidence of their parents' experiences, many of whom had undertaken international education (some through scholarships) and were reported to have subsequently been successful in their careers. Such findings support general literature on motivations for international doctoral study, with graduates from a variety of contexts, which cites key drivers associated with improvement of career prospects, professional advancement or better future employability (Almotery, 2009; Brooks and Waters, 2010; British Council, 2015; Nghia, 2015; Packwood *et al.*, 2015; King and Songhi, 2017). It is worth noting, whilst touching on motivations here, that students have also been shown to be driven by other factors, such as the pursuit of new adventures, to experience new cultures or to be part of education in different international contexts (Maringe and Carter, 2007; Packwood *et al.*, 2015; Safakli and Ihemejee, 2015; Chao *et al.,* 2017). Research has also shown that students have been influenced to engage in international study as part of decisions to participate in opportunities arising from government efforts to develop their countries, in order to more effectively participate in a global knowledge economy (Yakaboski *et al.,* 2017).

Research on the motivations behind PhD study specifically is limited, but there have been several important studies which have provided valuable insights, and which have categorised motivations in different ways. Guerin *et al.* (2015), for instance, who surveyed 405 doctoral students at Australian universities identified five different motivations: family & friends (encouragement and support rather than expectation), intrinsic motivation (genuine interest and desire to contribute to the field), lecturer influence, research experience and career progression. These seem, therefore, to encompass both motivations and motivators. The latter motivation was particularly significant for those at the beginning of their working lives, which is perhaps particularly relevant in relation to the current study. Moreno and Kollanus (2013), whose research focused on doctoral students in Finland and Austria, similarly identified five key motivations, mainly employment-related: academic career goal (strongly related to future plans and academic work), professional development (enhancing non-specific career prospects), career change, employment opportunity (PhD related to a job offer) and personal fulfilment (interest in academic work and research), which they categorize as extrinsic and intrinsic. The first four motivations, for instance, were considered extrinsic in their aim to achieve an external goal related to external demand or desirable reward and personal fulfilment was considered intrinsic in pursuit of the PhD for its own sake or for personal satisfaction. Brailsford (2010) also confirmed the significance of improving career prospects, personal development, and intrinsic interest in the chosen discipline, as well as the influence of lecturers, the latter of which is in line with Guerin *et al*.'s study. He also highlighted the importance of recognising multiple motives.

Wiegerováa (2016) took a more focused approach, classifying participants into one main category according to the initial and most significant motivation, through examining the memories of ten Czech doctoral graduates working in universities. Core motivations were categorised as being influenced by macrosocial (employment, the labour market and social climate) and microsocial factors (through the work of the university, faculty, MA experience, inner maturation and individual conviction). These led to two categories of motives: external (fulfilment of ideas, role model influence and obtaining financial income) and internal (desire to be a researcher, to excel in the chosen field, to get to the university and to extend student life). Yang *et al.* (2017) found that the most important motivation for international doctoral study amongst their sample was the intrinsic value that it was perceived to provide in relation to enrichment of their lives and research perspectives, although personal and professional growth was also significant. Finally, research by Tarvid (2014), which looked at the motivations for PhD study of Latvian students studying at home and abroad, showed that motivations differed according to subject of study, with distinctions being made between personal oriented goals and labour market goals. Interestingly for the current study, the research showed that students studying biology and management, as well as social and political sciences, mathematics and chemistry, were more labour market oriented in the decisions to engage in PhD study.

There is also some indication in the literature that international education can lead to better work opportunities. It has been estimated, for instance, in relation to international students from the UK, that internationally mobile students are 24 per cent less likely to be unemployed than non-mobile peers six months after graduation and have a higher likelihood of having a graduate job and higher starting salary (Universities UK, 2017: 18). The work of Onsman (2011: 522), which highlights the drive towards Saudization and the problems that have been encountered in relation to the higher education sector as a result, also seems to indicate that Saudi students who have travelled abroad, particularly to English speaking countries, might be considered more of an asset to particular organisations or companies. As he asserts, at present, there are many problems with the current approach being adopted, with promotion of Saudi nationals to positions of power despite limited experience, overseas educators with experience lacking understanding or appreciation of Saudi cultural norms and religious practices, and inexperienced academics from other countries being employed who lack English communication skills. Furthermore, crucially, the lack of adequate communication skills is highlighted as problematic. It might be expected, then, that Saudi PhD graduates who have awareness of cultural and religious norms in the country, but who have travelled to

another country and return with the ability to communicate in English, might be placed in a more favourable position for employment and progression in the higher education sector. In addition, King *et al.* (2010: 33) examined credit mobility (a year abroad during a degree) and suggested that evidence indicated a relationship between mobility and employability, with internationally-qualified students more likely to acquire better degrees and higher salaries. They did, however, assert the importance of being cautious in asserting the direction of causation. As they explained:

> This might indicate that mobility creates added value for the student, except that we also know that mobile students are academically selected from the start, and to some extent socially selected too, through the social-class and travel experiences of their family backgrounds.

It might also be important to consider the difficulty of assessing causation in relation to employability outcomes in terms of the personalities of different students. It could be argued, for instance, that international students are more entrepreneurial than those who remain in their home country, and that this impacts on their employment outcomes. King *et al.* (2010) also indicate that interviewees' experiences provided support for the claim that employers valued international education. They conclude, however, that whilst anecdotal evidence exists which suggests that employers prefer international graduates, there is little published literature which provides actual evidence of added value here. Like King *et al.* (2010), Wiers-Jenssen (2012) urges caution when asserting a link between international student mobility and enhanced employment opportunities, stating that there is little evidence to support this claim. At the same time, she states that mobile students "are more likely to hold international jobs in the domestic labor market; hence mobility has an impact on 'horizontal' career opportunities" (p.471) (sideways movement in employment to facilitate upwards career progression in the future).

Students' choices in relation to international higher education are affected by a variety of different factors including costs, entry requirements, employment prospects, location, social life, subject availability, support and teaching reputation, but also - as touched on above - ranking and reputation (Souto-Otero and Enders, 2017). There is a tendency for research to underline the importance of university reputation in choice of international institution, as opposed to teaching quality, which underlines the competitive nature of higher education, and the marketing of institutions is central here. It is important to acknowledge, however, as Souto-Otero and Enders (2017: 4) explain, that:

> Reputation, a general socially mediated belief about the status of a university, is not identical with ranking position. Reputation affected student choices before global rankings appeared, and the effect of reputation in decision-making should not be immediately equated with the effect of ranking information.

Thus, there is a distinction between ranking and reputation which tends to be overlooked. Nonetheless, ranking has a significant influence on reputation and has become an important marker in student decisions about institution. As the OECD (2018: 219) explains, ranking and league tables for educational institutions have emphasised the perceived distinctions between institutions in terms of quality, and reinforced the desire to attend those institutions considered more prestigious. Different global ranking systems include the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, the QS World University Rankings and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education (SJT), now referred to as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), and are heavily related to research activities and capabilities (Marginson, 2006; Horta, 2009). These global ranking systems, despite questions being raised in relation to methodology (Dembereldorj, 2018), have increased the pressure on higher education institutions to compete (Horta, 2009), to enhance their status, prestige and to retain their place in the global market (Lopez-Levya and Rhoades, 2016), and subsequently to generate income from the sector. According to Lomer *et al.* (2018), such pressures have enhanced the need for 'nation branding', which institutions engage in, to enhance their symbolic capital. This refers to the ways in which the institution and qualification are given meaning, which significantly affects its reputation, leading to greater attraction for international students and subsequently increasing its resources and success.

Lomer *et al.* (2018) explore the role of nation branding, with a particular focus on Education UK under the 'Britain is GREAT' campaign, covering the period from 1999 to 2014 to highlight the factors at work within positional competition. This branding of UK higher education is important in relation to the current study, not just in terms of the positional advantage associated with UK qualifications, but also the promotion of the relationship between the qualification and employment. UK branding promotes:

> …promises of capitals, of potential returns on private investments in international education, likely to appeal to aspiring and strategic middle classes in countries with large pools of students envisaging study abroad. By enhancing employability…the brand offers a real boost to educational capital among international alumni (Lomer *et al.,* 2018: 144).

In line with the discussion on rankings and positional competition presented earlier, however, such branding does not operate in a way that promotes national institutions equally. Hierarchical processes are at work within this branding. A focus on Oxford, for example, is used to represent the whole sector and enhance the UK reputation on the global level. As Marginson (2013: 4) explains, rather than focusing on the top 500 institutions, within global competition, the tendency is to concentrate on a smaller number of more elite institutions. Thus, in Saudi Arabia, with the growing importance of Vision 2030 and the focus on establishing a skilled, knowledgeable, highly educated workforce, particularly with growing unemployment in the country (Alfalih, 2016), an international qualification from a globally reputable institution, such as a Russell Group university, may place an individual at considerable advantage within the labour market. The potential value of the international qualification is evidenced in findings from a Global Employer Survey conducted in 2011, which found that in Saudi Arabia:

> Employers are in line with the objectives of the King Abdullah Scholarship program, which sponsors thousands of Saudi students each year to gain qualifications at foreign universities. Saudi employers are more affirmative (76%) than the average for the Middle East (71%), and Saudi employers feel recruits with international experience outperform others even more strongly than in other countries in the region (Molony *et al.,* 2011: 18).

Furthermore, as Igarashi and Saito (2014: 228) suggest, there is unequal distribution of cosmopolitanism in terms of country of birth or domicile, where for individuals born and raised in western countries, the acquisition of cosmopolitanism as cultural capital is easier as "academic qualifications that are only local or national for them are simultaneously regarded as global by people in the non-West". Weenink (2007: 495) explains that cosmopolitanism is a form of cultural or social capital which refers to the possession of resources or qualities, that provide the holder with "a competitive edge in transnational arenas where the struggle is for privileged positions". In this sense, it could be argued to be largely associated with global positional competition. Thus, for Saudi nationals to compete in the labour market with such individuals, international doctoral education may be perceived as a way to achieve higher status or an advantage over other candidates. At the same time, there may be additional considerations which impact on choices, such as geographic location. As Shields (2013: 15) found:

> Geographic factors are also increasingly associated with student flows: As one would expect distance is negatively correlated with student numbers (most

students would prefer to stay closer to home), and the correlation between these variables is growing stronger.

It may be, therefore, that a range of factors impact on student decisions with regards to the choice of institution for international study, where, for instance, both reputation and location are considered.

It has been shown, then, that competition in higher education may be significant in relation to the current study where it was important to examine whether or not the international PhD in itself constitutes capital and provides positional advantage, in comparison to national PhDs, but also whether institutional status or reputation was significant. It is also important to recognise the potential role of subject of study in terms of positional competition (Strathdee, 2008). Jarvis (2019), for instance, identified three areas of the Korean workforce which he found were most influenced by the demand for global skills. These were business/marketing, computer engineering (research) and government. PhDs which focused on subjects directly related to these areas might therefore place individuals at an advantage over others.

3.3 Theoretical explanations of international student mobility

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, there are two main theoretical explanations for ISM which tend to dominate debate; human capital theory (Becker, 1993) and Bourdieu's (1977; 1986) ideas around cultural capital and habitus. In this section, it will be made clear that these theories have some merit in relation to the current study but that the research sought a more broad-ranging conceptual framework which would encompass the increasingly international character of higher education. The following section therefore looks to the expansion of such theoretical explanations, and subsequently in the current study, the use of global cultural capital, to explore the value of the international PhD in relation to labour market outcomes in the Saudi context.

3.3.1 Human capital theory

Human capital theory regards education as an economic investment. The theory is most commonly associated with Becker (1975; 1992) who regarded investment in education and healthcare as investments in human capital, which would be financially beneficial to both individuals and society. The 'human' aspect emerges, as Becker (1992: 16) explains, through the production of:

> …human, not physical or financial, capital because you cannot separate a person from his or her knowledge, skills, health, or values the way it is possible to move financial and physical assets while the owner stays put.

This theory, then, suggests that the skills, talent and knowledge of employees within the economy represent a form of capital which they invest in, subsequently enhancing their productivity in the economy (Acemoglu *et al*., 2014). As such, higher education, comprises investment in an individual's human capital (Van der Wende, 2017). With intellectual development comes economic capital, and thus education is influential in economic and labour market outcomes. As a result, underlying this theory is the assumption that "the financial rewards to be reaped in the future will outweigh the costs incurred in the immediate- to intermediate-term" (Kim *et al.*, 2011: 143). With globalisation, more complex divisions of labour have emerged, propelled by the prioritising of scientific knowledge related to technological innovation, and the growth of the higher education sector (Acemoglu *et al*., 2014), as demand for higher skilled employment and therefore necessary education increases (Brown *et al*., 2007).

It is important to note, however, that there is some debate here, given concerns with over-qualification and skills over supply, with a number of studies exploring the potential mismatch between skill demand and supply (Green and Zhu, 2010; Kampelmann and Rycx, 2012; Cabus and Somers, 2018; Livingstone, 2019). An important distinction between private and social benefits of human capital is offered by Kim *et al.* (2011) with respect to rewards. With human capital being inherently represented through individuals, the private benefits may be more apparent, including financial advantage gained through increased income, or non-monetary returns such as professional status. Social benefits also accrue, however, to institutions and nations, being reflected in increased production and profits for organisations, or enhanced gross national product for the country (see also Oreopoulos and Petronijevic, 2013), or indeed through reduction in crime (Machin *et al.*, 2011).

In relation to Saudi Arabia, it is possible to see how such a theory may be useful in terms of explaining decision-makers' actions (reflected in the assumption that investment in education correlates with economic development and higher financial returns), particularly in terms of the country's funding of overseas education as part of wider development initiatives (Yakaboski *et al.*, 2017), with private benefits to the individual combined with social benefits to the country as a whole. This is particularly the case with the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme and employment scholarships (see Chapter Two) which require the return of graduates to the country. A related case has been

documented in previous research in relation to China's educational reforms and 'brain gain' policies, which have involved investment in national universities alongside the strategy of funding students to study abroad as part of this development. This has been regarded as a strategic drive to invest in human capital for the purpose of educational reform and economic gain (Ryan, 2012). There are strong similarities in such a case with Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia.

Critiques of human capital theory have centred around its economic focus, in which educational value is measured in terms of economic contribution, and where the commodification of higher education is argued to threaten the very meaning of its existence (Giroux, 2003; Kenway *et al.,* 2004; Giroux, 2014). As Thomson and Walker (2010) explain, whilst we might expect governments to concentrate on the ways in which educational gains relate specifically to the economy, this should not be at the expense of considering the benefits relating to intellectual development or broader social goods. Furthermore, the simple association between investment in education and rewards disregards the structural factors which can negatively impact on such beneficial outcomes (Klees, 2016; Brown *et al.,* 2020).

It has also been suggested that the methodological approach adopted by the human capital perspective is often limited to the vertical dimension of education, which focuses on number of years in education. Thus, it has been argued that it overlooks horizontal differentiation in education (Gerber and Cheung, 2008), which refers to the different types or quality of education attained at a particular level (although there have been some recent attempts to address this; see, for instance, Naylor *et al.*, 2015, who looked at rates of return according to degree class, and Zimmerman, 2014 and Burgess, 2016, who discuss high returns from elite universities). It also overlooks the problem of lack of availability of job and career opportunities in the labour market (Brown *et al.,* 2020). Furthermore, whilst human capital is understood as a universal definition, it is problematic in its failure to explain differential outcomes, unequal outcomes and status (Marginson, 2006; 2019) or the value attached to educational credentials (Waters, 2009). The primary focus of human capital theory on economic explanations, for example, is limited to exploring levels of education and labour market returns (Thomson and Walker, 2010), and whilst there is an acknowledgement of differential returns depending on type or place of employment, there is little attention paid to the analysis of, or the causes behind, those differences, or the structural factors which may impact on outcomes (Klees, 2016).

3.3.2 Cultural capital

Cultural capital, most commonly associated with the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1986), has been put forward as an explanation for the reproduction of existing class relations through education, as a counter argument to the view of education as meritocratic and based on credentials (Brown *et al.,* 2016). Bourdieu is credited with capturing the complexity of social class through recognition of both the material and cultural factors at work. His work developed the idea, for instance, that social class is comprised of several types of capital (cultural, social and economic) and "with a higher level of social class associated with higher cultural capital" (Chan Suet Kay *et al*., 2016: 25-26). Bourdieu (1986: 16) argued that these three forms of capital were interlinked and could be exchanged. As he explained, capital presents itself in different ways:

> …as economic capital which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility.

As such, the adoption of Bourdieu's framework within research requires the acknowledgement that educational settings reproduce and naturalise social differences. Cultural capital, as Bourdieu (1977) explains, refers to knowledge, skills and behaviour and differs from economic capital (economic resources) or social capital (social networks). International education has been argued to provide numerous benefits for international students in terms of Bourdieu's different forms of capital, for instance, "mobility capital…human capital (a world-class university education), social capital (access to networks, 'connections'), cultural capital (languages, intercultural awareness) and, eventually, economic capital (high-salary employment)" (King *et al.*, 2010: 95). Different forms of capital also provide a route to specific educational opportunities. The example provided here by Pasztor (2015: 837) offers a helpful illustration of the ways in which different forms of capital can impact on access to international doctoral education:

> Although most of these students are coming from middle class backgrounds, they often do not come with the 'full package'. For example, Sabine's well-to-do family is able to convert their economic capital into cultural and social capital by sending their daughter to LSE, which allows her to qualify for a funded place for PhD at

Elite. Conversely, in the case of Boyka, the lack of economic capital is counterbalanced with cultural and social capital, which is used to access economic sources, such as funding for postgraduate studies, subsequently leading onto the doctorate. Hence, international educational opportunities, and specifically the masters, are effectively used in both cases to increase their chances for accessing fully funded doctoral studies at Elite.

Bourdieu (1986) suggests that cultural capital exists in three main forms: the embodied state, which encompasses our knowledge and skills gained over time, through education and socialisation; the objectified state, which tends to refer to goods and material objects associated with our lifestyle and education, such as books and computers, furniture and clothing and, finally, the institutionalised state, which refers to the ways in which cultural capital is measured, through qualifications and job titles. Chan Suet Kay *et al*. (2016) suggest that the embodied form of capital is the lived dispositions or 'habitus', which is another concept introduced by Bourdieu (1977). Habitus refers to the way in which such capital is ingrained in our dispositions and might be reflected, for example, in the attitudes and values of the dominant class, such as a positive perception of education. Thus, habitus encompasses the ways in which broader social inequalities are negotiated at the individual level (Brooks, 2008) and relates to "…particular conditions that shape the ways individuals think and act", being also affected by family and schooling (Tran, 2015: 7). As Igarashi and Saito (2014) explain, the earliest transmission of habitus emerges through the parents' transfer of cultural capital to their children, which shapes the future attainment of cultural capital. The habitus has strong links with identity (Chan Suet Kay *et al*., 2016), but is about more than this; it reflects how individuals acquire and carry ways of thinking and being and doing from one place to another. It represents the ways in which past social structures (and experiences) are communicated in present actions (James, 2015).

As cultural capital is transmitted from parents to children, it is argued to result in higher-class individuals who possess cultural capital achieving greater academic success than those in the lower classes, thus underlining the relationship between cultural capital and educational success (Jaeger, 2011). Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital was considered valuable for the current research as it may be that for international students, for instance, differential preferences, but also experiences and outcomes, result from the possession of cultural capital. It has been suggested that middle class families use international educational qualifications as a way of positioning themselves more favourably in the labour market (Holloway *et al.*, 2012). It may also be that the educational experience abroad can enhance the embodied form of cultural capital, as

noted earlier (Findlay, 2011). Success within the educational system, then, is believed to be enhanced by cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986), and the subsequent acquisition of capital and resources, which might then impact on employment and career outcomes.

The distinctions made between different types of cultural capital are important for the current study. Human capital tends to conflate these notions in the sense that the qualification is often taken to reflect an individual's skills and knowledge. Bourdieu, however, highlights these different types of cultural capital, and this distinction was maintained in the current study. The research looked at the value of institutionalised cultural capital; the ways in which the international PhD is perceived and used by the graduates and their employers, but also the value of embodied cultural capital, through the ways in which educational experiences are represented and communicated in interactions with others and the skills acquired, including language skills. Objectified cultural capital, however, proved less relevant in the current study. As mentioned previously, Bourdieu's concept of social capital is also significant with regards to education and is inextricably linked to cultural capital. Social capital was initially introduced by Bourdieu to reflect the benefits that individuals obtain through social networks and ties with others, and the idea that the resources that an individual has are centred around membership within a group. Thus, social capital relates to the size and nature of a person's social networks which can be used for personal gain. Bourdieu defines social capital as:

> …the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119).

Bourdieu (1986) explains that relationships and networks may relate to family, class, tribe, school or party and that the social capital an individual has is dependent on "the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected" (p.21). In the educational context, social capital can be significant in relation to educational choices made (Brooks, 2008), and in the labour market, it retains importance in terms of potential access to employment opportunities.

It is also possible to identify areas where Bourdieu's explanations may be limited. Whilst social class is important, other potentially influential aspects of social difference should

not be overlooked (Holloway *et al.,* 2012), and indeed it has been suggested that intra-class inequalities should also be explored (Brown *et al.*, 2016). This also raises questions around the issue of agency, and how people with similar cultural capital may behave differently. It may be that people share a cultural set of ideas, but Bourdieu tends to overlook the potential for individuals to have ideas of their own (*Ibid.*), which may shape their responses and their positioning within both education and their future aspirations and expectations. It is important, therefore, to understand how students perceive themselves in the world and what they might become, as well as how their experience of doctoral education impacts on that. The role of factors such as gender may also be significant here. It may be, for instance, that cultural capital provides a useful explanation in relation to improvement of employment opportunities in the home country for both males and females, but it is also likely that the actual outcomes are felt differently by men and women. Research by Zhang (2019), which looked at female Chinese international students in a Scottish university, for example, examined the ways in which gender and cultural capital shaped subject and course choices, the perceived benefits, as well as disadvantages associated with converting cultural capital in the labour market. In terms of the current study, then, it was felt that expectations of different genders within Saudi Arabia, relating to gendered roles and norms, may result in different employment and career outcomes for males and females, with the latter being subject to greater restrictions than the former. It has been suggested, for instance, that certain subjects are prohibited for women, which impacts on entry to some routes in the labour market (Alfalih, 2016). Furthermore, Alfalih (2016) argues that gender inequality exists in the labour market in the KSA, making the need for investigation into the differential outcomes of Saudi PhD graduates significant.

Another important dimension, especially in relation to the current study, is also omitted in Bourdieu's work. He overlooks the more global or transnational transformations of cultural capital, focusing instead upon one nation or society (Kim, 2011; Brown *et al.,* 2016). This limited perspective neglects the potential to examine how cultural capital may play out differently within different contexts, particularly in relation to the institutionalised state of cultural capital, in terms of qualifications and credentials (see also Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, it fails to "…account for comparative differences in the social structure of competition and ideological shifts in class (re)production in different national contexts" (Brown *et al.*, 2016: 191). In relation to the current study, for example, it was believed that the embodied cultural capital of particular subjects in Saudi Arabia could be a significant issue, where particular skills and experience in desired subject areas, or types of dispositions or knowledge, are valued over others. It was therefore important to build on this conceptual tool in order to address these limitations.

3.3.3 Developing a more global conceptual framework

Becker's human capital and Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theories provide important insights into elements of the experiences of international students in relation to labour market outcomes; including recognition of the value of the qualification, and the implication that a high-level qualification will provide labour market opportunities. The concept of global positional competition discussed earlier helped to highlight the changing nature of the market context in relation to education and employment, but it is also important for highlighting whether, given the internationalisation of higher education, there is an advantage to having international educational experiences or not, and what cultural capital would look like in the global context. Buchholz (2016: 31) points out that a key challenge for contemporary sociological theorising is the reassessment of "the conceptual resources that originated in the imaginary frame of the western nation-state in light of the often qualitatively different problems associated with transnational or global research". Simply transferring such theories developed in the western world to the other context is clearly problematic, as is discarding such theories all together. Thus, as she explains:

> …beyond mere upscaling or downright dismissal, a more promising route is likely to be that of theoretical reform: to re-examine and re-conceptualize the resources of the sociological tradition in the reflexive confrontation with the transnational and global problems of research (*Ibid.*).

If we take human capital and Bourdieu's social reproduction theories and put them in the international context, we see that human capital, being a universal theory, can be applied in both national and international contexts, although as discussed above, it provides a limited understanding of important aspects for the current study. It might also be argued that cultural diversity is not being captured by human capital. Cultural capital, on the other hand, has been subject to development in recognition of this diversity, resulting in the theory of global cultural capital.

3.3.3.1 Global cultural capital

Global cultural capital is an explanatory tool which takes Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital further, expanding its applicability to the international educational context. It refers to the ways in which "degree attainment, knowledge, taste, and cosmopolitan

attitude and lifestyle, understood as exclusive resources that designate one's class and status, globally operate, circulate, and exchange" (Kim, 2011: 113). Thus, with the rise of ISM, the cultural assets and skills gained from an international PhD might represent a valuable form of global cultural capital. Jarvis (2019: 4) suggests that international education offers a new context for interpreting cultural capital through extending "the focus beyond national borders to include the process of obtaining cultural capital in one country and using it in another". Importantly, cultural capital may be experienced, or operate, differently within different contexts (Kim, 2016); and thus experiences may differ in relation to cultural capital within, for instance, the UK when compared to Saudi Arabia, in terms of both its creation and its conversion into labour market outcomes. The current study was concerned with how global cultural capital operates - in the form of the international PhD, or the international educational experience - in the Saudi Arabian labour market, in comparison with domestic-acquired PhDs, thus providing some explanation of the relationship between culture and capital and going beyond assumptions related to human capital around rational economic individuals.

Jarvis (2019) provides a useful outline of the ways in which Bourdieu's three types of cultural capital might look in the globalised context. Embodied global cultural capital, for instance, might be evidenced through individuals' ability to interact with those from other cultures with a level of comfort and familiarity. Objectified global cultural capital, on the other hand, still reflects the possession of objects and resources that indicate status, and also requires embodied cultural capital for appropriate recognition and transmission of their value, but in the global sense, it relates to the collection of cosmopolitan experiences. As he suggests, this might include manifestations of a high-status global lifestyle, such as appreciation of foreign foods and cultures which come from first-hand experience, or communication in English with international friends and colleagues through social media. These experiences demonstrate a more global attitude or understanding of different cultures, which might be distinguished from those of individuals in the home country who have less experience of travel. Finally, institutionalised global cultural capital provides status to the individual in the same way that institutionalised cultural capital does, but in the global sense, the international PhD may be affected by the reputation or status of the institution from which it is acquired. While home universities enter a global hierarchy in which international universities are also located, the global reputation of UK universities can enhance the prestige and status associated with the PhD. For Jarvis (2019), it is about more than this, however, as the international PhD credential reflects the physical manifestation of the global educational experience, as well as the status associated with it, and the role of the institution.

Jarvis' (2019: 12) work is also important in demonstrating the ways in which the three states of global cultural capital overlap and work together. As he explains:

> Obtaining embodied cultural capital requires time and "authentic" participation that cannot be faked, and a degree from a Western university creates confidence in the authenticity of these global experiences. Embodied global cultural capital allows foreign-educated returnees to recognize and obtain the correct material and symbolic global goods or objectified global cultural capital. And this embodied global cultural capital is empowered and legitimized by the confidence derived from the status and authority of institutionalized and objectified global cultural capital. As a result, global cultural capital is especially transformative for foreign-educated returnees as it signals that they have become legitimate global participants.

A global identity therefore plays an important role in relation to global cultural capital, particularly in its embodied form (Chan Suet Kay *et al*., 2016). It has been argued, for instance, that a limited focus on the development of skills and expertise within a student's field and their subsequent productivity overlooks the ways in which direct experience of transnational social fields impacts on both educational experiences and individuals' trajectories beyond university (Phelps, 2016). Career outcomes might relate, for example, to identity transformation resulting from the experiences and knowledge developed by the international student and the frequent participation and engagement with transnational activities. These include, for example, the ability to switch between the identity held in the home country, to that of the international student in the host country (Gu *et al*., 2010; Gu and Lee, 2019); to engage with various networks from various cultures; to experience and interact with different environments and cultures, and to do this through different forms of communication technologies across space.

Research by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015: 948) explored the experiences of international students from China who graduated from UK universities and returned home for work upon completion of their degrees and adopted a mixed method approach involving 652 Chinese students. It found that the majority of the participants were able to "…develop transnational(ised) connections, competences and identities that continued to contribute to their capacity and functioning in employment and society at 'home'". The participants explained that these had proved beneficial in relation to their employment outcomes, as had other assets such as enhanced linguistic competence gained from learning and studying in a second language, and increased knowledge and awareness of other cultures and countries. Ninety-three per cent of the participants, for instance, perceived

international awareness as important for their employment, in relation to marketable skills. At the same time, these gains were balanced against challenges; with such transnational identities potentially causing difficulties in the workplace, setting individuals apart from their workmates. What the research underlined, overall, was the impact of international educational experiences on the identities of the graduates and the subsequent effect on their employment careers. They stated that participants had reported that the changes they experienced in themselves included a different attitude to work and a confidence in their own capabilities and ability to apply these. Furthermore, the self-assurance acquired through the knowledge gained and experience of studying abroad "…struck at the heart of returnees' self-concepts, and ways of living and working" (p.965).

These ideas about the global identity have also been framed within the notion of cosmopolitanism (Weenink, 2007; 2008; Kim, 2011; Igarashi and Saito, 2014; Jarvis, 2019), sometimes also referred to as 'global habitus' (Chan Suet Kay *et al*., 2016), which is regarded as an important element of global cultural capital. As touched on earlier, Weenink (2007) regards cosmopolitanism as a form of cultural or social capital which provides a form of global positional competition. Igarashi and Saito (2014: 222) offer an alternative definition, simply defining cosmopolitanism as "an orientation of openness to foreign others and cultures" and suggesting that cosmopolitanism occurs in all three states of global cultural capital. Much like the global identity, therefore, cosmopolitanism is regarded as the manifestation of global cultural capital for international doctoral students, and may impact on labour market outcomes, especially where cosmopolitan assets are positively viewed by employers.

Research by Kim (2010; 2017) took these ideas further to demonstrate how academics engaged in international mobility use their embodied positional knowledge in transnational spaces and proposed that such a process could be framed within the notion of 'transnational identity capital'. Kim argues that it goes beyond Bourdieu's ideas around cultural and social capital which were located in the national context (and specifically France), and the role of such capital within explanations of class differences. Transnational identity capital, on the other hand, "transcends national cultural boundaries" (Kim, 2017: 9) and is:

> …highly tacit, embodied, travelled knowledge. It is generic competences to engage with 'otherness', which enables mobility in and out of different habitus between and above inter-national territorial boundaries. It is a mode of cosmopolitan positioning to forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations,

which makes it easy to move in and out of diverse groups and contexts - including ethnic and national sub-cultures (*Ibid.*).

Kim believed that transnational identity capital therefore provided a type of 'difference', which has been shown to result in potential competitive advantage.

There are many challenges that come with managing transnational lives, and these will likely impact on doctoral students' identities (such as the management of the reality of daily lives, see Phelps, 2016), but what the current research was interested in, was how these transnational identities, as part of global embodied cultural capital, may be regarded as beneficial (or problematic) in the international labour market context. It may be, for example, that the transnational identity represents enhanced skills, knowledge and competencies, as both experienced by the graduate and as perceived by potential employers. Engagement in transnational fields may equip the graduates with certain understandings and competencies, whether considered 'cosmopolitan' or not, which are valued in the employment context, and provide a competitive advantage over other doctoral graduates. Exploring transnational identities in relation to employment outcomes - as part of global embodied cultural capital - was therefore important, as it may be that career aspirations and goals are affected by transnational experiences, but also the presentation of the transnational self might also affect employment outcomes.

3.3.3.2 The relationship between local and global cultural capital

It might be assumed, then, that global cultural capital is a desirable trait of employees within the KSA, and will therefore enhance employment opportunities and outcomes, but it is important to examine the ways in which these different forms of capital actually operate in relation to the labour market, especially in comparison to graduates with PhDs acquired in the KSA. Jarvis (2019) conducted research into international Korean students to examine occupational success of graduates on their return to their home country. He suggests that whilst there has been research into the benefits of international study and the perceived advantages it provides graduates with (including language ability, global forms of capital, competitiveness, cosmopolitan experiences and degrees from prestigious institutions), relatively little is known about "how these global experiences are actually used when international students return to their home countries" (p.2). Jarvis (2019) also shows that those who are educated abroad could experience both benefits and obstacles, and the most successful translation of global cultural capital to advantage in the labour market occurs where there is effective combination with local cultural capital to ensure sufficient understanding of the local work context. Without this,

there can be a negative impact on organizational fit and reintegration into the local work culture.

There is an important distinction to be made between what Jarvis (2019) called 'early exiters' (those who pursued undergraduate degrees abroad) and late exiters (those who pursued postgraduate study abroad after undergraduate study in Korea), particularly when returning to the home country for employment. He found that late exiters had more advantageous employment outcomes than early exiters as they had more balanced levels of both global and local cultural capital. As he explained, late exiters who had higher levels of local cultural capital had the capability to observe cues and signals in the workplace, and to demonstrate awareness of the limitations their skills could yield, which could then balance the reverse culture shock that many experience. Thus, variation in experiences was dependent on timing of exit (from the home country) and cultural capital, cultural fit (such as understanding of the local work environment) and returnee reintegration into their home country and culture (which could relate to time away or when they left the home country). In addition, whilst international networks can provide opportunities for employment, Jarvis (2019) found that for individuals returning to their home country, the lack of local established networks could actually result in disadvantage. The 'early exiters' in his study were not completely disadvantaged, however, as they acquired cultural capital that might be better suited for employment in the host country. The findings therefore suggested that global cultural capital is important to labour market outcomes, but so too is local cultural capital when considering context – especially when returning to the home country for employment. This has similarly been noted by Igarashi and Saito (2014: 233) who argue that whilst international qualifications and global cultural capital are important to success, nationalism is a significant consideration. They argued that whilst governments promote the value of transnational experiences, such cosmopolitan experiences do not necessarily translate into better opportunities within the labour market. Thus:

> What maximizes the chance of success seems to be the 'right' combination of cosmopolitan and national academic qualifications that signal their holders' dispositions and competencies to function effectively in both global and national arenas…But again, the right combination of the two types of academic qualifications is likely to vary according to how education systems vis-à-vis labor markets in a given country institutionally combine cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

Looking at the value of the international doctorate in relation to individual experiences is therefore important for identifying the ways in which employers view different forms of capital, and the potential value attributed to different combinations of both local and global cultural capital in different contexts.

3.3.3.3 Global social capital

Whilst Jarvis' (2019) work highlights the value of both local and global capital, it is important to be aware of the different ways in which global social capital may be acquired in the international educational context. Indeed, research by Waters (2009) on international students and graduates returning to Hong Kong argued that whilst cultural capital, such as academic credentials, could be translated into economic capital such as employment, social capital played an important role too, and as she explains "The value of the cultural capital possessed by overseas-educated graduates depends, crucially, on particular, embedded and localised social relations" (p.116). Furthermore, she states that her research indicated that social capital could "'over-ride' the value of 'objective' qualifications" (p.120). In terms of ISM, then, it is important to consider the various systems of networks and interactions across the global context. Of note here are the links made between the host and home country through the migrants (Schiller *et al.*, 1992). International doctoral studies take place in a transnational environment, and thus the links, networks and interactions of people across nation-states (Clavin, 2005; Gargano, 2009; Rivzi, 2010; Yakaboski *et al*., 2017), and their potential impact on outcomes, cannot be overlooked. The value of international friends and relationships in the lives of graduates, for instance, in relation to widening social support networks, has been highlighted (Gargano, 2009; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015). Other connections and networks that might be important in relation to labour market opportunities might be alumni networks from institutions in both the UK and Saudi Arabia. It may also be that family networks provide an important source of contacts or information (Brooks, 2008).

Global social capital also works alongside global cultural capital. As mentioned earlier, research by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) on Chinese international students studying in the UK, underlined the significance of the transnational identity adopted by many of the graduates, and the potential relationship of this with the creation of networks and transnational communities. Such active integration with various social networks and ease of communication with individuals from both home and in international spheres can become embedded in individuals' consciousness, leading to cosmopolitan competences. Global social capital is therefore intertwined with global cultural capital, but it is important

to acknowledge its significance in the lives of international students and its potential value in labour market outcomes.

PART TWO: Employment of Saudi graduates

3.4 Key themes in existing literature

Several studies have been conducted on career and employment outcomes in relation to Saudi students, with a tendency to focus on particular sectors. Research has examined, for instance, the career preferences and prospects of students and graduates of pharmacy or pharmaceutical related subjects (Bin Saleh *et al.*, 2015; Al-Arifi, 2019; Alhomoud *et al.*, 2019; Alruthia *et al.*, 2019), medicine (Guraya and Almaramhy, 2018), health informatics (Alkaraiji and Househ, 2014), nursing (Clerehan *et al.*, 2012), and dental graduates (Halawany *et al.*, 2017); the transition (Alharbi and Kinchin, 2010), employability (Mousawa and Elvas, 2015) and global professional identities of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in Saudi Arabia (Guerrero and Meadows, 2015); the competencies of graduates from fields such as engineering (Albadr, 2018); entrepreneurship intentions and challenges (Danish and Lawton Smith, 2012; Al Bakri and Mehrez, 2017; Choukir *et al.,* 2019; Kemppainen, 2019; Sabri and Thomas, 2019); as well as perceptions of the private sector and attempts to modify attitudes here (Al-Asqah, 2018). Research has also explored employment in relation to women specifically in Saudi Arabia (Alandejani, 2013; Alfalih, 2016; Naseem and Dhruva, 2017; Alfarran *et al.*, 2018; Sabri *et al.*, 2019). In other studies, the re-entering of Saudi graduates from the UK or US to their home countries was explored (Alandejani, 2013; Alyami, 2014; Arafeh, 2017). Research has therefore tended towards specific fields and has focused on preferences rather than actual outcomes and experiences (Alharbi and Kinchin, 2010; Alhudaithy, 2013; Bahammam and Linjawi, 2017; Albadr, 2018; Almaghaslah *et al.*, 2019; Alruthia *et al.,* 2019). However, several important insights can be drawn from these studies which can be grouped into three key themes: Saudi graduates' employment in Saudi Arabia; the distinction or competition between locally-educated and internationally educated graduates in the labour market; and gender differences amongst graduates in relation to the labour market.

3.4.1 Saudi graduates' employment in Saudi Arabia

The literature on Saudi graduates' employment in the country has tended to focus on exploring the role of educational qualifications in obtaining employment in the different Saudi sectors and the need for developments in education to develop the labour force

or improve skills for labour market participation. Several studies, for example, have examined the impact of educational qualifications on gaining access to employment in Saudi Arabia (Ahmed, 2016; Alfalih, 2016; Jouili and Khemissi, 2019). It is important to note that these have not always distinguished between international and locally-acquired qualifications, however, or looked specifically at PhDs. Nonetheless, there have been important findings in this area. The lack of sufficient economic diversification in Saudi Arabia, for instance, has been cited as problematic in relation to establishing employment for graduates. Jouili and Khemissi (2019) examined the effect of economic diversification on job opportunities for graduates in general and cited a positive relationship between successful economic diversification and employment opportunities. In relation to Saudi Arabia, however, it was argued that "actual economic diversification of the kingdom is low regarding the creation of new job opportunities, especially for the bachelor's degree holders" (p.35). Thus, the authors state that the government needs to further address the diversification issue to facilitate greater numbers of jobs for graduates. In addition, several sources indicate that all graduates, from national or international universities, have faced challenges in accessing suitable employment in Saudi Arabia (Ahmed, 2016) due to firms being unfamiliar with recruiting Saudi workers (with a high percentage of expatriate workers) (HKS, 2019), or showing resistance to recruiting Saudi workers (Alfalih, 2016).

The OECD (2018: 73) suggests that whilst in the majority of countries a rise in educational attainment is associated with lower unemployment rates, in some countries, including Saudi Arabia, the "…relationship between unemployment rates and educational attainment levels is reversed". They suggest that in Saudi Arabia, "20% of tertiary-educated younger adults are unemployed, compared to only 2% of those who have not completed upper secondary education" (*Ibid.*), providing some contrast with the human capital claims touched on earlier. The HKS (2019) similarly explains that the employment returns for education are low in Saudi Arabia for those with Bachelor's degrees (the research did not look at Masters and PhD graduates). They attribute these findings to the skills sets obtained by graduates which they argued do not match the skills sought by employers. Findings from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA (2016) support these claims. The latter also asserts that the majority of educated Saudis work in the public sector. They believe that this is because the private sector is often unattractive to graduates, due to the pay and conditions associated with this sector, when compared with the public sector. As they state, public sector positions more commonly involve 40 hours a week or less, in contrast to private sector roles across six days and more than 50 hours a week. In addition, the public sector provides greater opportunities for training and personal development (*Ibid.*).

Looking further at the distinction between the different sectors of the Saudi labour market, research by Nannapaneni *et al.* (2019), which used a questionnaire with 435 university students and structural equation modelling to explore the attitudes of students in relation to their replacement of expatriate workers in Saudi Arabia (as part of the Saudization strategy), similarly identified a preference for the public sector over private sector employment. The majority of the participants displayed preference for administrative roles with prestige and reasonable working hours, and students believed this was more likely to be found in the public sector. Participants expressed willingness to be unemployed until the right position came up. With this sector being highly saturated, the researchers assert the need for universities to improve student perceptions of private sector positions and prepare them for these more challenging positions. The role of the government in monitoring the perks and pay of the private sector and bringing these in line with the public sector was also cited as important in improving private sector participation amongst graduates. In relation to preferences for particular sectors, the influence of family and community role models has also been highlighted as important, as "Family traditions of working in the public sector, the higher social prestige of government jobs, and a decided preference for white-collar employment all reinforce the preference" (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016: 14). As a consequence, it is asserted that graduates may choose to be unemployed until a suitable public sector position becomes available, supporting the findings of Nannapaneni *et al.* (2019). This is a potentially viable option given the availability of the job search incentive program in the country, which provides financial support for those aged 20-35 years searching for work who meet certain eligibility criteria (Hafaz, 2020). For postgraduate students, however, a period of six months must have passed before applications for the support can be submitted, and thus in such cases, the choice of unemployment until suitable employment becomes available would mean that graduates would have to ensure the availability of alternative funds to support them during this time.

Importantly, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA (2016) highlight the significance not just of graduate preferences on the employment status of graduates, but also those of employers, particularly in the private sector:

> Employers which are looking to fill positions do not actively seek out Saudi nationals, and they often claim that it's easier to find employees abroad because Saudis lack the proper preparation and job skills. Relying on a growing foreign workforce, rather than investing in the training and mentoring of Saudis, inhibits

> the creation of medium and highly skilled jobs for which these nationals would be suited (p.14).

These latter statements seemed to relate specifically to those Saudi graduates educated in the KSA, underlining some distinction here between international and locally-acquired qualifications (both Bachelors and Masters degrees). Conversely, one study looked in detail at the core competencies sought by employers of business graduates in Saudi Arabia, demonstrating the many different expectations of employers. As Nataraja *et al.* (2011) point out, the three core clusters of the economic system in Saudi Arabia are comprised of the service sector, the industrial sector and the public sector (as mentioned in Chapter Two). Within these, there are different industries and each of these seek different competencies from their employees, whether personal attributes (assertiveness, organized, detail oriented, sequential vs synchronic, quick learner, tolerant vs strict, emotional stability, introvert vs extrovert), professional skills (communication, critical thinking, information technology [IT], interpersonal, research and analytical), or business disciplinary knowledge (knowledge on: business functional areas, business processes, specialized business area, current business trends, business strategy and social, cultural, legal, ethical and environment related to business functions). The research, which used qualitative and quantitative methods with managers from a range of different company types, suggested that employers within each of the three sectors looked for these twenty core competencies (mentioned above in the three core skills) in employees. The study also underlined the desire for practical training experience, in addition to the need for in-depth knowledge of Saudi Arabian culture. This latter factor perhaps highlights how a long time away from Saudi Arabia might actually be considered to the detriment of graduates. At the same time, research by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) showed that international students reported a stronger understanding of their own cultures after time spent in other countries. Thus, exploring the perceived value of internationally acquired qualifications, in comparison to nationally-acquired qualifications is necessary.

The lack of skills held by Saudi graduates has been partly attributed to global and national developments. Ahmed (2016) notes, for example, some of the challenges that have been encountered in public sector employment with policies for Saudization. It is argued that there is a disconnect between the skills Saudi students learn during their schooling and the more westernised expectations and curricula influenced by global standards (Khan, 2018). This lack of skills, and the need for developments in higher education in order to facilitate the expansion of the economy and the development of job opportunities for graduates, has been further highlighted in a number of studies,

particularly in relation to enhancing self-employment and business creation in Saudi Arabia (Mohieldein, 2017; Jouili and Khemissi, 2019). There is a need for universities to better encourage entrepreneurial intentions amongst Saudi graduates in order to develop business and the private sector (Al Bakri and Mehrez, 2017), as well as attitudes towards working in the private sector (Al-Asqah, 2018).

The literature indicates the need for further research into the work readiness of graduates (Mohieldein, 2017; Winterton and Turner, 2019) and the reasons for graduate unemployment (Al-Dosary *et al.*, 2006). Studies have looked into the quality of different programmes of study in Saudi Arabia in relation to plans to develop and improve the labour force in specific areas, such as health informatics (Alkaraji and Househ, 2014) and technical education and vocational training (Alandas, 2012). In a study by Elgeddawy (2018), which used a mixed method involving a survey with open ended questions with 220 male and female students, the aim was to explore whether or not the development of university curricula could improve global competencies and graduate employability. The findings indicated that "…integrating a mix of skill-based humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics core curriculum courses into higher education curricula improves student global learning, thinking and future employability" (p.5656). It was also found that it was important to enable the integration of global employability competences, including communication, critical thinking, problem solving, global awareness, technology, teamwork and leadership, and to do this "not only through standalone core curriculum courses, but also across all discipline specific courses" (*Ibid.*). This perhaps supports the studies mentioned earlier which established the need for skills development amongst graduates to enhance employability in the country. Furthermore, it perhaps underlines the potential value attributed to global qualifications, which is explored in the following section.

3.4.2 Nationally-acquired versus internationally-acquired PhDs in relation to employment

Of interest to the current study is the significance of the PhD in relation to employment in Saudi Arabia, and the potential relevance of its national or international status. Whilst most of the literature did not make such explicit distinctions, it was possible to draw out relevant findings from several studies and there was one notable piece of research which examined the issue of competition between locally-educated and internationally-educated graduates in the field of industrial engineering (IE) (Al-Ghamdi, 2014). The research, which was based on a survey with 196 participants from IE departments (undergraduates), highlighted the competition in the Saudi labour market between

locally-graduated and internationally-graduated Industrial Engineers. It underlined the ways in which increasing competition from international qualifications has impacted on local IE departments to enhance the quality of their teaching and to improve labour market participation for locally educated graduates. Such competition is attributed to:

> …increased expectations on the part of employers, who desire high qualifications for entry level jobs and expect to appoint graduates who have developed a number of specific competencies during their time at university. Consequently, they intensify their screening process by preferring students who have credentials from elite institutions with high grades, or students with post-graduate qualifications (p.122).

Such research is important in highlighting the increasing competition between locally and internationally-educated graduates. The focus, however, was on Bachelor's degrees, thus overlooking the significance of doctoral PhDs from different destinations as well as actual career outcomes of graduates, whether locally or internationally educated.

In the Saudi Arabian context, Ahmed (2016) points to the difficulties faced by the Saudi labour market in absorbing all of the returning graduates of KASP scholarships, especially in the higher education sector. This has also been highlighted in the work of Taylor and Albasri (2014: 116), which focused on Saudi international students' experiences of the KASP and found that international graduates are not always guaranteed employment. Using survey data to examine the impact of the KASP for Saudi graduates from the US, they found that whilst the KSA had always engaged in good efforts to enhance employment amongst graduates, including job fairs with a high number of recruiters, and had once been successful in improving employment opportunities, they explained that Saudi graduates from countries such as the US and the UK face difficulties securing work on their return home. They attributed this to developments in the Saudi labour market, with increased demand for higher job qualifications, as well as multiple tests for employment and lengthy job interviews, and stated that whilst country of qualification had once lead to the ability to easily secure work, such graduates did not always pass the employment tests. This research highlights a number of important issues which are significant to the current study; the difficulty of securing employment, the suggestion that the prestige of the UK may no longer be enough to enhance opportunities, and the fact that nationally-educated graduates might be at an advantage over internationally-educated graduates.

At the same time, the value of the educational qualification from Saudi Arabia has also been questioned, due to the lack the skills desired by employers and subject selection. As the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA (2016: 16) argued:

> Saudi students tend to select academic majors, such as humanities and the arts, that have fewer job prospects compared with their counterparts in G-20 nations. Conversely, fewer Saudi students tend to choose engineering and manufacturing majors compared with youth in other countries, limiting potential job prospects.

Finally, it is worth noting that personal networks can play an important role in securing employment (OECD, 2018). The HKS (2019: 7) cites the importance attributed to networks provided by family and friends in relation to careers. As they explain, "This means that graduates who do not have a well-connected network of family and friends are at a disadvantage when they enter the labor market". Thus, there may not simply by differences in relation to the national/international divide, but also *within* these groups.

3.4.3 The significance of gender

There is an increasing amount of literature available on gender and the labour market in relation to Saudi Arabia, which may relate to the changes taking place in the country. Research has underlined the strong relationship between women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia and economic development, for instance, suggesting that female empowerment stimulates the economy (Saqib *et al.*, 2016). Several studies have focused specifically on women's experiences in relation to employment in Saudi Arabia, including one study which explored the barriers to employment for women in the country (Alfarran *et al.*, 2018); qualitative studies investigating the workplace experiences (Hennekam *et al*., 2018) and challenges faced by repatriate Saudi female PhD graduates (Alandejani, 2013); and quantitative studies on the challenges faced by Saudi women in relation to the labour market (Naseem and Dhruva, 2017); on female entrepreneurs in the country (Sabri *et al.*, 2019); and on the factors which motivate female Saudi students in Saudi Arabia to choose entrepreneurship as a career (Islam *et al.*, 2018). Research has also touched on the significance of role models on entrepreneurship intentions in relation to gender (Choukir *et al.*, 2019), or leadership amongst females in Saudi Arabia (Kattan *et al.*, 2016) and the rising numbers of women in senior positions (Al-Bakr *et al.*, 2017).

Research has shown a significant rise in employment amongst women in the country (as also highlighted in Chapter Two), and indeed, Varshney (2019: 359) states that the

improvements that have taken place in Saudi Arabia, and women's own determination, have had an important impact. As she explains:

> …the new era has ushered a paradigm shift that has beckoned a rising women's empowerment process. Today, Saudi women are better educated, more well-informed, and more financially independent as a result of a plethora of changes. Furthermore, their presence in various public spheres and social media is highly visible today.

It has also been shown, however, as indicated in section 2.3, that unemployment remains high for women and that significant challenges remain for women within employment. Kattan *et al.* (2016: 1271) suggest, for instance, that despite the significant increase in the numbers of females in higher education in Saudi Arabia, this has not translated into considerable increases in employment and entrepreneurship. At the time of writing, they cited figures indicating that women represented seventeen per cent of the whole employment rate, which they suggested was the lowest in the world. Furthermore, they showed that only twelve per cent of women were entrepreneurs, compared with 21 per cent of men. Similarly, Alfalih (2016) used 1,347 questionnaires and 28 semi-structured interviews to examine the trajectories of female Saudi graduates (with undergraduate and Master's degrees) and identified a relationship between educational level and employment opportunities for women, claiming that educational attainment for women does not necessarily lead to greater employment. Whilst it was indicated that there was indeed an increase in female labour market participation, it was also shown that some restrictions in the country could impact on women's employment. These related to gender segregation and constraints around the subjects that women could study, which could impact on labour market trajectories. This has been supported by the claims of the HKS (2019: 24), which show that whilst women "…make up over half of college students, they are concentrated in the field of education. Women remain a very small minority in technical fields such as engineering". Similarly, the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA (2016: 18) suggest that women encounter difficulties in accessing employment due to subject of study, attributing this to women's own choices, rather than different forces shaping these decisions.

Several studies have identified a range of barriers that women encounter in the labour market in relation to specific fields of employment or types of labour. Research by Alfarran *et al.* (2018: 713), which drew on face-to-face interviews with government officials and unemployed women claims, for instance, that the gendered education system and cultural constraints have affected employment opportunities for women. But

social expectations are also important. The impact of marriage and family in career choices and opportunities has also been noted in several studies (Abu-Zaid and Al Tinawi, 2014; Afiouni, 2014; Abdul, 2017; Halawany *et al.,* 2017; Moazam and Shekhani, 2018). In one study, for example, which looked at the experiences of medical graduates, the researchers found that despite 70 per cent of medical students being women, half of them did not pursue medicine upon graduation. They reported that amongst their participants, marriage was prioritised amongst families of women, with medical degrees being regarded less of a career choice and more of a safety net where marriages were not successful (Moazam and Shekhani, 2018). In another study by Abu-Zaid and Al Tinawi (2014), which employed a survey involving 116 female students from Alfaisal University, the barriers encountered by female medical graduates from Saudi Arabia entering physician-scientist careers were explored (where bio-medical research is the main profession). The authors underlined the importance of this particular profession, yet the lack of qualified Saudi females entering into it. The influence of expectations around family and motherhood were cited as key barriers, alongside the lack of female physician-scientist role models, limited encouragement from families, peers, academic advisers and mentors, and a preference for patient care over research. Research by Alandejani (2013) with six Saudi female assistant professors who were educated in the UK or US also indicated that whilst repatriate scholars faced expectations by their employers to transfer the knowledge and skills gained abroad to their employer institutions, they also encountered barriers in the transfer of knowledge from ill-equipped institutional environments and resources in their home country and from colleagues who were resistant to change.

Career choices and long-term career plans of Saudi women have also been explored in a study by Al Ghazzawi *et al.* (2017), which used a survey to draw on the insights of 108 female pharmacy students from King Abdulaziz University. The findings indicated a preference for working in public sector institutions such as government or academia, due to the perceived restrictions placed on women in the private sector and their provision of family-friendly work environments. Research has also highlighted the importance of encouraging entrepreneurship in the country, in order to develop the economy and, importantly, enhance the career choices of women (Kattan *et al.*, 2016; Al-Bakr *et al.,* 2017; Islam *et al.*, 2018; Choukir *et al.*, 2019; Sabri *et al.*, 2019). Entrepreneurship also emerged as significant in the current study, particularly for women (see Chapter Seven). Indeed, Danish and Lawton Smith (2012), using a survey of 33 female entrepreneurs, cited findings which showed that out of 59 countries studied in the 2010 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), Saudi Arabia stood out "…as a country where entrepreneurship is seen as a good career choice for women and there are positive

perceptions about the status and media attention for women entrepreneurs" (p.217). Furthermore, in a study which used a survey with female Saudi university students, it was found that the majority of students (84 per cent) exhibited a strong interest in developing their own businesses. The motivations behind these intentions were related to several goals:

> …(social status/prestige, earning more money, desire to contribute to national economy, and enjoy challenge and risk), environmental factors (university courses, media, and availability of government assistance), human capital factors (previous business experience and higher education level), and demographic factors (on child and joint family type) (Islam *et al.*, 2018: 15).

As mentioned earlier, however, actual numbers of female entrepreneurs have been previously shown to be relatively low in comparison to males (Kattan *et al.,* 2016), and thus further exploration of women's perceptions and experiences is important (see Chapter Seven).

It is necessary to state that whilst the influence of gendered expectations within Saudi Arabia, as highlighted above, clearly play a key role in shaping the career choices and trajectories of women in the country, as Afiouni (2014) argues, we should not ignore the role of agency in women's lives. In her study, which explored the career choices of female academics in the Middle East, whilst institutional factors were significant, she suggested that her findings reflected:

> …both an independent and an interdependent referencing of agency for women in the sample. For example, the choice of academia was grounded in personal priorities and goals…but a more interdependent interpretation was evident when agency references institutions and society…as shown when women reference both academic scripts and gender scripts when enacting their careers (p.331).

It is important, then, to consider both the ways in which contexts shape and are shaped by individual actions, where the "enactment of careers is seen as a process which creates, but also constantly modifies the structures of institutions and of individual lives" (*Ibid.*). This may be especially so in the current context, where there is a shift towards enhancing female employment in Saudi Arabia, and the provision of more rights, which facilitate wider social participation. The research of Hennekam *et al.* (2018), which involved 21 in-depth interviews with female employees in Saudi Arabia, highlights the different ways in which gender and employment work in Saudi Arabia, underlining the

importance of individual agency in overcoming obstacles to employment. It was also shown, however, that there was some overlap with social class, with women in higher classes expressing agency more easily than those in lower classes, and thus highlighting the importance of considering differences between women. Furthermore, Afiouni and Karam (2014) argue that in recognising that women have agency in their careers, we better understand that:

> …that women shape, and are simultaneously shaped by, the interactions between the misaligned contextual constraints and opportunities (e.g. mandated structures derived from gender ideology and from academia as a profession) and their own individual agency (p.551).

This therefore underlines the need to recognise the complex relationship between structure and agency, and the role of 'agentic processes' (acting within the constraints of structure) in career choices is further asserted in research.

3.8 Core findings and gaps in the literature

As we have seen, a range of explanations have emerged in relation to ISM, and human capital and cultural capital in particular have provided valuable starting points for exploring the labour market outcomes and perceptions of Saudi PhD students. Such perspectives, however, tend to ignore context and globalization, and how they interact, as touched on above. The current research builds on these theoretical perspectives, enabling the application of the important tools and concepts that they provide, but going further to explain the differential labour market experiences, outcomes and perceptions of Saudi PhD graduates from the UK. The research applies the concept of global cultural capital and differentiates between the various forms of global cultural capital. Thus, institutional global cultural capital represents the credential, but also institution reputation, status or ranking. Embodied global cultural capital is understood as the skills and experience gained from international education, reflected through cosmopolitan mannerisms and qualities, ease of interaction and communication with individuals from other countries, confidence and status gained from the international PhD, and the adoption of a global identity.

It has been important in the current study to explore how global cultural capital is mobilised on return to the home country in relation to employment, and whether or not it constitutes an advantage compared to other forms of cultural capital. Labour market experience may also be affected here by the possession of local cultural capital,

combined with global cultural capital. It is imperative, in this context, to better understand the role of global cultural and social capital in shaping individuals' labour market experiences. Thus, looking at the career outcomes of student mobility, the thesis considers not only the material benefits to individuals and nations, and the potential role of these, but also the importance of cultural meanings and values, and global processes in career journeys, as well as the potential role of gender in the Saudi Arabian context. It therefore acknowledges the range of factors affecting graduate careers and trajectories.

Existing research on the experiences of Saudi international students has offered significant insights, but there are also important gaps. The literature in relation to the employment of graduates in Saudi Arabia has found:

1. That employment returns in the KSA are low for those with degrees, and unemployment remains a problem for graduates. The public sector is the preference for most graduates, whilst the private sector is commonly considered undesirable, leading to some graduates choosing unemployment until suitable employment becomes available. The family can play an important role in the selection (and securing) of employment.
2. Low employment returns for graduates are associated with economic diversification and lack of skills. The competencies sought by employers, for instance, have been shown not to coincide with those of graduates. There is a need for developments in the higher education sector to facilitate employment opportunities in general, but also more specifically in the private sector and global market.
3. There is acknowledgement in the literature of increasing competition in specific areas in relation to national or international qualifications (although not specifically in relation to PhDs). The evidence was inconclusive, however, on the added value of international qualifications. Whilst there was some indication that international qualifications could lead to better work opportunities, evidence was either lacking or causation was questioned. It was also suggested that international qualifications might not make a difference to employment outcomes (although again not specifically in relation to doctorates), and that nationally educated peers might be at an advantage.
4. Whilst women's education and employment has increased in the country in recent years, women continue to have high levels of unemployment in comparison with males and face numerous challenges in the labour market. Women also express

a preference for public sector employment and in some cases, have shown slower career progression than males.

5. In examining gender, it appeared that some caution is necessary. First, the situation of women is changing rapidly in the country, with many recent developments in relation to rights. Second, it is important to acknowledge women's agency with regards to employment and careers. Third, demonstrating awareness of 'difference' is similarly important in relation to employment outcomes.

There have therefore been important findings of note, but this review of the literature has also identified several key gaps in knowledge. Whilst the career trajectories and outcomes of international students are an essential element of the educational journey, this aspect lacks in-depth understanding in relation to doctoral education specifically. There is little literature, for instance, on the careers of Saudi PhD graduates and on employment in the public sector. Given the increasing outward mobility of Saudi students, and state investment in the education of students who can return to the country to contribute to academia and the economy (Ahmed, 2015), this is an important omission. Furthermore, little research has explored the potential distinction between the national and the international in terms of the value attributed to these different qualifications by employers. This is a particularly important gap from the perspective of government investment in international education. As the HKS (2019: 25) asserts:

> Graduates who receive the KASP scholarship are expected to enhance their skill acquisition at the tertiary level and return to the Kingdom to contribute to its growth and prosperity, however there is no data tracking scholarship recipients' job placement upon the potential return to Saudi Arabia.

Finally, insights are limited from the graduates themselves in relation to their own perceptions of the value of their PhDs, and the ways in which these impact on employment, particularly with regards to Saudi graduates. Whilst there is some strong evidence on these issues in relation to Chinese graduates, there is nothing of similar quality which reflects on Saudi graduates' experiences. As such, the current study aimed to address these gaps in the literature and contribute to the field of study. The next chapter explains the methodological approach adopted to achieve this aim.

Chapter Four:
Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the central methodological considerations for the thesis. It begins by discussing the research approach, highlighting the critical realist perspective adopted in the study, and the use of a qualitative methodology. The reader is reminded of the research questions, before the methods used in this study and sample are explored in detail. This begins with an explanation of the stages of data collection and justification of the selected methods, before looking at the participant selection process, the inclusion criteria and the sample size. This discussion is followed with an overview of the pilot study, transcription and data analysis, and key ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with an overview of the dissemination of the data for the research.

4.2 Research paradigms and the research approach

Social research is diverse and reflects "…different views of the social world and different beliefs about how, in practice, it can and should be studied" (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 15). This relates to different 'paradigms', or worldviews (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), which inform "the meaning or interpretation of research data" (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017: 26). It is the ways in which the researcher views and interprets the world, their philosophical orientation or the lens through which they see the world (*Ibid.*). To put it another way:

> …paradigms differ in their assumptions about what is real, the nature of the relationship between the one who knows and what is known, and how the knower goes about discovering or constructing knowledge…paradigms shape, constrain, and enable all aspects of…inquiry (Aliyu *et al.*, 2015: unpaged).

Thus, the research paradigm is a way of summarizing the nature of, and connections between, ontology (the researcher's view of reality), epistemology (how that reality can be known or ways of knowing), axiology (the researcher's values and the effect of these on the research) and methodology (the research design, methods and approaches)

(Blaikie, 2000; Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009; Scotland, 2012; Aliyu *et al.*, 2015). The ontology, epistemology and axiology adopted by social researchers therefore impact on the research strategy, the methods of data collection and the interpretation of the findings. Thus, it is important to indicate the researcher's position within any study.

4.2.1 Critical realism

The research was framed by the critical realist perspective which influenced the methodological approach of the study. Critical realism is most commonly associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1978), who is considered the founder of the approach. As will become evident below, Bhaskar's critical realism was important in the introduction of a perspective which arguably deals with structure and agency in a more effective way than other perspectives such as social constructivism and acknowledges the structural issues which frame the actions and experiences of individuals.

The position adopted in the current study can be contrasted with positivist or social constructivist positions. The positivist approach is based on the ontological belief that there is one single truth or reality, thus reality is 'real' and observable. It is believed, then, that reality can be objectively measured, often using quantitative techniques for data collection, and developing patterns for explanatory arguments (Blaikie, 2000; Snape and Spencer, 2003). The positivist axiology regards research as value-free, objective and something from which the researcher is independent. In contrast, the interpretivist or constructivist approach suggests that there is no single truth, but rather, reality is created by individuals and groups. The aim is to understand multiple realities, thus facilitating a deeper understanding or greater 'truth' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). For social constructivists, qualitative research provides a more suitable approach for such investigation, and research is understood to be value bound; the researcher cannot be separated from the research, as they are a part of the process, thus emphasizing the subjectivity of the research. Whilst the current study leaned more towards the qualitative approach advocated by social constructivists and accepts the interactive element of the interview process (and its role in meaning construction), as will be discussed below, the critical realist perspective was considered more fitting and is distinct from these perspectives in regarding human knowledge as capturing "only a small part of a deeper and vaster reality" (Fletcher, 2017: 182). Ontologically, critical realists view reality as existing separately from people's views and understandings. Thus, the "being is real and the world exists and acts independently of our knowledge of it" (Khazem, 2018: 126). According to critical realist ontology, reality is split into three different levels (Bhaskar, 1978; 2013). As Blaikie (2000: 108) explains:

> …the *empirical* domain consists of events that can be observed; the *actual* domain consists of events whether or not they are observed; and the *real* domain consists of the structures and mechanisms that produce these events.

Epistemologically, critical realists consider understanding of such reality to be formed through people's perceptions and positions, as "knowledge is socially produced under specific social and linguistic conditions and is therefore changeable and fallible" (*Ibid.*) and as such, it is important for the researcher to look beyond empirically observable events, to the mechanisms which may generate them (Danermark *et al.,* 2002). There is some similarity here between the critical realist and social constructionist/constructivist positions in terms of support for interviews as a method of intepreting and understanding the experiences and perspectives of participants. The critical realist, however, also uses the interview process to generate a deeper understanding of social relations and structures (in addition to experiences and agency), in order to understand "the context of pre-existing social relations and structures, which have both constraining and facilitating implications for such action" (Smith and Elger, 2012: 6), and subsequently the complex layers of reality. The ways in which different perspectives deal with structure and agency is therefore important here, as are relations of power.

Whilst the social constructivist position considers perceptions and meanings in relation to educational experiences - for example, individual perceptions of cultural capital can be explored and related to actual outcomes - it is perhaps less efficient at *explaining* this relationship. The critical realist perspective is arguably more effective at dealing with the complex relationship between structure and agency (Smith and Elger, 2012). As Khazem (2018: 131) explains, critical realists believe that:

> The connection between structure and agency is the intentionality of human agency, where reasons for action become causes for it. Therefore, as agents, we can either reproduce pre-existing structures or transform them based on our actions.

In terms of the current study, this was important as it might be argued that doctoral education can be used to secure better labour market opportunities. Agency might be considered the graduates' ability to think and act independently – the choices they have made and the decisions regarding doctoral education and their employment. At the same time, a sense of agency does not guarantee that agency can be exercised as structural factors may impact on decisions made. From the critical realist perspective,

then, structure can both enable and constrain decisions and actions (Manyukhina & Wyse, 2019). Thus, whilst agency is often seen as individuals' ability to act, it can more accurately be considered the ability to act within a context which is mediated by society and culture (*Ibid.*). Here 'structure' includes both cultural and institutional structures.

It is important to state that whilst the current research drew on the work of Bourdieu (1984) on cultural capital, it did not accept his refusal to distinguish between the two concepts in an attempt to go beyond the structure and agency dichotomy. He believed, for example, that these concepts were inseparable (see also Manyukhina & Wyse, 2019). The critical realist approach to structure and agency was adopted in the current study, which regards these concepts as interlinked yet different (Archer, 1995). Critical realists regard the common dualistic debate between agency and structure to be essentially problematic, with both sides of the debate arguably presenting only a limited conception of reality. In line with the critical realist perspective, separation of structure and agency was considered essential in order:

> (a) to identify the emergent structure(s), (b) to differentiate between their causal powers and the intervening influences of people due to their quite different causal powers as human beings, and, (c) to explain any outcome at all, which in an open system always entails an interplay between the two. In short, separability is indispensable to realism (Archer, 1995: 70).

In this way, in the current research, both the actions of individual graduates and social contexts interact to determine labour market outcomes. We see, therefore, how the distinction between structure and agency promoted by critical realism helps to acknowledge that the aspirations of students/graduates relate not solely to the social context but rather reflect student subjectivities, which are shaped by their cultures and environment. The structure of opportunity also changes over time, both in terms of individual biography and in historical time. This is perhaps important in the context of the current study where global forms of education, international student mobility and the prioritisation of global knowledge are now widespread.

The role of graduates is therefore important in determining their career journeys, but the research could not overlook the underlying power structures and forms of cultural and political power which shape the decisions that the graduates are making. Examination of career trajectories and the stages involved since achieving the PhD was thus important, as this may help to understand not just the specific employment outcomes of graduates, but also the graduates' perceptions of the value of their PhDs, and the factors

that shaped these outcomes. It may be, for instance, that a graduate initially feels that their PhD will give them many opportunities and options, but their experiences of securing employment are less positive than expected. This may, then, relate to structural factors. Thus, by learning about the graduates' employment outcomes, but also their journeys to those outcomes, through the voices of the graduates themselves, it may be possible to better understand the relationship between agency and structure, and the ways in which the graduates have been able to use their agency and resources to navigate their way through structural processes to achieve their employment and career outcomes.

Methodologically, critical realism does not promote quantitative or qualitative research specifically, perceiving such division as unnecessary. Instead, it "functions as a general methodological framework for research but is not associated with any particular set of method" (Fletcher, 2017: 182), and therefore recommends the use of tools or methods which are suitable for each specific investigation. At the same time, critical realists seek to go beyond explaining the directly observable layer of reality, to learn more about how patterns of behaviour may be "produced by a causal power, or causal mechanism, not immediately apparent at the level of appearances and which can only be fully explored in open systems (the real domain)" (Roberts, 2014: 2). It is argued that qualitative methods can more accurately explore causal issues than quantitative methods. Indeed:

> …qualitative methods are arguably more attuned to the "messiness" and "openness" of real social life (e.g., the overlapping social identities we all inhabit on a daily basis) which inevitably affect the outlook of respondents in their everyday lives (Roberts, 2014: 4).

As will be shown below, the current research used qualitative semi-structured interviews to investigate causal mechanisms and outcomes. More specifically, it employed theory-driven interviewing (Pawson, 1996) in the application of the critical realist approach, through a retroductive research strategy.

4.2.2 The research strategy

Following Blaikie's (2000: 115) distinction between the four key research strategies (inductive, deductive, retroductive and abductive), this research applied the retroductive strategy, which is the approach used to employ the critical realist perspective to social inquiry. As Blaikie (2000) explains, the retroductive strategy:

> …begins with an observed regularity, but this is followed by the construction of a hypothetical model of a possible structure or mechanism that have produced this regularity. By observation and experiment, a search is then undertaken to establish whether the explanatory structure or mechanism exists (p.100).

Such an approach, Bhaskar (2017) argues, is similar to that of a natural scientist through "moving towards the identification of a structure or mechanism, which will explain the actual regularity that is observed" (p.28). Danermark *et al.* (2002) suggest that there are six different stages involved in the application of critical realism within research; description, analytical resolution, abductive/theoretical redescription, retroduction, comparison between different theories and abstractions and concretization and contextualization; although the stages are flexible in terms of the order in which they can be approached.

Stage One involves description of the particular topic of study. Prompted by existing research on employment and career outcomes, and based on the theoretical framework of global cultural capital, the current research hypothesised that the PhD will facilitate enhanced employment outcomes for the Saudi graduates, both with local or international doctorates. It was also expected, however, that international PhDs would provide competitive advantage in the form of global cultural capital, but that the benefits here may have been dependent upon or balanced against local cultural capital, or on subject of study (see section 4.3 for detail on the specific research questions). It is here that a distinction between the value of the national and the international PhD had the potential to emerge. It was also expected that gender differences would become evident in relation to employment opportunities. It may be, for instance, that females are more commonly employed in the academic rather than other sectors. Following from this, the researcher moved to the analytical or theoretical stages of the study. As shown in Chapter Three, existing theories on employment and career outcomes of international students are considered to provide a limited understanding of variations in experiences and outcomes and explanations for these, particularly in relation to global contexts and the increasingly international character of higher education. The importance of global cultural and social capital was therefore highlighted for providing a more developed way of understanding the value of the PhD, the relationship between the national and the international, and the ways in which such experiences translate to the labour market when graduates return to their home countries.

Then the process of critical realist research can begin with the use of empirical data to assist in the identification of demi-regularities or so-called 'rough-trends' (Fletcher,

2017). Thus, for the third and fourth stages, the researcher tests their theory through empirical research. Here, qualitative semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection method. Whilst it is acknowledged by critical realists that interviews can be limited in explaining structures, it is also possible for researchers to "ask informants to review and comment on different features and competing accounts of the wider relationships and contexts within which they act" (Smith and Elger, 2012: 20), and thus to provide a more sufficient picture here. Smith and Elger (2012) suggest that Pawson and Tilley's (1997) work on realist evaluation and their explanation of the importance of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, provides an ideal model here when employing the interview method. As they explain, this involves:

> …investigating relationships between underlying causal mechanisms (including actors' understandings and rationales for action), the varying contexts in which such mechanisms operate and the resultant outcomes, anticipated and unanticipated (Smith and Elger, 2012: 10).

Thus, mechanisms are processes which tend to be hidden, and these are active in particular circumstances or contexts, which result in consequences or outcomes (Pawson, 1996). In terms of employing this approach, Pawson (1996: 299) proposes the theory-driven model of interviewing whereby "the researcher's theory is the subject matter of the interview, and the subject is there to confirm or falsify and, above all, to refine that theory". Thus, there are defined roles for both the researcher/interviewer and the participant during the interview process. Whilst such a perspective has been met with some criticism with respect to the dominant role played by the interviewer in determining the explanation of structural conditions (in being driven by the researcher's theory) (Smith and Elger, 2012), Pawson and Tilley (1997) argue that the participant retains an important role and rather than being considered submissive in the relationship, both interviewer and interviewee are considered to play different, expert roles in the process. As Pawson (1996) explains, "the understanding of contexts and outcomes should be led by the researcher's conceptualizations", whilst in terms of the generative mechanisms, "the researcher will often assume that the balance of expertise lies with the informant in describing the detailed way in which reasoning contributes to social change" (p.303). Such an approach was considered important in the current study.

Stage Five requires reflection on the explanatory power of theory. As Fletcher (2017) explains, this process is where "empirical data are re-described using theoretical concepts" through a process of abduction, which "raises the level of theoretical engagement beyond thick description of the empirical entities, but with an

acknowledgment that the chosen theory is fallible" (p.188). Finally, in Stage Six, concretization and contextualization, it is necessary to focus on causal mechanisms and contexts, in order to "identify the necessary contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and to result in the empirical trends observed" (*Ibid*.).

The present research therefore looked beyond the observable behaviour and perceptions of the graduates, to explain the processes behind these outcomes. The qualitative semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to explore the reasons behind perceptions and behaviours, and thus the causal mechanisms, looking below the surface of the labour market outcomes of the graduates. The starting point was the assumption that the PhD would lead to better employment outcomes for graduates but understanding what it is about the PhD that leads to these outcomes was more complex. The potential mechanisms which were explored here, which "pinpoint the ways in which the resources on offer may permeate into the reasoning of the subjects" (Pawson and Tilley, 2004: 7), included the value attributed to the reputation of the institution from which a PhD is obtained, or its national/international status, or the role of cosmopolitan experiences, competence in use of a second language, ease of communication, gender, or perceived networks (whether local or international). As Findlay *et al.* (2012: 128) explain:

> It appears that a 'world-class' education for some is embedded in a mobility culture that attaches symbolic capital to the very performance of international living and that aspires to engage in international career trajectories that some might see as the hallmark of the transnational capitalist class.

Thus, the researcher explored the possibility that different skills and knowledge and international experiences might be significant here, where employers may look beyond educational qualifications (Bridger, 2015). Such mechanisms operate within certain contexts including the sector of employment, the perceived value of the PhD (including international status) in different employment and geographical contexts, gendered ideologies, and perceptions of the employment record or previous skills and experience of the graduates. From a critical realist perspective, then:

> …an important aim of the research interview is to ensure that a respondent gains awareness of the causal mechanisms affecting a context under investigation. This level of awareness is based further around the respondent reflecting on how they "reason" about a particular context and what resources they feel will enable

or constrain them to act in particular ways in the very same context (Roberts, 2014: 18-19).

In relation to the current topic, such ideas facilitated understanding and interpretation of the graduates' accounts of their employment and career outcomes and trajectories, through their perceptions of the value of their international doctorate, and how their experiences and outcomes were shaped by both individual actions, and social and cultural factors.

4.3 Research questions

As mentioned in Chapter One, the main question for the study was:

How do Saudi PhD graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia perceive the value of their PhD in relation to the labour market in their home country?

This was split into three questions:

1. How do Saudi doctoral graduates view the PhD qualification and experience in relation to their labour market preferences and perceived positioning, and how have those views changed since their graduation?

2. In what ways does the international status of the PhD impact on graduate perceptions and experiences of the value of the PhD in relation to early labour market careers?

3. To what extent does gender impact on the labour market experiences, perceptions and prospects of PhD graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia?

The main research question aimed to explore the value of the PhD as a whole, both in terms of the credential and the doctoral experience (whether national or international), in relation to labour market opportunities. Research Question One was intended as a way of exploring PhD graduates' views of the PhD in relation to their positioning in the labour market. The aim was to examine whether they viewed the PhD differently at the time of interview from when they started their PhD; comparing what they thought they would get from it with what they felt they actually got from it, or their labour market goals and how they felt the PhD would position (and has positioned) them in relation to these goals. This involved comparing motivations behind the PhD with actual outcomes, including

length of time to secure a position, occupations acquired, career trajectories and perceived value of the PhD. Research Question Two looked specifically and in detail at the international/national divide, exploring the extent to which the international PhD was considered more valuable than a locally-acquired PhD within the Saudi labour market from the perspective of the graduates. The focus here, then, was on how global experiences may be translated in the Saudi labour market context, and whether or not the international experience is valued more than the local. This involved looking at institutionalised global cultural capital (IGCC) (including institution ranking and subject), embodied global cultural capital (EGCC) and global social capital. Finally, Research Question Three explored potential gender differences in the experiences of the Saudi and UK PhD graduates with regard to the labour market. It looked at the potential impact of gender on the choices made in relation to the PhD, through examining motivations and subject choice, before looking at labour market outcomes in terms of occupations, work environments and pay, as well as recent developments in Saudi Arabia and their impact on gender and the labour market.

4.4 Data collection

4.4.1 Secondary data and literature

The literature review involved searching within several key electronic databases, which were accessed through the library catalogue. These included the Web of Science, ProQuest Central and JStor. The key words used in the search comprised 'Saudi students', 'Saudi international students', 'Saudi PhD students', 'Saudi doctoral students' 'Saudi graduates' students' with 'careers', 'outcomes', 'employment' and 'labour market'. In order to refine the numbers of sources, only peer-reviewed sources were included in these particular searches. For the most recent and up-to-date research, the searches involved refining for the last ten years. This review of the literature was complemented by a Google Scholar search using the same keywords to draw out additional findings from sources such as books, PhD theses and dissertations which may have been excluded in the search for peer-reviewed sources. This also yielded several additional journal articles that had not been identified in the previous searches. For the literature search inclusion and exclusion criteria, see Table 4.1 below. The numbers of sources generated at each stage were collated in a PRISMA table, which provides a method of reporting systematic reviews of the literature (see Figure 4.1).

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Date 2010 - 2020	Sources dated before 2000
Peer reviewed sources	Other types of sources e.g. newspaper articles

Table 4.1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature search

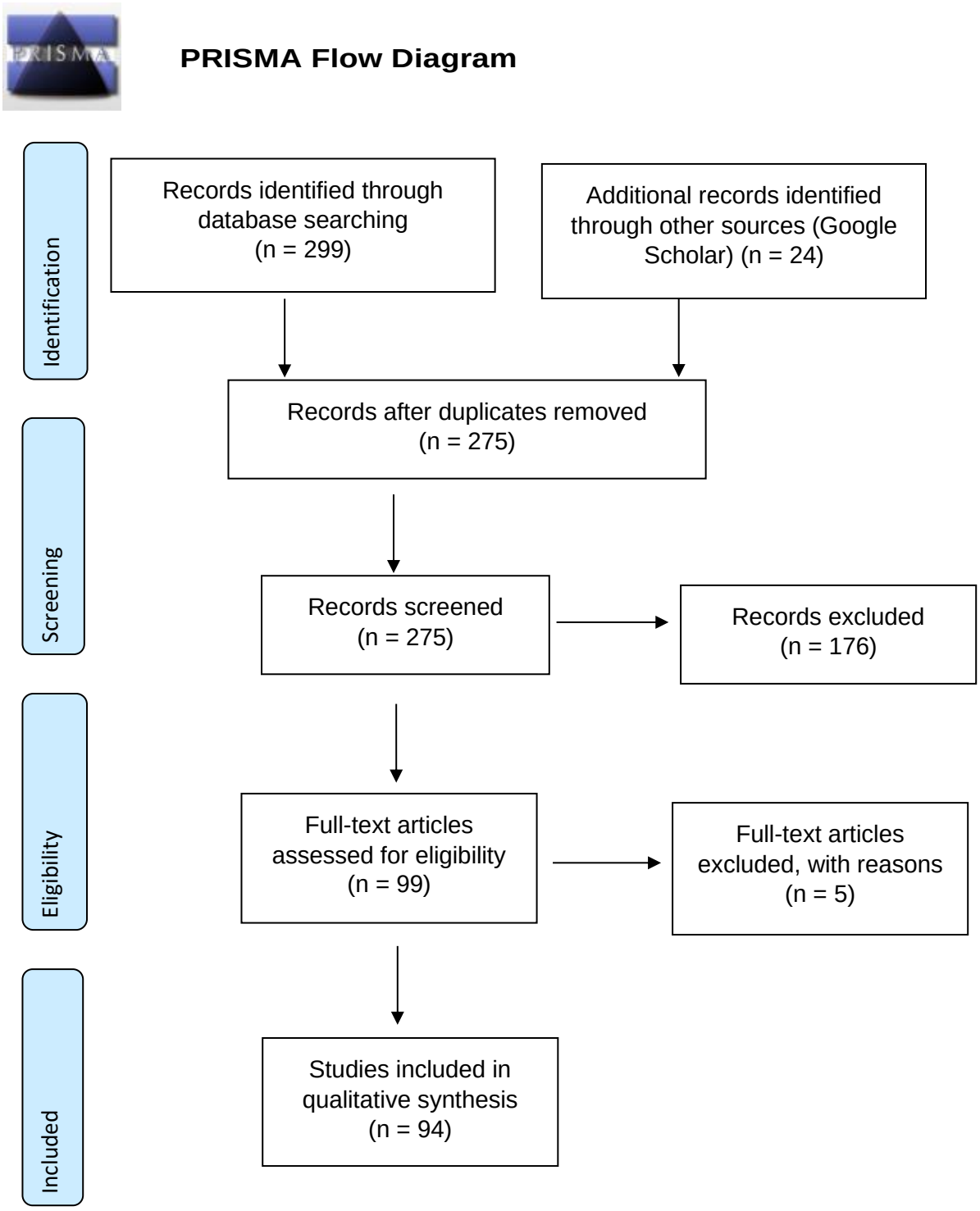

Figure 4.1: PRISMA Flow Diagram for literature search

Underlying theoretical explanations for international student mobility were also explored, through examination of literature on human capital (Becker, 1993; Dahlman *et al*., 2007; Acemoglu *et al*., 2014), cultural capital (such as Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986; Jaeger, 2011; Tran, 2015) and global positional competition (including Brown, 1999; 2000; Marginson, 2006; Kim, 2016). For statistical data, several websites were also consulted, including the Times Higher Education (THE), the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (including the International Passenger Survey [IPS]), Universities UK International, the Saudi Embassy, and individual universities selected for the study. Whilst this search yielded relevant data, including data on international student mobility generally, and some insights into Saudi Arabian students' university destinations, as well as information on the world ranking of universities, specific data on Saudi students by institution and subject proved limited, and so telephone contact was made with HESA and the Saudi Ministry to request such data. Public access to this material is currently restricted, resulting in the subsequent purchase of the latest specific relevant data on Saudi students. This provided valuable information on numbers of Saudi students attending Russell Group universities, and numbers broken down by subjects.

It is important to be aware of the merits and limitations of using secondary data in the research. Advantages predominantly relate to the accessibility and convenience of this form of data, having already been produced, which can enhance the pace of studies (Johnston, 2014). Where data is publicly available, it is also low cost to the researcher, reducing the need for substantial financial resources (Cheng and Phillips, 2014). Furthermore, the use of secondary data allows for the generation of new insights and interpretations to be drawn from the original data (Sherif, 2018), which can provide important contributions. On the other hand, the specific details relating to the data generation techniques employed in the studies are not always known, which is important given that these can impact on reliability of the data or findings (Johnston, 2014). The theoretical positions of researchers may also be a consideration, as they are likely to impact on the reasons behind the initial studies, the subsequent results and interpretation of the data (Sherif, 2018). There is also a lack of opportunity to follow-up on aspects which may be of interest (Johnston, 2014). Furthermore, the data gathered have not been produced in line with the specific research question set by the researcher using the secondary data (Cheng and Phillips, 2014). It is important, then, to remain aware of the disadvantages associated with using secondary data in any research, and in the current

study this type of data was not relied upon solely to address the research questions but rather was used to supplement the researcher's own empirical findings.

4.4.2 Qualitative interviews

The primary method for the study was qualitative semi-structured interviews, which enable participants to share their thoughts, feelings, perceptions and experiences in their own words (Alshenqeeti, 2014). This method was selected for the "flexible and fluid structure" (Lewis-Beck *et al.,* 2004: unpaged), which accommodates the use of an interview guide but also allows for departure from the guide to enable more probing into the data, if necessary. This facilitated a more conversational style in the interviews, increasing rapport, and allowed the participants to engage with the issues they considered important, rather than those pre-defined by the researcher. Thus, the open questions and the flexibility of the interviews enabled the researcher to better understand the experiences of the participants, than more structured methods such as questionnaires might allow.

4.4.2.1 The interview process

Whilst face-to-face interviews conducted in Saudi Arabia were initially planned, unexpected world events at the time of the fieldwork (the recent COVID-19 pandemic), prevented travel. The interviews were therefore conducted by Skype or telephone, depending on the preference of the participants. It was felt that such interviews would prove practical and helpful to participants who were in their place of work, and also enhanced the researcher's ability to include people who were located across the whole country, thus increasing the participation rate. The interviews were carried out in Arabic - the first language of the participants - and it was hoped that this would help to make the participants feel at ease. Conducting interviews in Arabic also increased the validity of the study as participants were able to articulate their thinking in their mother language (Creswell, 2005). These were then translated to English at the time of coding. Each participant was provided with an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix One) via e-mail or Skype to read and sign before the interviews began, explaining their rights as participants in the research. This was also read to the participants, before the interviews began.

The researcher used an interview guide or schedule, which included a range of questions, as well as 'probes' or prompts (see Appendix Two). This latter point is an aspect of the semi-structured interview that appealed to the researcher, as whilst

questions asked may reveal a 'surface level' response, prompts allowed for the use of follow-up questions to develop a deeper discussion and more in-depth understanding of the participants' responses (Legard *et al.*, 2003). The questions addressed in the interview schedule included a range of topics influenced by the research questions and the literature review. These covered, for instance, details about their study (where they studied, what they studied, when they started); their thoughts and opinions about the role and value of the PhD in their career (how the credential had helped them to achieve their aims, if at all, and whether they were able to use it); social networks; key influences and determinants on their career trajectories; opinions on the challenges and opportunities of studying in other countries or remaining in their home country; relationships and connections with other international students and the effect of these on employment and career outcomes; and the potential impact of gender on employment outcomes.

The interviews were audio recorded with consent (whether conducted by Skype or telephone). After listening to the interviews to enhance familiarity with participants' narratives, interviews were transcribed in Arabic using Microsoft Word, which was subsequently translated into English. It was planned that if consent was not granted for recording, the interviews would go ahead but the researcher would take detailed notes instead. All participants, however, allowed the interviews to be audio recorded. It has been argued that the representation of participants' words may be questioned by the participants themselves when viewed in the written form, and that this can be further exacerbated by the translation process, "because in the translation the words are literally not their own anymore" (van Nes *et al.*, 2010: 313). To avoid this affecting the current research, the participants were invited to read their translated transcripts in English, or the interview notes, to ensure that they felt that their accounts and experiences had been fairly represented and the meanings they intended had been accurately communicated within the transcripts.

4.4.2.2 Assessing the method

The choice of the interview method demonstrates the value the researcher attaches to personal language and experiences as adequate forms of data, as portraying meaning or bestowing accurate representations of reality. As Blaikie (2000: 251) explains, the use of qualitative methods demonstrates a commitment to:

> …discovering *their* [participants'] socially constructed reality and penetrating the frames of meaning within which they conduct their activities. To do this, it is necessary to master the everyday language that social actors use in dealing with

> the phenomenon under investigation, in short, to discover their 'mutual knowledge', the concepts, and the meanings associated with these concepts.

He further suggests that investigating this reality requires in-depth engagement with the lives of the people being interviewed, and thus qualitative interviewing can provide the means to achieve this.

The qualitative interview is a form of generated data, in the sense that the researcher is a part of the process in which the data emerges, through the interpretation and re-telling of aspects of the lives of the participants; their attitudes, beliefs and experiences, and the meanings that they attach to them (Ritchie, 2003). It is an interactive process in which a question is asked to facilitate a response, the participant then talks freely, and the interviewer's next input will be influenced by the answer of the participant (Legard *et al.*, 2003). The qualitative interview, then, is often described as a conversation, and thus reflects everyday processes for generating data, although it is important to recognise that everyday conversations and in-depth interviews have some differences. As Legard *et al.* (2003: 138) state, these include the fact that "their objectives, and the roles of the researcher and participant, are quite different". Nonetheless, this form of interviewing adopts a more natural, conversational style, using a range of both closed and open-ended questions and follow-up prompts to provide more in-depth understanding of the participants' responses. In addition, this more natural conversational style is enhanced by the fact that "The dialogue can meander around topics on the agenda…and may delve into totally unforeseen issues" (Adams, 2015: 493).

The qualitative semi-structured interview, therefore, provided both structure and flexibility, offering the researcher key themes and questions to be covered, whilst also enabling a degree of flexibility with each participant, depending on the responses provided. Semi-structured interviews were also selected over other qualitative methods such as focus groups, as it was hoped that participants may be more likely to share their experiences openly within one-to-one interview situations (Berg and Lune, 2013), rather than group situations where participants may feel pressured or affected by dominant participants, or too shy to express their own thoughts (Davis and Sutton, 2004). Furthermore, focus groups can require considerable resources in terms of time (Alshenqeeti, 2014) and may have proved particularly problematic during the recent pandemic in comparison with one-to-one interviews. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, were considered too open for the current study, as the researcher planned to use an interview schedule or guide for each interview, to ensure a greater flow of conversation, but also to cover particular themes and questions with each participant, to

allow for greater comparison of findings (Creswell, 2005). Structured interviews were not deemed sufficient for providing the kind of data required in this research, instead offering more structured data, and restricting the responses of the participants.

It is important to recognise that the flexibility of semi-structured interviews may negatively affect reliability and it may be that the use of open-ended questions makes comparison of responses more difficult. Interviews are in general also time-consuming to conduct and difficult to analyse systematically (Berg and Lune, 2013). In fact, Adams (2015) suggests that each stage of the process is both labour and time-intensive, from planning and preparing for the interviews, to setting them up, conducting and then analysing them. Time is therefore an important consideration when using this method. It is also important to be aware of the potential role of the 'interviewer effect', where participants may respond differently to the researcher on the basis of perceptions about certain characteristics, such as age, gender and ethnicity (Denscombe, 2007). This is connected to the issue of reflexivity, or the "importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective" (Patton, 2002: 64). It is therefore important to be aware of the ways in which the beliefs and judgements of the researcher may have influenced the research and the interpretation of the findings, and the implications of these for the research. This is particularly the case in qualitative research and contrasts with the more positivist position, as it acknowledges that the researcher cannot be separated from the social processes that they are investigating (Holmes, 2020). In the current study, for instance, it was important to consider the implications of the researcher being a PhD student researching PhD graduates.

Researcher positionality refers to both the researcher's worldview (or their ontological and epistemological position), as already touched on at the beginning of the chapter, and to their values and beliefs which may be shaped "…by their political allegiance, religious faith, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical location, ethnicity, race, social class, and status, (dis) abilities and so on" (Holmes, 2020: 2). It is important to recognise the impact of these in relation to factors such as the topic of investigation and the relationship between the researcher and the participants in the study (Yao and Vital, 2018; Holmes, 2020). In terms of the topic of study, for instance, it is important to acknowledge the personal and academic motivations underpinning the research. The researcher had a strong and long-standing interest in international student mobility and the theoretical explanations underpinning these. Thus, a familiarity with ideas around human and cultural capital were significant here. On a personal level, the researcher was a Saudi PhD graduate on an employer scholarship for a PhD at a UK higher education institution. The researcher's position therefore had a direct impact on the personal motivations for

the focus of study and the interest in labour market outcomes of the PhD. As a female PhD student, with direct experience and knowledge of the swift changes taking place in the country of investigation, the researcher was also interested in the potential influence of gender in these wider processes.

In terms of relationships with participants, one of the main debates surrounds the insider/outsider status of the researcher, which includes the researcher's position in relation to the culture they are studying and whether or not this presents an advantage or a limitation in the research. 'Insiders' are defined in different ways, such as being a member of a particular group, or simply sharing personal biography, such as gender, race or class, with participants, providing a lived familiarity with the group (Holmes, 2020). It is important to acknowledge that it is possible to be both an insider and outsider with different participants. As a mature, female Saudi PhD student, for instance, studying PhD graduates, the researcher could be considered an 'insider' in terms of being a doctoral student, from Saudi Arabia, of a similar age to most participants, with shared culture, religion and language. At the same time, the researcher was an 'outsider' in terms of gender when interviewing male participants, and in terms of place of study when interviewing graduates from Saudi Arabian universities (rather than abroad). Whilst it is not possible to fully avoid the potential impact of these factors, it was important to recognise the impact of the positionality of the researcher.

It has been suggested that reflexivity allows greater connection with participants, enabling researchers to "connect with others as a way to humanize and relate to participants in the research relationship" (Yao and Vital, 2018: 195). Furthermore, there are clear advantages of being an insider, such as the ease of access to participants, the ability to ask more meaningful questions where there is already an understanding of the culture, the potential for greater trust between researcher and participant, more in-depth presentation of the culture, and greater understanding of participants' explanations through shared language (Holmes, 2020). The researcher was a Saudi international PhD student, for example, and so it was hoped that the shared knowledge and experience that comes from international study in the UK, and shared country of domicile, would enhance the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. In addition, the level of education of both the participants and researcher enabled a shared level of academic language and understanding. It should be noted that the shared international experience was only the case with half of the sample, as touched on above, although shared culture, language and educational level may have been important here. Being an 'insider' interviewer in this way can thus be an advantage with common knowledge and shared language, prompting more in-depth discussion and thus

facilitating a deeper understanding of issues discussed (Byrne *et al.*¸ 2015; Saidin and Yaacob, 2016).

At the same time, it is important to recognise the potential disadvantages of the insider status (and potential advantage of being an 'outsider'). The inherent bias of being within the culture (Byrne *et al*., 2015), or being too familiar or "bound by custom and code so that they are unable to raise provocative or taboo questions" (Holmes, 2020: 6) may impact on the quality of data collection. It may also be that the assumption of shared understanding limits the explanation provided in the interview situation, or participants might even be less willing to share information that they might with an outsider (*Ibid.*). It may also be that the researcher's over-familiarity with the context or culture can prevent them from prompting the participants on particular issues. Furthermore, it has been argued that:

> …insiders may be blindsided by some issues in their research as they do not consider certain issues as important as how outsiders would see them. They might not be as alert and as sensitive to the information or issue compared to those who are outside the organisation (Saidin and Yaacob, 2016: 850).

It has also been suggested that insider status may lead to over disclosure by participants (Byrne *et al*., 2015). It is important, therefore, that the researcher demonstrates awareness of the potential bias inherent in data collection from their insider status and strongly adheres to both the research objectives and ethical guidelines (Saidin and Yaacob, 2016). Thus, the insider/outsider status was complex and shifting, with both advantages and disadvantages in both situations. In the current study, this process of reflexivity was important throughout the whole study, impacting on the construction of the research questions but also the design of the interview schedules and the transcription and interpretation of the interviews. Acknowledging the positionality of the researcher during data analysis was important, for instance, in exploring the responses on gender, with in-depth insights gained from the range of differing perspectives and perceptions of both males and females in the study. It is therefore through the process of reflexivity that the researcher understands and appreciates the complexities inherent in their role as researcher, their position as insider/outsider and their role in the construction of knowledge.

In terms of how the interviews were conducted, the use of Skype and telephone interviews has been criticised, for instance, for the belief that there is limited ability to develop rapport with participants (Burke and Miller, 2001; Carr and Worth, 2001), and

for telephone interviews or voice Skype, the loss of visual cues and nonverbal data which may have negative consequences for the quality of the data generated (Novick, 2008). It has also been suggested, however, that Skype interviews can provide a quicker route to developing rapport (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013), and that with technological advances, the use of and familiarity with these forms of technology are increasingly common and accepted (Carr and Worth, 2001). This might be particularly so in the current COVID-19 pandemic where the use of such technology has increased significantly (Howlett, 2021). Another potential problem is that particular individuals may not have access to this type of technology (Carr and Worth, 2001) which excludes them as participants, although in the current research, this was unlikely to pose a problem due to the profile of the participants. In addition, in recent years, the internet has become widely available to most households in Saudi Arabia, and mobile phones are also commonly owned by individuals. Deakin and Wakefield (2013: 603), moreover, point out, in relation to the adoption of this type of method, that:

> While potential research populations have become increasingly geographically dispersed, technological advancements and software have made communicating over large distances more feasible.

This is supported by Iacono *et al.* (2016: 1) who state that "Skype opens up new possibilities by allowing us to contact participants worldwide in a time efficient and financially affordable manner, thus increasing the variety of our samples". With the recent pandemic, as mentioned, use of this type of method also enabled the research to continue, showing similarities with the work of Howlett (2021). Furthermore, Krouwel *et al*. (2019: 219) conducted research which evaluated the differences between Skype (video) interviews and face-to-face interviews and concluded that face-to-face interviews:

> …were marginally superior to video calls in that interviewees said more, although this was on a similar range of topics. However, the difference is sufficiently modest that time and budget constraints may justify the use of some video call interviews within a qualitative research study.

Technological difficulties, such as loss of internet connection, was, however, an important consideration (Alkhateeb, 2018). Whilst technological difficulties were encountered, these were brief and did not cause significant problems. Loss of internet connection occasionally interrupted Skype calls for a few participants, for instance, but re-calling simply resolved the problem and the interviews continued.

The decision to use video or audio-only Skype was made by the interviewees, depending on which approach made them feel most comfortable. Research by Alkhateeb (2018) using Skype interviews with females in Saudi Arabia, for instance, found that despite initial attempts to use video Skype, some participants were hesitant as they explained that it made them feel uncomfortable. In addition, cultural considerations were found to be important, as some participants explained that "…the video feature was not accepted socially especially by their spouses" (p.2255). Whilst this may result in the loss of non-verbal cues, it was felt that this was a necessary omission from the study, if it increased the rate of participation, and thus the benefits outweighed the limitations here. Most of the participants in the current study, both male and female, chose audio-only Skype calls as their preference. In relation to telephone interviews, Novick (2008) suggests that this form of interviewing can actually assist in allowing participants to feel more relaxed and willing to share information with the researcher. She further argues that little evidence has been produced to indicate a lower quality of data from these types of interviews. AlKhateeb (2018: 2259) supports Novick's claims surrounding the use of telephones, stating that:

> The use of the phone is a contemporary acceptable method of communication in Saudi Arabia. It provides a comfortable environment which aided in participants' involvement during the interviews while perceiving their boundaries.

It may be, then, that in the context of the current study, Saudi Arabia, the use of these types of method are better suited to the participants than face-to-face methods and facilitate the inclusion of more participants.

It is therefore important to weigh up the limitations of these methods against their advantages, and in the current study, it was felt that not only would the use of this type of method ensure that the fieldwork could go ahead during this period of globally restricted travel, it was also believed that this method would prove more practical and less intrusive to the participants. The researcher was aware of the limitations and ensured that technological difficulties such as loss of internet connection or sound problems (Alkhateeb, 2018) were overcome by rearranging interviews where necessary. In addition, taking particular precautions or preparation can be helpful in reducing limitations when employing telephone and Skype interviews. Burke and Miller (2001), for instance, provide a list of recommendations for conducting telephone interviews, and suggest that before the interview researchers should consider pre-testing, prior communication with participants, preparing audio-recording techniques, organisation

and scheduling of interviews, ensuring adequate introductions are made and that sufficient information is provided to interviewees about confidentiality, note-taking and how the results will be used. These precautions were made in the current study.

Despite the potential drawbacks of semi-structured interviews, overall, it was felt that the benefits far outweighed the limitations in this research. The researcher was interested in gaining rich, in-depth insights into Saudi PhD graduates' experiences of international study and subsequent employment outcomes, in their own words. The semi-structured interview enabled the generation of this type of data. The use of an interview guide or schedule also provided some structure, facilitating the conversation and ensuring that particular topics were addressed, thus enabling some comparison of responses during the data analysis (Creswell, 2007). At the same time, the method offered the necessary flexibility to delve deeper into issues raised and to include and explore unexpected and emerging themes arising from participant responses (Davis and Sutton, 2004).

4.5 Participants

4.5.1 Selection of participants

Whilst probabilistic sampling - as often adopted in quantitative studies - is ideal in selecting a wide range of participants, it is not often possible within qualitative research where the target populations are hard-to-reach (Palinkas *et al.,* 2015). As a result, purposive sampling tends to be used within qualitative research, and is defined as where "…participants are selected according to pre-determined criteria relevant to a particular research objective" (Guest *et al.,* 2006: 61). Thus, the sample is chosen to represent certain aspects of, or groups within, the sampled population (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). The sampling strategy used in the current study was therefore purposive sampling, which identified individuals who had particular knowledge or experience of the issue being investigated (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). In the case of the current research, this involved being a Saudi national with experience of international PhD study in a UK university, or a PhD in their home country, having completed the PhD between 5-10 years ago, and subsequently seeking or having secured employment in Saudi Arabia. Purposive sampling was therefore selected as it was the most convenient and direct approach for accessing the target population.

There are several different types of purposive or purposeful sampling. Patton (1990), for instance, distinguishes between sixteen different forms. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe and evaluate each of these individually. Therefore, the form of

purposive sampling adopted, as described by Patton (1990: 176), was criterion sampling. As he explains: “The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance”. It is also important that some level of diversity is achieved within the sample (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). Whilst research by Palinkas *et al.* (2015: 7) found that criterion sampling is one of the most widely used forms of purposive sampling, they also suggest that:

> By selecting only individuals who meet a specific criterion defined on the basis of their role in the implementation process or who have a specific experience…one may fail to capture the experiences or activities of other groups playing other roles in the process.

Nonetheless, in the current study, as it was Saudi PhD graduates’ experiences that were the focus of the research, gaining such insights directly from this group was essential (see also section 4.5.2 below, which explains the specific inclusion criteria for the study).

The ability to generalise the findings beyond the selected participants has also been questioned with the use of this - and other forms - of purposive sampling. As Polit and Beck (2010: 1452) argue, however, the issue of generalisation within any research - whether qualitative or quantitative - has been the subject of debate, with some qualitative researchers questioning whether this should even be a desirable aim, striving instead for a “rich, contextualized understanding of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases”. On the other hand, the ability to apply findings beyond the original participant selection within qualitative research is increasingly considered important (Polit and Beck, 2010), and may therefore be necessary to consider within sampling design. In order to enhance generalisation, here, one suggestion is the need to reach data saturation (Omona, 2013). This was a significant consideration within the current research and is discussed below (see section 4.5.3). Some have also raised questions about this type of sampling in relation to validity (Pole and Lampard, 2002), or potential bias through the deliberate selections made in generating the sample. It is argued, however, that such claims can be challenged by ensuring that the process of sampling is clear and ‘objective’ and can subsequently stand “up to independent scrutiny” (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003: 80). Thus, the current study identified clear justification and explanation of the sampling process in the following sub-sections.

Finally, it is worth noting that one recommendation for addressing some of the drawbacks of this sampling method is to introduce additional forms of purposeful sampling alongside it (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). Within the current research, snowball sampling was also

adopted as a supplementary form of sampling to generate a larger number of participants. As Patton (1990: 176) explains, within this form of sampling, through "…asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases". This may occur where existing participants in the research point the researcher to other potential participants. This type of sampling provides practical advantages, such as enabling the researcher to utilise social networks to enhance the potential participant population and providing access to the target population where numbers are limited or individuals are hidden or 'hard to reach' (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). Furthermore, it is suggested that this form of sampling potentially enhances trust amongst participants due to recruitment through peer referral rather than more formal methods (*Ibid.*). In one study which compared snowball and purposive sampling, it was also shown that snowball sampling was more straightforward than the latter and led to higher numbers of participants being recruited and participating in the study (Valerio *et al.,* 2016).

It is important to note that snowball sampling is not without criticism. It has been argued, for instance, that the selection bias involved in this method can have implications for the validity of the sample. Thus, samples are developed from respondent choice, affecting the ability to generalise from findings on such a sample, and representing a specific group of interconnected individuals, potentially excluding individuals not connected to a particular network (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). It has been suggested that aiming for larger samples may overcome some of the issues with representativeness here (*Ibid.*). This form of sampling has also been subject to criticism surrounding the ability of participants to recognise one another's contributions and therefore to compromise anonymity (Pole and Lampard, 2002). As will be explained in the ethical considerations section later in the chapter, the research adopted several steps to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for the participants. Despite these potential limitations, for the current study, this method was considered important for accessing individuals who met all of the inclusion criteria and especially for gaining access to private sector employees. It was hoped that the addition of this form of sampling, alongside criterion sampling, would assist in yielding the desired number of participants who met the inclusion criteria (Pole and Lampard, 2002).

4.5.2 Inclusion criteria

There were several factors considered in the selection of participants, in terms of the inclusion criteria. These include gender, institution and subject. In the current research, gender is of significance in terms of differential experiences. Expectations of different

genders within Saudi Arabia, for instance, may result in different employment and career outcomes, particularly in relation to subject of study, as touched on in Chapters Two and Three. Equal numbers of males and females were thus sought in the study, in order to explore potentially variable employment experiences in relation to gender and context.

The research initially intended to focus on Saudi Government-funded PhD graduates. It is important to note that there are two key types of scholarship provided by the Saudi Embassy; first, those allocated to suitable candidates not in employment, and secondly, those in employment in the government sector at the time of the award of the scholarship (such as education), where scholarships are awarded by employers but funded by the Saudi Embassy. Due to recent developments, both types of scholarship require return to Saudi Arabia on completion of the degree or PhD (Yakaboski *et al.*, 2017). This was already the case for the scholarships attached to employment (the second type mentioned above), where applicants applied for the grants through their employers, but changes in 2015 to the third stage of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques' overseas scholarship program, referred to as 'your job first and then your scholarship' (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019b), have led to a third type of scholarship which co-exists with the previous two. Here, scholarships are offered to applicants not previously in employment, with a job being offered prior to study, and then graduates returning to this position on completion of the PhD, as explained in Chapter Two (see section 2.4). These developments have meant that both the job outcomes of the applicants, and the destination country, are determined by the scholarship, through the requirement to return to a previously-secured position in Saudi Arabia. The latest development in 2015, however, should not have affected the current research sample, for as will be discussed below, participants were sought who had completed their PhDs at least five years prior to participation in the study, and so they would have started their PhDs in 2012 or earlier. Furthermore, the researcher also intended to include participants who had undertaken self-funded PhDs in the UK, and two self-funded participants were included in the final sample. This low number related simply to the fact that these were the only students to come forward to participate in the study who were self-funded. Self-funded students are subject to similar requirements as scholarship applicants (see below), although in contrast to funded students, the condition to return to the KSA is not mandatory. The sample group therefore represented a diverse graduate population, including both those with and without jobs secured for their return, and both those required to return to the home country, and those who chose to return.

The total figures for Saudi PhD graduates from UK universities are shown below in Table 4.2. It is interesting to note here that the percentage of females for all Saudi PhD

graduates from the UK has been gradually increasing. The figures show both scholarship and self-funded applicants together as separate figures were not available. Table 4.3 shows the figures of PhD graduates from Saudi universities for the same periods. Whilst total figures for PhDs are slightly lower for all years, the number of PhDs in Saudi Arabia has been gradually increasing (apart from a fall in 2015/16). It is also notable that the percentage of females to males is different to the UK PhDs, with a significantly lower number of females doing PhDs in Saudi Arabia than males.

Year	Total number of graduates	Males	Females
2017/18	544	287 (53%)	257 (47%)
2016/17	560	310 (55%)	250 (45%)
2015/16	689	413 (60%)	276 (40%)
2014/15	559	350 (63%)	209 (37%)
2013/14	500	297 (60%)	203 (40%)

Table 4.2: Numbers of Saudi PhD graduates from UK universities (scholarship/self-funded) [Adapted from figures provided by the Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019c]

Year	Total number of graduates	Males	Females
2017/18	451	362 (80%)	89 (20%)
2016/17	379	291 (77%)	88 (23%)
2015/16	247	194 (79%)	53 (21%)
2014/15	355	257 (72%)	98 (28%)
2013/14	295	205 (69%)	90 (31%)

Table 4.3: Numbers of Saudi PhD graduates from Saudi Arabian universities [Saudi Ministry of Education, 2020]

Scholarship applicants must meet a range of criteria and complete the application process. Certain conditions are required to obtain the scholarships, including the need to be a Saudi national; to be medically fit; to have a valid passport; to have the required certificates, qualifications and academic report approved by the awarding body (this would include, for example, a Master's qualification if applying for a PhD); to meet specific age requirements; to apply to approved universities (see below for further detail on the latter); to not have applied previously; to pass all scientific, professional and personal interviews and, if applicable, employer interviews. Finally, if receiving an employer award, the applicants must meet any special conditions and requirements of the employer (Conditions set as of 2019; Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019d). As mentioned previously, whilst the preferred subject areas for scholarships alter every year according to the requirements of the economy, particular subjects are often prioritised for funding, such as medical/health and engineering sciences, as well as

information/communication, computer science and basic sciences, with subjects like business studies, accounting, management and finance tending to be selected more by self-funded students (Ahmed, 2015). In terms of those who have studied in Saudi Arabia, until 2018, higher education was free, but following the implementation of Vision 2030 in 2016 and the changes that ensued, institutions began to charge tuition fees (Al Qassim University, 2020; Saudi Government, 2020a).

In terms of institution type, the Saudi Embassy website for approved universities (Saudi Embassy, 2019d), which students in receipt of scholarships must consult in selecting their place of study, includes Russell Group universities (Russell Group, 2019). In some ways, this is also the case for self-funded applicants, as only PhDs, or other qualifications, from these approved institutions will be recognised and accredited by the Saudi Embassy on their return (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019d). As will be explained further below, participants recruited for the current study with international PhDs from the UK must therefore have studied at an approved university. For PhD applicants, there is a requirement to have a Master's degree with a minimum of a Merit in order to be accepted for an award (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019e). Thus, the scholarships are not targeted simply at an elite set of students, but rather the criteria relates predominantly to a combination of previous academic performance, and subjects and professions required by the Saudi economy. Figures which differentiate self-funded from Saudi Government-funded PhD graduates by year in the UK were not available from the Saudi Embassy, although it was possible to gain some indication of the percentage of self-funded graduates in comparison to Government-funded graduates through figures provided on all Saudi international PhD students in Europe (not just UK students). See the chart below (Figure 4.2) for numbers of Saudi international PhD students both in receipt of government and self-funded scholarships. Figures for self-funded students for 2017/18 were not available, but figures from the previous years indicate that the percentage of self-funded graduates has declined from around fourteen per cent of all Saudi students in 2013/14, to around four percent for 2016/17. This may be a result of the increase in government-funded schemes available to students.

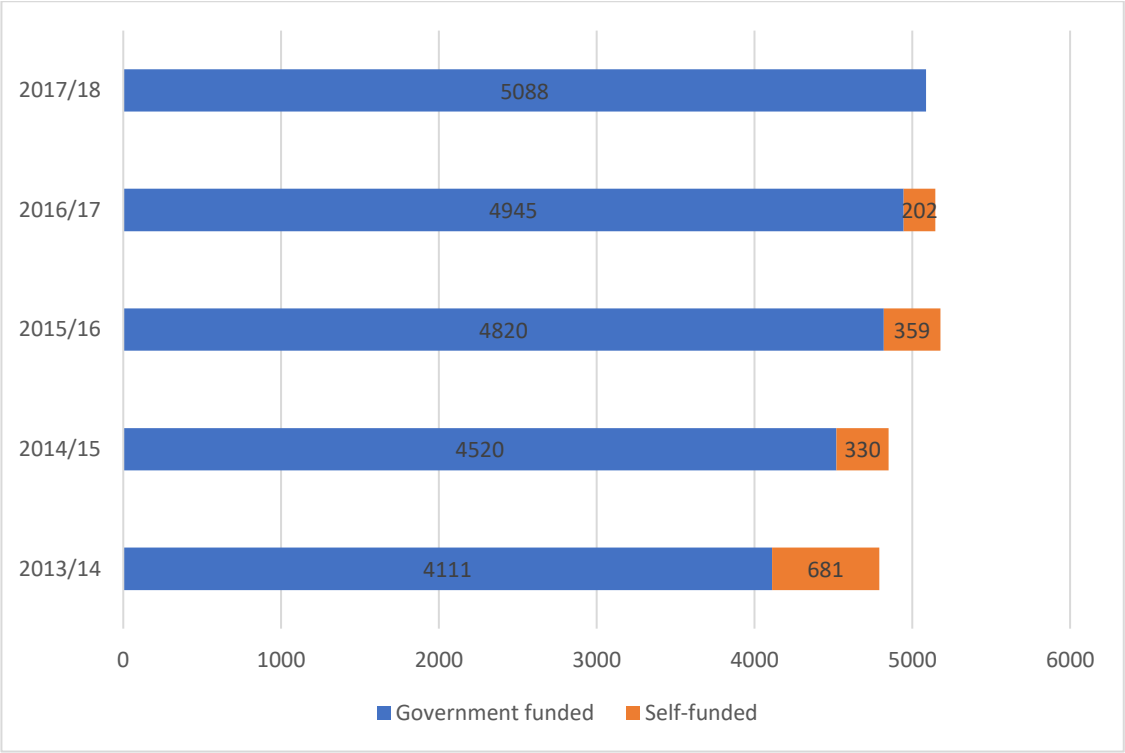

Figure 4.2: Saudi Government-funded and Self-funded Saudi international PhD graduates in Europe by academic year [Adapted from figures provided by the Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019c and 2019f]

It is important to acknowledge that due to the different forms of funding for the PhDs, the participants were likely to have different attributes which may have impacted on their employment and career outcomes. Aside from the direct impact of the conditions of scholarships, through the link to employment roles on completion of the PhDs, there may be further differences that impact on career trajectories. Those already in employment, for instance, may have considerable professional experience when compared to applicants with no previous employment. The skills and experience of the self-funded applicants may also be more likely to reflect the latter group. These differences are likely to impact on the employment and career outcomes and trajectories, and will thus have important implications for assessing the value of the PhD and the career developments of graduates who return to the KSA. For the sample of participants who remained in the KSA for study and employment, then, it was important to ensure some diversity of experience. Thus, the research aimed to include participants with at least five years previous professional experience, as well as those who may have little previous employment experience, in order to facilitate comparison of their development with participants who studied in the UK and returned to Saudi Arabia (and may have had professional experience from their previous employment roles). They were all comparable in terms of academic qualifications, having completed BAs and MAs prior to the PhD. Ensuring that individuals were included who were at a similar stage in their

career development was therefore necessary for effective comparison and analysis of perceptions, experiences and employment and outcomes, especially in relation to consideration of embodied cultural capital. The research therefore aimed to include similar numbers of individuals with similar numbers of years of experience prior to PhD study in the UK and Saudi Arabia.

As mentioned above, the Saudi Embassy require that students studying abroad apply to specific, approved educational institutions (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019a). The current study sample therefore focused on postgraduates from higher education institutions, including Russell Group universities, which are approved by the Ministry (*Ibid.*) and have been included in the Times Higher Education (THE) *World University Rankings* in order to include some of the most prestigious institutions. Such worldwide rankings "…have given a powerful impetus to intranational and international competitive pressures and have the potential to change policy objectives and institutional behaviours". Thus, such "…global ranking has secured mainstream public and policy credibility" (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007: 55). It is worth noting that different global ranking systems exist for higher education institutions, including the THE, as touched on in Chapter Three (see section 3.2). The THE was selected for the current research, as it is reported to be "the more nationally plural" list, including a range of institutions from different countries in the top positions (*Ibid.*: 55). In addition, these rankings tend to be based on peer opinion and reputation, in contrast to ARWU rankings, which emphasise research performance (Clarke, 2007), making them more suitable for the purposes of the current research. Furthermore, whilst subject to critique of methods, THE rankings play a considerable role in servicing "…the market in cross-border degrees" (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007: 57), thus making them particularly suitable in the current study, where global positional competition was considered significant in the internationalisation of higher education.

To allow for more accurate comparison of the value of the national and the international PhD, the participants who remained in Saudi Arabia for their PhD study included only those who studied at the top universities in Saudi Arabia. This ensured a more balanced comparison where graduates are considered by employers for PhDs which have a similar level of prestige, but where the difference lies in the national or international element (thus in terms of an international PhD versus a PhD from one of the top universities in the home country). The top four Saudi universities in the THE World Rankings 2020 were King Abdulaziz University, Alfaisal University, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals and King Saud University. King Fahd University, however, is an all-male

university, and Alfaisal University does not offer doctoral study, therefore students were sought from King Abdulaziz University and King Saud University.

To facilitate the comparison of the experiences of the graduates, it was believed necessary to focus on a limited number of subjects or disciplines, especially as the range of occupations and career opportunities are likely to vary for different subject areas. In order to make a decision, subjects data on the most commonly studied disciplines for UK doctorates by Saudi students (and therefore the areas in which the government has most likely invested in), and by Saudi students studying in the KSA, were examined. Theoretical justification of the selected subjects was also necessary, as will be explained further below. The tables below (Tables 4.4 and 4.5) show figures for Saudi doctoral graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia, by the top five most studied subject areas. The data were obtained from 2010 to 2015, to ensure that the subjects reflected the current research sample criteria, allowing for several years to have passed since graduating.

Year	Subject	N.o.s males	N.o.s females	Male/female balance %	Total
2014-15					
	Computer Science	15	10	60/40	25
	Education	8	3	73/27	11
	Chemistry	7	3	70/30	10
	Management	6	3	67/33	9
	Biology	5	3	63/37	8
2013-14					
	Computer science	10	9	53/47	19
	Management	8	2	80/20	10
	Chemistry	6	4	60/40	10
	Biology	5	5	50/50	10
	Law	8	0	100/0	8
2012-2013					
	Computer Science	12	6	67/33	18
	Linguistics	11	4	73/27	15
	Management	10	4	71/29	14
	Biology	6	8	43/57	14
	Education	9	3	75/25	12
2011-2012					
	Computer Science	11	4	73/27	15
	Chemistry	14	8	64/36	22
	Management	11	9	55/45	20
	Biology	9	4	69/31	13
	Pharmaceutical Sciences	9	3	75/25	12
2010-2011					
	Computer Science	7	10	41/59	17
	Economics	7	8	47/53	15
	Biology	9	5	64/36	14
	Linguistics	7	4	64/36	11
	Management	5	3	63/37	8

Table 4.4: Saudi doctoral students graduating from the UK by subject and year

[Saudi Ministry of Education, 2020]

Year	Subject	N.o.s males	N.o.s females	Male/female balance	Total
2014-2015					
	Religion	47	4	92/8	51
	Arabic	33	7	82.5/17.5	40
	Chemistry	27	3	90/10	30
	Management	10	7	59/41	17
	Biology	11	6	65/35	17
	Education	14	5	74/26	19
2013-2014					
	Religion	58	14	81/19	72
	Education	29	40	42/58	69
	Law	60	8	88/12	68
	Biology	27	9	75/25	36
	Management	18	4	82/18	22
2012-2013					
	Religion	65	43	60/40	108
	Arabic	45	27	55/45	82
	Management	30	19	61/39	49
	Biology	17	13	57/43	30
	Sociology	15	10	60/40	25
2011-2012					
	Religion	50	14	78/22	64
	Arabic	31	12	72/28	43
	Management	20	14	59/41	34
	Biology	14	7	67/33	21
	Education	9	5	64/36	14
2010-2011					
	Religion	47	22	68/32	69
	Arabic	37	31	54/46	68
	History	20	17	54/46	37
	Management	16	10	61/39	26
	Biology	13	8	62/38	21

Table 4.5: Saudi doctoral students graduating from the KSA by subject and year

[Saudi Ministry of Education, 2020]

Using these figures, it was possible to determine the subject areas with the highest number of graduates for the five years for doctoral graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia. The researcher then identified the top three subjects for each country with the closest gender split (closest to 50/50) (see Table 4.6 below):

	2014-2015	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11
UK					
1	Comp.Science	Comp.Science	Comp.Science	Chemistry	Comp.Science
2	Management	Chemistry	Management	Management	Economics
3	Biology	Biology	Biology	Biology	Management
KSA					
1	Management	Education	Arabic	Management	Arabic
2	Biology	Biology	Biology	Biology	History
3	Education	Management	Religion	Education	Management

Table 4.6: Subject area with the highest number of Saudi PhD graduates by year and closest gender split [Saudi Ministry of Education, 2020]

The two subject areas selected for the study were chosen on the basis of them representing *both* the highest percentage of doctoral students as well as having a reasonable gender balance in comparison to the other top subjects. As the above table shows, both Management and Biology appeared four times for both countries over the period selected. Graduates of these subjects, who had graduated in the last five to ten years, were therefore the focus of the current study. The choice of subject also importantly reflected the research's focus on examining the value of credentials, in relation to evaluating outcomes and graduates' perceptions of the value of their PhDs.

Biology could be considered a globally accepted credential, in other words, it is a subject which is likely to apply equally worldwide regardless of country of destination. It might be expected, therefore, that some forms of cultural capital may be less important for these types of subjects than for others. It may be, for instance, that subjects such as law which may be specifically applicable to the country of study, would have less value in another country, and therefore other factors may be considered. For the current study, Management was selected in contrast to Biology, and could be argued to reflect a softer, less technical profession, where context may impact on the value of the credential and social or cultural capital may be significant (Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Gordon, 2013; Tholen, 2016). Thus, whilst the focus on particular subjects in the study had some implications for the ability to generalise the findings, the subject selection importantly reflected the theoretical elements of the study, and the most popular subject areas for Saudi PhD students.

The research therefore sought male and female participants from amongst the cohort of UK-qualified, who had studied Biology or Management at a Russell Group university, and KSA-qualified Saudi PhD students studying the same subjects at King Abdulaziz University and King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. The graduates included those who had graduated from UK or Saudi universities in the past five to ten years, in order to

enhance the relevance of the data and enable participant reflection on the value of credentials (see Table 4.7 below for a summary of inclusion criteria).

Country of Origin	Saudi Arabia
Country of Study	UK and Saudi Arabia
University	Russell Group university (UK) or King Abdulaziz University and King Saud University (Saudi Arabia)
Level of Study	PhD
Subject	Biology or Management
Gender	Equal numbers of males and females
Funding	Both government funded and self-funded
Period	Completion of PhD within the last five to ten years

Table 4.7: Inclusion criteria

Thus, participants were sought from specific universities, studying specific subjects, with certain divisions by gender, funding position and work experience. In attempting to recruit participants who met these criteria, the students were accessed via the Saudi Student Society, which was contacted to advertise the research to the relevant groups and provide the researcher's contact details to potential participants. The Saudi Student Society is a community which was established with approval from the Saudi Embassy. There is one Saudi Society in each UK city which provides support, guidance and activities for Saudi students studying within UK higher education institutions (UK Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau [UKSACB], 2019). The Saudi Society also provided contacts to other potential participants in Saudi universities, not just the UK sample. Professionals and representatives who work with or support international students, as well as careers officers, were also contacted to request relevant information and to establish initial links and contacts to find potential participants for the research. This then led to snowball sampling where the rest of the participants were recruited through the initial participant and their wider networks. On completion of this stage of the fieldwork, a table was produced outlining the key characteristics of the sample (see Chapter Five, section 5.2).

4.5.3 Number of participants

In terms of the number of participants included in the current study, whilst it is generally advised that data collection should continue until data saturation has occurred, it is also suggested that an estimated number of participants at which data saturation might occur is necessary at the initial stages of the research. This is "…the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to the codebook" (Guest *et al.*, 2006: 65). Fusch and Ness (2015: 1413) state that:

> Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study…, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained…, and when further coding is no longer feasible.

As all research designs and methods differ, it is the responsibility of the researcher to identify when data saturation will be achieved and to be explicit in identifying this.

It is generally accepted that within qualitative studies, smaller samples are sufficient, with many adhering to samples of under 50 (Mason, 2010). As Ritchie *et al.* (2003: 84) explain, this is because if the sample sizes become much larger than this, then they may be "…difficult to manage in terms of the quality of data collection and analysis that can be achieved". In Guest *et al.*'s (2006) study, which explored the appropriate number of participants before data saturation is achieved for research which applies semi-structured interviews, it was suggested that smaller sample sizes of around twelve participants could be sufficient (although if more interested in high-level themes, then six could also be appropriate). Three important considerations were highlighted, however, including interview structure, content, and participant homogeneity. In terms of structure, asking the same questions to multiple participants is important in relation to achieving data saturation and avoiding a constantly moving target, the semi-structured interview adopted in the current research was consistent in terms of the questions asked. In terms of content:

> If the goal is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve will likely be sufficient…But if one wishes to determine how two or more groups differ along a given dimension, then you would likely use a stratified sample of some sort (e.g., a quota sample) and might purposively select twelve participants per group of interest (Guest *et al.*, 2006: 76).

On this basis, in the current research, it might be assumed that twelve participants for each group within the study would be sufficient, for example, twelve graduates in Biology and twelve graduates in Management who studied in the UK (with six males and six females in each subject, again resulting in twelve of each gender who studied in the UK), and twelve graduates in Biology and twelve in Management who studied in Saudi Arabia (with the same gender mix as the UK sample). In terms of homogeneity, Guest *et al.* (2006: 76) explain that:

> We assume a certain degree of participant homogeneity because in purposive samples, participants are, by definition, chosen according to some common criteria. The more similar participants in a sample are in their experiences with respect to the research domain, the sooner we would expect to reach saturation.

It is therefore proposed that six males and six females within each group would be the ideal. This provided a target number of 48 participants, which the researcher achieved in the study (see Figure 4.3 below).

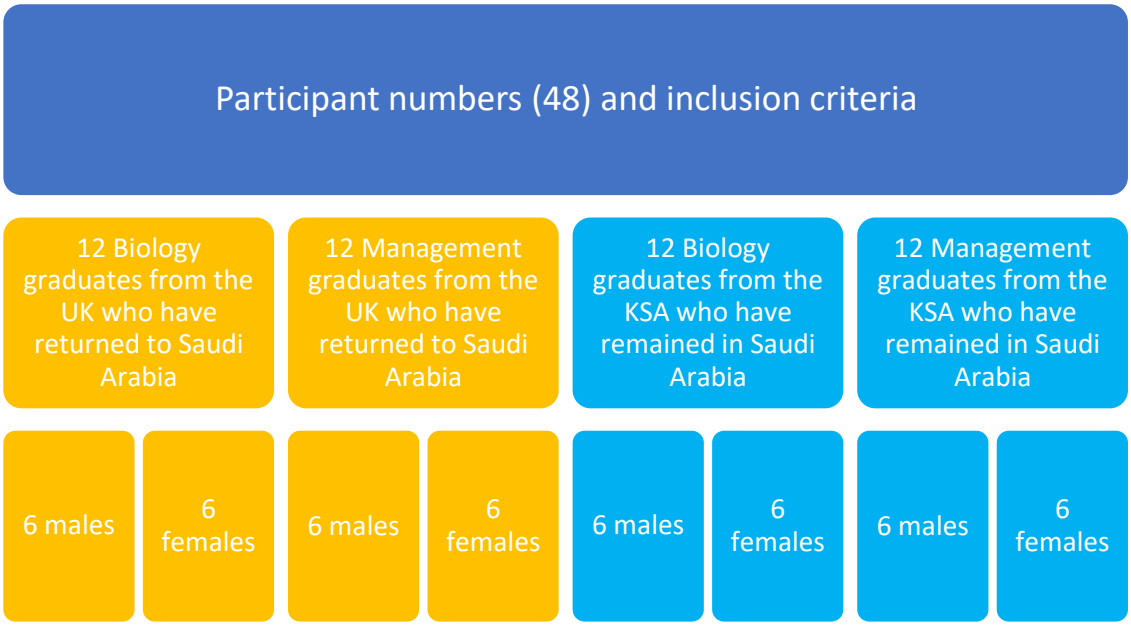

Figure 4.3: Number of participants and inclusion criteria

4.6 Pilot study

Conducting pilot studies is often considered a crucial element of social research (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003). It has been argued that pilot research should be considered a vital part of all studies, where the pilot process, the results and the improvements made are all reported in the final study, in order to demonstrate the enhanced quality of the research and open the methods up to scrutiny. As van Teijlinge and Hundley (2001: unpaged) explain, "…researchers have an ethical obligation to make the best use of their research experience by reporting issues arising from all parts of the study, including the pilot phase". On the other hand, some have argued that within qualitative research, because of the flexibility of the methods used, the researcher can respond and prompt based on the answers of participants and therefore, it may not be necessary to pilot at all (see Ismail *et al.,* 2017). Nonetheless, there are many reasons for conducting pilot research, but one of the key motivations for pilot studies is the need to trial or test

methods (van Teijlinge and Hundley, 2001) and assess time and resources required for the final study (Ismail *et al.,* 2017). It has also been argued that piloting can provide more accurate and focused findings and assist the researcher in assessing the feasibility of the study (*Ibid*.). Pilot studies can also be useful for identifying potential practical issues within research. It is worth noting that:

> A common problem is the inclusion of pilot study participants in the site(s) of the main study. Here the concern is that such participants have already been exposed to an intervention and, therefore, may respond differently from those who have not previously experienced it (van Teijlinge and Hundley, 2001: unpaged).

It is argued, however, that this tends to be less of a concern in qualitative studies, where researchers may also use the data from the pilot study in the main data set. Despite some debate surrounding the value of pilot research in qualitative studies, based on the many benefits discussed above, it was felt that in the current study, the ability to test the data generation tools and develop initial contacts would prove beneficial prior to conducting the main fieldwork.

Piloting the interview guide was a significant stage in the current study, for example, and as Arthur and Nazroo (2003: 135) explain "it is important to review whether it allows participants to give a full and coherent account of the central issues and incorporate issues they think are important". This is also an important exercise for testing the effectiveness of the questions (Oppenheim, 1992) and ensuring that the order and wording of the questions is logical and clear (Creswell, 2005). The interview schedule was therefore piloted with two contacts already known to the researcher prior to the interviews taking place, to test the questions and flow of the interviews. These pilot interviewees did not fit all of the study sample criteria (in terms of subject, for instance) and were therefore not included in the final sample, but rather were simply used to inform the interview process. The pilot study participants were made aware of this prior to the interviews. The participants for these pilot interviews were also asked about the clarity and relevance of the questions used, and any suggestions that they might have for further topics or questions. Consequently, some changes were made to the initial order of the questions, to the wording of the questions and the topics covered. The pilot study also provided the researcher with the opportunity to test the clarity of the consent form and ensure that all participants were satisfied with its content and the way that it was presented. Pilot interviewees, for example, were asked about the wording of the consent form and whether or not the material was clear and understandable.

4.7 Transcription and data analysis

The research adopted thematic analysis, in order to identify common themes in the employment and career outcomes of the graduates, and to assess the effectiveness of existing conceptual tools in fully explaining the relationship between culture and capital. The analysis of qualitative interview data can be a lengthy process, particularly as large amounts of data are often generated during this method, but it is also crucial that researchers approach this stage cautiously, as it affects "not only the quality of an interview, but the validity [and] reliability of the whole research" (Alshenqeeti, 2014: 41). The research adopted the approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) in relation to thematic analysis, which involves six key steps, also informed by the critical realist approach to analysis. Data analysis based on a critical realist ontology requires the search for demi-regularities or 'rough trends' (see earlier in section 4.2.2), which are identified through qualitative coding. This begins with data processing which "…is important in qualitative research, including CR, for which it provides insight into empirical demi-regularities and represents the beginning of abduction and retroduction" (Fletcher, 2017: 185). The CR approach emphasises the importance of the use of theories to identify the causal mechanisms which influence social events and behaviours and thus assist in analysing social problems. It should be asserted that whilst theory is important here, it is also regarded simply as a starting point (Bhaskar, 1979) and thus is considered flexible or conditional, or as initial theory (Fletcher, 2017). In the current study, cultural capital, global cultural and social capital and ideas surrounding positional competition were important for informing the analysis, although the researcher was prepared to reject or modify these based on the findings.

Following the completion of the interviews, the researcher listened to each interview in order to enhance familiarity with the participants' narratives, and to facilitate understanding of the experiences, thoughts and opinions that they share with the researcher (Creswell, 2005). The interviews were then transcribed in Arabic using Microsoft Word, and checked against the audio recordings for accuracy, before translating the Arabic transcript into English. The transcripts were read and re-read in order to enhance familiarity with the data. This is the first step of thematic analysis promoted by Braun and Clarke (2006). Step two involves the generation of initial codes, where meaningful parts of the data are highlighted by the researcher. This is the stage in critical realist analysis involving the identification of demi-regularities or rough trends. A flexible deductive approach was adopted here, where provisional codes were initially drawn from the literature review, theory and CR, but later changed, developed and

adapted during the analysis process. In terms of motivations for a PhD, for instance, several initial codes were drawn up, including: improvement of career prospects, professional advancement, pursuit of new adventures, experiencing new cultures, being part of education in different international contexts, participating in opportunities arising from governments, family and friends encouragement, desire to contribute to the field and lecturer influence. These were later modified following the research findings to include: better employment opportunities, requirement of employment, personal passion for education/ambition, achievement of highest qualification, opportunity to continue, to serve or develop my country and parental encouragement. This stage therefore drew on existing literature and the theoretical framework for the study and numerous codes were generated in these initial stages, before these were collated to develop overarching themes for the third stage of thematic analysis; searching for themes (*Ibid.*). In terms of the aforementioned motivations, for instance, codes were collated into three themes of 'professional', 'intellectual', and 'institutional and cultural' motivations. The themes were compared across all interviews and notes made of any more individual issues that emerged, which were used to go back through the interviews.

Step four involved reviewing themes, where themes were refined, developed or discarded, before step five, where themes were named and defined and subthemes identified. Also important in the use of critical realism as a framework is the process of abduction or theoretical redescription (Fletcher, 2017), whereby the researcher interprets the results through reference to the key theoretical concepts. When assessing the value of the PhD, for example, and the international PhD in particular, participants mentioned the acquisition of the qualification, the skills and knowledge gained, the use of a second language, development of networks and so on. These were important for indicating the 'real' or the ways in which the individuals perceived the value of the PhD, but engagement with existing theory around global and social cultural capital enabled the researcher to distinguish between different forms of cultural capital and ascertain the most valuable forms of cultural and social capital in relation to the labour market. Quantification of the qualitative data at this stage allowed the identification of the most common responses and assisted in the process of identifying patterns here, such as the significance of GICC and GECC, and the seeming lack of evidence of the importance of GOCC, although this numerical data did not detract from the value given to the content and description in responses (see below for further comment on the use of numerical data in qualitative data analysis).

Retroduction is the final important stage within critical realist analysis and here the focus is on causal mechanisms and the contexts in which they operate. In terms of motivations

behind PhD study, for example, demi-regularities included the graduates' motivations and as touched on above, these were then grouped into three key themes. Looking further at these, however, the importance of both agency and structure were identified, with particular motivations appearing initially to indicate agentic processes, but further investigation outlining the significance of structural processes here (see section 5.3.5). Furthermore, looking at the value of the PhD, many graduates cited the importance of the different gains to be made, but further exploration highlighted important causal mechanisms such as the reputation of the institution or the international/national status of the PhD, which impacted on the perceived value of the qualification in relation to the labour market. Context was also shown to be significant during this stage of the analysis, with the perceived value of the PhD being affected by different employment contexts, with distinctions evident between public and private sectors. This latter stage in the analysis demonstrated the importance of using global cultural capital to explain the perceived value of the international PhD in the Saudi labour market and underlined the importance of global social capital here too. In addition, CR's distinction between agency and structure enabled these concepts to be explored in further depth. In the current study, structural processes were shown to be especially important in understanding the motivations behind PhD study and its perceived value and helped to understand agency in relation to causal mechanisms.

Finally, step six involved producing the report, where findings from the analysis were presented, with consideration of themes, research questions and literature. Whilst the use of data analysis package NVIVO was considered, manual thematic analysis was used in practice, as this ensured greater familiarity with the data. It is important to mention the use of numerical data in the qualitative data analysis for the study. The use of quantification within qualitative research has been the subject of much debate, with questions raised around the accuracy of distinctions made between quantitative and qualitative research relying on the use of numerical data (Maxwell, 2010). In the current study, use of numerical data was employed to give greater clarity and precision when documenting the findings, allowing the researcher to identify whether responses were received from the 'majority' of participants, or just 'some' or 'a few', thus employing 'quasi statistics' or making quantitative claims in written form (Becker, 1970). Thus, the intention was to be able to describe "…the occurrence and distribution of the claim or action in that setting or set of individuals" (Maxwell, 2010: 478), to present evidence for interpretations made or to identify patterns (Sandelowski, 2001), as indicated above. It is important to assert that the researcher was aware of the limitations of using numerical data and did not consider such data suitable in establishing causal connections, which might be adopted in more quantitative research (Maxwell, 2010), whilst also being aware

that the use of such data could not be used to make claims as to the generalisability of the findings, or to give precedence to the amount of evidence at the expense of the description or content of responses (*Ibid.*).

4.8 Ethical considerations

Adherence to the University of Cardiff ethical guidelines, and clearance through the ethics committee was sought prior to the research (see Ethical Concerns Form, Appendix Three). Ethical considerations were therefore addressed in the planning of each stage of the research, and research commenced once clearance had been obtained. Attention to the British Sociological Association's (BSA) (2017) statement of ethical practice was important, for as the BSA (2017: 4) states:

> Sociologists have a responsibility both to safeguard the proper interests of those involved in or affected by their work, and to share their analyses/report their findings accurately and truthfully. They need to consider the effects of their involvements and the consequences of their work or its misuse for those they study and other interested parties.

Thus, the BSA guidelines were adhered to, with special consideration given to ensuring the safety of the participants, as well as confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection, and gaining informed consent. In terms of ensuring safety, for instance, there were no anticipated risks to the participants taking part in the research in a physical sense. The researcher planned that should interviewees reveal any sensitive information to the researcher - for instance, the fact that they have not fulfilled the requirements of the scholarship that they received - the use of this information in the thesis would be discussed with the participant. This did not arise as an issue in any of the interviews. Whilst all personal information on the participants would be concealed, permission to use this type of data was sought if necessary. Whilst there was an emotional risk to participation in the research in the sense that participants may share sensitive or upsetting issues, they were reassured that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not wish to and could withdraw from the research at any time. There were also additional conditions which would require disclosure that the researcher had to consider prior to the fieldwork. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018: 25-6), for instance, explains that:

> If behaviour reported by participants is likely to be harmful to the participants or to others, the researchers must also consider disclosure. In some cases, such

> as revelations of abuse or proposed acts of terror, researchers may be under statutory duty to disclose confidential information to relevant authorities, and they must be aware of these responsibilities.

Furthermore, in line with the UK Government's Prevent Duty strategy, the researcher would be required to report expressions of extremism (Gov.uk, 2019). In such situations, it was planned that advice would be sought from relevant authorities before informing the participant of the need to disclose such information, if necessary. Participants were informed prior to the interview, through the information sheet, that disclosure of particular information to relevant authorities may be necessary (such as illegal activity) (see Appendix One). This did not arise as necessary, however, in any of the interviews.

In line with BSA guidelines governing anonymity and confidentiality, participants were provided with information on the extent to which their data would be kept anonymous and confidential and to what extent, if any, they would have the right to view and/or modify interview transcripts and fieldnotes. They were also told of their right to reject the use of audio recording devices. Anonymity was preserved through the use of pseudonyms to protect participants' identity (see Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010) and through concealing any identifying information (BSA, 2017). The participants were informed that they would be able to view the transcripts following the interview, to check their responses had been accurately recorded and portrayed. It was necessary to follow the relevant data storage and protection rules provided in the UK Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998, and in the recent General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, for as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (2019: 1) explains "Researchers should be aware that the processing of any information relating to an identifiable living individual constitutes 'personal data processing'". Data has been stored, therefore, on the University network, ensuring appropriate security measures are in place to protect data, particularly as security on this source is regularly reviewed (and internet security updated) (ESRC, 2019). Data will also be kept for the required amount of time (six years) on completion of the study before being destroyed (Gov.uk, 2018). Only the researcher has access to the initial pre-anonymised recordings and data.

Informed consent was sought from the participants. This "implies a responsibility to explain fully and meaningfully what the research is about and how it will be disseminated" (Corti *et al.*, 2000: 3). The participants were provided with a consent form prior to the interview, which was written in both Arabic and English (see Appendix 1 for the English version of the Information Sheet and Consent Form). This explained to the participants the purpose of the study, as well as their rights, such as the voluntary basis of their

participation and their right to withdraw from the research at any time (BSA, 2017). They were also informed about the dissemination of the findings. They were asked to read and sign the forms electronically before beginning the interviews, or to give verbal consent which was recorded. It was also planned that permissions would be secured from institutions employing the Saudi PhD graduates, if participation in the study was dependent upon their consent, but this was not necessary in the current study.

4.9 Dissemination of the findings

It has been important to consider the dissemination of the research findings in terms of the audience. It is likely that the work will be disseminated in a variety of forms, in addition to the final thesis, in order to meet different audience needs. This might include, for example, specific summary reports for the research participants, if they wish to be informed of the findings, as well as summary reports for relevant parties, such as the Saudi Embassy, Saudi Student Society and universities. It is also expected that sources will be produced for academic audiences, in order to contribute to academic insights in the field and facilitate further developments in research into employment outcomes and the experiences of Saudi and other international students. It will be important to produce academic articles of a high standard which can be submitted to peer-reviewed journals, as these are considered to be key sources of scholarly evidence (Guetterman, 2015), which will enhance the ascribed validity and reliability of my research.

4.10 Summary

This research aimed to address an important gap in the current literature on international student mobility, by exploring the employment outcomes, experiences and perspectives of two specific groups of Saudi PhD graduates; individuals who had studied international PhDs at UK institutions and returned to Saudi Arabia for employment and individuals who remained in Saudi Arabia for PhD study and employment. This chapter has outlined the research perspective and strategy for the study, and has shown how the critical realist ontology and epistemology played an important role here in exploring the realities and mechanisms at work within doctoral students' labour market experiences following their PhDs. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews, the research examined the insights and perceptions of the graduates themselves, in relation to the impact and perceived value of international and national doctorate degrees on the career trajectories and outcomes of Saudi doctoral students. The chapter has discussed the strategies used for generating and analysing data, and justified the important considerations made

with regards to the method, sample and ethical concerns. The next chapter will present the findings from this research.

Chapter Five:

Graduate perceptions of the value of the PhD in relation to labour market opportunities

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the first insights into the findings of the study, drawing on themes that emerged regarding graduate perceptions of the value of the PhD in the Saudi labour market. The intention was to explore how graduates perceived the PhD prior to its commencement, in terms of what they hoped to achieve, as well as how they viewed it upon completion, with respect to what they felt they had gained, particularly in terms of employment and career outcomes. This chapter therefore sought to explore how Saudi doctoral graduates viewed the PhD in relation to their labour market preferences and perceived positioning, and how those views had evolved since their graduation. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the characteristics of the sample. The next section examines the motivations behind the graduates' decision to educate themselves to PhD level. This is followed by an analysis of three aspects related to employment outcomes: the length of the job seeking process, the occupations held and the career trajectories of the participants. Graduate perceptions of the value of the PhD in relation to the labour market are then explored. The chapter draws on perceptions of the PhD in general here, with differences between the national and international doctoral qualification being examined in the following chapter. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the core insights offered and the contributions made to the field.

5.2 Sample characteristics

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the study involved 48 participants, 24 of whom graduated in the UK, and 24 who graduated in Saudi Arabia. Table 5.1 below provides further details on each of the participants, including names (changed to ensure anonymity), gender, age bracket, country of study, subject of study and current occupation. It is worth noting the distinctions within the academic profession in Saudi Arabia in relation to the latter category, which begins with teaching assistant (with a Bachelor's degree), and then progresses to lecturer (after the Master's degree), to Assistant Professor (with a doctoral qualification), to Associate Professor, and finally Full Professor (following research and publications).

	Participant	G	Age	Coun.	Subject	Occupation
1	Nasar	M	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
2	Matab	M	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
3	Ali	M	31-40	UK	Management	Associate Professor
4	Ibrahim	M	31-40	UK	Management	Associate Professor
5	Bender	M	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
6	Omar	M	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
7	Bashara	F	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
8	Ashwaq	F	31-40	UK	Management	Deputy manager in Financing company
9	Hannah	F	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Manager - Insurance Co.
10	Nasreen	F	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
11	Khalood	F	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
12	Habah	F	31-40	UK	Management	Assistant Professor
13	Suliman	M	31-40	UK	Biology	Assistant Professor
14	Marad	M	31-40	UK	Biology	Associate Professor Head of Dept
15	Said	M	31-40	UK	Biology	Assistant Professor
16	Sami	M	31-40	UK	Biology	Assistant Professor
17	Michel	M	31-40	UK	Biology	Head of blood test lab in private hospital
18	Adam	M	31-40	UK	Biology	Assistant Professor
19	Houd	F	31-40	UK	Biology	Associate Professor
20	Amal	F	31-40	UK	Biology	Lab Technician in Hospital
21	Ala	F	31-40	UK	Biology	Researcher in Research Centre
22	Nabeela	F	31-40	UK	Biology	Assistant Professor - Head of Dept
23	Iptisam	F	31-40	UK	Biology	Assistant Professor - Head of College
24	Afnan	F	31-40	UK	Biology	Associate Professor - Deputy Head
25	Mohammed	M	31-40	Saudi	Management	Associate Professor
26	Abdulaziz	M	31-40	Saudi	Management	Manager in a company
27	Asam	M	31-40	Saudi	Management	School teacher
28	Ahmed	M	41-50	Saudi	Management	Teacher
29	Turkey	M	31-40	Saudi	Management	Head of Department in a school
30	Amen	M	31-40	Saudi	Management	Head of Supervision in a school
31	Sara	F	31-40	Saudi	Management	Assistant Professor
32	Asil	F	31-40	Saudi	Management	Assistant Professor
33	Areej	F	31-40	Saudi	Management	Assistant Professor
34	Manal	F	41-50	Saudi	Management	Teacher in private school
35	Laila	F	31-40	Saudi	Management	Assistant Professor
36	Maha	F	31-40	Saudi	Management	Head of College (Associate Professor)
37	Waleed	M	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Lab technician in State sector
38	Mousa	M	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Doctor in hospital (blood taking)
39	Hassan	M	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Lab technician in private sector hospital
40	Eman	M	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Assistant Professor
41	Jamil	M	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Assistant Professor
42	Samir	M	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Assistant Professor
43	Fatimah	F	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Assistant Professor
44	Nora	F	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Assistant Professor
45	Sumaya	F	41-50	Saudi	Biology	Head of Dept (Associate Professor)
46	Anood	F	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Assistant Professor
47	Reem	F	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Assistant Professor
48	Hind	F	31-40	Saudi	Biology	Head of Dept (Associate Professor)

Table 5.1: Sample characteristics

As Table 5.1 shows, the sample included 24 males and 24 females, with an even number of participants from Biology and Management. There was also some diversity in the sample in terms of marital status and dependants, with both married and single individuals, and those with children or without. Thirty-eight of the participants were married with children, whilst ten were single with no children. Participants were mostly

aged within the 31-40 age bracket, although three of the participants were aged 41-50. Furthermore, whilst the majority of participants now work in the public sector, as will be discussed further below, a larger proportion of the participants had been employed in the private sector at some point prior to the PhD. Twenty-nine had worked in the private sector, for example, fourteen in the public sector, and five had been unemployed. Thus, there was some diversity in the sample in terms of family and professional backgrounds.

5.3 Graduate motivations for PhD study

Research question one aimed to determine the perceptions of the graduates in relation to the PhD and their labour market preferences and positioning. Towards the beginning of the interviews, the participants were therefore asked about their motivations for doing the PhD. Through exploring initial motivations for the PhD, and how those related to their employment, the intention was to learn more about the role of agency - through the decisions and choices made - as well as the structural factors which may have impacted on these decisions. Motivation, as Wiegerováa (2016: 126) explains, predominantly refers to "a set of internal and external factors that influence our decision or behaviour". Chapter Three examined motivations behind international study and underlined the significance of employment, career and professional development in decisions (Almotery, 2009; Brooks and Waters, 2010; British Council, 2015; Nghia, 2015; Packwood *et al.*, 2015; King and Songhi, 2017) as well as personal experiences (Maringe and Carter, 2007; Packwood *et al.*, 2015; Safakli and Ihemejee, 2015; Chao *et al.,* 2017), but it was considered important here to look at motivations behind doctoral study specifically.

Previous research shows that there are several key motivations for PhD study, both intrinsic and extrinsic (Brailsford, 2010; Moreno and Kollanus, 2013; Guerin *et al.*, 2015; Yang *et al.,* 2017) (see Chapter Three) and this was evident in the responses of participants in the current study. The responses from participants in the current study indicated several key motivations which included a personal drive or passion for education and the PhD being a requirement of their job. These received the same number of responses (some participants offered both as a motivation). One is an employment requirement and therefore might be considered a structural factor or extrinsic motivation, whereas the other reflects an intrinsic motivation. Additional responses included: to improve employment opportunities; to take advantage of the opportunity that arose to continue with the PhD; to achieve the highest qualification possible; to develop professional skills; to help serve or develop their country and finally,

because of parental encouragement. The numbers of participants that provided these reasonings are shown in Table 5.2.

Motivation for doctoral study	Number of participants	UK graduates	Saudi graduates
Requirement of my job	28	15	13
Personal passion for education/ambition	28	17	11
Better employment opportunities	13	6	7
Opportunity became available to continue	6	5	1
To achieve highest qualification possible	4	2	2
To serve or develop my country	2	1	1
Parental encouragement	2	1	1
Total intrinsic	30	18	12
Total extrinsic	53	29	24

Table 5.2: Motivations for doctoral study

Influenced by previous research, the current study adopted a categorisation which considered extrinsic and intrinsic factors, and both microsocial and macrosocial influences, but these were grouped into three key areas: intellectual development, professional development and institutional and cultural factors.

5.3.1 Intellectual development

The passion for education, or strong ambition to be well-educated, which as mentioned above was the joint most popular motivation for the PhD, was discussed by 28 participants overall and was considered to be intrinsic in terms of pursuit of education for personal satisfaction or for education in itself. Looking at the characteristics of the participants who offered this justification for the PhD, there was a relatively even split between males and females, with fifteen males and thirteen females, suggesting little gender distinction here. The majority of the participants were working in academia (seventeen) and schools (five), which is perhaps to be expected where a passion for education is expressed. The other six participants were working in a state hospital (two), or in the private sector in either management (two) or a laboratory in a private hospital (two). It is worth noting that this motivation was only offered as a sole motivation by one participant, with the majority of participants mentioning it alongside employment-related justifications.

There was some indication that this motivation was more popular amongst the participants who had chosen to study in the UK (seventeen), than amongst those who stayed in Saudi Arabia (eleven). The Saudi participants who discussed this tended to talk about a lifelong passion for education, something which had stemmed from

childhood. For the UK participants, however, whilst this was also linked to a long-held passion for education in most cases, many also made links in their responses with international experiences, and the drive and desire to study in the place where education had an extensive history and was well established. This may indicate a distinction between those who choose to study abroad and those who remain in their home country, with more ambitious individuals selecting international education (for further discussion, see Chapter Six).

Partly related to passion for education was the response provided by four participants that they had wanted to achieve the highest qualification that they could, to take education as far as possible. Two participants stated, for example:

> When you earn a certificate in higher education, you achieve something very high. I wanted to be one of these people. I love education (Amen).

> … I always had the ambition to be educated as much as possible…I have always wanted to get the highest qualification that I can (Said).

This drive for intellectual development underlines the importance of agency, but also the significance of structural factors, such as family, in shaping motivations. The motivation for intellectual development, for instance, was often related to parental influence or encouragement. Whilst only Ahmed and Khalood discussed parental influence when asked specifically about the drive to do the PhD, with Ahmed explaining that his parents had encouraged all of their children to be as educated as possible, this theme appeared later on in many of the interviews, with parents playing a significant role in encouraging many more of the PhD graduates. Family support and encouragement in relation to education, for instance, was reported to be important in PhD study for nearly half of the sample (23 participants). This included fifteen females and eight males. One female participant, Sumaya stated that:

> We are ten girls, all of us educated. My Dad was the first one to support me, and he really cares about our education.

In addition, Adam explained that:

> Basically, I love to be educated because I come from a very educated family. So, I grew up with a love for education.

Support and encouragement also included financial support and participation in organised cultural and academic activities for some participants:

> I gained important principles from my Dad that human life, health and education all come first. My Dad paid for my education when I first came to the UK (Sami).

> My family knew how strong my interest was in this and the things they did really encouraged it – they would take me to museums, buy me books on Biology, and so I grew up with this (Amal).

> My mum reads a lot and she always encouraged us to be educated and to continue with our education. She recommended that all of us become independent, and always said to us, you need to be unique and to be careful that life does not stop you from developing yourselves. My Dad is a great example for me in this life, because I see that he develops himself all the time, and he has also developed us. When I came here, I didn't face challenges like others. I understood research, and my Dad taught me how to think critically. He asked about my opinion all the time and gave me the tools to get started with research. This gave me a passion for research, and also the tools, or skills to conduct research (Iptisam).

It might be suggested that family support and positive perceptions of education represent a form of habitus, and it is therefore valuable to determine whether this could be considered a social class issue. It might be, for instance, that whilst the PhD enhances individuals' cultural capital, many of those engaged in the PhD already had a certain level of embodied cultural capital, which had been transferred by their parents. This is explored below in section 5.3.4 on sources of motivations.

5.3.2 Professional development

In line with Moreno and Kollanus (2013), motivation related to professional development included several different but related extrinsic factors, and most significantly for the current study sample, these included employment opportunities where the PhD was related to an existing job or job offer and enhancing career prospects generally. As indicated in Table 5.2, the PhD being a requirement of employment was the joint most popular response to this question, playing a role for 28 participants. As Omar explained, this requirement had been made explicit during the job offer:

> …because I am working in academia, it is a condition of the job in academia that you continue with your studies. When I received my job offer, I had to sign in my contract that I would begin a PhD within three years of starting my job.

Furthermore, Nasar explained:

> Basically, I am working within an academic career, so I had to continue with my PhD anyway as part of my job, so that was the first thing that motivated me to do a PhD.

It is important to note that 27 of these 28 participants were working in academia, in a higher education institution in the public sector. The one participant who was not, Abdulaziz, was working in the private sector and had chosen to do the PhD in order to try to access employment in the public sector as he explained that a PhD would be the way to gain a job. His situation was therefore not the same as the other 27 who were required by their employers to do the PhD. Later on in the interviews, however, it emerged that all 35 of those working in academia had been required to do the PhD as part of their employment, but it may not have been expressed initially as the main driver behind their doing the PhD. Such a finding underlines the important role played by employers in decisions to engage in PhD study, but perhaps also demonstrates the culturally specific factors here. As Yakaboski *et al.*'s (2017) study on Saudi students' motivations to study abroad showed, student willingness to comply with such employer requirements may also reflect the collectivist nature of Saudi culture. Thus, there are potential culturally specific social processes which can impact on the decisions and actions of the graduates (although the implications of not doing as required by the employers, such as loss of job role, may also play a role here).

It is also worth noting that in addition to the 28 participants who had explicitly related the motivation to do the PhD to employment requirement, another thirteen participants mentioned other employment-related purposes (with the final seven not mentioning employment-related reasonings). These thirteen participants each discussed the desire to do the PhD in order to improve their future employment opportunities, career prospects or their economic position. As two participants explained:

> …undertaking a PhD will undoubtedly open many doors for me, especially in the management sector, and it will equip me with the necessary skills and attributes, such as writing and oral skills. Both of these are easily transferable and valued in other fields (Bashara).

> It was a personal decision to do the PhD as I wanted both a better income and a better life (Mousa).

As shown in Chapter Three, existing research has previously highlighted such motivations in relation to international and doctoral study, including career advancement and future employability, but what the current research also shows is that this drive, within this study's sample, is most specifically targeted at a particular sector of employment; the public sector, and especially academia. Fatimah, for example, stated that:

> Basically, I was working in the private sector in a private school as a teacher, but I was keen to move into a different job and aimed to work in the public sector instead. I knew that in order to do this, I would need a PhD. Learning has always been a passion of mine anyway, so this is something that I have wanted to do for some time.

This desire to work in a university was sometimes linked to a passion for education or research. Houd stated that:

> I was working in the hospital after I finished my BA, and whilst I was working there, I completed my MA too. I asked the hospital to help fund a PhD, but they could not, and I faced difficulties finding funding elsewhere. So, after eight years working in the hospital, I decided to change my career path and aim to work within a university instead. I have always loved research, so this seemed like the right choice. I managed to find one university who would accept me, but they told me that if I wanted the position, I would need to complete a PhD. This would be funded by them. This was great news for me, because universities want you to have a PhD, so I saw this as a good opportunity to apply and start working in academia.

It may also be, as discussed below, that the conditions afforded by academia (such as secure employment, equal pay and perception of good work-life balance) also played a role here. Thus, underlying motivations relating to employment were not always straightforward and could involve a combination of different drivers, including both intellectual and professional development.

5.3.3 Institutional and cultural factors

Cited by six participants as a key motivation for doing the PhD, was the decision to take the opportunity that had become available to them. It is worth noting that five of the participants who discussed this had studied in the UK and thus for them, the 'opportunity' was also linked to the scholarship. As two of the participants explained:

> My Dad got a BA but he had a chance to do the MA and then couldn't. So, he really encouraged me when he knew I had the chance of the scholarship and told me not to pass up the opportunity (Khalood).

> …the scholarship was a golden opportunity for me, and I had to take it (Nabeela).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Saudi Arabia has a strong scholarship system in place, with both employer scholarships and government scholarships. Scholarships therefore play an important role in graduate decisions and opportunities to engage in PhD study, specifically on an international level. It is important to note, however, that whilst the scholarship may be considered an opportunity to be taken, it may also be viewed as something which is necessary – as part of employer or government requirements to do the PhD – which drives the student. Thus, scholarships are useful for emphasising the importance of considering the combined effects of both agency and structure in individual actions.

The desire to serve the country through the PhD, and thus to return with the skills and knowledge to assist in the development of the economy or the higher education sector specifically, was a cultural factor that was discussed by two participants. Waleed, for instance, stated that he was keen to help develop his country. In addition, Omar explained that:

> I would like to help Saudi society and also the students, and to spread the knowledge I have gained as much as I can. I want to help the country and the education system.

Whilst only two participants mentioned this factor in terms of their motivation to do the PhD, it is worth noting that the desire to improve the country through their PhD also featured in many later responses to different questions. The intention to assist in the development of the country appears to support Saudi Arabia's goal to grow and strengthen the economy through international education and the advancement of

education in the country, particularly in relation to Vision 2030 (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2019; Alfalih, 2016; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017), as mentioned in Chapter Two. This particular motivation seems to indicate a culturally specific explanation for the PhD, underlining the importance of Saudi culture for the participants, and perhaps again emphasising the potential impact of the collectivist culture (see Yakaboski *et al.*, 2017) on graduate decisions.

5.3.4 Sources of motivations

As discussed earlier, in section 5.3.1, in order to determine whether or not the PhD graduates in the study sample already had a certain level of embodied cultural capital which had been transferred by their parents, the socioeconomic position of the participants was explored. Whilst it was not possible to develop a classification of socioeconomic position based on parent income (as the data was not collected), the research did examine socioeconomic position based on parental occupation and level of education. Occupation level was explored using the NS-SEC UK occupation classification as a framework (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2010). The NS-SEC is a sociological classification system which was developed to combine previous occupation and socio-economic group classifications and is based upon the Goldthorpe Schema (see Goldthorpe, 2007) because of its international applicability and acceptance, but this has been further updated to provide a more thorough classification system (see ONS, 2010). Due to its clarity, this was applied in the current research (using Table 8 NS-SEC based on SOC2010 simplified and full derivation table: analytic classes, see Appendix Four) to determine socioeconomic position. The analytic classes consider labour market position and economic status. Whilst housewives were classified as analytic class number 8 (never worked and long-term unemployed), where they had previously worked, their previous occupation was used. The occupational class of the parent with the highest position in the household was used.

The majority of the participants were found to be from middle and higher socioeconomic classes, classified as analytic classes 2 and above. Of these, 20 were from the highest occupational classes (1.1 and 1.2), thirteen of whom were Saudi graduates, and seven who were UK graduates. There were also 23 from the next highest occupational class (2), thirteen UK graduates and ten Saudi graduates (see Table 5.3 below).

Occupational class	1.1	1.2	2	3	6
UK graduates		7	13	2	2
Saudi graduates	2	11	10	1	
Total	2	18	23	3	2

Table 5.3: Occupational class by parent with the highest position in the household

Also of note was that of the 48 families, 32 had both parents working within the above classes (with the other sixteen participants being from families where their mothers were classified by the participants as 'housewives'. Such findings perhaps support Bourdieu's (1986) claims with regard to the reproduction of existing class relations through education. Three participants, however, were from households where the analytic class was 3 (two UK and one Saudi graduate), and two were from analytic class 6 (both UK graduates). It is worth mentioning that there were no participants from groups four and five, or lower, so these classes are omitted from the table. Interestingly, the majority of the latter categories (four out of five) were international students, which might indicate that it is not only the highest classes whose children study abroad. Cultural capital presents in different ways and it is therefore necessary to look at other factors, such as education level of parents.

In terms of education, as might be expected from the perspective of Bourdieu's cultural capital, the majority of the sample were from educated families, with 36 participants having at least one parent educated to degree level or above (see Table 5.4 below). Of the lower occupational class families, only one was from a family where both parents also had the lowest level of education, further indicating the importance of educational level in the transmission of cultural capital.

	UK graduates	Saudi graduates	Total
Both parents secondary level	3	9	12
One parent secondary, one parent BA or above	7	3	10
Both parents educated to BA level	7	8	15
Both parents BA level, & 1 parent above BA	4	1	5
Both parents above BA level (MA or PhD)	3	3	6

Table 5.4: Educational level of graduates' parents

Of the 36 more educated families, ten had one parent educated to degree level and one secondary, 26 had both parents educated to at least degree level (with six of the latter having both parents educated above degree level, and four having at least one parent with a PhD). It is interesting to note that of these, four were from families where the mother was educated to a higher level than the father, which might suggest important

female role models here. There is some support here for previous research which has shown that educated mothers can play an important role in influencing their children, particularly daughters, to engage in higher study, and especially abroad (Val Mol, 2021). Importantly, twelve participants - or one quarter of the sample - were from families with both parents educated to just secondary level. This might suggest, then, that it is not just educated families who transmit cultural capital to their children (see also Yang *et al.*, 2017 below), and that children from less educated families also pursue high-level education such as PhDs. It is worth noting, however, that in 75 per cent of these households (nine), the graduates had studied in their home country, with only three of the participants in this group studying abroad. This might suggest that international education is more likely amongst more educated families (see also Souto-Otero, 2008 on the importance of education over income differences).

As mentioned above, positive perceptions of education and support from families can be an important influence on PhD graduates and this may represent a form of cultural capital, even where parents are not educated to a high level. For Hassan, for instance, whilst his mother was educated to just secondary level, he explained that his desire to do the PhD had come from his mother's encouragement:

> My Mum always encouraged me, she always said that she hoped one day I would be a doctor. I achieved my Mum's dream.

A similar finding in relation to family support for education was evident in the work of Yang *et al.* (2017: 12) on Chinese postgraduates who found that a third of their participants were from low socio-economic backgrounds and subsequently argued that:

> … the strength of benevolent support of parents, even if they were poor and illiterate, were among some of the most important factors in shaping students' self-confidence. When further equipped with access to a variety of scholarships, students with academic aptitude and strong motivations appeared to be able to open the door towards study abroad for higher degrees.

What this suggests is that for the majority of the participants in the sample, there was evidence of high occupational class and high level of education amongst the families, which might indicate that the lived disposition of habitus, and indeed cultural capital, are transferred from parent to child, and reflected in educational attainment and academic success. This supports the work of Bourdieu and his claims about the relationship between cultural capital and educational success. It is important to mention here,

however, is that there were graduates from lower class families within the sample. Furthermore, a quarter of the participants were from the less educated, suggesting that having children engaging in PhD study is not just the domain of more educated families (see Table 5.4). In terms of international education, whilst Holloway *et al.* (2012) suggest that middle class families may use international study more frequently to place themselves in a more favourable position in the labour market, in the current study, those participants from the lower classes were also engaged in international education. In fact, the majority of participants from the lower classes were international graduates (four out of the five) (see Table 5.3). This therefore demonstrates some potential contrast with Bourdieu's (1986) claims. There was some suggestion, however, that the less educated were within higher classes (all were from higher class occupations, such as occupational class 1.2 and 2 apart from one in class 3), and those in lower classes were often highly educated. It may be, then, that PhD study is more likely within households which have at least one of these characteristics. Thus, having either high education level or being of a high socio-economic position alone may be enough for the transfer of cultural capital from parents to children, and therefore, Bourdieu's claims retain their relevance. There are some resemblances here with the work of Pasztor (2015) discussed in Chapter Three on the ways in which different forms of capital affect access to international education, with not all middle-class families coming with the 'full package', thus a family may have either economic capital or cultural or social capital, but education may be used to gain these.

5.3.5 Exploring motivational factors

The findings indicate variation in the participants' initial motivations for the PhD, but with some overlap, multiple reasonings, and for the majority of participants, strong links either to perceived employment outcomes or expectations and/or to a passion and enthusiasm for education. The role of self-selection amongst the participants who took part in the study in explaining these findings needs to be considered as those coming forward to take part perhaps were largely high achievers in relation to education and employment. Nonetheless, there is some support for existing literature which demonstrates a relationship between pursuit of the PhD and the perceived advancement of employment opportunities, with the current findings indicating that employment outcome was a key consideration for the participants in the current study. Furthermore, whilst this section has touched on the motivations expressed behind doing a PhD amongst the whole sample of participants in this study, it is important to note that additional motivations were expressed in relation to the drive to do the international PhD specifically. Important insights were presented here in relation to motivations such as the desire to experience

a different culture, to understand different education systems and to travel and learn English. As these motivations provide further understanding of the perceived distinction between the international and the national doctoral qualification, they are discussed further in Chapter Six.

What the findings also indicate is that decisions and motivations for PhD study are complex, with both agency and structure playing important roles here. Intellectual development motivations appeared to demonstrate the importance of agency, but when examined further, it was clear that structural factors had an effect, such as the influence of family and availability of funding schemes supporting PhD studies. Furthermore, motivations related to professional development underline the economic factors which influence individuals. The significance of considering culturally specific processes has also been highlighted, and as shown, it may be that graduates were impacted in their decisions to do the PhD not just by intellectual or professional factors, but also by cultural factors such as collectivist culture, or by governmental and employer influences and requirements.

5.4 Employment

As research question one aimed to examine labour market preferences and perceived positioning, and how those views may have changed since graduation, it was important to ascertain the extent to which the employment-related motivations behind participants' doing the PhD had been borne out in practice or had been met in reality. Whilst the motivations and actions of the graduates in shaping their employment outcomes is important, for instance, exploration of the underlying structures (including economic, political and cultural structures) which may have impacted on the decisions or the outcomes of the graduates (Afiouni, 2014; Alfalih, 2016; Fletcher, 2017) was also important. This involved looking at scholarships, the job seeking process, occupations held and career trajectories.

5.4.1 Scholarships

Of the 31 participants who had been in their jobs prior to the PhDs, fourteen travelled to the UK on employer scholarships and thirteen carried out their PhDs in Saudi Arabia (where no additional financial provision is provided). These participants were required by their employers (all in academia) to do the PhD. An additional four teachers (who did their PhDs in Saudi Arabia) sought permission from their employers to do the PhDs whilst working. Thus, for these 31 participants, there was no gap between study and

employment, and all had the security of their role. All but one also received a promotion upon completion of their PhD. It is important to note that whilst the participants who studied in Saudi Arabia were not in receipt of scholarships, as PhDs were free of charge for domestic students at the time when the participants studied for their doctorates, they are included for comparison as many were required to do the PhDs by their employers.

Employer scholarships have a clear and direct link to employment career. Some scholarships, in particular, may include requirements for graduates to return to specific roles (Yakaboski *et al.*, 2017), as was the case for the current study's participants on employer scholarships. The employer requires the PhD to be completed and on completion, the graduate is required to return to their position, or a higher position as a result of a promotion. Thus, the scholarship directly influences employment outcomes in terms of return to a secure position, possible promotion and also in ensuring that employment begins again immediately on completion of the PhD, which might be considered both the enabling and constraining effects of structural factors on the decisions and actions of the graduates.

Of the other seventeen participants, who were not with their current employer before they started their PhD, eight secured employment in academia. Two of these had studied in Saudi Arabia and six, all males on the KASP, had studied in the UK. This indicated some link between the KASP and employment within academia, which seemed to be confirmed as three of the latter participants were recruited through the Istiqtab programme. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Istiqtab is a recruitment programme within individual universities which seeks to specifically recruit exceptional students who have studied abroad on scholarships, and thus, KASP recipients tend to meet these stipulations. Whilst the majority of KASP recipients worked in academia, there was one male who secured work in a laboratory in a private hospital following the KASP. There was also one female on the KASP from the UK who did not manage to secure employment in the public sector, despite attempting to do so, and in fact, she explained that she had to remove her PhD from her application to be able to secure work, which was eventually in the private sector.

As discussed in Chapter Two, employer scholarships are provided by different types of higher education institutions; established and emerging universities. Established universities in Saudi Arabia are considered to be those that have been in existence for over thirty years (Al-Rouqi, 2016), including King Saud and King Abdulaziz Universities. Emerging universities, on the other hand, are new universities that have emerged only in the last ten years and are supervised and regulated by the Ministry of Education, such

as the University of Shaqra and Jeddah University (Al-Rouqi, 2016). As one participant, Manal, explained:

> …as we have in Saudi a lot of new universities, they need it, because we don't have enough teaching assistants and professors in the universities, so they need qualified people to develop the universities. There are a lot of new universities being developed in the country, so they need PhD graduates.

Emerging universities provide more benefits in terms of greater allowances for employees. Both forms of scholarship, however, require return to Saudi Arabia, as an employee, for a period of time, equivalent to the period of the scholarship, otherwise repayment of the scholarship is required (Ministry of Human Resource and Social Development, KSA, 2017). The recent introduction of more employment-focused scholarships, such as the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques' overseas scholarship program (see Chapter Two), is likely to enhance this trend in the provision of employment-related scholarships and subsequent employment at the universities offering the scholarships. Such schemes are not provided by the employer or institution, but by the Government to enhance employment opportunities for young people and fill the gaps in the required sectors. The scholarships held by the UK participants are shown in Table 5.5.

Type of funding or scholarship for the PhD	**Number of participants**
King Abdullah Scholarship	8
Employer scholarship (established university)	7
Employer scholarship (emerging university)	7
Self-funded	2
Total	**24**

Table 5.5: Funding and scholarships (UK participants only)

The twenty-four participants from the UK included fourteen on employment scholarships; seven from established universities and seven from emerging. Of the twenty-four Saudi PhD graduates, as mentioned above, none held scholarships, however seventeen were expected by their employers to do the PhDs and therefore required to return to their employment on completion of the PhD (or if studying in Saudi Arabia, remained in their positions during the PhD). Of these, five were from established universities, eight were from emerging, and four gained permission from their employers to do the PhDs whilst working in schools. In terms of gender differences amongst these groups, of the fourteen UK graduates who were on employer scholarships, there was a higher proportion of females, with nine women and five men. The types of employers providing the scholarships varied between established universities and emerging universities, with

three males and four females from established universities, and just two males and five females from emerging universities. Each of the women were required to travel with male family members, all of whom were spouses or family members, with five studying alongside their husbands, two with their brothers and two being accompanied by their fathers.

Seventeen Saudi graduates had been with their employer whilst doing their PhDs, seven of whom were males, and ten females (seven of the Saudi graduates were not employed at the time of starting their PhD) (see Table 5.6 below).

Situation at time of the PhD	**Number of participants**
Employed in established university	5
Employed in emerging university	8
Employed in a school	4
Not employed at time of PhD	7
Total	**24**

Table 5.6: Situation of Saudi (home PhD) graduates

Again, there was a higher number of females from emerging universities than men (six women, two men), and in the established universities, two males and three females. With such small numbers, it is difficult to draw conclusions here, but there was some indication that females might be more commonly employed by emerging universities. This could reflect the new status of these universities and the need to develop their levels of academic staff, with a subsequent willingness to employ more women, alongside men. Whilst such institutions may be slightly less prestigious than the more established universities in the country, with the increasing numbers of females seeking employment in the country, and the education sector providing a preferable form of employment, especially for females, alongside the rising need for staff within emerging universities, it would seem that these institutions are becoming an increasingly important source of employment for women. There were also more males on the KASP, with seven males and one female, and the only two self-funded participants were females. The larger numbers of males on the KASP may relate to the fact that women feel more comfortable travelling abroad on scholarships where there is job security on return, and thus are more likely to travel with employer scholarships, as indicated in the responses of several of the female participants. It was explained, for example, by Habah that she felt more psychologically secure travelling abroad as part of her scholarship from her employer. She felt that she faced less challenges than others as a result of this, with financial security whilst away and job security on return.

Such findings underline the importance of considering culturally specific influences on the opportunities available to males and females, with the scholarships available to women reflecting the changing cultural context in Saudi Arabia which have entailed important advances in terms of both education and employment but within limited boundaries, such as the newer universities. They also highlight the importance of continued cultural practices, such as the requirement of a male family member when exercising the right to take up these opportunities. It should also be recognised that there were differences between the female graduates in the study, including, for example, the presence of two self-funded females who had initiated the study themselves and therefore self-directed their international experiences abroad, which underline the need to consider how structural factors can both restrict and enhance opportunities in relation to gender, but also how agency plays a role, and how some women may not live up to all expectations or subjectivities shaped by their cultures (Afiouni and Karam, 2014).

5.4.2 The job seeking process

All participants interviewed were in secure employment at the time of the interviews, with no unemployed participants. This was in contrast to their situations prior to the PhD where five had been unemployed. It is worth mentioning that this high employment rate amongst the participants may be a consequence of biases derived from self-selection for participation in the study, with unemployed individuals perhaps being less inclined to come forward. It should not be assumed, then, that a PhD always leads to employment. In terms of examining the job seeking process further, participants were asked about the length of time it took them to find employment on completion of the PhD. The intention here was to help provide another perspective on the value of the PhD for securing employment. As the majority of the participants had been required to do the PhD as part of their employment, they simply returned to their roles with no gaps in employment. As shown in Table 5.7 below, this was the case for 27 of the participants working in academia. There was a relatively even split of these graduates who had conducted the PhD in the UK and Saudi Arabia (fourteen to thirteen) and amongst these participants, the majority were females, with nineteen women (nine UK and ten Saudi) compared with eight males (five UK and three Saudi). Four other participants had also had the opportunity to do the PhDs whilst in their jobs as teachers in the public sector, all male, bringing the latter figure up to twelve. This may indicate that women are more likely to engage in PhD study where it is part of secure employment, supporting earlier indications, which is an important finding in relation to gender.

Situation of participant	Gap between PhD and employment	Participants
In employment at time of PhD: Required to do PhD	0	27
In employment at time of PhD: Opportunity to complete whilst in job	0	4
Applied for and secured work during PhD	0	5
Recruited through Istiqtab programme	0	3
Returned to Saudi Arabia to apply for work	< 3 months	7
Returned to Saudi Arabia to apply for work	6 months	1
Returned to Saudi Arabia to apply for work	12 months	1
Total		**48**

Table 5.7: Length of job seeking process

Of the 21 participants who were not required to do the PhD as part of their employment, four were in employment, and five participants began applying for positions before completing their PhDs (two from the UK, both male, and three from Saudi, with two males and one female), so they also immediately entered employment upon finishing the qualification. Three of the participants were recruited through the Istiqtab programme and therefore entered employment immediately on completion of the PhD (all male). There were just nine participants, therefore, who started applying for work in Saudi Arabia after completing the PhD. The majority of participants in this situation (seven) had secured employment within three months. Four of these participants had international PhDs, and two had PhDs from Saudi, which might suggest a slight preference for the international PhD, but it is difficult to conclude with relatively small numbers and without considering further variables that might have impacted here. Another participant with an international PhD took six months to secure work and another, with a PhD from Saudi Arabia, took twelve months. It is worth noting that the individual who took six months (Matab) had secured a position on completion of the PhD, but the paperwork and administration prevented the job starting immediately. Furthermore, Hassan took twelve months to secure employment, but this was reportedly out of choice as he explained that he was unwilling to take on a position that was not suitable for him. This latter example shows some relation to claims made within existing literature which indicates a trend towards PhD graduates choosing to remain unemployed for a period of time before securing their preferred positions (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016; Nannapaneni *et al.*, 2019, see Chapter Two), although in the current research this relates to only one case. Whilst Hassan took twelve months to find suitable employment, it should be noted that he did not use the job search incentive programme in the country during this period (see also Chapter Three, section 3.4.1). Participants, on the whole, required short periods of time to obtain employment. 46 of the participants had secured employment within three months, and those that had not either had employment in place or had chosen temporary

unemployment whilst seeking suitable employment. Thus, there was some indication that the PhD proved valuable here.

5.4.3 Occupations held

It is worth reflecting on the types of employment that the participants were engaged in following their PhDs, to assist in assessing the value of the PhD for employment outcomes. The table below provides a more detailed breakdown of the participants' occupations at the time of the interview (Table 5.8).

Occupation	**Total**	**Saudi**	**UK**
Academia – Assistant Professors, Co-Professors, Researchers	35	15	20
Public sector healthcare (hospitals)	3	2	1
Public sector education - teachers and heads	4	4	0
Private sector education - teacher	1	1	0
Private sector management	3	1	2
Private sector healthcare (hospitals)	2	1	1
Total	**48**	**24**	**24**

Table 5.8: Occupations of the research participants by country of study

As noted, all graduates were employed at the time of the interviews, with the majority working in the public sector. 42 of the 48 participants worked in the public sector (21 UK and 21 Saudi graduates). Of the six participants working in the private sector, two had PhDs in Biology and four in Management. The fact that the majority of the participants were working in the public sector was expected as it has been shown in the literature that PhD graduates not only show a preference for the public sector (Nannapaneni *et al.*, 2019) but that the public sector is the main employer of PhD graduates in Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016). This trend tends to be related to preferable pay and conditions in the public sector, and there was some support for this in the current study. As two participants explained:

> … not every place was suitable for me in the private sector, because with me having a PhD, I was not willing to accept just any salary, so this would cost any employer a lot, and not all private sector jobs would give me this. So, my expectations for the salary were high, and not everyone was able to offer me this (Matab).

> Employers see people with PhDs as expensive researchers, and they don't want that. Sometimes the employers are not interested in Master's degrees either.

> But the Saudi labour market is changing; they are accepting Master's degrees a lot more because they are not having to pay a lot more for people with MAs (Marad).

Whilst the researcher could not rule out the possibility of some self-selection in terms of academics being more likely to come forward to take part in the study than private sector employees, it is important to note that extensive attempts were made to find more participants working within the private sector who had completed a PhD. Adverts were placed with the Saudi Society who circulated requests to graduates working in different areas of the private sector, and when participants from the private sector came forward, they were asked to advertise the study to other private sector employees. Thus, these additional efforts, which still resulted in fewer private sector employees taking part in the study may have related to the fact that more PhD graduates find employment in the public sector than the private sector. As will be shown later in the chapter, this may also relate to the fact that private sector employers regard PhD graduates as overqualified (see section 5.5.2). It is also worth noting that most participants (29) had had some experience in the private sector during their careers (see section 5.4.4 below).

There were some differences between graduates who had studied in the UK and Saudi Arabia. Whilst there were even numbers of UK and Saudi graduates working in the public sector (21 each), as shown in Table 5.8, there was a higher proportion of UK graduates who were employed in academia, with twenty UK graduates compared with fifteen Saudi graduates. This could be partly explained by the requirements of the scholarships for the majority of the UK graduates. Fourteen participants, instance, had employer scholarships from universities and therefore returned to their existing academic positions, and three were recruited through the Istiqtab programme following the KASP, which involves employment in the academic sector. In contrast, only thirteen of the Saudi graduates had been required to do the PhDs as part of their employment.

5.4.4 Career trajectories

In exploring graduate perceptions of the PhD in relation to their labour market preferences and perceived positioning, and how those views may have changed since their graduation, it was important to ask the participants about trajectories to seek explanations as to why views may have changed. Examining the trajectories of the participants was useful in terms of exploring the stability of employment outcomes following the PhD, for instance, and the value of the PhD in securing particular roles in particular sectors. Amongst the participants in the study, 42 of the 48 graduates had

been in only one job since leaving the PhD. This perhaps suggests some stability in their roles, and it may also relate to contracts and scholarship requirements. Of the six graduates who had moved jobs several times, four were UK graduates (one self-funded and three on King Abdullah scholarships) and the other two were Saudi graduates who were not employed at the time of their PhDs and did not have a secure job to return to. Of these six graduates who had moved jobs since completing their PhDs, two had moved jobs three times, and four just twice, including to move to their current employment position over around four years (2015/16-2020). Amal and Mousa explained that they had simply moved to a new job because of their family circumstances changing, such as moving to a new area, and so their decisions did not appear to have been affected by dissatisfaction with their initial employment. Both worked in hospital laboratories, one a state hospital and one private, and had moved to identical jobs in a different city. For one participant, Omar, the change of jobs was simply a result of a short period (six months) in a job in the private sector whilst looking for a job in his desired area of academia. Thus, for these three participants, the move related to either temporary positions or a change in circumstances, rather than dissatisfaction with their jobs.

Of the six graduates who had moved jobs, the last three participants worked in the private sector and had moved around as a result of dissatisfaction in their roles. Two were UK graduates. Michel, for instance, worked in a hospital laboratory in a private hospital for one year but was not comfortable in the environment, so moved to a similar role in another hospital. He reported still not being satisfied in his role and was currently seeking work in academia. Hannah (also a UK graduate) and Manal had both held three jobs since completing their PhDs. Hannah graduated in 2015 and moved into a job in the private sector for one year but reported leaving because of the poor salary. The next job - also in the private sector - also lasted a year, but again she was dissatisfied with the salary and moved to another private sector role. She stated that these jobs did not accept her PhD on her application, which may partly explain the dissatisfaction with the pay scale she was on. She explained that her current job pays better, although again, the PhD was of little value here in helping her to get the position, and it was offered on the basis of her MA only. Manal was the final graduate to have moved positions since graduating, having had three jobs since graduating from her PhD in 2016. She had decided to do the PhD as it was something she had always wanted to do, and after completing it, she worked in a private finance company for six months. She moved on from that role as she reported wanting to gain different experiences for her CV, so she moved to an insurance company for a year after that. She felt, however, that the work was very intense in the role and the workload and work situation, with long working days, did not suit her family situation. So, she sought and secured a role in a school which

provided better hours that suited her family, despite a lower salary. Overall, for these three participants, there appeared to be some dissatisfaction with employment in the private sector, which had led them to move between roles several times.

It is also worth noting, as mentioned above, that 29 of the participants had previously worked in the private sector before their PhDs and subsequently moved into the public sector. For many of the participants, the private sector had been viewed as a short-term or temporary option, with future career preferences being located in the public sector:

> When I graduated from university, I applied for many jobs and got a job in banking for six months. Then I moved to another bank after that, where I stayed for a year. During this time, I applied to universities as I was thinking about my future, and I got a job as a teaching assistant in a university in Saudi. As part of this job, it was a requirement that I would do an MA and PhD (Sara).

> I went to Saudi after the Master's degree and worked for Aramco for six months on a short contract and during this time I applied for the job in the university (Omar).

> When I graduated from the BA, I found a job straight away, and I worked as a teacher in the private sector for two years. I knew that this was temporary for me, and I later got a job in a hospital in the blood testing laboratory. Whilst I was teaching and during my employment at the hospital, I was applying for positions teaching in universities, so I was doing this for some time. I finally got a job as a teaching assistant in a university and during this job, I was required to complete a Masters and PhD (Suliman).

> Basically, I was working in the private sector in a private school as a teacher, but I was keen to more into a different job, and aimed to work in the public sector instead. I knew that in order to do this, I would need a PhD (Fatimah).

In addition, for Mohammed, he had worked in the private sector in the family business until he had acquired the job he wanted in the public sector.

> When I graduated, I worked in the family business for a year, and during this time, I applied to three universities as I decided that I wanted to teach in a university. I got a job in one of them.

Furthermore, for Abdulaziz, who still works in the private sector, the desire is to work in the public sector, as for some of the other participants working in the private sector:

> I got a job with my Dad in the family business. After that, I applied for the PhD, and when I was doing it, I started applying again and got a job in an electronics company, a private company, where I am a manager... I have decided to keep looking for a job as I wanted to be in an academic environment and to be a lecturer, as this seems more suitable for me after getting the PhD. I would not be overqualified in the academic environment. I want to be in academia more than anything else.

This preference for many, as mentioned above, was related to pay, and as will be shown in Chapter Seven, there were also gender-related preferences, but it was also evident that the workload could be considered heavier, with longer hours, in the private sector. As Waleed explained:

> I left the first position, which was in the private sector because I wasn't happy with the workload, and also it was very stressful and so I was extremely tired all of the time. I was working long hours at night, which wasn't suitable for me with my sick parents. In the middle of the job, I also got married, so again the night work wasn't good for me. So I started looking for work again. Then I found a position in a lab in the State sector, which was the same kind of work but a better environment and conditions, and I settled into it much better.

Finally, in terms of employment, it is interesting to note that many of the participants had their own business as well as their job, or were planning to set one up. It was shown in the literature in Chapter Three, that entrepreneurship is highly encouraged in the country as part of wider plans to develop the economy (Kattan *et al.,* 2016; Islam *et al*., 2018; Choukir *et al*., 2019; Sabri and Thomas, 2019). This has been previously shown to particularly be the case for women (Danish and Lawton Smith, 2012; Choukir *et al*., 2019; Sabri and Thomas, 2019), which was also supported in the current study (see Chapter Seven, section 7.4.2 for further details). The findings indicated, too, that establishing businesses alongside the graduates' careers was an important choice for many, which was common in Saudi Arabia. Ahmed stated, for example, that:

> To be honest with you, men and women in Saudi love to own their own businesses, in addition to having their jobs. For example, I am a doctor and my

> wife is a teacher, and we have our own businesses. She has a boutique for abayas and I have a professional car washing company.

It appears, then, that entrepreneurship is an additional employment outcome for many of the PhD graduates in the study.

5.5 The value of the PhD in securing employment

In exploring how Saudi doctoral graduates viewed the PhD in relation to their labour market preferences and perceived positioning, therefore, examination of employment outcomes indicated that the PhD could be valuable in securing employment relatively swiftly, and particularly in the public sector, and where problems tended to be encountered for most PhD graduates was within employment in the private sector. It was also important, however, to explore the graduates' perceptions of the value of their PhDs, in order to further understand the factors that shape these labour market outcomes.

5.5.1 Graduate perceptions on the role of the PhD in employment

On the whole, the majority of participants regarded the PhD as having been significant in their employment outcomes, with 44 of the participants citing a number of benefits, and only four explaining that the PhD had not benefitted them in relation to their labour market opportunities. Five participants stated that the PhD had been central to them achieving the job that they wanted, as evident in the words of two participants:

> I was a teacher but then I wanted to have a better life and a better employer. With a PhD, life is different, and I knew that I could find a better job with my PhD. It was a good decision and it changed my life (Fatimah).

> Absolutely yes, it was definitely a benefit for me as I got the job after I got the PhD. It is the most wonderful thing that has happened to me (Ashwaq).

For two of these five participants, however, it was the international PhD specifically which was cited as being the driver in securing their job. As Amal explained:

> There are no disadvantages. The opposite of that. I got employed because I have a qualification from the UK (Amal).

The value of the international status of PhDs, in comparison with national PhD qualifications, is an important consideration in relation to employment, and will be explored further in Chapter Six.

One of the most common responses was that the PhD provided the graduates with a promotion in their current job, with seventeen participants highlighting this. Four worked in schools and the other thirteen worked in academia. This is in line with scholarships provided by employers and the government in Saudi Arabia, where those required to do PhDs within their employment will receive promotions as a result (KSA Higher Education Council General Secretariat, 2020). The second most popular response amongst the participants was that the PhD had provided them with job security, and all but one were working in academia. Presumably in these cases, the requirement to do the PhD as part of their employment position, and then completing it, provided greater confidence amongst the graduates about the security of their roles. Other benefits of the PhD within the workplace that were discussed by participants included an increase in salary (six participants), better positions (six participants) or more control and responsibilities (six participants). Sumaya explained, for example, that the PhD had given her more control in the workplace in relation to her teaching:

> Of course the PhD has been a benefit to me. The benefits have impacted on my teaching. I have a broader perspective on anything that I want to teach to my students. I can teach all the modules I want in my field, I can teach everything, but I could not do this before with just my Master's degree. Now I can design my own module too.

Four of the participants discussed how the PhD had given them more flexibility in relation to their position and options within the labour market. For Manal, for instance, the PhD had, she explained "…given me more opportunities and has broadened my options". Another participant similarly stated that:

> I can move anywhere I want now, because I am highly educated, I have this higher degree (Eman).

Two graduates also mentioned how the PhD had been beneficial in providing them with networks, which were valuable in the workplace. Asam, for instance, discussed the benefits of being able to attend conferences and networking events since the PhD, and Bashara talked about how networks she had gained could provide valuable future benefits in relation to work:

> …the experience…has given me a lot of future business ideas and proposals that I might want to implement. With the networks I have constructed over the duration of my studies, the experiences and skills gained, all this will be advantageous and valuable when collaborating and working with people from overseas.

There were also, however, participants who felt that the PhD had not provided them with the advantages within the workplace that they had hoped, with the responses of four participants providing interesting insights. One participant stated, for instance, that there had been no direct benefits provided by their employer after gaining the PhD, such as a promotion or a rise in salary, although they had still found the PhD beneficial personally and within their work:

> It is not a benefit or disadvantage in my job, because in my job it didn't give me any positive things. I didn't even get a higher salary. After the Master's degree I got a promotion and became Head of the Department. After the PhD I got nothing. But personally and as a teacher, I feel that I am in a better position. I am a better teacher to the students, and I also help to develop the teaching in the school through workshops and training...my employers viewed it as a benefit but haven't really rewarded me for it (Turkey).

It is worth noting, however, that Turkey had not been required to do a PhD as part of his employment, but rather had decided to do it out of personal choice and had simply sought permission from his employer to do it whilst in employment.

Three of the participants who had been seeking employment for three months (as discussed earlier) explained that the PhD had not been beneficial in enabling them to secure employment, with each using the MA to secure their roles instead. Hannah, for example, explained that:

> It has been a benefit, but not in terms of employment, because it didn't really help me to get a job…When I finished and went back to Saudi, I stayed for three months and then I found a job but unfortunately I didn't get a job with the PhD, I got it because of my Masters. I applied and applied for jobs with the PhD, but I didn't get one. I then took my PhD off my application forms and I got an interview. When I was there, I told them I had a PhD but they said I don't need it, I would get the job simply with my MA. I stayed in this job for a year, and then got another

> job as an Assistant Manager in an insurance company. I have been in that job since. They also didn't offer me the job when I applied with my PhD. I tried again with just the MA and they offered it to me.

Abdulaziz had applied for work during his PhD and secured a job in an electronics firm, whilst continuing to apply for work in academia. At the time of the interview, he had still been unsuccessful in securing work in that sector. He explained that his employers regarded him as overqualified in his current job and had secured his position on the basis of his MA, rather than his PhD. As Abdulaziz stated:

> I got a job with my Dad in the family business. After that, I applied for the PhD, and when I was doing it, I started applying again and got a job in an electronics company, a private company, where I am a manager. But the strange thing was that I got the job on the basis of my MA, not my PhD, because they didn't want the PhD, they just wanted the MA. So with the PhD, I would be overqualified. I have worked as a manager here for some time, but I have decided to keep looking for a job as I wanted to be in an academic environment and to be a lecturer, as this seems more suitable for me after getting the PhD. I would not be overqualified in the academic environment.

In addition, Michel stated that the PhD had not enabled him to secure the employment that he wanted. He had intended to work within academia as he loved the academic environment and had tried to secure a position there for several months, but after being unsuccessful, he had settled for a job within the private sector, working in a laboratory in a private hospital. He explained that for him, the PhD:

> …has been a benefit, but you can't find a job straight away. Because the private companies say that you are overqualified. They love students with BAs, MAs and Diplomas, they get jobs straight away. Maybe this is because the PhD graduate is so good, so the employer will be worried that they wont give a fair salary, or fair rights. PhD graduates are going to be more expensive as well.

There are two important and related issues that arise out of these quotations which require further exploration. First, in these latter three cases, the PhD had not been helpful in securing employment, and the MA had been used instead. Second, which may be related to the first point is that the PhD graduate is regarded by some employers, particularly those in the private sector, as being overqualified. It is important to explore the reasons behind such findings to provide further insights into the value of the PhD in

the Saudi labour market. It was felt that reflecting on the value of the PhD by employers might provide further insights here.

5.5.2 Graduate reflections on employer perspectives of the PhD

Participants were asked how they felt employers viewed PhDs in Saudi Arabia and there was a tendency to draw on their thoughts on both their own employer's perspectives and the Saudi labour market in general when answering these questions. Two main responses stood out here, with the most popular indicating that first, the PhD is generally viewed favourably, or as an achievement, by employers, and second, that the PhD graduate is viewed as being overqualified in the private sector. Each of these responses was highlighted by just over half of the participants (25), with some participants referring to both aspects. There were clear differences here in relation to the labour market sectors. The belief that the PhD was viewed positively by employers, including that it was appreciated, respected, regarded as an achievement or viewed favourably, tended to be related to the academic sector. Another five participants discussed how the academic institutions required the PhD in many cases. Bender and Suliman, for example, stated that working in higher education requires highly educated individuals, and so it follows that the PhD is a requirement for those working in the sector. The need for PhD graduates, and international PhD graduates in particular, to assist in the development of the university and society, was also discussed:

> They appreciate it and they like people doing the PhD, they understand that you have taken many years of your own time to study abroad and you then bring that experience back to the university, to help develop the university (Khalood).

> They have definitely seen it as a good thing. They are waiting for you to come back and to improve the university (Omar).

> It also creates competition between people, and this makes people work hard, which then helps to develop society. When you have a lot of PhD graduates in society, and lots of research and publications, it helps society to grow (Nora).

The second most commonly cited response, on the other hand, with regard to employers viewing PhD graduates as being overqualified, was related most specifically to the private sector. In fact, just over fifty percent of the sample (25) drew attention to this particular issue. The quotations below give a sample of the participants' statements here:

> They just want people to have a Master's degree as a maximum, they don't want people who are researchers. If you want to find people who graduate from a PhD, they are working in higher education only, the Ministry and these kinds of places, but it is not common to find people with a PhD working in the normal Saudi labour market (Asil).
>
> This is not something that I have experienced myself, but I have friends who have struggled to secure employment, and many feel that they are not accepted because of their PhDs. Employers see people with PhDs as expensive researchers, and they don't want that. Sometimes the employers are not interested in Master's degrees either. But the Saudi labour market is changing; they are accepting Master's degrees a lot more because they are not having to pay a lot more for people with MAs (Marad).
>
> … in the Saudi labour market not everyone welcomes the PhD. Some employers are not interested in the PhD, but others want it. The state sector is better for those who have high qualifications like PhDs, both my friend and I found this, but in the private sector, there are a few who won't accept the PhD, they are more interested in you having an MA or BA (Waleed).

It therefore appeared that there was some mismatch between expectations of what the PhD would provide in relation to employment, and the actual outcomes. The general assumption amongst the majority of participants was that the PhD would provide them with better labour market prospects and would not present a barrier. Only one participant challenged the idea that PhDs may be regarded as being overqualified in the private sector, with Fatimah stating that such a suggestion was the opposite to what she had both seen and heard. In general, then, there were clear differences in employer perceptions of the value of the PhD in terms of labour market sector. There are a couple of possible explanations for such differences. First, in terms of the public sector view of PhDs, according to the graduates interviewed in this study, the higher education sector in particular requires highly educated employees, and so tend to view those with PhDs favourably. Thus, from the perspective of the participants in the current study, there are differences in employer perceptions of the PhD depending on the labour market sector. In addition, with the developments in the education system and the goals of Vision 2030 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017; see also Chapter Two), increasing the numbers of PhD graduates in the sector is important. In particular, the role of emerging universities is significant. As mentioned earlier, these universities are very new (less than ten years

old) (Al-Rouqi, 2016), and offer particular scholarships to attract excellent students who will gain further qualifications within their employment, thus bringing greater skills, expertise and status to the university, facilitating its development and enhancing economic growth. These new, or 'emerging' universities employed 22 of the participants in the current study (with thirteen participants currently working in established universities).

Second, in terms of the private sector perception of the PhD, one possible explanation for the private sector perspective relates to pay. Indeed, the expense in terms of paying PhD graduates was mentioned in several of the participant responses (see, for instance, Marad above), which perhaps underlines one of the key issues here. As outlined in Chapter Two, in Saudi Arabia, there is an expected level of salary for graduates with doctoral qualifications to ensure that those with higher qualifications receive sufficient pay from their employers (Payscale, 2020). As has been indicated from the responses, this may act as a barrier to employment in certain cases, as PhD graduates are deemed more expensive than those with a BA or an MA, and therefore employers may regard the cheaper graduates as the more preferable option.

5.5.3 Subject choice and differences in labour market outcomes

Determining the perceptions of employers in relation to PhDs and particular subjects was also important. In Chapter Three, for instance, the need to develop Bourdieu's work beyond national contexts was highlighted, in order to explore whether or not the embodied cultural capital of particular subjects is significant in relation to the Saudi labour market, with particular skills and knowledge being valued over others, and therefore offering a form of positional competition. It may be, for example, that Saudi labour market demand relates to particular subject areas, giving some individuals an advantage over others. Furthermore, studying subjects which meet demand for global skills, could be considered significant in terms of global positional competition. As discussed in Chapter Four, the subjects selected for the current study were related primarily to popularity of subjects studied by Saudi students in the UK and Saudi Arabia within a particular time scale of 2010-2015, and with a reasonably even gender balance. Also of consideration, however, was the perceived global value of particular subjects, or the belief that some subjects could be valued over others in the Saudi labour market, and so two different subjects were chosen on this basis to allow some comparison. It was expected, for instance, that science subjects, such as Biology, would be considered to be highly technical and therefore some forms of cultural capital may be less important, making these subjects more valuable in the labour market than less technical subjects such as

Management, which might impact on the perceived value of the subject, making cultural capital more significant for this type of subject. In addition, Vision 2030 has heavily invested in the development of the science sector through plans for diversification of the economy, which could also have positive implications for a Biology qualification. On the other hand, with Vision 2030 resulting in investment and development of sectors such as manufacturing, tourism and leisure, technology, and mining (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2019), arguably, a Management - rather than Biology - PhD may be perceived as particularly valuable in terms of employment opportunities in the coming years. In addition, the Government's strong focus on enhancing the contribution of the private sector in the economy (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2019) has meant the recent privatisation of public and government sector services, which might also lead to greater demand for Management qualifications than Biology. It was therefore important to explore the perceptions and experiences of the participants in relation to perceived value, or embodied cultural capital, relating to subject.

Participants were asked about the motivations behind subject choices for PhDs, to determine whether employment outcomes or employer perceptions of specific subjects had been influential. The majority of responses related to either personal interest in the subject area, personal passion which stemmed from a young age or the subject suiting their personality. Biology was predominantly mentioned in relation to a passion or love for the subject (with sixteen responses, compared to nine who cited the same justification for Management), whereas Management was largely associated with an interest or suiting someone's personality (fourteen compared with three for Biology). Management was also more strongly associated with receiving good grades in the subject area, as mentioned by six participants, compared with one for Biology. As one participant explained:

> I love this field and I got a high score at school in Management. I have never been good with Biology, Chemistry, blood and stuff. I feel I have the ability to do it. It is important to have that ability, you don't do a subject that you cannot do. Also, I love planning, organisation, control and monitoring; all the different aspects of management (Asil, Management).

In relation to employment specifically, only seven participants indicated that choice of subject had been related to employment, five of whom had studied Management and two in Biology. Despite the small number of responses here, interesting insights were raised in relation to subject and perceptions of positioning in the labour market. First,

several participants mentioned the belief that a Management qualification would give them greater employment opportunities through access to a range of jobs:

> The Management subject also means that you can find a job anywhere (Sara, Management).

> It was a personal passion from the beginning but I also knew that there would be a lot of jobs in it (Bender, Management).

> …the Management subject is a requirement from all the state and private sector jobs. When I applied for my recent jobs, I found Management jobs everywhere, but I didn't go for them as I wanted a university job in particular (Asil, Management).

Second, it appeared that Management was considered particularly valuable with respect to being able to work across all sectors, and due to the subject drawing on a variety of disciplines, making it a particularly flexible qualification to have in the Saudi labour market:

> I will find even greater job opportunities, due to the fact that this specialization is a broad and comprehensive discipline that combines many fields, including science, analysis and planning, such as marketing, finance, public relations and according to insurance (Ibrahim, Management).

Third, it was argued that Management would always be a valuable subject to have; it was not considered to age or become devalued over time:

> This subject would always be valuable, it never gets old. I can work anywhere with it, in the private sector and the state sector (Nasar, Management).

In terms of the actual benefits of the subjects studied by the participants in the current studying relation to employment, whilst there was some indication that both subjects might be appreciated in the labour market, it appeared from the perspective of the participants that a PhD in Management might give greater flexibility to work across all sectors.

PhD subject therefore seemed to prove significant in relation to the labour market. Research by Tarvid (2014), which looked at the motivations for PhD study of Latvian

students, also showed that motivations differed according to subject of study, with distinctions being made between personal oriented goals and labour market goals. Interestingly for the current study, the research showed that students studying Biology and Management, as well as Social and Political Sciences, Mathematics and Chemistry, were more labour market oriented in the decisions to engage in PhD study. In the current study, however, the data also showed that Management graduates were more labour market oriented than Biology graduates. Important gender distinctions were also indicated in relation to subject in the current study, and these are discussed further in Chapter Seven.

5.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to understand the processes at work in the relationship between the PhD and employment outcomes of graduates, through exploring the perceptions of the participants with regard to their intentions for the PhD and their subsequent employment outcomes and trajectories. What the findings indicated in relation to decisions and motivations for PhD study were the significance of intellectual and professional development motivations as well as institutional or culturally significant processes, such as collectivist culture, or governmental and employer influences and requirements, thus supporting existing literature here in relation to the significance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and both agency and structure (Brailsford, 2010; Guerin *et al.*, 2015; Yang *et al.,* 2017). Processes of structure and agency were shown to be more complex than anticipated, however, with intellectual motivations appearing to be related not just to intrinsic needs and preferences but also to parental influence and issues of social class. Supporting the work of Bourdieu, it was found that the majority of the participants in the sample were of high occupational class and from families with a high level of education, indicating the transference of cultural capital from parents to their child in the engagement of doctoral study. It was also shown, however, that those from families of lower occupational class also engage in PhD study and further that for the majority of these graduates, they had chosen to pursue international study. What emerged overall was that either high occupational class or high level of education was evident in all of the graduate families, indicating that either of these factors, or the combination, may lead to the transfer of cultural capital from parent to child.

In terms of employment, the findings showed that the PhDs, for most (where not already in jobs) led to relatively short periods of time in securing a job, with most working in the public sector, and with relatively stable career trajectories. There was also some indication that, overall, the PhD is particularly valuable for employment outcomes where

graduates are working in, or seeking work, in the public sector. This confirms the claims of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA (2016) that more educated individuals work in the public sector as a consequence of its more attractive work and pay conditions when compared with the private sector. Going further than this, however, the current study examined subject differences and found that participants' perceptions and choices made in relation to employment indicated that Management qualifications might be perceived as especially valuable for accessing employment in all sectors.

Whilst the existing literature has previously indicated that the public sector is the main employer, and preferred employer, of graduates in Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016; Nannapaneni *et al.,* 2019), which the current research supports, the findings also offer additional explanations as to why this might be the case, providing important contributions to the area. Scholarships, for instance, have been shown to be a key driver for employment in the academic sector, and the current study has shown how the development of the education system to include new or emerging universities in the last ten years, has significantly increased this trend. Thus, new Saudi universities are offering more PhD scholarships to build their staff base. More significant, however, were the findings which related to the private sector, which have not been previously evidenced in the literature. It may be, for instance, that preference for the public sector, or its position as the main employer of PhD graduates, is partly related to the private sector view of PhD graduates, in addition to opportunities and conditions. There was a strong indication from the responses of the participants that the PhD graduate was viewed as overqualified by the private sector in the Saudi labour market. It was also shown that a small number of graduates had removed their PhD qualification from their applications in order to secure work. For those working in the private sector, there was some suggestion of a less stable employment trajectory, with the majority of participants who had moved jobs several times having worked in the private sector. Additional insights into entrepreneurial activities were also provided by the current study. It was evident that PhD graduates tended to seek additional income generation through small businesses and consultancy work or discussed their plans to do this in the future. Existing literature had indicated that entrepreneurship is highly encouraged in Saudi Arabia, but it has not previously been shown that PhD-educated individuals with full-time positions often seek supplementary entrepreneurial activities alongside their employment.

This chapter has therefore highlighted initial insights that emerged in relation to graduate perceptions of the value of the PhD in the Saudi labour market. It is important to also explore, however, the importance of structural factors or contexts which may impact on

employment outcomes relating to labour market sector. In order to further explain this relationship, it is necessary to look further at potential mechanisms, such as the extent to which the reputation of the institution from which a PhD is obtained is valued, or its national/international status. These are the focus of the next chapter. It may also be, however, that gender is also influential, and this is explored further in the final findings chapter; Chapter Seven.

Chapter Six:

Exploring the value of the international or national status of the PhD in the Saudi labour market

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues with the exploration of graduate perceptions of the value of the PhD in relation to the labour market, but with a specific focus on the international/national divide, as well as competition in relation to institution status. It was hypothesised that the doctoral qualification would facilitate enhanced employment outcomes for the Saudi graduates, both local or international doctorates, and this was supported by the findings presented in the previous chapter. It was also expected, however, that international PhDs would provide competitive advantage in the form of global cultural and social capital, and this was the starting point for the current chapter. It was then also important to explore - if this was the case - the potential mechanisms which might lead to such outcomes. Thus, after establishing the potential influence of the national/international status of the PhD, other mechanisms such as institution reputation, the global identity, and global social capital could be explored. This chapter begins with a brief explanation of the questions asked and responses received from participants in relation to the value of the international PhD, leading into three sections which explore potential mechanisms further. These are institutionalised global cultural capital (IGCC) (including institution ranking and reputation), embodied global cultural capital (EGCC), and global social capital (GSC), balanced against an assessment of the value of the locally-acquired PhD. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key insights presented in the chapter, and draws these together by presenting two models; one demonstrating how capital works in relation to the Saudi labour market, and the other focusing on student decision-making.

6.2 Graduate perceptions of international vs national doctoral study

With the intention to examine the ways in which the international status of the PhD might be perceived to provide an advantage in the Saudi labour market, according to the perceptions and experiences of the graduates, the participants were asked several questions around international study. These included the perceived advantages and disadvantages of international doctoral study, and how international PhDs were viewed by employers and society in general in Saudi Arabia. The UK graduates were additionally asked about their motivations behind studying abroad and what they felt they

had gained, and PhD graduates from Saudi universities were asked if they had considered study abroad, why they chose to study in Saudi Arabia and what they felt they had gained from that choice. Overall, participants indicated that international PhDs were particularly valuable for graduates, with seventeen (thirteen of whom were UK graduates and four Saudi graduates) stating this directly, and eighteen suggesting initially that there was no difference between the international and national PhD, or that this was not the only important factor, but later providing examples and instances of where they felt the international PhD was more advantageous or provided added value for individuals. As such, 35 out of the 48 participants (seventeen males and eighteen females) felt that international PhDs were particularly valuable when comparing national and international PhDs. One participant stated, for example:

> I gained an international experience and also appreciation from everybody who knows that I studied abroad, especially in the UK, and in a university with a good reputation. With education from universities in any of the countries, the UK, America, Australia, you get this kind of appreciation (Houd, UK graduate).

Looking initially at the particular benefits cited in relation to international study, responses could be grouped into five categories. These were, in order of the number of responses received and starting with most popular; employment-related benefits (including that employers particularly valued the international PhD, that a job had been secured because of the international PhD, that the international PhD had been required by their employers and was therefore valued, or that they could work anywhere in the world); the development of skills and knowledge potentially valuable in employment (English language skills, the development of networks and relationships, knowledge and experience of different cultures); intellectual or personal development; acquiring knowledge beneficial to the home country (experience of a different education system, or a more established education system); and finally, personal benefits relating to the family of the graduate, such as children learning a second language (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Benefits of international study

Of the 35 participants who asserted the added value of the international PhD, 21 related such value with employment. As one participant, Adam, explained:

> One of my friends with a PhD from the UK and another friend who had one from Saudi both went for the same job at a company in Saudi and they took the graduate from abroad, not from Saudi. They took him because of his UK PhD, and because of his ability to speak English (Adam, UK graduate).

These initial insights seemed to support existing literature, for as indicated in Chapter Three, previous research has underlined the significance of positional competition in relation to PhD study and the labour market (Brown, 2000), but has specifically drawn attention to a more global sense of positional competition with the rising trend towards international PhD study and the potential to enhance the status and capital of international PhD graduates in the labour market, when compared with national or local graduates (Kim, 2011). Important, however, is the distinction between different forms of capital in relation to international PhDs and the labour market. Adam's quotation seems to highlight the relevance not just of IGCC (the UK PhD), but also EGCC (English proficiency). Thus, it may be that the advantages cited in relation to international study can be better understood by distinguishing between different forms of cultural capital to determine which elements of the PhD - and whether international or national - are particularly valued within the Saudi labour market.

Looking further at this frame of reference, labour market advantage resulting from the possession of an international qualification can be considered to represent IGCC (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.3.1). Assessing the value of the international status of the qualification in comparison to a nationally-acquired PhD is important here, and so too is the perceived merit of institution reputation, including global ranking. EGCC could be considered to encompass the benefits cited in relation to the knowledge and experience gained of different cultures, the acquisition of skills (such as those related to using English language), attaining knowledge beneficial to the home country and intellectual or personal development. These factors could be associated with the development of a global identity, but it was also important to determine whether such benefits could also be gained within a more localised context. It may also be that the embodied cultural capital of certain fields or subjects is significant here, with particular knowledge being especially valued in the labour market (thus requiring the exploration of potential distinctions between Biology and Management in relation to the labour market, as shown in Chapter Five). Finally, global social capital may be significant, with the use of

communication technology across space with international contacts gained through international study, and subsequent benefits to employment gained from the development of such relationships. These forms of cultural and social capital are discussed individually with reference to the experiences of both the UK and Saudi graduates.

It is important to assert, before exploring different forms of capital further, that not all participants regarded the international PhD as more beneficial than the nationally-acquired PhD. There was some evidence of preference for the national PhD (two female graduates), for instance, and six participants stated that the international or national status of a PhD does not make a difference in relation to the labour market; they are both viewed equally. All eight participants who stated this were Saudi graduates, two male and six female. Responses here included:

> If you compare between those who graduate from Saudi and those who graduate from other countries when they come back, we would have the same salary; it would make no difference. The most important thing is that you have the certificate (Asil).

> People respect you and give you social status for being a Dr, I don't see any difference between whether you study in Saudi Arabia or abroad (Samir).

> I compared the two PhDs when I made the decision about staying or going abroad, and I did not see a difference in my opinion. If the subject is available in Saudi, and they have all the resources, then why would I not do it in my country? (Hind).

The remaining five graduates noted conditional factors which might impact on employment opportunities beyond the level of the credential and the country of study, thus making the additional value of an international PhD depend on certain conditions and seemingly placing more weight on embodied rather than institutionalised cultural capital. They stated that national and international PhDs are viewed differently in society and the labour market depending on subject (as touched upon in Chapter Five) and institution, as well as the linguistic skills acquired in an international PhD. Only one of these participants was a UK graduate, with the rest having graduated from Saudi Arabia, and all were male. As two participants explained:

> …it is not about where the certificate is from, it is about your skills and experience. If you graduate from the UK, where established education is strong, I will be honest, it is looked at as very good, but it also depends on where you graduate from, which institution, how good your English language is (Hassan, Saudi graduate).
>
> In terms of whether it is outside or inside Saudi Arabia, it really depends. If you choose Arabic or religion, the best place in the world is Saudi Arabia. But if you choose another subject, it depends on your interests and your ability to do that, because some people cannot study outside their home country, and some people can, so you go with what you can do, you choose the option that fits what you are capable of doing (Osama, Saudi graduate).

These participants highlighted various different factors, then, that could impact on the value of the PhD beyond place (its national or international status). The potential significance of subject, institution of study and English language skills, however, can be contrasted with those highlighted in previous research which has also shown that the potential additional value of international PhDs in relation to employment can vary, but in terms of country of employment, country of study, sector, industry, job level, and individual ability to demonstrate skills (Gardner *et al*., 2008; Molony *et al*., 2011; Shiveley and Misco, 2012; Lomer *et al*., 2018; Tomlinson, 2018).

6.3 Institutionalised global cultural capital

As mentioned previously, IGCC refers to the value gained from the international credential itself, representing the physical manifestation of the global experience and the status of international qualifications (Jarvis, 2019). Potential additional value may result from the status or reputation of the institution from which the PhD is acquired. Thus, in its global form, a PhD may represent an advantage in the labour market.

6.3.1 The international qualification

Of the 24 UK graduates in the study, as shown in Chapter Five, twenty secured employment immediately after their PhDs, three secured work within three months and one took six months to start work (although in the case of the latter, the job had been secured sooner). It might therefore be suggested that the international PhD enabled participants to secure work in a relatively short period of time. This provides some contrast with findings from earlier studies which suggest that international graduates face

difficulties securing employment on their return to Saudi Arabia, especially those on KASP scholarships (Taylor and Albasri, 2014; Ahmed, 2016). For Taylor and Albasri (2014), for instance, graduates who had acquired qualifications locally were shown to be in a stronger position than some of their international counterparts. These differential findings may relate to recent changes in the country leading to better circumstances for international graduates, or to the fact that the type of qualification addressed in the current study was of a higher level (doctoral) than those in previous studies.

It was important in the current study, however, to look more closely at the findings to establish whether it was the international element of the PhD which had proved particularly valuable. Comparing the outcomes with Saudi obtained PhDs reveals that time taken to secure employment for the Saudi graduates were similar, with twenty-one being in employment or securing work immediately after their PhDs, two taking three months, and one taking twelve months. It was necessary to look beyond time to employment, then, at the explanations to understand the value of international study. Of the 35 participants (both UK and Saudi graduates) who cited the particular merit of the international PhD, as shown above, 21 associated this with direct benefits to employment. Of these, sixteen were UK graduates (two thirds of the UK sample) and drew directly on their own experience of such benefits to their employment opportunities. For seven of these participants, this related to the belief that they had secured their job because of the international PhD. As Nasar and Amen explained:

> I got a job straight away, an employer who wanted me because I had studied in the UK (Nasar).

> I got the job that I wanted because of the international PhD. It was made clear when I applied that if I have the certificate for the international PhD, then I would get the job (Amen).

For five of the sixteen participants, their employers had specifically required their PhD to be carried out abroad in order for them to continue in their position, and thus the international PhD had been a requirement and had directly benefited the participants through enabling them to keep their employment position. Another four of the sixteen participants reported the value of the international PhD for their future careers as it gave them the opportunity to work anywhere in the world. Such responses are perhaps unsurprising given the fact, as discussed in Chapter Three, that competition is ingrained within societies and labour markets (Naidoo, 2016; Lomer *et al.*, 2018), and has been shown to be reflected in the motivations of international students to study abroad through

belief in the gains to be made in relation to the labour market (Marginson, 2006; Findlay *et al*., 2012; Brown *et al*., 2016). Thus, the international PhD may operate as a positional tool, providing a form of capital which can be converted into positional advantage in the labour market. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the articulation of the perceived value of the international PhD in the labour market was not restricted to the UK graduates; several Saudi graduates who saw additional value in an international PhD made reference to personal constraints which prevented them from following that path. Waleed, who was a graduate from Saudi Arabia, explained that a PhD abroad would have been desirable for him if his caring responsibilities for his parents had not prevented this from being an option for him. He felt that had he been able to study abroad, he would have been able to "find a better job and position in society, and also be a much better researcher". There was some indication, then, that the international qualification could be beneficial in terms of access to employment in Saudi Arabia.

6.3.2 Institution reputation and ranking

Whilst an international qualification is in itself regarded as an advantage in the global labour market, there are other factors to consider, as indicated earlier (see section 3.3.3.1 and 6.2 above), such as reputation of country or institution. Subsequently, this educational - or institutional - capital may be dependent on the prestigious nature of the qualification (Lomer *et al*., 2018). On a global scale, this relates to international reputation, and global rankings. Various studies report rankings and institutional reputation as an important motivation for international students to study abroad (Marginson, 2006; Findlay *et al*., 2012; Brown *et al*., 2016). This may be particularly significant in Saudi Arabia with the country's development plans, Vision 2030, and the potential value attributed to qualifications from more prestigious universities. In order to determine the relevance of rankings and reputation of institution, participants were asked about the reasons behind their choice of institution or decisions to study abroad, rather than being asked directly about such factors. It was felt that if such details then arose, this would indicate their significance. The interview transcripts were examined for any mention of rankings, reputation, competition or status in relation to their choices for the PhD. 41 participants highlighted the importance of the reputation of the university when they discussed their choices for the PhD. 21 of the participants were UK graduates, and 20 Saudi, indicating that this was a consideration for both groups, regardless of country of study. There also did not appear to be a gender distinction here, with twenty (ten UK, ten Saudi) males and 21 females (eleven UK, ten Saudi). When determining what the participants meant by reputation, however, some distinctions in its understanding between national and international graduates were evident.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, reputation and ranking are not necessarily synonymous, but there was a strong relationship with ranking for just over half of the participants (21) who mentioned reputation. It is worth noting that sixteen of the 21 participants who associated reputation with ranking were UK graduates, compared with five Saudi graduates. These graduates mentioned rankings in relation to world ranking or world leading universities directly; the importance of selecting Russell Group universities because of their world ranking; studying at institutions accepted by the Saudi government or Ministry (again because of their ranking); and finally, employer requirements for specific institutions, which were also related to global ranking. Thus, there seemed to be a strong association between global ranking and reputation for the UK graduates. As Bashara, a UK graduate, stated:

> I have always wanted to study in world leading universities and in countries that embrace research and knowledge, and the UK and xxx University were no different.

Furthermore, Ashwaq, also a UK graduate, stated that she had pursued her doctoral studies abroad because:

> …university and research qualifications and certificates issued by British universities, four of which are classified as the best in the world, are officially recognized around the world and desirable in many places (Ashwaq).

Nine participants explicitly indicated the significance of ranking in relation to employment. For four of these participants, acquiring a PhD from a high-ranking institution was related specifically to employment obligations, in line with the requirement to carry out the PhD abroad (all four were UK graduates; two males, two females). These rankings also appeared to be related to subject. As two participants stated:

> My employers required me to do my PhD abroad at a very high-ranking university in my subject, and so I chose the university according to their ranking. The University of xxx had a strong reputation and this was important because if I study in a high-ranking university, I would learn a lot and bring that knowledge back to Saudi Arabia; I would make a real contribution to knowledge here (Suliman, UK graduate).

> It was a requirement from my employment to study in one of the top twenty universities for my subject in the UK (Habah, UK graduate).

It is worth noting that such experiences are likely to be particularly relevant in the academic context, where a strong reputation in specific subject areas is especially valued. For the other five participants (four UK females and one Saudi male), ranking was more broadly related to perceived status and advantage in the labour market, in line with global positional competition arguments. Participants explained, for instance, that:

> …when you apply for a job, they look at where you graduated from, so it needs to be a strong university, it is important (Nabeela, UK graduate).

> Some sectors see a graduate from the UK as better than from Saudi as they graduate from a high-ranking university (Manal, Saudi graduate).

For Bashara, a UK graduate, there were many advantages to studying abroad which she believed were particularly valued by the private management sector, but for her, the most important was having studied in a globally high-ranking university:

> There are many advantages when it comes to studying abroad such as learning a new language, meeting new people from diverse backgrounds, learning a new culture, learning and experiencing a different education system, developing and learning new skills and attributes and more importantly undertaking research in a world leading university. These skills are greatly valued in the management sector.

What is also interesting here is the mention of a particular sector. As shown in the previous chapter, the private sector is considered a less accessible sector for PhD graduates, but it may be that the international qualification from a reputable institution is considered a particular advantage here. This was supported in the response of another participant, Omar, who explained that:

> If you applied to one of the two big private companies in Saudi, Aramco or Sabik, they look at where you graduated from, and check that it is a reputable Russell Group university, and then they check how strong your English language is, and if you are good enough, they may give you a job there. The most important thing is that you have good English-speaking skills to work in these companies. Also, in the Saudi labour market in general, they look at which university you graduate

> from in particular. They didn't used to but because so many people have PhDs now, and a lot of graduates from the UK, they look to see whether you have graduated from a strong university.

It appears, then, that international status of the PhD is not the only significant factor here, being dependent also upon institution reputation (being a Russell Group university) as a way of distinguishing between candidates, and a form of embodied capital; that of English proficiency within particular parts of the private sector (see also section 6.4).

Ranking was therefore clearly important in terms of reputation for many of the participants, then, but for the other participants, reputation was simply used to refer to strong, prestigious or excellent universities, or one of the 'best'. This was the case for five of the UK graduates and fourteen of the Saudi graduates (three of whom also highlighted the importance of the age and history of the institution in relation to reputation). This was therefore a particularly dominant view for the latter group. As several Saudi graduates explained:

> I studied in Saudi at a very difficult university. I chose it because it is an excellent university. I know how important it is in my subject to graduate with a good certificate, and I knew I would get that from this university (Anood, Saudi graduate).

> In terms of my university, I studied in the oldest and strongest university in Saudi and it was not easy to do the PhD there. I wanted to be with my family in the same city too. But a strong university was important and the reputation mattered to me (Areej).

> It is one of the best universities across the country, and I really wanted to be one of their graduates (Jamil).

Similarly, two UK graduates explained:

> I would gain appreciation from everybody who knows that I studied abroad, especially in the UK, and in a university with a good reputation (Houd, UK graduate).

> It was necessary to study in a strong, well-known university for myself. It was important for me to choose a place that would be considered prestigious when I returned to Saudi Arabia (Nabeela, UK graduate).

For the latter two, reputation appeared to be related here to the acquisition of status. Finally, one Saudi graduate explained that reputation for them was related to the institution being the largest institution available and the fact that the staff were considered to be 'so good' (Eman). Thus, strong reputation was associated with high quality teaching.

When discussing institution reputation, as perhaps evidenced in Houd's quotation above, sometimes the reputation of the country and reputation of the university were conflated in the discussions. Ten participants, for example, discussed the importance of the UK reputation in particular, eight of whom were UK graduates (four male, four female) and two of whom were Saudi graduates (both male). As two of the participants explained:

> …the UK has a long history with education, it is not just ten or twenty years, it is a country with a wealth of experience and so it is a strong place to study. When you look at rankings too, it has a very good reputation in my field…University and research qualifications and certificates issued by British universities, four of which are classified as the best in the world, are officially recognized around the world and desirable in many places (Ashwaq, UK graduate).

> Basically, my two brothers went before me to the UK, and they were always telling me stories about the UK and how strong the education was there. The UK is also unique in terms of research and the universities are generally strong (Sami, UK graduate).

For several participants, however, the choice of institution was not based solely on reputation of institution, but also the circumstances or situation of the individual, such as convenience of location, or remaining close to work and family. This was overwhelmingly the case for the Saudi graduates, with only three UK graduates compared with fifteen Saudi graduates citing this factor as the motivation for choice of institution. There did not appear to be a gender distinction here, and there was an even split of participants for subject. As two participants explained:

> Because I work in the same city, it would have been too difficult to travel elsewhere, so I only applied to this university (Amen, Saudi graduate).

> I chose this university because it was in the same city as me, and I found a supervisor there that I liked. So, it was easy and smooth. It is also the university where I did my BA, and it is a good university with a long history in teaching (Maha, Saudi graduate).

For the UK graduates, convenience was perhaps not on the same scale as for the Saudi graduates, but choice of country of study was related to the ability to travel a relatively easier distance than other countries of a similar status for study abroad:

> …it was a requirement of my job to do a PhD abroad, as I mentioned, so I applied to America, the UK and Canada and I decided that I would go to whichever made an offer first. All offers came back and I chose the university as it was the most suitable for me and my family, and it was less travel than the other countries, as it was the nearest to Saudi Arabia (Suliman, UK graduate).

In fact, in line with the claims of Shields (2013) with regards to the significance of geographic location in student flows (see Chapter Three, section 3.2), whilst the importance of reputation and ranking was highlighted by UK graduates, by far the most popular explanation for choosing the UK in particular (when selecting between reputable or world class universities) was its close proximity to Saudi Arabia (compared with other reputable countries). Eighteen of the twenty-four UK graduates mentioned this. For two of the participants, their first choice had been America, but due to the distance, they had selected the UK instead. Thus, there was some similarity here between national and international graduates, in relation to choice based on location. For the Saudi participants, for example, location was often related to convenience, and for the international participants, location was to some extent also related to convenience and ability to travel home in a shorter period of time than other international locations with reputable institutions.

Also important in motivations behind the choice of the UK was familiarity with the country (four participants), having family and friends in the country (four), and the quality of the education, with its long history (four). Individual (one participant) responses also included that it is a multicultural country, a UK qualification would be important in terms of employment and that the UK's approach to education was preferred. As Omar explained in relation to the latter:

> I like the system in the UK more than America as it is more theoretical, there is critical thinking, you can be more creative.

Thus, it appeared from the responses that reputation of the UK was certainly a factor considered by many of the participants, and in such situations, it may be that the capital gained from an international PhD, or studying in a world class university, is converted into positional advantage within a globally competitive environment. Whilst this may be the outcome of a qualification from the UK, however, it was evidently not the only consideration for the majority of participants, with location and proximity to home country emerging as particularly important in the majority of cases (when selecting between world class universities). It was also evident that whilst the participants' motivations for choice of institution did not always solely relate to their employment opportunities, this motivation was cited as a key driver by nine participants, thus providing some support for existing literature on graduate awareness of competitive advantage relating to the labour market when studying in high-ranking institutions (Brown *et al.*, 2016).

6.4 Embodied global cultural capital

It has been suggested that the value attached to the PhD might be affected by the ability to demonstrate transferability of international experiences (Gardner *et al.*, 2008) and in the current study, there was some indication from the responses of the participants that this may indeed be the case. As two participants stated:

> They think they have more skills because they have studied in an established country with education and their English is good. In fact, it is not true. When I applied to one of my interviews, there was me and another person, who was Saudi but studied abroad, but he didn't do well in the interview. So, you might have an education that is from another country, which is seen as better by some, but personality matters too, and it doesn't mean that you are going to get the position. So, it isn't necessarily about where you get the certificate, it is about whether you are good or not. The Saudi labour market doesn't automatically accept you if you have an international PhD, it depends on the person and how they perform in the interview as well (Waleed, Saudi graduate).

> So, on the one hand you may have a PhD from the UK which is viewed positively, but on the other hand, you can say what is your experience, what are your skills, did you proceed from the interview? This is important too (Hassan, Saudi graduate).

These cases underline the potential importance of other forms of capital, and in particular, embodied cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital, as we have seen, is something often transmitted from parents to children, and may be enhanced through education, and particularly international education. The PhD, however, whether international or national, is likely to provide a level of embodied cultural capital which is beneficial to individuals in relation to the labour market, as the skills, experience and ways of thinking that come from years of PhD education are likely to translate into favourable skills and ways of being, which are recognised as valuable in the labour market. The words of one participant, Amen (Saudi graduate), on Saudi employers' views of PhDs perhaps emphasises this point:

> They respect them, but in my opinion the skills and experience you have are more important than where you get the qualification from.

It may be, however, that the skills set acquired by international students is especially valuable. In terms of embodied global cultural capital specifically, this refers to the skills, knowledge and experience gained from living and studying abroad, which might be demonstrated through individuals' proficiency and confidence in interacting with people from different countries and cultures, or use of a second language, and which may be particularly valued by Saudi employers.

Looking more closely at embodied cultural capital in relation to the participants' perceptions, as mentioned earlier, 35 of the 48 participants (73 per cent), perceived the international PhD to provide particular advantage to graduates, and of these, 21 mentioned the important impact on them of the ability to gain experience and knowledge of different cultures. As two participants explained:

> The international experience itself, whichever way you look at it, has been so beneficial. I am more familiar with people of different colours and religions, and different cultures. The UK is a multicultural society, so I have known people from all over the world. I have had neighbours who are Indian or Turkish, Muslim and non-Muslim, so the experience has given me a familiarity with so many different cultures (Marad, UK graduate).

> …in Saudi, just you know your family, your neighbours, and your friends, so you just practice your own language. So, your culture is focused around these people, this life. But when you go to another country, you have different

> experiences, different people, different ways of thinking. You have a different kind of life here. So, it helped me to develop and broaden my thinking. Life before the scholarship is so different to life after the scholarship (Matab, UK graduate).

One participant explained how the skills and experience gained were considered particularly valuable in relation to employment:

> I have come with good experience and skills and this will benefit me for my current job role. For example, I have worked with many people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Should I be required to work with people from different backgrounds in my current role, it will be easy to do so (Bashara).

In addition to the more general experience and skills gained, particular skills which were considered especially valuable were also mentioned, such as language skills. It was largely felt that the UK graduates would be at an advantage over national graduates in relation to this latter aspect, due to the ability to practice and develop their English language skills through daily interaction with native English speakers, reading English materials and resources, as well as producing written work in English. The years of this type of experience were believed to be especially valuable on return to their home country. Of the 35 participants who perceived the international PhD to be of particular advantage, seventeen cited the development of English language skills as especially important in relation to this. Afnan (UK graduate) stated, for instance, that:

> People look at you as you have English language, a certificate from outside, you have studied in a country like the UK where the education is famous, so people give you more attention. Everyone from around the world studies in the UK.

Nasar and Bashara (UK graduates) similarly explained how the English language combined with the qualification put them in a favourable situation:

> I have the English language, the BA, MA and PhD. These are like having a credit card, that help you to get a job in a good place (Nasar).

> I have achieved my qualification abroad, from a well-known and outstanding university. This will allow me to undertake any employment anywhere in the world. This is due to the fact that the qualification was undertaken in English and this in itself is a skill (Bashara).

Hannah (UK graduate), who had not found the PhD particularly valuable in terms of accessing employment, stated that despite this, the English language had given her an advantage. As she explained:

> …the English Language qualification put me in a better position in terms of getting a job, always.

Furthermore, Manal stated that:

> Some sectors see a graduate from the UK as better than from Saudi as they graduate from a high-ranking university, and they also have the English language. Some companies need the English language, not all, but some do and so this is a benefit (Saudi graduate).

This had been indicated previously in the claims of Omar (see section 6.3.2 above), where he highlighted the importance of strong English language speaking skills when working for two of the largest private companies in Saudi Arabia; Aramco or Sabik, and therefore English language skills might be considered to provide a form of capital or positional advantage in such cases.

It is important to note that some Saudi universities also provide their courses in English language and therefore the benefits of learning in a second language were not restricted to the UK graduates, as explained by Anood (Saudi graduate):

> I think there is not a lot of difference between national and international as we have a lot of strong universities in Saudi and some are offered in English language too.

Three participants drew directly on their own experiences of studying in Saudi Arabia to illustrate this point. Sara, for instance, explained that her Management course was taught in English and stated that “even my supervisor spoke in English”. Furthermore, Mohammed explained that he had “studied in English as well, in a strong university”. Finally, Hassan stated that:

> I also read everything in English, so I developed my English skills as well. I also met so many different people who I had never met before from different cultures. When I met these people, I learnt so much more about their culture.

Hassan therefore also seemed to gain the skills mentioned earlier by the international graduates whilst remaining in his home country. This was not the case for all Saudi graduates, however, and the ability to develop English language skills through both living and studying in the UK was regarded as important. The UK was cited as especially valuable here, for as Nasreen (UK graduate) explained:

> If you want to practice English language, you can go to any native speaking English country, whether Canada, Australia, but people always recommend the UK.

It was evident that this recommendation was related predominantly to the closer proximity of the UK to Saudi Arabia than other English-speaking countries. Fourteen of the 35 participants who discussed the benefits of the international PhD in particular, stated that the international experience also enabled the acquisition of particular knowledge and experience which would be beneficial on return to the home country. This was especially related to the idea that by experiencing different education systems, or the education provided by an established education system, individuals would be able to perform better in their individual roles. This was particularly the case for those working in academia, where they would be able to transfer skills and knowledge to the academic context in their home country:

> …undertaking research in a different country with a different education system will equip me with invaluable skills and experiences, both of which are welcomed and valued back home as they will help me to excel in my current job role (Bashara).

> They have definitely seen it as a good thing. They are waiting for you to come back and to improve the university. They appreciate everything that you have done; being away from your family, working hard, facing challenges, and then achieving the qualification at the end. So it is valued by your employers (Omar).

For Khalood, also a UK graduate, she explained that employers particularly value the international experience as:

> …they like people doing the PhD, they understand that you have taken many years of your own time to study abroad and you then bring that experience back to the university, to help develop the university.

Also mentioned here was how the international experience allowed them to gain particular knowledge which more broadly assisted in the development of their home country. Such skills and knowledge development might be especially valued in recent years given the changes and developments that have been taking place in Saudi Arabia in terms of higher education, with many new universities opening and offering jobs alongside scholarships. As a result of even more recent amendments to Vision 2030, these universities will be subject to privatisation (Council of Universities' Affairs, 2020), and therefore the international experience may be considered even more valuable as it has the potential to provide the university with greater marketing appeal for attracting future students.

As shown in Chapter Three, it has been argued that embodied global cultural capital goes further than the skills and knowledge gained from international study, to include the development of the global identity (Chan Suet Kay *et al*., 2016; Phelps, 2016). Research has drawn attention to the importance of international educational experiences on the transnational identities of graduates and the subsequent impact on their employment outcomes, especially in relation to the confidence gained by the graduates in their own abilities, and a heightened sense of independence and self-assurance (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015), or the application of embodied positional knowledge in transnational spaces, and the presentation of a form of 'difference', which provides competitive advantage to individuals. The latter has also been referred to as transnational identity capital (Kim, 2010; 2017).

In the current study, five of the UK participants who had cited the advantage of the international PhD discussed the personal transition that they had experienced as a result of their international PhD. Later in the interviews, participants were asked about the opportunities they had gained, the most meaningful aspects of the PhD for them and how they saw themselves following the experience of the PhD. This seemed to further highlight the development of the global identity for several participants. As Nasreen (UK graduate) explained:

> You can understand things more quickly when you travel abroad as it opens your mind. Travelling always teaches you something, it makes your personality stronger, it develops you as a person (Nasreen, UK graduate).

In line with existing literature on the development of the transnational or global identity, the focus of participants seemed to be on the ways in which their international

experiences had impacted on their confidence in their own abilities and their independence. Such confidence was not restricted to international graduates, with twenty-three participants explaining that they had gained greater confidence in their abilities, twelve of whom were international, compared to a similar number of national graduates (eleven) mentioning this aspect. Greater levels of independence, however, were discussed more by international graduates (four) than national graduates (one). It was also evident that a larger number of international graduates (four) described gaining a greater sense of self awareness, or felt that they knew themselves more, than national graduates (two). As one participant explained:

> It helps to open you up to the world and you can see different people from all over, with different personalities, from different societies, of different nationalities. You see people with such a range of personalities, open minded, close minded, positive and negative personalities. You also have new experiences, so when you have these new experiences, you start to know yourself and your skills more, and you can deal with new environments (Said, UK graduate).

The international experience was therefore considered valuable in terms of the development of the individual on a personal level but the words of Houd (and Bashara earlier in the chapter) also indicated how these personal developments might subsequently be valued by employers:

> The PhD abroad has given me an advantage as I had different experiences, experiences which are so different to what I have had before. I am more attractive in the labour market because of this unique experience that I have from abroad. I have not just studied, I left my country, I have changed and I have developed myself. I have returned with a lot of experience and skills, and I have interacted with native English speakers, but I have also developed and retained networks as a result of this too (Houd).

Furthermore, as touched on in Chapter Three, it may be that the global identity or cosmopolitanism gained from study abroad, places international graduates at an advantage where cosmopolitan assets are positively regarded by employers.

The retention of contacts and networks will be touched on in the following section on global social capital, but it is important to briefly look again at the responses of the national graduates. As mentioned above, the development of the self was not restricted to the UK participants, and many of the locally-educated participants cited ways in which

the PhD experience had allowed them to develop on a personal level. Whilst these were not always linked to travel and the development of international contacts, the latter did emerge in the responses of a few of the national graduates. As Osama (Saudi graduate) stated:

> It has been a benefit, as it has given me a lot of good things. In my current job, it has given me a promotion and I am more open now to the world. I attend conferences outside Saudi, I am making relationships with people inside and outside Saudi Arabia from the Gulf countries. The PhD has broadened my mind and opened up opportunities for me.

There was, then, evidence of diversity in the responses of the participants, and examples of the ways in which Saudi graduates may have acquired embodied cultural capital in similar ways to the UK graduates. These tended to be the exception, however, with the skills and knowledge acquired by the international graduates largely representing a more developed skills set which more commonly included English proficiency and intercultural awareness than the national graduates, and demonstrated greater evidence of a more global identity which could lead to greater confidence in capabilities in the workplace.

It is also important to note here that the transformative impact of the international PhD on international students and their identity emerged from the different forms of global cultural capital working together. This is especially significant in relation to the labour market, where the participants appeared to perceive the combination of different forms of cultural capital as vital in the positional advantage they felt they had gained. As Amal (UK graduate) explained:

> I wanted the qualification from the UK because I knew that it would help me to work anywhere that I wanted. This is because I would have a second language, I would have a certificate from a good institution with a good reputation, and the fact that I did the qualification abroad would attract the attention of any employer (Amal, UK graduate).

She further stated that:

> I also looked at society around me and thought if I had a qualification from the UK, what kind of benefits would it have for me. I would have the certificate, the skills, I would have travelled, presented at conferences, maybe gained another

> type of qualification and then to do all of this in the UK, the whole package would make me look very good, it would make my CV stronger.

It is important to recognise, then, as Jarvis (2019) explains, that the different forms of global cultural capital overlap and reinforce one another. Thus, an individual may acquire embodied global cultural capital over a period of time in another country, which generates a level of status and confidence from the acquired experience and enables the appropriate transferability of the status gained from institutionalised global cultural capital, or the international PhD. Also of consideration was the potential role played by global social capital in relation to labour market outcomes.

6.5 Global social capital

The use of social networks for personal gain was considered significant in Bourdieu's (1986) work and with regards to the labour market, can be used to access employment opportunities. In relation to global or transnational social capital, it was important to explore whether or not the networks gained from international study are particularly advantageous in relation to the Saudi labour market, or whether more local links and connections are more valuable. This underlines the distinction made in Jarvis' (2019) work between local and global cultural capital. Looking first at the 35 participants who cited the value of the international PhD in particular, nine mentioned the importance of the relationships that had been gained here.

It was evident from the responses that the networks gained through PhD study were considered to be valuable elements of their experiences during the PhD, with twenty international participants and fifteen national participants discussing the importance of both national and international networks for providing a supportive environment during their study. As several participants explained:

> Saudi people, and Saudi students in xxx [university city], work together like one hand. With this support and togetherness during my study, this help, it made it all so much easier (Ali, UK graduate).

> In the UK, my friendships helped me to settle in, to find a house, how to register with a GP, how to travel, everything that I needed to know about living in the city. One friend owned a house in the UK, one of his children was born there, and they went to Saudi and then they returned, and his children went to university in the UK. He helped me a lot when I came to the UK, he taught me everything. If I was

> struggling with anything, he was there to help me. Most weeks we would meet with other Saudis, to play football, or drink Arabic coffee and catch up with one another. This was part of the Saudi clubs, which are there to support people and stop them from being lonely. In Saudi Arabia, the relationships I made in the UK have also continued (Michel, UK graduate).

These particular quotations underline the creation of social capital with relevance to Saudi Arabia, outside of Saudi Arabia, through these clubs and the support that these Saudi networks provide during international study. The importance of friendships with students from different nationalities was also mentioned, however:

> I have friends from Saudi who I studied with, and also non-Saudi friends, and we helped each other through the PhD. I have maintained these friendships, and we are still in contact today (Nasar, UK graduates).

The importance of networks and relationships for such support has been previously mentioned in research on international study (Clavin, 2005; Gargano, 2009; Rivzi, 2010; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015; Yakaboski *et al*., 2017). The participants in the current study, however, also underlined the importance of networks in terms of decisions made during international study. Said, for instance, discussed how important friendships made during his BA had been in choosing to do the MA abroad and then his subsequent PhD in the UK:

> I have friendships from Saudi society but also people from outside. I am a very sociable person. The friend who advised me to go for the PhD is from Australia. I met him when he was finishing the last term of the BA. He asked me why didn't I continue and do my MA in Australia? I had no intention of staying on after the BA, but he showed me how to do it and encouraged me and so I did it. So, this was a good friendship, and I gave him a lot of help and support in return (Said).

Furthermore, for Habah and her husband, having links in the UK, or friends studying abroad, influenced their decision to study in the UK.

Friends, family and support were also important in relation to the Saudi graduates, proving to be an important factor in motivations behind doing the PhD in the home country. For twenty of the Saudi graduates, for instance, support from family, friends and networks was mentioned either in relation to their decision to study in their home

country, or in relation to the perceived disadvantages of studying abroad (because of the loss of these):

> I have a couple of friends who I have always studied with. We always influenced each other, and they started a PhD before me. They encouraged me to do the PhD after their experience, so they were a big influence. I told them how I wanted to do the PhD abroad, and it was them who told me it was possible to do the subject I wanted in Saudi. Also, I saw the PhD as giving me social status (Waleed, Saudi graduate).

> …as I studied in my own environment, I was able to get the support I needed from friends and family, but also to give support as well (Mohammed, Saudi graduate).

> …I mean that in general, I have been much more comfortable studying in my country, my culture. I have had support, my family around me, I have been in my own country, and this has allowed me to focus and work, to feel psychologically comfortable. I would not have had this if I had studied the PhD abroad in a country that I am unfamiliar with and without my family around me (Fatimah, Saudi graduate).

Indeed, the temporary loss of these close contacts for the international graduates was mentioned significantly in relation to disadvantages of the international PhD, and was cited by nine of the UK graduates. Previous research indicated similar findings for undergraduate international students in Europe (Souto-Otero *et al.*, 2013).

Of particular importance to the current study, however, was the role of social capital in relation to securing employment, and whether the networks gained during international study could be considered to constitute a form of social capital, or indeed, global social capital. The latter might be evidenced through the maintenance of networks following study, which lead to opportunities, related to participants' careers such as the development of projects and publications (see below). Most importantly, is the use of networks to gain access to employment, as previous research has underlined the significance of personal networks in relation to the labour market, highlighting how those who are well connected have access to greater advantages here (OECD, 2018; HKS, 2019). Research suggests that whilst global cultural capital can be particularly valuable in providing competitive advantage to international students in the local labour market,

this can be dependent upon more localised networks and social relations (Waters, 2009; Jarvis, 2019).

With the majority of participants who studied abroad being on employer scholarships (fourteen), it might be argued that such graduates did have both local social capital (a secure job at a local university) and global social capital (through the requirement to study abroad). Of the remaining ten UK graduates, eight were on KASP scholarships and two were self-funded. Three of the KASP graduates were recruited through the Istiqtab programme, and therefore applied to and utilised local recruitment programmes, rather than local networks. For these graduates, it may be that because of these initiatives, they are less reliant on social capital to obtain or retain employment. Another participant already worked in a university and was required to do a PhD and had subsequently applied for a KASP scholarship. Of the remaining four KASP participants, the experiences of two seemed to demonstrate the importance of utilising both local and global social capital. Omar, for instance, described how he secured work at the same company as a family member for six months, before securing his current position in a university. Furthermore, Matab (UK graduate) explained:

> I made contact with people through the networks and friendships that I have in Saudi Arabia. One of my friends told me about a job in the private sector as a Head of a Department in an organisation, and so I applied, and I got recruited in that way. I had interviews over the telephone and filled in half of the paperwork whilst I was in the UK. Then I finished it when I returned. So, in a way, they booked me ready for when I finished my PhD.

Matab's experience indicates the value of utilising local networks and contacts to gain work, and his later responses suggested that the international PhD was considered valuable by his employers, which illustrates the importance of both global and local cultural capital. The remaining two KASP participants, Michel and Hannah, and the two self-funded participants, Ashwaq and Amal, did not appear to utilise either international or local networks in securing employment, and simply described applying to numerous institutions and organisations to secure work. Two also discussed the difficulties they faced in gaining work initially. Whilst the numbers are small here, there is some support for the work of Jarvis (2019) in underlining the potential value of networks of different types in gaining access to employment, particularly in relation to international graduates and employment within the home country.

The maintenance of contacts established following PhD study was also important and Houd and Sami, both UK graduates, explained how the continuation of such relationships gained through international study could prove advantageous in terms of employment:

> The friends and networks I have made in the UK are now part of my life. I am with them all the time on Facebook. I have made strong relationships in academia as well. I now have a network, within the academic environment. If there are opportunities coming up, with publications and things like that, we all inform each other. I am also planning to do joint publications with many of them (Houd).

> I have relationships with people from Saudi and the UK. I have maintained my UK friendships…I have also written many publications with friends. I have one friend who wants me to review papers for publication. So, I have lots of important contacts (Sami).

As shown, the maintenance of their relationships subsequently facilitated the writing of publications together, or opportunities for these. Publishing academic work is an important aspect of academic and professional development and a requirement for promotions within the education sector in Saudi Arabia. As such, the maintenance of such relationships and networks can be regarded as significant in employment and career outcomes. The importance of these networks for facilitating opportunities such as publishing papers was also mentioned by several other participants:

> …the networks I have constructed over the duration of my studies, the experiences and skills gained, all this will be advantageous and valuable when collaborating and working with people from overseas (Bashara, UK graduate).

In addition, Sami explained how the relationships she held in the UK impacted on her work with students at the university where she worked:

> I have sent maybe fifteen students to the UK, and they have been under my supervision, because I have relationships there (Sami, UK graduate).

Similarly, these professional relationships have been important for Marad (UK graduate), on both a work and personal level. As he explained:

> … I had neighbours from different nationalities who became my friends, and I made a very big circle of Saudi friends across the whole of the UK, not just in my university, through the Saudi club. I also went to a lot of conferences, and lots of activities through the Saudi club. So, I met a lot of people from across the UK. I also did a publication and through social media, I made even more friends. So I have a big network now. Because of this network, my son is now studying for his BA in the UK, and I am not worried about him now as I know that there are people around him who can look out for him.

One participant discussed the value of the contacts made in relation to future business plans, or entrepreneurship:

> I have established many friendships from many countries, such as India, Turkey, China. Also, I'm thinking of constructing my own business and travel to these countries and seek advice and help from the friends I have made, as it will ease a lot of implications and makes things really smooth, if I ever wanted to bring any shipment from those countries (Bashara).

The importance of maintaining networks and relationships established during PhD study therefore emerged as particularly important for the international graduates, in terms of opportunities for collaboration, publications, information sharing, business development, as well as facilitating links for placements of students, and these were mentioned by 20 of the UK graduates (in comparison to thirteen Saudi graduates). It should be noted that these were primarily individuals working in academia who cited such benefits. Of the 20, fourteen discussed the importance of the Saudi contacts they had made, and seventeen highlighted how important their international contacts had been to them (some graduates mentioned both Saudi and international contacts). In comparison, of the thirteen Saudi graduates who discussed the importance of contacts made, the majority cited their Saudi contacts, which was to be expected given that they had studied in Saudi Arabia. Thus, for the UK graduates, more so than the Saudi graduates, the international contacts made were especially significant for them. Seven Saudi graduates did mention the importance of international contacts, however, and so whilst international contacts were perhaps not as significant for Saudi graduates, it did indicate the potential for local graduates to develop international networks, albeit on a smaller scale than international graduates. For Nora, for instance, these relationships had proved valuable in her work life, as indicated below:

> I gained information from PhD students, we exchange information and knowledge, we write publications together. Studying for a PhD is not like studying at any other time in your life. It is very individual, you do it very much on your own, you are cut off from everyone. So, because of this, making sure you have good relationships is very important. Also, with the friends I made during my PhD, if I go to meet them, I never come away with nothing, I have also gained something useful. They are very valuable friendships.

It is also important to state that not all international graduates shared the belief that networks gained during their study were worth maintaining. As two of the female UK participants explained:

> I have relationships with Saudis and non-Saudis, but I don't have a lot of relationships that have continued. So, I am not in touch with many of these friends any more (Hannah).

There did not seem to be any particular reason for this lack of desire to remain in contact, but rather Hannah described how she simply returned to her life in Saudi Arabia, and was very busy, and keeping in contact had not remained a priority for her. Similarly, Khalood stated:

> I made relationships with both Saudi and non-Saudi people but I don't really care about these relationships, I don't really need to integrate, it is not a primary concern for me.

The findings have shown that whilst international study can provide access to international experiences and a wider network of international contacts and relationships, and these can be beneficial throughout international educational experiences and throughout the career of individuals, in terms of gaining access to labour market opportunities initially, it seems that access to more localised networks may also be important, thus supporting the work of Jarvis (2019). This also appears to support Bourdieu (1986) in relation to how networks (and therefore social capital) could be particularly significant in cultivating cultural capital in the labour market context.

6.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore whether or not the international PhD provides competitive advantage in the form of global cultural capital in the Saudi labour market,

from the perspective of both international PhD graduates and those who studied in the national context, and if so, the potential mechanisms which might lead to such outcomes. It was shown that in terms of IGCC, the international qualification was indeed considered advantageous. A large number of participants in the study (35) cited the particular benefit, or added value, of the international PhD, and for many (21), this was associated with employment outcomes. Whilst research suggests that Saudi graduates with international qualifications returning to their home country encounter difficulties in securing employment (see, for instance, Taylor and Albasri, 2014), this was not evident in the current study (although as explained, a large percentage of the sample were in employment prior to leaving for their PhD). The findings indicated that the international graduates acquired IGCC through the international PhD, which enabled them to gain employment in a relatively short period of time. Indeed, 67 per cent of the UK sample related the international PhD to employment outcomes, either stating that they had secured employment because of the international PhD, employers had particularly valued this qualification, or the international PhD had been a requirement of their employment to secure their position. The international PhD was also considered to provide advantage in future employment and was thus perceived to provide a form of global positional competition in the Saudi labour market.

It was also evident, however, that perceived advantage could be contingent on other factors, such as reputation of institution, particularly related to ranking for just over half of the participants who referred to the significance of reputation for them. As previous research has shown in relation to international study (Marginson, 2006; Findlay *et al*., 2012; Brown *et al*., 2016; Naidoo, 2016; Ahmad *et al.,* 2017), ranking, and especially global ranking, was found to be particularly important for the international graduates. The current research explored the link between employment and reputation further, however, with participants indicating that reputation mattered as either employers or the Saudi Ministry required PhDs to be carried out at reputable institutions, or they believed that employers viewed the qualification as higher status, or that the status gained was personally important for them and would be highly viewed throughout society. This was particularly noted in the academic context. It is also worth noting, however, that choice of institution largely seemed to relate to location, showing some consensus with the findings of Shields (2013), and this was perhaps a commonality between the UK and Saudi participants (although the levels of proximity varied considerably). Nonetheless, for the international graduates, the choice of institution had the added value of its international status. There was some evidence, then, of differences between international and national graduates relating to institutionalised cultural capital, with

perceived global positional advantage in terms of qualification being related to ranking and reputation, and especially for the international graduates.

In line with the findings of Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) and Jarvis (2019), in the current study, embodied global cultural capital was shown to be significant in perceived value of the international PhD and its subsequent impact on employer perceptions. Of the participants who viewed the international qualification as an advantage, a large number discussed the ability to gain experience and knowledge of different cultures, English language, knowledge of different education systems being valuable for the home country and global identity. In relation to the latter, whilst both international and national graduates discussed the development of confidence, gaining independence was especially significant for the international graduates. The impact of the international experience on the personal development of individuals was important and this – it was believed – could be translated into labour market outcomes through the perceptions of employers who value such personality traits.

Research has underlined the value of personal networks or social capital in relation to the labour market (OECD, 2018; HKS, 2019) but the current study also showed that global social capital, balanced against local social capital, could be important in terms of labour market outcomes and could impact on ability to secure employment or future opportunities and career development. There was some acknowledgement of the value of networks during the PhD and in decisions around PhD study. Saudi clubs were especially mentioned by many participants, and other Saudi students, but also important were international friendships and networks. The importance of relationships, family and networks were also cited as important in the decisions of Saudi graduates in terms of their PhD study. Important, however, was the role of social capital in relation to labour market outcomes, both in securing employment and development of future roles. It was found that local networks were important for international graduates in relation to employment, underlining the importance of both local and global cultural capital here, confirming the findings of Jarvis (2019) in relation to Korea. It was also shown that the maintenance of contacts and networks could be important in terms of facilitating career development. International contacts, in particular, were considered significant here.

Chapter Seven:

Exploring the role of gender in employment and the labour market

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores gender differences in the experiences of the Saudi and UK PhD graduates in relation to employment and the labour market. As has been previously discussed in this thesis, doctoral study leads to positive employment outcomes for the study participants. This chapter focuses on perceptions of gender differences and the experiences of female and male PhDs in the Saudi labour market. As discussed in Chapter Three, whilst cultural capital, or global cultural capital, provide useful explanations of the improvement of employment opportunities in the home country for both males and females, outcomes may vary between women and men; an aspect that Bourdieu does not explore. Furthermore, the literature indicated that in the context of Saudi Arabia, women's experiences in the labour market could be affected by cultural practices and gendered expectations around the family, especially in the academic sector (Alfiouni, 2014; Halaway *et al.*, 2017; Alfarran *et al.*, 2018) and this research aimed to explore such claims further amongst the graduates.

The chapter begins by looking at choices made in relation to PhD study and the impact of gender. This involves looking first at the motivations behind PhD study, and how drivers could be differentiated according to gender. Choices relating to subject are also explored. The chapter then moves on to look at the impact of the PhD with regards to perceptions of careers, enhanced employment opportunities and labour market outcomes, with consideration of gender differences and the potential for gender to affect the value of the PhD in the labour market. Here, the chapter explores experiences in relation to early labour market outcomes in terms of occupations held, work environments and pay. This is followed by a discussion on the perceptions of the participants in relation to recent developments in Saudi Arabia and employment. The chapter concludes by looking at the importance of recognising issues of difference in analyses of gender.

7.2 Gender and PhD study

Educational opportunities for women have increased significantly in Saudi Arabia in recent years, from primary through to doctoral level, with girls outnumbering boys in both secondary and higher education (see Chapter Two). In relation to the latter, Saudi women have had greater access to higher education in the last twenty years, both in their home country and through international study. As shown in Chapter Two (section 2.4), for instance, there has been a more balanced representation of males and females in graduate study. Indeed, in the current study, fifteen female participants reported having received considerable support and encouragement from their families to pursue the PhD in particular. This support did not appear to simply be the result of educated parents (see section 7.2.1 below). The literature suggests, however, that segregation of genders still occurs within education and men and women tend to study different subjects (see section 2.4). It has also been suggested that women travelling abroad for study are required to have a male family member with them, although as the current research found, in many cases such family members are also sponsored through the scholarship schemes and may also study abroad (see Chapter Five). It was important to explore such issues further in the study, through discussions with the participants around the motivations behind PhD study, and the circumstances surrounding their study experiences.

7.2.1 Motivations, career and employment focus

It was important to explore the choices made by both men and women in the study relating to international or national doctoral study. In particular, the researcher was interested to determine the drivers behind international or national PhD study and to ascertain whether or not choices and opportunities had been affected by gender in any way. Looking first at the drivers, amongst the participants, the majority had been required to do the PhD as part of their employment and were therefore in their jobs when they undertook the qualifications. These participants simply returned to their roles with no gaps in employment, and the main driver was then considered to be employer requirements or job conditions. This was the case for 27 of the participants in academia. Whilst there was a relatively even split of these employed graduates who had conducted the PhD in the UK and Saudi Arabia (fourteen and thirteen), the majority of these participants were females, with nineteen women (nine UK and ten Saudi) compared with eight males (five UK and three Saudi). Four other participants had also had the opportunity to do the PhDs whilst in their jobs as teachers in the public sector, all male, bringing the figure up to twelve. This may indicate that women are more likely to engage

in PhD study where it is part of secure employment, especially as more males engaged in the PhD without it being a requirement of their employment, which is an important finding in relation to gender. For one participant, for instance, it was explained that:

> It was a requirement of my job for me to do the PhD. If it had not been a requirement, I would not have done the PhD (Fatimah).

In terms of gender differences amongst these groups, in the fourteen UK graduates who were on employer scholarships, there was a higher proportion of females, with nine women and five men. The types of employers providing the scholarships were established universities and emerging universities, three males and four females from established universities, and just two males and five females from emerging universities. As mentioned earlier, emerging universities have become an increasingly important source of employment for women in the country (Al-Ghamdi and Tight, 2013; Mazi and Altbach, 2013) within the academic sector (see also section 5.4.1).

Related to the above, is the opportunities provided to women to study abroad for their PhDs, to join their husbands in their international study. In 2013, Jamjoom and Kelly highlighted this phenomenon in relation to educational developments for women in the KSA, and the current study supports such findings. Looking at the situation of the 24 UK graduates, five of the male UK graduates secured scholarships, which allowed for their wives to also study abroad. This was the case for Ali, Bender, Suliman and Adam, but also Marad, whose wife was funded through his scholarship after arriving in the UK, after they had both observed other women studying. For one participant, Omar, he and his wife had decided to study abroad together and had applied separately. So, for half of the male UK sample, the wives of the graduates were provided with opportunities to study PhDs abroad alongside their husbands. Only one participant travelled to the UK alone (Michel), and for the other five males, their wives (and sometimes children) joined them in travelling to the UK but did not participate in international study (see Table 7.1 below for the findings here).

	Total
Wife joined husband with his studies – on his scholarship	5
Husband joined with her studies – on her scholarship	4
Brother joined with her studies – on her scholarship	3
Husband and wife decided to study together	3
Wife joined husband without study	5
Male family member/husband joined woman with her studies (didn't study)	3
Travelled alone	1
Total	24

Table 7.1 Gender, guardians and scholarships

There seemed to be some gender differences in terms of family influence on the decision to do the PhD, and on educational background more generally. For over half of the females in the study, the important influence of families in their education and their PhDs, in particular, were mentioned. By contrast, only eight of the males in the study referred to this. The significance especially of fathers was evident in the accounts of the females. Ten females talked about the importance of the support of their Dads specifically (although three of these also talked about the important role of their mothers) and another two discussed the importance of family support in general.

> From a young age, my Dad encouraged all of us to be well-educated. All of us are now doctors, three working in hospitals and three in universities, in science and medical subjects, apart from one who works in the computer science field (Houd).

> We are ten girls, all of us educated. My dad was the first one to support me, and he really cares about our education (Sumaya).

> My Dad came with me to the UK, he always gives me the support I want. He also travels with me to conferences. When I was studying in Saudi if the books were not available, he would travel with me to go and get books from different countries. My mum also helped me so much with the data collection. They have both been so supportive, they are such a good family (Nasreen).

> My mum and dad were very strict about education when we were growing up. They would produce a timetable for us for all of our work, even in the holidays. They were my foundation for developing my approach to education, I am very much like them, and I firmly believe in the importance of education (Nabeela).

Following these responses, the researcher was keen to determine whether the PhD was pursued through choice, and it was clear from the responses that the women had been very active in their own journey, with all women making clear that the decision had been their own which was then supported by their families. It may be, however, that parents actively encourage their children within education throughout their lives, which also provides important influence here.

Only two of the male participants mentioned the importance of their dads (although two more discussed general family support):

> My dad died before I graduated. When I told my dad I wanted to travel abroad to study and to do it in English, and to get a scholarship, my dad really encouraged me. My dad loved education and told me if you don't go to the airport yourself, I will take you myself and put you on a plane! (Omar).

> We are a unique family, as I have one sister, a pharmacist, and three brothers. We are all doctors. I am so grateful for my family, so grateful for the support they give, in the financial, the mental and moral support. I gained important principles from my Dad that human life, health and education all come first. My Dad paid for my education when I first came to the UK (Sami).

Whilst fathers clearly played an important role in the female participants' educational decisions, mothers were also mentioned as important. This supports previous research which has underlined the significant role played by mothers in both male and female occupational choice (Vleuten *et al.*, 2018; Van Mol, 2021). Research by Van Mol (2021), for instance, suggests that mothers may motivate their daughters to engage in international education, in particular, in order to enhance opportunities to achieve intergenerational social mobility. As stated above, three female participants mentioned the different ways in which their mothers and fathers had influenced them and another three specifically mentioned just the influence of their mothers:

> My mum taught me when I was smaller how to study very well, so I grew up with this. I have had the support from my family all of my life, and this has really helped me with my education, although clearly 90 per cent of my effort for my MA and PhD came directly from me. But my family has been so important in getting me there, if I hadn't had this strong foundation in terms of education and support, then I don't think I would have been able to do this (Reem).

For the male participants, the influence of mothers in their decisions to do the PhD were mentioned more than their fathers, with three participants discussing the importance of their mothers here (Marad, Mousa and Hassan). Mousa stated:

> I did the PhD because of my mum; she always wanted me to be a doctor. She called me doctor all the time, even before I got the PhD!

As mentioned in Chapter Five, 36 participants had at least one parent educated to degree level or above, with ten having both parents educated above degree level. As

shown, of these ten, seven were from families where the mother was educated to a higher level than the father, potentially indicating important role models here. There was also some evidence, however, of the need to balance gender roles in decisions about PhD study in the statement of one female participant. Ala explained, for example, that:

> After I got married following my MA, I got a secure job. Then the scholarship became available for me to do the PhD. I talked it through with my Mum because she is a Doctor in a hospital, and she did a PhD in Egypt. She also did her MA in the UK, so I knew that she could give me good advice on this. She told me that a PhD abroad would be such a valuable experience, as I would learn the language, I would have the experience of living in a new place, a new culture, and studying in a country with an established education system. But she also told me that I would need to be strong and patient, as I was just married, so I had to think about that, and I would be away from my family, which would be hard. But she said that it was something she wanted for me, she wanted me to have a PhD like her, although she said that in the end it was my decision.

Ala's statement seems to indicate important considerations for women in relation to marriage and culture, which may impact on decisions to do the PhD and the career trajectory. It also highlights the complexity of factors in relation to gender; Ala had an educated mother, an important role model, yet was also reminded of her duties as a wife and being away from family. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the support provided to female participants by families did not all appear to simply be the result of educated families, as there were four participants from families where the father was educated above BA level, but the mother was educated to secondary level, and two from families where both parents had only been educated to secondary level. It may be, however, that positive perceptions of education, or habitus, were transferred to the participants from their families, as discussed in Chapter Five.

One of the most important findings that emerged in relation to gender and PhD scholarships was related to male guardians and the opportunities associated with this. The literature has shown that having male guardians is an important element of international study for Saudi women, driven largely by social rather than legal customs (Al-Bakr *et al*., 2017). Despite the latter, all of the women in the current sample were joined by male family members during their study in the UK. Whilst such a practice is not always regarded positively, particularly in relation to the perceived control exhibited by males or the uneven balance of power it is believed to represent (Hennekam *et al*., 2018), Ahmed (2015) argues that the provision of sponsorship for a male relative of

female students through scholarships demonstrates the government's support for women's education. Furthermore, the findings in the current research also support the case for a more positive portrayal of male guardians. The findings showed that for seven of the twelve female graduates travelling to the UK, scholarships had been awarded which then provided opportunities for male spouses or family members to engage in international study. Nasreen, Khalood, Houd and Amal all secured international scholarships, for instance, which were then extended to provide scholarships for their husbands to study (who were travelling with them). This was also the case for Ashwaq, Ala and Afnan, although the scholarships enabled their brothers to engage in international study. In such cases, where women are the drivers, and in a sense, providers behind opportunities for their husbands and male family members to engage in international study, this arguably provides an element of power in favour of females. For two of the females, Nabeela and Iptisam, their husbands were also their guardians, but the decision to study abroad was reported to have been taken together as a couple, and scholarships were separate. Again, in such cases, the arrangement of a male guardian does not fit the stereotyped assumption of male control but rather indicates shared decisions and partnership (although it is important to note that the power relations inherent in individual relationships was not explored). The last three female UK participants, Bashara, Hannah and Habah, had all travelled with their fathers as their guardians (the latter did not study). In these cases, where fathers have been willing to live abroad for three or four years with their daughters, this could be argued to again indicate supportive attitudes and behaviours towards higher education for females. This was evident in the perceptions of the women, who all expressed gratitude to their fathers for travelling and staying with them.

7.2.2 Subject of study

The significance of subject was explored in Chapter Five in terms of the potential role of the embodied cultural capital of particular subjects, and whether or not particular skills and knowledge were considered to be valued over others, where Saudi labour market demand prioritises particular subject areas, subsequently providing positional advantage (see section 5.5.3). This section, however, focuses on subject area in the relation to potentially gendered choices and the role of cultural capital. Existing literature suggests that subject choice could be affected by cultural capital and gendered expectations (Onsman, 2011; Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016; HKS, 2019; Zhang, 2019). It has also been shown that mother's expectations and occupational field could be particularly influential in both male and female decisions around education (Vleuten *et al.*, 2018), although research has also shown that the influence of the mother

is particularly strong in daughter's education decisions (Attansio and Kaufmann, 2014). It was therefore important to explore such factors in the current study, to determine whether the choices that individuals made in relation to subject, and subsequently, their labour market outcomes, were impacted by gender factors.

As shown in Chapter Five, there was some distinction between the types of subjects selected for PhDs, with those studying Biology relating their choice particularly to a passion or love for the subject (sixteen compared to nine in Management). Management, on the other hand, was associated more strongly with an interest or suiting someone's personality (fourteen compared with three for Biology), or the receipt of good grades in the subject area (six participants, compared with one for Biology). In terms of gender differences, for those who cited a passion for their subject areas, there was a relatively even gender split. Of the sixteen Biology graduates, eight were males and eight were females. Of the Management graduates, five were males and four were females. The fact that these participants had been driven by a passion to do the subject and had then achieved what they had hoped, might indicate that both males and females were able to do what they wanted without restriction. Whilst we cannot rule out the potential role of other variables here in ability to achieve and move forward with their passion, such as socialisation and class, for instance, what we see initially is that both genders were able to continue with a subject which they loved. Furthermore, looking at the responses of the female participants, in particular, it was shown that several again had been especially encouraged to pursue their passion for their subject:

> I loved it when I was younger, and I always loved watching things about animals and operations and things like that. My family knew how strong my interest was in this and the things they did really encouraged it – they would take me to museums, buy me books on biology, and so I grew up with this (Amal).

> My mum was a teacher, and my mum's friend is a teacher, and from when I was very young, they would always write little notes and encouragement saying that they hoped one day I would be a doctor. This stayed in my mind (Reem).

It might be argued that such experiences may still be influenced by culture and socialisation and expectations for different genders, and thus, in such situations, it may be that gender expectations and cultural capital shape subject and course choices (Zhang, 2019). It should be noted, for instance, that Biology might be considered a suitable or acceptable subject for females in Saudi Arabia and is a very popular subject

of choice as a result, and indeed this is something that several participants shared. As Houd explained:

> When I talked to my family about my choice of Biology, they agreed that it was a very good subject to do and they said that I would be able to find a job anywhere.

Nonetheless, research such as that of Onsman (2011) and HKS (2019) suggests that women are more likely to be enrolled in subjects like education, social sciences and the humanities. The very fact that the current study focused on Biology and Management was because of the popularity of these subjects for both subject areas in Saudi Arabia over a period of five years, for both males and females. The popularity of Biology for women, being a science subject, seems to challenge these studies' findings. Furthermore, the current study found no evidence of women being prohibited from studying particular subjects, as indicated in previous studies (Alfalih, 2016). Whilst this may have been because the participants were unwilling to share such suggestions, it may also indicate that there have been positive changes in recent years which have enabled women to exercise more choice in their education and subsequently in their labour market and career outcomes. Indeed, some universities have introduced dedicated programmes for women in subjects which they had not previously studied, such as electrical and computer engineering (see Effat University, 2020).

In terms of those who expressed the motivation to do the subject they had for their PhD because of their strong performance in the subject or the belief that it suited their personality, fourteen were in Management and three in Biology. There was an even split, however, of males and females for Management, with the three Biology graduates all being male. Six participants mentioned receiving good grades and therefore continuing with the subject and of these, five were studying Management and one Biology. The majority of these participants were female, with only one male in Management. Both of these motivations might arguably be more culturally driven, and it is not possible to rule out the potential role of social expectations and encouragement here.

Seven of the participants mentioned also being driven by labour market factors, such as the belief that their subject would provide them with better opportunities in the workplace. Six were in Management and one in Biology, with three males and four females. As one participant stated:

> I kept asking everyone inside and outside the university for advice on subjects, and what types of jobs and careers different subjects would lead to. People

> would always tell me that management would give me a job anywhere, in any sector, and in any place (Areej, Management).

Another interesting finding, however, is that four of the Biology graduates suggested that their choice had been the result of an inability to study the subject they had particularly wanted to study; in all four cases, this was medicine. This was the situation for one male, who simply explained that he had not achieved the grades he needed to study medicine (Adam), and three females. For Houd, as with Adam, this related to not achieving the required score to study medicine. Nabeela, however, stated that:

> Do you know, when I was studying before university, I got 97 per cent in my education, a very high percentage, and I decided that I wanted to be a Doctor. But there were circumstances which stopped me and I went for Biology instead. I am still continuing with my ambition to be a doctor (Nabeela).

As she later explained, at the time she made the decision she had only recently been married and therefore decided to change her field of study because medicine would take a lot of time and energy from her, and would be a big responsibility, which would be difficult for a married woman. She felt it would be better to invest her time in developing her family with her new husband. In this case, it was clear that Nabeela's responsibilities in marriage took precedent over her career choices, which may be related to her culture and expectations for women. There is some similarity here with the findings of both Afiouni (2014) and Moazam and Shekhani (2018) who suggest that expectations around marriage can particularly influence women's choices in relation to employment. There is also some similarity here with the issues raised earlier in relation to Ala's statement and the balancing of gendered roles and expectations when pursuing doctoral education. It is important to note, however, that Nabeela did not rule out the possibility of becoming a doctor at a later stage in her life or career. For another participant, Nora, it was also explained that she had wanted to pursue a career in medicine but had been unable to do so, and so had chosen to study Biology instead. She explained that she was offered a place in medicine in a university in a city far away (in Saudi Arabia) but she was unwilling to travel away from her family, and so this had prevented this option for her. At the time, Nora was not married and she explained that she did not like to be on her own away from her family. This particular situation might be more common for women in Saudi Arabia than men, and again, is potentially affected by gendered expectations for women. It is important to note, however, that the option to study the subject of her choice was made available to her, had she felt able to travel to another university.

7.3 The PhD and labour market experiences

Whilst it may be that human and cultural capital acquired through either a local or international doctoral qualification leads to enhanced opportunities within employment in the home country, it is important to explore whether or not the actual outcomes are perceived differently by men and women. Research has previously touched on some of the barriers and difficulties faced by women in the Saudi labour market, for instance (Naseem and Dhruva, 2017; Alfarran *et al*., 2018; Hennekam *et al*., 2018), as well as the additional responsibilities faced by women (Abu-Zaid and Al Tinawi, 2014; Abdul, 2017; Halawany *et al.,* 2017), which can impact on labour market outcomes. As shown in Chapter Three, research by Zhang (2019), for example, which examined the experiences of Chinese international students from a UK university, found that cultural capital could result in both gender benefits and constraints in employment (with highly gendered subjects impacting on career choices), and it was important to explore such issues in the context of Saudi Arabia. As discussed above, the role of subject of study has been previously touched on in relation to its potential impact on women in the Saudi labour market, but it has also been suggested that there is gender inequality in the Saudi labour market, with women encountering disadvantage and less favourable conditions than men (Alfalih, 2016). The current research therefore aimed to explore potentially gendered outcomes amongst the sample of national and international graduates, looking at early labour market outcomes in terms of occupation and the work environment and differential pay.

The findings also indicated in Chapter Five that, in relation to the sectors of the labour market, the majority of participants had secured employment in the public sector and underlined potential difficulties in accessing employment in the private sector (a large proportion of these were also in education). Important findings also emerged in relation to the different sectors of the Saudi labour market in terms of gender. Whilst there were even numbers of males and females in the public sector, with 21 each, as shown in Table 7.2, more women were employed in academia than men, with twenty women compared with fifteen men.

Occupation	**Total**	**Females**	**Males**
Academia – Assistant Professors, Co-Professors, Researchers	35	20	15
Public sector healthcare (hospitals)	3	1	2
Public sector education - teachers and heads	4	0	4
Private sector education - teacher	1	1	0
Private sector management	3	2	1
Private sector healthcare (hospitals)	2	0	2
Total	**48**	**24**	**24**

Table 7.2 Occupations of the research participants by gender

Existing literature indicates that women tend to show a preference for the public sector (Al Ghazzawi *et al.*, 2017), with explanations for this trend being related to perceived restrictions (*Ibid.*), and segmentation in the private sector (Alfarran *et al.*, 2018), as well as claims that segregated gender environments impact on women's employment opportunities (Afiouni, 2014; Alfalih, 2016). Furthermore, it was shown in Chapter Five that the conditions and workload in the private sector could be considered less desirable than the public sector. For the participants in the current research, preference for the public sector was evident amongst both males and females. The predominant explanation for this preference seemed to relate to the perception that it provided greater ability to balance work and domestic duties. Nine female participants, for instance, mentioned this in relation to caring and childcare responsibilities. Three female participants explained:

> The public sector suits me more because I can balance my job and look after my daughter. I have a babysitter for when I am at work, and then I return home and the babysitter leaves. When my daughter is a little older, I can send her to a nursery and my job will still be suitable for looking after her because of the hours I work (Afnan).

> Women work in the public sector because it is suitable for them, it suits their nature and the hours are good for them. Women have so many responsibilities, with children, cooking, cleaning, planning. Men can share some of these but women have more. So, women need to be careful and find something suitable so that they can balance work and their caring responsibilities. Some people are lucky because they have their parents to look after their kids (Ala).

> The work in academia is more suitable for me, because as a woman, I already have a lot of responsibilities. I am always thinking of my kids. I chose academia because I can go and come back early enough to pick up my children from school and spend the evening with them. It suits me more. Women always have responsibilities, these never go away for us (Iptisam).

The suitability of the public sector for women was also mentioned by one male participant:

> I have two sisters who work as teachers in the public sector. They chose the public sector as they are both married with families and in the public sector, they

> can work in the morning, or until 2pm, so they have more time to be with their families. So it works better for them with their families. The private sector is not like that (Ibrahim).

There is an assumption, then, as with many countries, that family and childcare responsibilities lie with the women, and therefore, for those who choose to work, it is important to find employment which enables a balance to be achieved. The impact of such factors on women's employment and career opportunities in relation to Saudi Arabia has been underlined in several other studies (Abu-Zaid and Al Tinawi, 2014; Afiouni, 2014; Abdul, 2017; Halawany *et al.,* 2017). In the current study, however, it was also shown that whilst the majority of males expressed preference for the public sector in terms of a love of education, teaching and research (eight males compared to three females), the suitability of the sector for family and caring responsibilities was not restricted to females, and in fact, three males expressed a preference for the public sector in relation to this. Hassan, for instance, who was currently working in the private sector, expressed a desire to work in the public sector because he felt that it would give him more time with his family:

> I want to work in the public sector as the private sector is very high pressure. My wife works too, and we have a son, and we have very little family time together because of the hours that I work.

Waleed also explained how working in the private sector had made it more difficult for him to care for his parents:

> I worked in that job for a year and a half, until I found my current job. I left the first position, which was in the private sector because I wasn't happy with the workload, and also it was very stressful and so I was extremely tired all of the time. I was working long hours at night, which wasn't suitable for me for caring for my sick parents. In the middle of the job, I also got married, so again the night work wasn't good for me.

Waleed explained that he had subsequently found work in the public sector which had allowed him to balance his family and caring responsibilities with his work life. Five of the participants had also taken on the PhD whilst continuing in their full-time roles (with permission from their employers). All five of these participants were males and discussed how PhD study alongside full-time work had been a challenge, but for Osama, he also discussed the difficulty of balancing these with the additional responsibilities of

family. Thus, whilst women largely take on the majority of domestic responsibilities, and this is the culturally accepted way of life, in the current study it was shown that men's employment opportunities and circumstances can also be affected by family and caring responsibilities, which has been overlooked in existing literature. Furthermore, it was suggested that the appreciation and respect shown to women who achieve doctoral qualifications and high-status occupations can be heightened by the fact that they have to balance so many responsibilities. As Areej explained in relation to her PhD:

> Because women have more responsibilities than men, I am a mother and look after the kids, this is a big job, so my husband and my family appreciate what I have done so much more, because I had a baby and I still did the PhD.

It was also noted, however, that the additional responsibilities faced by women can negatively impact on their abilities to work at all, thus highlighting the need for the development of childcare facilities:

> Women in Saudi Arabia are in the labour market less than men because they face a lot of challenges. They stay with their children; a lot of women don't have anyone to look after their children. So, we should open more nurseries so that more women can be part of the Saudi labour market (Amal).

There was therefore a mixed perception of the roles and responsibilities held by women in society and the impact that it could have on labour market outcomes. There seemed to be some consensus, however, that the family and associated responsibilities played an important role in women's labour market choices and outcomes (although, as shown, the impact on males should not be overlooked).

Whilst family and domestic responsibilities seemed to be the most important influential factor amongst the women in the current study in relation to their employment, there was some recognition of the importance of segregated environments, as noted in the literature (Alfalih, 2016). Houd, for instance, who explained that she personally had not experienced any difficulties related to gender segregation, and had been brought up in a family where her Dad had taught her that there was no difference between girls and boys, mentioned other women she knew who had encountered particular constraints:

> Working in a mixed gender hospital, I know some girls who have not been able to stay in their job when they get married as their husbands do not want them in

> a mixed gender environment. Or some people's fathers do not want them to either.

In some parts of the public sector, the segregated environments provide a more acceptable environment for women and indeed it was only female participants (three) in the study who mentioned any preference for the segregated work environment. As the following quotations indicate, several female participants stated that they liked the segregated gender environment in the academic sector:

> We don't have mixed gender at the university, but I don't want to work with men anyway. I am more comfortable working with women (Sara).

> We have communication with men through the phone or through projects, but we are not in a mixed gender environment, so it does not affect me at all. I knew when I applied to the university that it was not a mixed gender environment (Asil).

> I prefer not to be in mixed gender environments (Maha).

It should be noted that all of the above participants were graduates from Saudi universities, and so this preference might have reflected their lack of experience of mixed gender environments, in comparison with the UK graduates. For Marad, for instance, his experience of mixed gender environments during international study had been an important experience for him and led to his wife also studying alongside him abroad. As he explained:

> From my perspective, I don't have any problems, I see it as a normal thing to mix with women as there were a lot of women in my office when I was studying. Seeing these women studying, I realised that my wife was not getting the full benefit from the international experience, and so that is why I suggested that she study too.

One participant, Sara, however, was well travelled and therefore may have encountered many mixed gender environments. She stated that this was simply personal preference and she could be herself more amongst women. This may reflect cultural factors, or more personal circumstances, but Sara did not explain her answer further here.

Not all universities are completely segregated, however, and whilst there are separate buildings where males and females work, regular meetings are held where males and females mix either face-to-face, telephone or online. In fact, Mousa stated:

> Because of mixed gender environments in the university, this makes the university. Because of this diversity, we have more creativity.

The current research also found that mixed gender environments were perceived positively by the majority of participants, with 34 participants, both male and female, discussing positive aspects of mixed gender environments and the opportunities they could provide:

> I work in a mixed gender environment and my boss is a man. He treats every man and woman in the company the same way and treats everyone with respect (Ashwaq).

> The mixed gender environment is very healthy and when men and women work together, they produce good things, and they make everything productive (Sumaya).

Interestingly, more of the male participants cited the benefits of mixed gender environments, with twenty males (ten UK graduates and ten Saudi graduates) compared with fourteen females (nine UK graduates and five Saudi graduates).

Another attraction of the public sector for women could be the equal pay for both genders, as explained by Anood:

> Women in the Saudi labour market, especially in the public sector, are equal with men in terms of pay. But in relation to the private sector, there is a difference. Sometimes, even though it depends on the company, they pay women less than men, but also sometimes more. It just depends on the owner, as they are not guided by the government like the public sector is.

This quotation highlighted two important issues which seemed to be supported by other participants in the study; first, the provision of equal pay between men and women in the public sector and second, lack of gender pay equality in the private sector. 32 of the participants, the majority of whom worked in the public sector, discussed the equal pay

between men and women in relation to both pay and annual bonuses. In terms of pay, for instance, it was stated by both men and women that:

> In the system within the public sector in the Saudi labour market, women and men receive the same salary. Equality has been achieved (Eman).

> There isn't any difference through labour law between men and women in the public sector in terms of pay. They are identical in the university, I know this because I work in one (Nasar).

> Men and women are exactly the same in the job place in the public sector in terms of scholarships and rights. Me and my husband are very similar. We both work in the public sector and there isn't any difference between us (Iptisam).

> In terms of the public sector, we are equal in terms of pay and annual bonuses (Hind).

This seemed to emphasise the fair treatment of men and women in the public sector in relation to pay, and as mentioned, this seemed to be a significant factor in terms of preference for the sector. As Anood's quotation showed the private sector has not yet reached the same level of gender pay equality. Again, this was an issue mentioned by both men and women in the study:

> …in the private sector, there isn't any similarity in pay between men and women. I hope this is addressed sooner rather than later so that there can be more women in the private sector, so that they can further develop this sector in the Saudi labour market (Hind).

> There isn't equal pay for women in the private sector, so women leave the sector quickly. One of my family was working in a job for only six months but she left because she felt that the unequal pay was not fair (Ahmed).

One difference which did emerge, however, in terms of experiences relating to pay whilst in their jobs, was that of maternity leave. Six female participants talked about the need to take maternity leave from their work to have their children. Whilst the women did not discuss in detail the impact of maternity leave on a personal level or their return to work, they did talk about the impact in terms of pay. Asil, for example, explained that:

> My son needed me in the first year as it is the most important year for children, so I took the first year as maternity leave, and for this, I had a quarter of my salary.

The other five participants also discussed receiving a quarter of their salary during maternity leave, which is standard maternity pay from the government. Whilst there are some important insights in terms of pay, the implications here require further exploration, as do the experiences of maternity leave on women on a personal and career level, as well as gender differences in promotion opportunities in the public sector or universities.

7.4 Perceptions of future employment opportunities in the KSA

The findings from the study have highlighted important insights into the positions of men and women in relation to the Saudi labour market and the potential role played by the PhD in enhancing opportunities. It has also underlined some of the constraints which can impact on individuals, and how these may result from gendered ideologies and cultural expectations. It is important to be aware, however, of the impact that recent changes have been having in the country in relation to gender (Hennekam *et al.*, 2018), and how the participants viewed these in relation to their labour market choices and opportunities. Research has suggested, for instance, that whilst there is still some way to go to achieve gender equality in the country (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013; Al-Bakr *et al*., 2017; Hennekam *et al*., 2018), there have been important developments in recent years, and women have especially viewed many of the recent changes positively (Al-Bakr *et al.,* 2017). The perceptions of the participants with regards to such developments were therefore explored in further detail.

7.4.1 Perceptions of change in the country

Whilst not asked directly about the developments that have been taking place in the country, many of the participants drew attention to this issue in their interviews. It was evident in the responses that there had been many recent and positive changes which had opened up opportunities for women to work in more varied roles across the whole labour market. Fifteen participants (six male and nine female) stated that women could now work in many different sectors and fields. The following quotations provide some examples:

> Nowadays in Saudi, the situation for women is much better. Women in Saudi Arabia love working. Before, they would concentrate on finding jobs within

> education, but now they work in banks, customer service and marketing as well (Nabeela).
>
> …women are able to work in all fields now, in every aspect of society, and public and private. And women also receive scholarships, just like men now, and they receive the same conditions as the men, they are very equal in that way (Ashwaq).
>
> Before, women were always planning to be teachers. I have two sisters and my wife; they are all teachers. That was the only place, education, that women worked. But everything has changed, I see women working in all sectors. Several women in my family are now working in finance. So, women are looking outside of education to finance, marketing, management. They are going to companies instead of just education (Michel).

In general, amongst participants in the current study, there was a very positive response to the situation of women within the labour market in recent times, as a result of the many changes that have been taking place in Saudi Arabia. Twenty-six participants, for instance, mentioned positive changes in the country in relation to gender, with reference to the work of Vision 2030, the lifting of restrictions on women driving, and the increasing numbers of mixed gender environments, all of which may have impacted on the largely positive experiences of the participants in the current study:

> This is the era of empowering women; this is the right time now. Everything is open for women; they can work everywhere (Ala).
>
> Before, women could not work because there weren't a lot of women working, especially in the private sector. But after change happened, they can work in the private sector, in places like malls. I drive and my husband bought me a car. I am so happy with how things have changed recently. I am looking forward to everyone seeing Saudi as the best country in the world (Hind).

Changes relating to education were also discussed, supporting the positive developments highlighted in the literature (see Chapters Two and Three), as well as in healthcare and politics:

> We have rights like men, the right to receive healthcare for example, for men and women is similar. The residents in Saudi and their family also get healthcare (Afnan).

> Women, before, were just advisers in the council [the Shura Council], but today they are members (Sara).

The Shura Council, also known as the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia and the Majlis ash-Shura (the Shura Council, 2021), is a formal advisory body of the KSA. This also seems to support the claims of Melius (2017) mentioned previously with regards to women's increasing active involvement in councils.

In line with more recent research such as that of Varshney (2019), then, there was a general optimism around the many changes that have taken place in Saudi Arabia to improve the employment circumstances of women. It is important to remain aware, however, that change takes time. There was some awareness in participant responses of the slow pace of change:

> Men work more than women absolutely, but with Vision 2030, everything changed. Women can work everywhere, and there are so many more women working. It is not quite as much as men, as this will take time, but there are a lot more women in the labour market now (Jamil).

> Women now drive cars, for three years now, so we need more time for everyone in society to learn to drive, as this is something new and everything takes a while to get used to (Areej).

As with many countries in the world where women's rights have significantly improved, inequalities still remain, especially within the labour market. In the UK, for instance, where women have had many more rights than those of women in Saudi Arabia for some time, women still receive lower pay than their male counterparts, with the gender pay gap being cited most recently at 8.9 per cent in the UK with little change since 2018 (Office for National Statistics, 2019). This lower pay relating to gender, however, may be more difficult in a country like Saudi Arabia, where pay - in the public sector - is linked to qualifications (Majmaah University, 2019). As has already been mentioned, for instance, the responses of the participants seemed to indicate that men and women receive equal pay in the public sector.

7.4.2 Entrepreneurial activity

Entrepreneurial activity was another area where potential gender issues emerged in the study. Chapter Five showed that many of the participants in the study either had their own business alongside their job, or were planning to set one up, and this was especially the case for women. As Habah explained:

> The person who works in the public sector does not stay in their job all the time; they always have something plus their job. They can do consultancy work, we are not like the old generation, we look to have many incomes.

Twenty-three of the participants mentioned their own businesses in some form, with eleven expressing plans to open their own businesses (three non-specific, four in private consultancy, two in childcare, one in housing and one in clothing) and twelve stating that they already had businesses including restaurants, boutiques, salons and car wash companies. Of those who already had their own businesses, seven were females and five were males. Whilst numbers are perhaps not large enough here to draw conclusions about whether or not there are gender differences in relation to entrepreneurship, the findings did indicate that small businesses were considered important for women. The quotations below highlight some of the comments made here:

> Saudi women are very open minded and love working, and love to be independent. There are a lot of women, I am one of them, who love to have their own business in something that I love. For instance, I have my own salon because I love beauty and also in my salon, my friend shares some space and does her own business, she does gems for women. See how we like to have our own businesses (Habah).

> Women in Saudi, I think in the last ten years, women have been thinking about themselves more than before, they need to make themselves secure through their own job or business. My sister, for example, didn't have a job after her BA, and then she opened a nursery of her own, and it is a fantastic business, and this is something that we need in Saudi (Afnan).

> Women in general naturally love children, and I love children, I have four kids, so this made me think about doing a small business, especially as I was a housewife. We made a small salon just for children (Ala).

The comments above seem to indicate a general trend towards business and work which perhaps stems from women's increasing opportunities within the world of work. As Afnan stated, 'women are thinking about themselves more than before', and it may be that this ability to act on impulses and desires has come from greater opportunities and empowerment. For Afnan, the positive changes that have taken place in the country had, in her opinion, also led to a change in the way that women think, and what they feel they are capable of doing, leading to greater levels of entrepreneurship here. This particular issue is thus deserving of additional research to further investigate the extent to which gender may influence entrepreneurial activity and provide further support for these initial insights.

7.5 Differences between women

The current study has highlighted important findings in relation to gender differences, but it is essential to acknowledge, as discussed in Chapter Three, the role of both women's agency with regards to employment and careers, and the potential differences *between* women. First, as the literature indicated, there is a tendency for gender relations in Saudi Arabia to be viewed negatively, with men viewed predominantly as oppressors and women as subordinates, but this stereotypical assumption should be avoided, as it is largely inaccurate (Alqahtani, 2015). The examples highlighted above, for instance, which discussed supportive fathers, and in particular, supportive Dads who encouraged their daughters to pursue education to its highest level, provide some evidence to contradict such assumptions. This extended to the search for employment opportunities:

> When I found a job in a different city to the one I live in, I found the first one who supported me to move there was my dad. He helped me to move there, find a house and settle down. Without my dad, I just couldn't have done this. He helped me enormously and I am so grateful for that (Bashara).

It was clear from the responses that there was a feeling of support from males in general. The male participants in the study also discussed their opinions about women in the workplace, and it was clear from the responses that they were very supportive of females:

> When my sister finished her studies, she asked my advice about what to do because I had more experience and knowledge of the Saudi labour market. She asked me about where the best place to apply would be with her qualifications. I

> helped her and encouraged her to apply to universities, schools and hospitals. I wanted her to get a good job and be an independent woman (Ali).

Furthermore, many of the women in the study discussed elements of their relationships with their husbands, which also seem to challenge such claims and indicate greater levels of agency than suggested in the literature. Iptisam, Manal and Khalood, for example, discussed the joint decisions that had been made between husband and wife in relation to international study:

> My husband did it all with me. We did the Master's degree together and the PhD together, we encouraged each other (Manal).

> My husband also studies medicine, so we made the decision together to go abroad to study…so in some ways you could say that he influenced me (Iptisam).

> When I studied the Masters, my husband and I decided that we would stay here for the MA and PhD…My husband influenced me too as we decided to study together, and we made the decision to go abroad together (Khalood).

Such examples challenged stereotypical assumptions around gender in the country. It may be, however, that in this particular sample, the women had come from particularly supportive families or had the cultural capital to be able to pursue PhD study and subsequently to secure high-status employment, or they may have come from cultures which adhere less strongly to practices of gender segregation (Altamimi, 2014). Second, differences between women also need to be acknowledged. Different communities and families, for instance, vary in their beliefs and practices, and these may impact on individual experiences differently (Altamimi, 2014). Of those who mentioned the importance of family support in their decision to do a PhD, eight had travelled abroad for study, and four had studied in their home country. This might indicate that females who have been brought up in cultures where education is valued and encouraged for females is especially conducive to international education, and there is some indication of this in previous research, as touched on above (Van Mol, 2021).

7.6 Conclusions

This chapter aimed to explore the role that gender plays, if any, in the labour market outcomes of PhD graduates who have studied both at home and abroad. This gender aspect was not explored by Bourdieu (1986) but in the current study emerged as an

important factor in relation to labour market outcomes. Whilst the PhD and subsequent cultural capital can provide enhanced opportunities in employment, for instance, there is evidence that employment outcomes have been felt differently by men and women. There was some suggestion, for instance, that the choices made in relation to PhD study might be affected by gender in terms of influences (with women more likely than men to be influenced by employer requirements, family members and family responsibilities). In relation to scholarships, too, it was argued that whilst men have previously provided experiences for their wives to study alongside them through their scholarships, thus confirming the claims of Jamjoom and Kelly (2013), educated women can also be seen to be providing opportunities for their husbands and male family members to study through the requirement for guardians. There was also some indication that international study might open up further opportunities in relation to the labour market - for both males and females - where participants were happier or more comfortable working in both mixed and non-mixed gender environments.

It was shown that women's choices with regards to employment were particularly affected by family and childcare responsibilities (supporting existing research by Abu-Zaid and Al Tinawi, 2014; Abdul, 2017; Halawany *et al.,* 2017), although the current study showed that acknowledging the impact on men is also important here. In addition, choices could be affected by pay and the organisation of work environments (particularly in terms of segregated or mixed gender workplaces). The current findings also showed that there was some distinction between labour market sectors, however, as it could be argued that within the private sector, in particular, gender affects the value of the PhD within employment, with women being disadvantaged, especially in terms of pay. In line with the claims of Afiouni (2014), the importance of agency was also evident, especially in relation to entrepreneurial activity. Establishing businesses alongside occupations has proved important for both men and women, but especially so for women, and it has been shown that this is perhaps a result of positive changes which have led to a change in thinking amongst women, emphasising how structure can impact on agency, but also how agency may then also be a force for structural change. The findings also questioned the assumed subordinate roles of women, with evidence of examples that challenged stereotypical assumptions. In addition, there was a tentative suggestion that cultures which supported female education and supportive families could be particularly conducive to international study for women.

The chapter has, then, underlined important factors surrounding gender and PhD study in relation to labour market experiences and opportunities. In particular, it seemed that occupational choices may be affected by the tension between the desire to pursue a

career and employment in an area of interest, such as academia, and the constraints surrounding what is acceptable in terms of family life. Such tension seems to be the backdrop to a situation in which general policy in the country appears to be moving towards greater equality of gender opportunity, breaking away from very stark inequalities. These are important insights in relation to gender differences in the KSA. The next chapter summarises the findings from the study and highlights the contributions made.

Chapter Eight:

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the different perceptions, experiences and outcomes of doctoral graduates, from Saudi and UK universities, in relation to the Saudi labour market. The research was informed by a critical realist approach and utilised a qualitative research methodology, drawing on 48 interviews with UK and Saudi PhD graduates in Biology and Management. The research was influenced by Bourdieu's (1986) contributions on cultural capital and work which had extended his ideas to the global educational context (Kim, 2011; 2016; Jarvis, 2019). The research sought to examine the value of international doctoral education in the Saudi labour market context and to do this by drawing directly on the experiences of the PhD graduates themselves. Important insights were provided into previously under-researched issues in the field, including the employment and career outcomes (rather than solely experiences and challenges) of international students; the experiences of doctoral students, as opposed to more commonly explored undergraduate experiences and a focus on Saudi international students within the UK context, rather than the more frequently explored US context.

8.1 Summary of research findings and contributions

The research focused on three core research questions which aimed to examine graduate perceptions of the value of the PhD in the Saudi labour market, but with the influence of the critical realist perspective, it was important to explain the processes behind these outcomes, as well as the impact of mechanisms such as the international status of the PhD and gender on labour market outcomes. Through interpretation of the graduates' own accounts of the labour market outcomes and trajectories, it was possible to explore how their experiences and outcomes are shaped by individual actions, as well as social and cultural factors.

8.1.1 How do Saudi doctoral graduates view the PhD qualification and experience in relation to their labour market preferences and perceived positioning, and how have those views changed since their graduation?

The intention here was to gain insights into how the participants initially viewed the PhD, what it would give them and whether such perceptions were confirmed or challenged by

the outcomes. Graduates' motivations for PhD study were shown to relate to a range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intellectual development, for instance, was cited by over half of the sample and was particularly mentioned by UK graduates and those working in academia. The PhD being driven by the perceived need for professional development was equally cited by the graduates, and was particularly related here to existing employment, job offers or the enhancement of career opportunities. Culturally specific processes, in relation to employer requirements of the graduates, stood out as especially significant. Whilst previous literature has highlighted professional development in relation to motivations for international education, in terms of career advancement (Almotery, 2009; Brooks and Waters, 2011; British Council, 2015; Nghia, 2015; Packwood *et al*., 2015; King and Songhi, 2017), little research has touched on this latter factor. The findings also showed that this drive for professional development was targeted specifically at one sector of the Saudi labour market; the public sector. Institutional and cultural factors, especially in relation to scholarships and the desire to contribute to the development of the country, were also important, and underlined the interaction between agency and structure in graduate decisions.

The research also studied the sources of motivations for PhD study. For Bourdieu (1986), for instance, the reproduction of existing class relations occurs within education through the transmission of cultural capital from parents to children, with individuals from higher classes achieving greater academic success than those from lower classes. Thus, it might be expected that fewer graduates from lower social classes would be engaging in PhD study. The majority of the sample was indeed from families with high occupational class or high level of education, thus indicating the lived disposition of habitus, and transfer of cultural capital here, subsequently supporting Bourdieu (1986). As shown in Chapter Five, however, there were five participants from families of lower occupational classes and a quarter of the participants were from less educated families. Thus, it might be argued that doctoral study is not restricted to higher class, highly educated families. It was also indicated that even graduates from lower occupational classes travelled abroad for doctoral study, even though it has previously been indicated that this is predominantly the domain of middle-class families (Holloway *et al*., 2012). This was evidenced with four of the five lower occupational class families being international graduates. However, individuals from less educated families tended to be from higher occupational classes, and those in lower classes were often highly educated, with only one participant being from a family of low occupational class and low educational background. This provided some suggestion that having at least one of these attributes facilitates educational success and may lead to the transfer of cultural capital from parents to children, further supporting Bourdieu's claims.

Looking at perceived benefits from doctoral study, initial indications were that the PhD was valuable in securing employment. All participants were in secure employment and had experienced short transitions from education to work in the majority of cases. Looking further, however, it appeared that there were wider factors to consider. The majority of the international sample were on employer scholarships, and most of the Saudi graduates had also been required to do the PhD by their employers during their employment. Thus, rather than the PhD providing job security, it seemed that having a job facilitated PhD study which subsequently enhanced employment outcomes for graduates. Furthermore, three of the participants directly stated that the PhD had not helped them to secure employment although other forms of capital gained during the PhD - such as EGCC - had proved advantageous.

The majority of the participants worked in the public sector and whilst this could partly be attributed to the sample, as mentioned, efforts were made to ensure diversity, but there was also some indication that whilst PhDs were particularly valued in the public sector, this was not the case in the private sector (although it is worth noting that many of these were in education settings). Such findings support existing literature (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016; Nannapaneni *et al.,* 2019), but the current research went further to explore the reasons behind this. Scholarships, for instance, which have a direct impact on employment outcome and were shown to represent a key driver for employment in the academic sector, are increasingly prevalent amongst emerging universities in the country for the development of the education sector. These universities have particularly become an important source of employment for women in the country. The private sector was also found to ascribe less value to the PhD than the public sector, tending to consider individuals with PhDs as overeducated or overqualified and subsequently expensive employees.

Recognition of such labour market differences in perceptions of the PhD were found to influence graduate preferences for the public sector. Participants drew attention to such views of PhDs and suggested that the private sector was less accessible as a result. In addition, the private sector was considered less desirable due to perceived lack of stability, with several participants drawing on direct personal experiences here. The public sector, in contrast, was viewed as more secure, more suitable for those with families, better for balancing work and family life and offering more favourable pay and conditions. Thus, agency appeared to be particularly affected here by structural factors which impacted on employment choices and outcomes, resulting from barriers, constraints or opportunities related to different labour market sectors.

Further contributions from the current study were made in relation to entrepreneurship, for whilst previous literature has underlined the encouragement of entrepreneurial activity in Saudi Arabia (Kattan *et al.,* 2016; Islam *et al*., 2018; Choukir *et al*., 2019; Sabri and Thomas, 2019), it has not previously been shown that PhD-educated individuals with full-time positions often seek supplementary entrepreneurial activities alongside their employment. The findings indicated that many of the participants, for instance, had businesses alongside their employment or were planning to set them up. Overall, it appeared that the desired outcomes of the PhD had been achieved for the majority of the participants, in relation to professional development, but also personally and intellectually.

8.1.2 In what ways does the international status of the PhD impact on graduate perceptions and experiences of the value of the PhD in relation to early labour market careers?

As noted previously by Jarvis (2019), whilst research has explored the advantages that international study can provide for graduates, there is relatively little available research which examines the ways in which such global benefits are applied in the home countries of graduates on their return. Jarvis (2019) examined this in relation to the Korean context, but there has been no research which has done the same in relation to Saudi Arabia. The findings from the current study addressed this important gap, looking at how global cultural and social capital are used and perceived in relation to the Saudi labour market, and drawing specifically on doctoral graduates' experiences, applying the work of Bourdieu (1986) to the global educational context. The research was distinct from Jarvis (2019), however, not simply in its focus on Saudi Arabia, but also in looking specifically at the experiences of doctoral graduates, and in terms of the findings which highlighted the acquisition of different forms of global and social capital from international study, but which excluded objectified cultural capital, as this did not appear to be distinguishable from embodied global cultural or social capital in the way that Jarvis (2019) had envisaged.

The international PhD was considered to provide added value for graduates through institutionalised global cultural capital which provided an edge in terms of positional competition in the Saudi labour market. Around two thirds of the sample related the international PhD to employment outcomes, stating that they had gained employment as a result of it, that employers had valued it, or that the international qualification specifically had been required by their employers. Institutional cultural capital was also

related to reputation of institution from which the qualification was obtained, particularly in terms of ranking of institution, especially for the international graduates. Ranking was believed to positively influence the perceived value of the qualification within the labour market context, especially within academia. Thus, participants felt that those with international qualifications could be in a more privileged position in the labour market.

Of importance in relation to the international PhD was the acquisition of embodied global cultural capital, which included gaining experience and knowledge of different cultures, English language skills, acquiring knowledge of different education systems and the development of the global identity. English language skills were considered especially valuable for employment by nearly half of those who cited the additional benefits of international doctoral study. In relation to global identity, in line with the work Jarvis (2019), and his claims around authentic embodied global cultural capital, the majority of the international doctoral graduates not only gained global cultural capital, but they also found the process of this acquisition meaningful on a deeper level than simply gaining access to the labour market. Rather, they felt they had developed themselves on a personal level and in a way that had impacted on their whole lives. Importantly, they had a greater level of confidence and contentment or ease with interacting with those from other countries and cultures, which would subsequently provide further benefits for their employment and careers in the future. Thus, this personal development could be translated into labour market outcomes through the perceptions of employers who value such personality traits.

Looking at global social capital, previous research has shown that whilst international networks can provide opportunities for employment, for individuals returning to their home country, the lack of local established networks could actually result in disadvantage (Jarvis, 2019). In line with this, the current study has shown that whilst expectations of international PhD study may be high in relation to labour market benefits, the process is complex, as local networks are also significant, underlining the importance of the balance between local and global capital. The maintenance of networks and relationships established during PhD study in relation to gaining opportunities for collaboration, publications, information sharing, business development, as well as facilitating links for placements of students, however, were found to be particularly important for the international graduates.

Also significant was the interaction of different forms of global cultural and social capital in relation to labour market advantage, with participants suggesting that value was related not just to the qualification, but also the English language, the skills and

knowledge gained and the connections and networks. As shown in Chapter Six, combined, these factors placed international students in a more competitive position. Overall, the findings provided important insights in terms of how capital works in relation to the labour market, according to the participants' perceptions, as summarised below in Figure 8.1, with the model indicating the most significant factors to emerge and the ways in which they interact to provide advantage for international graduates.

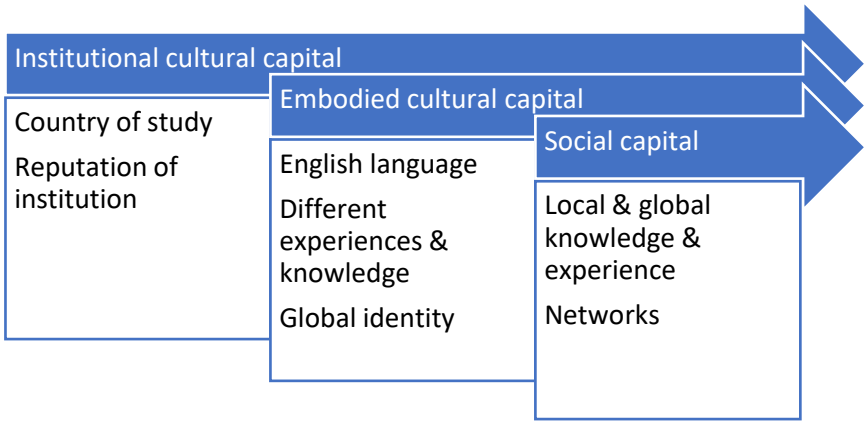

Figure 8.1 A summarized model of capital in relation to the Saudi labour market

Also important is the ways in which capital works in relation to the Saudi labour market. Figure 8.2 presents the different considerations that employers may make when comparing prospective candidates with both national and international qualifications. It shows that there are similar factors that may be considered with relation to both national and international candidates, but with differences depending on the priority given to these different factors by the employers and the main additional advantages for the international graduates appearing to relate to embodied capital.

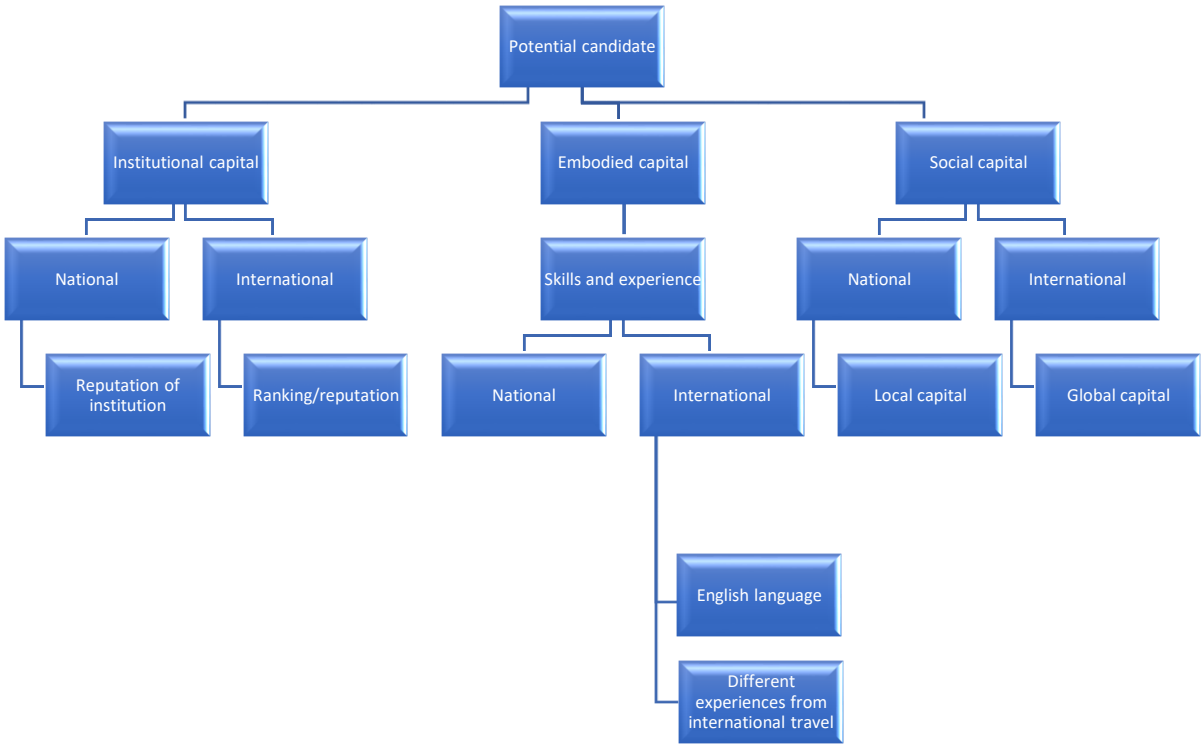

Figure 8.2 How capital works in relation to the Saudi labour market

8.1.3 To what extent does gender impact on the labour market experiences, perceptions and prospects of PhD graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia?

In addition to applying Bourdieu's (1986) framework to the international context, the study also explored an element which Bourdieu had not addressed; gender. Choices about PhD study were shown to be affected by gender, with women more likely than men to be influenced by employer requirements, family members and family responsibilities. Interestingly, whilst the literature had highlighted the important role of mothers in influencing daughter's decisions relating to education (Van Mol, 2021), the current study underlined the particular significance of fathers, especially for female graduates. It was also found that women could be more likely than males to engage in PhD study where it

is part of secure employment. Decisions around employment were influenced by family and childcare responsibilities, especially for women, but there was also evidence of family and domestic duties impacting on employment for males. This is an important finding in a country with assumed rigid gender roles and expectations. Indeed, such stereotyped assumptions were also challenged in the examples of several of the women, particularly in relation to decision-making relating to study, where women appeared to exercise choice jointly with their husbands. Furthermore, in relation to education more generally, whilst previous research suggests that women study specific subjects which limit their opportunities in employment (Onsman, 2011; Al-Bakr, 2017), or that certain subjects are prohibited for women (Alfalih, 2016), the current study's findings challenge these and indicate that such claims may now be outdated.

Also significant in the choices made in relation to employment were pay and the organisation of work environments (particularly in terms of segregated or mixed gender workplaces), which led to a greater focus on public sector employment amongst women. In relation to pay, for instance, it was shown that there is equal pay between men and women in the public sector in contrast to the private sector. Public sector preference was also partly related to the gender segregated work environment, however, mixed gender environments were viewed positively by the majority of participants. There was also some indication that international study might open up further opportunities in relation to the labour market - for both males and females - where participants were more comfortable working in mixed and non-mixed gender environments.

It seemed overall, then, that occupational choices for women in particular, could be affected by the tension between the pursuit of employment or career in a desired field and the constraints surrounding expectations in relation to family and domestic duties. Such tension appears to be the backdrop to a situation in the country as a whole where things are improving and where general policy seems to be moving towards greater equality of gender opportunity. It was evident that from the perceptions of the participants, for instance, there had been great strides forward in relation to gender equality. The majority of participants viewed women's position in the labour market in recent years positively, drawing on examples of positive changes in the country which have resulted in greater gender equality and continued developments within education, as well as more opportunities for women in relation to employment and - as evidenced in the current study - entrepreneurship. Combined with the aforementioned challenges to stereotypical assumptions surrounding gender relations in the country - family support for the pursuit of women's education, women providing opportunities for male partners and family members through scholarships, evidence of joint decision-making between

husband and wife around study, and males, as well as females, being influenced by family and caring responsibilities in their decisions regarding employment - it appeared overall that these positive developments had led to women exercising more freedom within education and in relation to subsequent employment and career outcomes.

In summary, then, the key findings from the study were that:

- In the Saudi context, professional development, alongside institutional and cultural factors play a significant role in motivating graduates to engage in PhD study, especially where the qualification is a requirement of previous positions held. There are potential gender differences here, with women being especially likely to engage in PhD study where it is a requirement of the employer. Intrinsic motivations, or personal and intellectual development, are also important drivers of PhD study.
- There is some support for Bourdieu's (1986) claims surrounding the reproduction of existing class relations through education, with the majority of the sample coming from high occupational classes and highly educated families. There were some exceptions, however, suggesting that PhD study – and indeed international doctoral study – is not purely the domain of middle-class families. Nonetheless, most graduates were from families who were either highly educated or higher class occupations, or both, which may indicate the transfer of cultural capital from parent to child in relation to education.
- Doctoral study leads to positive employment outcomes for individuals in the sample, especially in relation to public sector employment. Emerging universities have particularly become an increasingly important source of both education and employment for women in the country. In contrast, the private sector in Saudi Arabia is considered less accessible and less desirable than the public sector and appears to place less value on the PhD qualification, whether national or international.
- International graduates acquired forms of global institutionalised, embodied and social capital from the international PhD. The international PhD was especially perceived to place individuals in a privileged position in the labour market, providing a form of institutionalised global cultural capital, which was also related to ranking of institution. Considered equally important was the acquisition of embodied global cultural capital, with education abroad considered to enhance embodied cultural capital, including gaining knowledge and experience of different cultures, English language skills, knowledge of different education systems and the development of the global identity. International graduates, in

particular, cited the deep level of personal development from the international PhD which they believed could prove valuable in the labour market context. Whilst international networks were shown to be important, so too were local networks, in relation to employment. For international graduates, however, the maintenance of networks and relationships established during doctoral study were deemed particularly significant in the employment context and in terms of career development.

- Gender impacts on decisions surrounding PhD study and employment, which are related to gendered expectations and responsibilities. Choices also related to labour market structures and gender equality, particularly in relation to pay. There appears to be evidence, however, of major positive developments around gender in the country which have had an important impact on both education and employment for women. Furthermore, there has been some challenge to stereotypical gender relations in the country, demonstrating the importance of both agency and structure in the lives of women, and men, in Saudi Arabia.

8.2 Challenges and limitations of the research

It was important to be aware of the limitations of the study and to consider the impact of these upon the analysis. In terms of the current study, consideration needs to be given to the use of retrospective data in its research design. This was important, for instance, in terms of assessing graduates' motivations and perceptions of their outcomes. As the individuals were asked about their perceptions of their cultural capital and their value after things have happened, it may have been that people rationalised their capital in terms of their outcomes, particularly where their outcomes were not as successful as they had hoped or expected. Or it may have been that their recollection of their perceptions five years previously were limited because of the time gap. It was difficult to accurately determine the importance of these different forms of capital and their outcomes because the outcomes could dictate how the graduates perceived their level of capital and the quality of the capital that they had. Nonetheless, it was felt that the benefits of using this type of method and the findings it would yield outweighed the limitations here.

Furthermore, as noted in the methodology chapter, there are two important issues that emerged in relation to the sample which raise questions around its representativeness. First, the sample of participants in the current study tended to be from academia and many had a job prior to leaving the country for doctoral study. Second, the graduates seemed to come from a selective group of families with professional backgrounds, who

placed a lot of emphasis on education. Importantly, then, it was necessary to be aware that employment outcomes may not simply reflect the qualification and the cultural capital acquired during PhD study, but it is also possible that social standing and connections of those families may have been influential in employment outcomes. It is also worth stating here that with the sample largely working within the education sector, the differences between men and women may also be less pronounced than in other sectors. Further research might explore this. Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter Four, attempts were made to include as diverse a sample as possible, with PhD graduates from the private sector and from different occupations. Many of the participants also had previous experience of working within the private sector, which they could draw from in the interviews. It may be, then, that the sample simply reflects a more common tendency for PhD graduates to be employed within the public sector and academia.

Finally, in terms of challenges, it is worth mentioning that the global situation at the time of the fieldwork for the study – with the COVID-19 pandemic – had implications for the research. Initial plans had included face-to-face interviews being provided as an option to participants, where choice of interview format was deemed necessary to enhance participation in the study. Nonetheless, this did not appear to present a major challenge, as the ability to conduct interviews online via Skype enabled interviews to go ahead as planned, and may even have proved advantageous, in widening the group of participants who were willing to engage in the interviews. Many of the women who agreed to take part in the study, for instance, asked to use just audio Skype rather than visual Skype as a preference. It may be that had face-to-face interviews been the only option, these women would have been less likely to participate in the study.

8.3 Future research and implications

Whilst this research has aimed to tackle a range of issues, it has also shed light on other possible areas of research. As touched on above, for instance, it may be that the findings of the study reflect the largely academic sample and thus future research might aim to include participants from a different occupation sector for comparison. As shown in Chapter Seven, for example, whilst differences emerged in relation to gender, it was felt that these were perhaps less pronounced because of a largely academic sample, than perhaps might be indicated in a broader sample which includes more labour market sectors. Future research might develop this and look at gender differences in terms of wages, labour market inequalities or differences, and promotions, amongst national figures. This might indicate that females who have been brought up in cultures where education is valued and encouraged for females is especially conducive to international

education, and there is some indication of this in previous research, as touched on above (Van Mol, 2021). Again, additional research here would be beneficial in confirming such findings.

Similarly, in relation to gender, whilst important insights emerged in terms of pay, the implications here require further exploration, as do the experiences of maternity leave on women on a personal and career level. This also links with the need to better understand the experiences of women and career progression within academia. Whilst the public sector has been shown to be more accessible than the private sector of the labour market, particularly for women, what is less understood is the experiences of women once in the sector, the opportunities and barriers to career progression. The research also underlined the importance of entrepreneurial activity in recent years for women in particular. Previous research has shown, however, that actual numbers of female entrepreneurs are low (Kattan *et al.,* 2016). Further research might revisit these numbers through a large-scale study given the very recent opportunities and recent developments for women.

Research has also shown that employment returns for graduates are low in the KSA (Ministry of Labor and Social Development, KSA, 2016; OECD, 2018; HKS, 2019), which contrasts with the current study's findings, but the focus in existing studies has tended to be on undergraduates rather than doctoral students. The current findings do support existing research, however, which highlights the less accessible nature of the private sector (Ahmed, 2016; Alfalih, 2016; HKS, 2019). In addition, whilst this study has demonstrated important findings in relation to the interaction between local and global cultural capital, providing some support for the claims of Jarvis (2019) within the Saudi context, further exploration of this aspect which draws on a larger sample may yield additional insights. Furthermore, the creation of social capital with relevance to Saudi Arabia, outside of Saudi Arabia, through Saudi Student Societies was also found to provide important support during international study. Future research might explore the added value that such clubs can offer and whether they can provide networks which enhance labour market opportunities. Finally, the international participants from the current study reflected on their experiences of the existing scholarship system, but with recent changes to scholarships in 2019 (see Chapter Two), there may be additional insights to gain here. Future research could explore the impact of recent changes to the scholarships.

It is hoped that the findings from the study will be of use to policy makers and practitioners within higher education, funding councils and employers in the different labour market

sectors. The research indicated that gender inequality in relation to pay in the private sector, as well as less favourable conditions for those with families, could prevent some from entering the sector. It may be that government intervention here would assist in ensuring better circumstances and a more accessible environment, enabling more opportunities for both men and women to enter the different labour market sectors. It may also be that a basic level of pay for more qualified candidates could be introduced in the private sector to ensure that those educated to doctoral level are sufficiently reimbursed for their qualifications, although this may lead to further exclusion of PhD graduates from the private sector, where they are viewed as expensive employees. Again, government intervention, through working with the private sector and perhaps providing subsidies to encourage private sector employment of doctoral graduates, would be beneficial here and would subsequently bring benefits to the sector.

The research has shown that the international qualification can be particularly beneficial to doctoral graduates within the public sector and this may provide some validation of the importance of the generous scholarship system in place. It is hoped that the important work of the government in enabling and supporting Saudi students to engage in doctoral study abroad will continue, and the value that international graduates bring to the education sector in particular and the country as a whole, will be evident in the findings of this research. The research has equally shown how the UK experience for the majority of the international graduates was regarded positively and as such, this perhaps underlines the important relationship between the two countries and the value provided not just to Saudi Arabia in terms of educated graduates, but also the benefit to the UK of continued provision for Saudi graduates within higher education institutions.

Appendices

Appendix One:

Information Sheet and Consent form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

An investigation into the value of the PhD for Saudi graduates in relation to labour market outcomes: Exploring the experiences and perceptions of local and UK-qualified graduates

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish.

Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the purpose of this research project?

The aim of the research is to examine and compare the labour market experiences, outcomes and perceptions of Saudi PhD graduates educated in the UK and Saudi Arabia who seek or secure employment in Saudi Arabia.

2. Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited because you have graduated with a PhD in Biology or Management, either from the UK or Saudi Arabia, in the last five to ten years.

3. Do I have to take part?

No, your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, I will discuss the research project with you and ask you to sign a consent form. If you decide not to take part, you do not have to explain your reasons and it will not affect your legal rights. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate in the research project at any time, without giving a reason, even after signing the consent form.

4. What will taking part involve?

You will be asked to take part in an interview which should take between one and two hours. Interviews will be semi-structured, so there you will be asked certain questions but you are free to give as little or as much detail as you like, or to share any other relevant information that you feel is important, even if not asked about it. The interview will be recorded with your consent to ensure that all information is accurately recorded.

5. Will I be paid for taking part?

No, your participation is completely voluntary but also greatly valued.

6. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no direct advantages or benefits to you from taking part, but your contribution will help the researcher understand the experiences of Saudi PhD graduates and the value of the PhD in the Saudi labour market. This may be of value to the Saudi government, employers and higher education institutions, as well as future international and national Saudi students.

7. What are the possible risks of taking part?

There are no perceived risks of you taking part in the study on a physical or emotional level.

8. Will my taking part in this research project be kept confidential?

All information collected from (or about) you during the research project will be kept confidential and any personal information you provide will be managed in accordance with data protection legislation. Please see 'What will happen to my Personal Data?' (below) for further information.

9. What will happen to my Personal Data?

All personal data collected, such as your name, email address, phone number and Skype ID will not be shared with anyone and will be stored securely according to Cardiff University guidelines. Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation. Further information about Data Protection, including:

- your rights
- the legal basis under which Cardiff University processes your personal data for research
- Cardiff University's Data Protection Policy
- how to contact the Cardiff University Data Protection Officer
- how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office

may be found at https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection. Printed copies of the above-mentioned documentation and privacy notices are also available should you require them.

After conducting the interview, the researcher will anonymise all the personal data it has collected from, or about, you in connection with this research project, with the exception of your consent form. Your consent form will be retained for five years in accordance with University Records Retention Schedules and may be accessed by the researcher and, where necessary, by members of the University's governance and audit teams or by regulatory authorities. Anonymised information will be kept for a minimum of five years in accordance with the University Records Retention Schedules but may be published in support of the research project and/or retained indefinitely, where it is likely to have continuing value for research purposes. It will not be possible to withdraw any anonymised data that has already been published.

10. What happens to the data at the end of the research project?

The data collected during the research project will only be used by the researcher after the end of the research project. It will not be shared with anyone else but may be used in future publications by the current researcher.

11. What will happen to the results of the research project?

It is the researcher's intention to publish the results of this research project in academic journals and present findings at conferences. Participants will not be identified in any report, publication or presentation, although verbatim quotes will be used where there is no identifying information. A summary report of the findings from the study will be

available to all participants if desired (please inform the researcher if you wish to receive a copy).

12. What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain, or have grounds for concerns about any aspect of the manner in which you have been approached or treated during the course of this research, please contact Amnah Albehiji. If your complaint is not managed to your satisfaction, please contact supervisor in the School of Social Sciences.

If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for it.

13. Who is organising and funding this research project?

The research is organised by Amnah Albehiji and supervisor in the School of Social Sciences in Cardiff University. The research is currently funded by the Saudi Embassy.

14. Who has reviewed this research project?

This research project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the School Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University.

15. Further information and contact details

Should you have any questions relating to this research project, you may contact the researcher during normal working hours:

Name: Amnah Albehiji
Phone: 00966569043495
Email: wep_99@hotmail.com

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and a signed consent form to keep for your records.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Study Title: An investigation into the value of the PhD for Saudi graduates in relation to labour market outcomes: Exploring the experiences and perceptions of local and UK-qualified graduates

Purpose of Study: To explore the different labour market experiences, outcomes and perceptions of Saudi PhD graduates from the UK and Saudi Arabia.

		Please initial each box
1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or academic penalty.	☐
3	I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by designated individuals from Cardiff University where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to access my data.	☐
4	I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee.	☐
5	I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	☐
6	I understand how this research will be written up and published.	☐
7	I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	☐
8	I consent to being audio recorded.	☐
9	I understand how audio recordings will be used in research outputs.	☐
10	I agree to take part in the study.	☐
11	I agree for research data collected in this study to be given to researchers, including those working outside of the EU, to be used in other research studies. I understand that any data that leave the research group will be fully anonymised so that I cannot be identified.	☐
12	I agree for my personal data to be kept in a secure database for the purpose of contacting me about future studies.	☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix Two:

Interview schedules

Interview schedule for Saudi-educated Saudi PhD graduates

[Read or give consent form to informants and get signature]

GENERAL QUESTIONS

a) **Year PhD started:**

_____

b) **Year PhD finished:**

_____

c) **Subject area for PhD:**

_____

d) **University attended for PhD:**

_____

e) **Current age:** 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60

f) **Gender:** Male / Female

g) **Current employment status:**

_____

h) **Current occupation (if applicable):**

_____

i) **What are your parents' current occupations?**

	Occupation when respondent growing up	Current occupation	Changes in occupations?
Mother			
Father			

j) **What is the highest educational qualification attained by your parents?**

Mother: _____

Father: _____

k) **What is your parents' nationality?**

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Graduate perceptions of the PhD and positional competition in the labour market

1. Could you please tell me about your undergraduate and Masters degrees ?

2. What motivated you to do a PhD?

3. Did you consider doing a PhD abroad?

4. Were you influenced in your decision by anyone else to do the PhD? If so, who?

5. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of doing a PhD abroad?

6. Did you get the PhD/institution you wanted? Was it your first choice? Could you tell me a little bit about this?

7. Why did you choose your particular subject?

The impact of national and international PhDs on graduate capital and resources

8. Could you tell me a little about the process of getting a job since completing your PhD?

9. How long did it take to gain employment after completing the PhD?
10. Do you feel that the PhD experience has changed the kinds of jobs that you can apply for? In what sense do you feel that the experience made a difference?

Global institutionalised cultural capital

11. Has the PhD been a benefit or a disadvantage to you in terms of gaining employment? In what ways?

12. How do you think the PhD has been viewed by your employers? What do you think you brought to the job that was different from what an international PhD would have brought?

13. How are PhDs and international PhDs viewed in Saudi society?

Global embodied cultural capital

14. What skills or attributes do you feel you have gained from the PhD?

15. Which skills or attributes that you have gained from the PhD do you feel have been, or might be, particularly valued by employers in Saudi Arabia?

Global objectified cultural capital

16. Did you establish any friendships, connections or networks during your PhD study which you feel have been beneficial in terms of getting a job or furthering your employment? In what ways?

The impact of international doctoral study on graduate identities and future career plans

17. What do you feel are the most valued or meaningful aspects of your PhD education for you?

18. What would you say are the greatest opportunities you have gained from staying in the KSA to do your PhD?

19. Has the PhD changed how you feel about yourself, your capabilities and opportunities in terms of employment and the labour market? In what ways?

20. Have you faced any challenges since finishing your PhD?
21. What are your future plans for your career journey, and what factors do you think are important in helping you to achieve those?

22. Do you think gender has affected your PhD and employment experiences in any way? If so, in what ways?

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences with me. I am very grateful for your contribution to the study.

Do you have any questions? Or anything you would like to add that you feel we have not covered?

Interview schedule for Saudi-educated Saudi PhD graduates

[Read or give consent form to informants and get signature]

GENERAL QUESTIONS

a) **Year PhD started:**

_____

b) **Year PhD finished:**

_____

c) **Subject area for PhD:**

_____

d) **University attended for PhD:**

_____

e) **Current age:** 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60

f) **Gender:** Male / Female

g) **Current employment status:**

_____

h) **Current occupation (if applicable):**

_____

i) **What are your parents' current occupations?**

	Occupation when respondent growing up	Current occupation	Changes in occupations?
Mother			
Father			

j) **What is the highest educational qualification attained by your parents?**

Mother: _____

Father: _____

k) **What is your parents' nationality?**

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Graduate perceptions of the PhD and positional competition in the labour market

23. Could you please tell me about your undergraduate and Masters degrees ?

24. What motivated you to do a PhD?

25. Did you consider doing a PhD abroad?

26. Were you influenced in your decision by anyone else to do the PhD? If so, who?

27. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of doing a PhD abroad?

28. Did you get the PhD/institution you wanted? Was it your first choice? Could you tell me a little bit about this?

29. Why did you choose your particular subject?

The impact of national and international PhDs on graduate capital and resources

30. Could you tell me a little about the process of getting a job since completing your PhD?

31. How long did it take to gain employment after completing the PhD?
32. Do you feel that the PhD experience has changed the kinds of jobs that you can apply for? In what sense do you feel that the experience made a difference?

Global institutionalised cultural capital

33. Has the PhD been a benefit or a disadvantage to you in terms of gaining employment? In what ways?
34. How do you think the PhD has been viewed by your employers? What do you think you brought to the job that was different from what an international PhD would have brought?

35. How are PhDs and international PhDs viewed in Saudi society?

Global embodied cultural capital

36. What skills or attributes do you feel you have gained from the PhD?
37. Which skills or attributes that you have gained from the PhD do you feel have been, or might be, particularly valued by employers in Saudi Arabia?

Global objectified cultural capital

38. Did you establish any friendships, connections or networks during your PhD study which you feel have been beneficial in terms of getting a job or furthering your employment? In what ways?

The impact of international doctoral study on graduate identities and future career plans

39. What do you feel are the most valued or meaningful aspects of your PhD education for you?

40. What would you say are the greatest opportunities you have gained from staying in the KSA to do your PhD?

41. Has the PhD changed how you feel about yourself, your capabilities and opportunities in terms of employment and the labour market? In what ways?

42. Have you faced any challenges since finishing your PhD?

43. What are your future plans for your career journey, and what factors do you think are important in helping you to achieve those?

44. Do you think gender has affected your PhD and employment experiences in any way? If so, in what ways?

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences with me. I am very grateful for your contribution to the study.

Do you have any questions? Or anything you would like to add that you feel we have not covered?

Appendix Three:

Ethical concerns form

School of Social Sciences
Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
Dr Tom Hall

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04 March 2020

Our ref: SREC/3662

Amnah Albehiji
PhD Programme
SOCSI

Dear Amnah,

Your project entitled *'An investigation into the value of the international PhD for Saudi graduates in relation to labour market outcomes: a comparison of the experiences, perceptions and identities of domestic and UK-qualified graduates.'* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Professor Alison Bullock
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Appendix Four:

NS-SEC UK occupation classification (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2010) Table 8

Table 8

NSSEC based on SOC2010 simplified and full derivation table: analytic classes

SOC2010 Code	Standard Occupational Classification 2010 unit group	Simplified NS-SEC	Employment status/size of organisation						
			1 Employers - large organisations	2 Employers - small organisations	3 Self employed - no employees	4 Managers - large organisations	5 Managers - small organisations	6 Supervisors	7 Other employees
1115	Chief executives and senior officials	1.1	1.1	1	1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1116	Elected officers and representatives	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1121	Production managers and directors in manufacturing	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1122	Production managers and directors in construction	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1123	Production managers and directors in mining and energy	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1131	Financial managers and directors	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1132	Marketing and sales directors	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1133	Purchasing managers and directors	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1134	Advertising and public relations directors	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1135	Human resource managers and directors	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1136	Information technology and telecommunications directors	2	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1139	Functional managers and directors n.e.c.	2	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1150	Financial institution managers and directors	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1161	Managers and directors in transport and distribution	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1162	Managers and directors in storage and warehousing	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1171	Officers in armed forces	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1172	Senior police officers	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1173	Senior officers in fire, ambulance, prison and related services	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1181	Health services and public health managers and directors	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1184	Social services managers and directors	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
1190	Managers and directors in retail and wholesale	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1211	Managers and proprietors in agriculture and horticulture	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1213	Managers and proprietors in forestry, fishing and related services	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1221	Hotel and accommodation managers and proprietors	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1223	Restaurant and catering establishment managers and proprietors	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1224	Publicans and managers of licensed premises	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1225	Leisure and sports managers	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1226	Travel agency managers and proprietors	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1241	Health care practice managers	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1242	Residential, day and domiciliary care managers and proprietors	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1251	Property, housing and estate managers	1.1	1.1	4	4	1.1	2	2	2
1252	Garage managers and proprietors	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1253	Hairdressing and beauty salon managers and proprietors	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1254	Shopkeepers and proprietors – wholesale and retail	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1255	Waste disposal and environmental services managers	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
1259	Managers and proprietors in other services n.e.c.	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
2111	Chemical scientists	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2112	Biological scientists and biochemists	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2113	Physical scientists	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2114	Social and humanities scientists	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2119	Natural and social science professionals n.e.c.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2

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Table 8
NSSEC based on SOC2010 simplified and full derivation table: analytic classes

SOC2010 Code	Standard Occupational Classification 2010 unit group	Simplified NS-SEC	Employment status/size of organisation						
			1 Employers - large organisations	2 Employers - small organisations	3 Self employed - no employees	4 Managers - large organisations	5 Managers - small organisations	6 Supervisors	7 Other employees
2121	Civil engineers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2122	Mechanical engineers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2123	Electrical engineers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2124	Electronics engineers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2126	Design and development engineers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2127	Production and process engineers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2129	Engineering professionals n.e.c.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2133	IT specialist managers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2134	IT project and programme managers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2135	IT business analysts, architects and systems designers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2136	Programmers and software development professionals	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2137	Web design and development professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2139	Information technology and telecommunications professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2141	Conservation professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2142	Environment professionals	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2150	Research and development mana	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2211	Medical practitioners	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2212	Psychologists	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2213	Pharmacists	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2214	Ophthalmic opticians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2215	Dental practitioners	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2216	Veterinarians	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2217	Medical radiographers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2218	Podiatrists	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2219	Health professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2221	Physiotherapists	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2222	Occupational therapists	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2223	Speech and language therapists	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2229	Therapy professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2231	Nurses	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2232	Midwives	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2311	Higher education teaching professionals	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2312	Further education teaching professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2314	Secondary education teaching professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2315	Primary and nursery education teaching professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2316	Special needs education teaching professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2317	Senior professionals of educational establishments	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2318	Education advisers and school inspectors	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2319	Teaching and other educational professionals n.e.c.	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
2412	Barristers and judges	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2413	Solicitors	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2419	Legal professionals n.e.c.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2421	Chartered and certified accountants	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2423	Management consultants and business analysts	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2424	Business and financial project management professionals	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2425	Actuaries, economists and statisticians	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2426	Business and related research professionals	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2429	Business, research and administrative professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2431	Architects	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2432	Town planning officers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2433	Quantity surveyors	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2434	Chartered surveyors	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2435	Chartered architectural technologists	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2

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Table 8
NSSEC based on SOC2010 simplified and full derivation table: analytic classes

SOC2010 Code	Standard Occupational Classification 2010 unit group	Simplified NS-SEC	Employment status/size of organisation						
			1 Employers - large organisations	2 Employers - small organisations	3 Self employed - no employees	4 Managers - large organisations	5 Managers - small organisations	6 Supervisors	7 Other employees
2436	Construction project managers and related professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2442	Social workers	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2443	Probation officers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2444	Clergy	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2449	Welfare professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2451	Librarians	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2452	Archivists and curators	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
2461	Quality control and planning engineers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2462	Quality assurance and regulatory professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2463	Environmental health professionals	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
2471	Journalists, newspaper and periodical editors	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2472	Public relations professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2473	Advertising accounts managers and creative directors	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3111	Laboratory technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3112	Electrical and electronics technicians	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3113	Engineering technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3114	Building and civil engineering technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3115	Quality assurance technicians	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
3116	Planning, process and production technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3119	Science, engineering and production technicians n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3121	Architectural and town planning technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3122	Draughtspersons	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3131	IT operations technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3132	IT user support technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3213	Paramedics	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
3216	Dispensing opticians	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3217	Pharmaceutical technicians	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3218	Medical and dental technicians	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3219	Health associate professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3231	Youth and community workers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3233	Child and early years officers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3234	Housing officers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3235	Counsellors	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3239	Welfare and housing associate professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3311	NCOs and other ranks	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
3312	Police officers (sergeant and below)	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
3313	Fire service officers (watch manager and below)	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
3314	Prison service officers (below principal officer)	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
3315	Police community support officers	6	5	5	6	6	6	5	6
3319	Protective service associate professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3411	Artists	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3412	Authors, writers and translators	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3413	Actors, entertainers and presenters	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3414	Dancers and choreographers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3415	Musicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3416	Arts officers, producers and directors	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3417	Photographers, audio-visual and broadcasting equipment operators	4	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3421	Graphic designers	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3422	Product, clothing and related designers	4	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3441	Sports players	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3442	Sports coaches, instructors and officials	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3443	Fitness instructors	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
3511	Air traffic controllers	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3512	Aircraft pilots and flight engineers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2

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Table 8
NSSEC based on SOC2010 simplified and full derivation table: analytic classes

SOC2010 Code	Standard Occupational Classification 2010 unit group	Simplified NS-SEC	Employment status/size of organisation						
			1 Employers - large organisations	2 Employers - small organisations	3 Self employed - no employees	4 Managers - large organisations	5 Managers - small organisations	6 Supervisors	7 Other employees
3513	Ship and hovercraft officers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3520	Legal associate professionals	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3531	Estimators, valuers and assessors	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3532	Brokers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
3533	Insurance underwriters	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
3534	Finance and investment analysts and advisers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3535	Taxation experts	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
3536	Importers and exporters	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3537	Financial and accounting technicians	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3538	Financial accounts managers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3539	Business and related associate professionals n.e.c.	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3541	Buyers and procurement officers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3542	Business sales executives	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3543	Marketing associate professionals	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3544	Estate agents and auctioneers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3545	Sales accounts and business development managers	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
3546	Conference and exhibition managers and organisers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3550	Conservation and environmental associate professionals	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
3561	Public services associate professionals	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3562	Human resources and industrial relations officers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3563	Vocational and industrial trainers and instructors	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3564	Careers advisers and vocational guidance specialists	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3565	Inspectors of standards and regulations	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
3567	Health and safety officers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
4112	National government administrative occupations	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
4113	Local government administrative occupations	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
4114	Officers of non-governmental organisations	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
4121	Credit controllers	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4122	Book-keepers, payroll managers and wages clerks	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4123	Bank and post office clerks	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4124	Finance officers	2	1.1	2	2	2	2	2	2
4129	Financial administrative occupations n.e.c.	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4131	Records clerks and assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4132	Pensions and insurance clerks and assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4133	Stock control clerks and assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
4134	Transport and distribution clerks and assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4135	Library clerks and assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
4138	Human resources administrative occupations	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4151	Sales administrators	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4159	Other administrative occupations n.e.c.	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
4161	Office managers	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
4162	Office supervisors	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
4211	Medical secretaries	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
4212	Legal secretaries	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
4213	School secretaries	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
4214	Company secretaries	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
4215	Personal assistants and other secretaries	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
4216	Receptionists	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
4217	Typists and related keyboard occupations	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
5111	Farmers	4	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
5112	Horticultural trades	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
5113	Gardeners and landscape gardeners	4	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6

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Table 8
NSSEC based on SOC2010 simplified and full derivation table: analytic classes

SOC2010 Code	Standard Occupational Classification 2010 unit group	Simplified NS-SEC	Employment status/size of organisation						
			1 Employers - large organisations	2 Employers - small organisations	3 Self employed - no employees	4 Managers - large organisations	5 Managers - small organisations	6 Supervisors	7 Other employees
5114	Groundsmen and greenkeepers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5119	Agricultural and fishing trades n.e.c.	4	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5211	Smiths and forge workers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5212	Moulders, core makers and die casters	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
5213	Sheet metal workers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
5214	Metal plate workers and riveters	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5215	Welding trades	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5216	Pipe fitters	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5221	Metal machining setters and setter-operators	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
5222	Tool makers, tool fitters and markers-out	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5223	Metal working production and maintenance fitters	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5224	Precision instrument makers and repairers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5225	Air-conditioning and refrigeration engineers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
5231	Vehicle technicians, mechanics and electricians	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5232	Vehicle body builders and repairers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5234	Vehicle paint technicians	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
5235	Aircraft maintenance and related trades	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5236	Boat and ship builders and repairers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5237	Rail and rolling stock builders and repairers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5241	Electricians and electrical fitters	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5242	Telecommunications engineers	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
5244	TV, video and audio engineers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5245	IT engineers	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
5249	Electrical and electronic trades n.e.c.	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
5250	Skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades supervisors	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
5311	Steel erectors	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
5312	Bricklayers and masons	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5313	Roofers, roof tilers and slaters	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5314	Plumbers and heating and ventilating engineers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5315	Carpenters and joiners	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5316	Glaziers, window fabricators and fitters	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5319	Construction and building trades n.e.c.	4	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
5321	Plasterers	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5322	Floorers and wall tilers	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5323	Painters and decorators	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
5330	Construction and building trades supervisors	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
5411	Weavers and knitters	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5412	Upholsterers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5413	Footwear and leather working trades	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5414	Tailors and dressmakers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
5419	Textiles, garments and related trades n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5421	Pre-press technicians	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5422	Printers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5423	Print finishing and binding workers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5431	Butchers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5432	Bakers and flour confectioners	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5433	Fishmongers and poultry dressers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5434	Chefs	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
5435	Cooks	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
5436	Catering and bar managers	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
5441	Glass and ceramics makers, decorators and finishers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5442	Furniture makers and other craft woodworkers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5443	Florists	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
5449	Other skilled trades n.e.c.	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5

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Table 8
NSSEC based on SOC2010 simplified and full derivation table: analytic classes

SOC2010 Code	Standard Occupational Classification 2010 unit group	Simplified NS-SEC	Employment status/size of organisation						
			1 Employers - large organisations	2 Employers - small organisations	3 Self employed - no employees	4 Managers - large organisations	5 Managers - small organisations	6 Supervisors	7 Other employees
6121	Nursery nurses and assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
6122	Childminders and related occupations	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
6123	Playworkers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6125	Teaching assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
6126	Educational support assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6131	Veterinary nurses	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6132	Pest control officers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6139	Animal care services occupations n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
6141	Nursing auxiliaries and assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
6142	Ambulance staff (excluding paramedics)	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3
6143	Dental nurses	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6144	Houseparents and residential wardens	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6145	Care workers and home carers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
6146	Senior care workers	5	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6147	Care escorts	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
6148	Undertakers, mortuary and crematorium assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6211	Sports and leisure assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6212	Travel agents	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
6214	Air travel assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
6215	Rail travel assistants	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	2	3
6219	Leisure and travel service occupations n.e.c.	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6221	Hairdressers and barbers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
6222	Beauticians and related occupations	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
6231	Housekeepers and related occupations	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
6232	Caretakers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
6240	Cleaning and housekeeping managers and supervisors	5	4	4	4	2	2	5	5
7111	Sales and retail assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
7112	Retail cashiers and check-out operators	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
7113	Telephone salespersons	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
7114	Pharmacy and other dispensing assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
7115	Vehicle and parts salespersons and advisers	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
7121	Collector salespersons and credit agents	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
7122	Debt, rent and other cash collectors	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
7123	Roundspersons and van salespersons	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
7124	Market and street traders and assistants	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
7125	Merchandisers and window dressers	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
7129	Sales related occupations n.e.c.	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
7130	Sales supervisors	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
7211	Call and contact centre occupations	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
7213	Telephonists	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
7214	Communication operators	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
7215	Market research interviewers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
7219	Customer service occupations n.e.c.	3	1.1	4	4	3	3	3	3
7220	Customer service managers and supervisors	2	1.1	4	4	2	2	2	2
8111	Food, drink and tobacco process operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8112	Glass and ceramics process operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8113	Textile process operatives	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8114	Chemical and related process operatives	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
8115	Rubber process operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8116	Plastics process operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8117	Metal making and treating process operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8118	Electroplaters	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8119	Process operatives n.e.c.	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6

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Table 8
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8121	Paper and wood machine operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8122	Coal mine operatives	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8123	Quarry workers and related operatives	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
8124	Energy plant operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8125	Metal working machine operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8126	Water and sewerage plant operatives	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
8127	Printing machine assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8129	Plant and machine operatives n.e.c.	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8131	Assemblers (electrical and electronic products)	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8132	Assemblers (vehicles and metal goods)	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8133	Routine inspectors and testers	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
8134	Weighers, graders and sorters	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8135	Tyre, exhaust and windscreen fitters	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8137	Sewing machinists	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8139	Assemblers and routine operatives n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8141	Scaffolders, stagers and riggers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8142	Road construction operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8143	Rail construction and maintenance operatives	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
8149	Construction operatives n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8211	Large goods vehicle drivers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8212	Van drivers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8213	Bus and coach drivers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8214	Taxi and cab drivers and chauffeurs	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8215	Driving instructors	4	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8221	Crane drivers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8222	Fork-lift truck drivers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8223	Agricultural machinery drivers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8229	Mobile machine drivers and operatives n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
8231	Train and tram drivers	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
8232	Marine and waterways transport operatives	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
8233	Air transport operatives	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
8234	Rail transport operatives	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
8239	Other drivers and transport operatives n.e.c.	5	1.1	4	4	5	5	5	5
9111	Farm workers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9112	Forestry workers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9119	Fishing and other elementary agriculture occupations n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9120	Elementary construction occupations	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9132	Industrial cleaning process occupations	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9134	Packers, bottlers, canners and fillers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9139	Elementary process plant occupations n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9211	Postal workers, mail sorters, messengers and couriers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9219	Elementary administration occupations n.e.c.	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9231	Window cleaners	4	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
9232	Street cleaners	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
9233	Cleaners and domestics	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
9234	Launderers, dry cleaners and pressers	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9235	Refuse and salvage occupations	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9236	Vehicle valeters and cleaners	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9239	Elementary cleaning occupations n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	7	7
9241	Security guards and related occupations	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9242	Parking and civil enforcement occupations	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9244	School midday and crossing patrol occupations	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7

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9249	Elementary security occupations n.e.c.	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9251	Shelf fillers	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
9259	Elementary sales occupations n.e.c.	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	6	6
9260	Elementary storage occupations	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9271	Hospital porters	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9272	Kitchen and catering assistants	6	1.1	4	4	6	6	5	6
9273	Waiters and waitresses	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9274	Bar staff	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9275	Leisure and theme park attendants	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7
9279	Other elementary services occupations n.e.c.	7	1.1	4	4	7	7	5	7

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