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ABUL SALAM

Department of Geography and Urban Planning, CHSS,
UAE University, Al Ain, UAE

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CHALLENGES FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN AL AIN CITY

ABUL SALAM *

Department of Geography and Urban Planning, CHSS, UAE University, Al Ain, UAE

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Abstract. We all talk of gender equality, woman empowerment and female education; but how far it has been achieved in reality. Although there are many benefits for Emirati working people, but at the same time they are facing many challenges and problems in their home and work. Working men are usually given unfair advantage in comparison to the working women. In this male dominated society, men are considered more hardworking, intelligent and better employees than women. This gender discrimination results in increased level of stress and job dissatisfaction among women. It also decreases motivation to work and commitment towards the job. The study was set to find out the challenges faced by working women in Al Ain city. This study wants to reveal exploitation of harassment and gender discrimination against working women. Researchers used quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. Questionnaire data were collected from 150 respondents. Researchers used convenience-sampling technique and used online survey. Data were analyzed and presented using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The main findings of the study show that the majority of working women agreed that tradition is the main reason that causes these challenges. 30% of working women agreed that stereotypical portrayal of women causes challenges for working women. The results also showed that most of working women faced challenges with balancing between work and home. 25% faced challenges with children care. Additionally, there were sexual harassment, gender discrimination and challenges related to transportation. The study concluded that there are many challenges faced by many working women in Al Ain city that need solutions, so working women can work more efficiently. Therefore this study recommends that considering reviewing career models, career development advice and support, with the aim of developing an age and gender sensitive approach to career progression in the institution will be a viable solution.

INTRODUCTION

We all talk of gender equality, woman empowerment and female education; but how far it has been achieved in reality (Singh, 2014). In the past few decades, the role of women in our society has been drastically changed. Women are making a tremendous contribution in each sector. Women workers face different challenges in the workplace like gender-based discrimination, harassment, domestic restriction, work and family issues and unequal pay. The overview of the humanitarian community reveals to us that society is rapidly changing and as Arabs face great challenges as well as to confront these challenges, we must re-examine some of the values regarding the role of women in development, both in terms of their work inside the house or outside (Sharabi & Harpaz, 2013). The subject of women's work creates many debates by scholars and experts, especially with religious trends, and who tried to make their research that the first and the most suitable place for women is house, but some of them have said that the work of women is a threat to the safety of the family.

Working Women

Traditionally, women have always been the backbone of family

life and the social structure of the UAE and they continue to remain an integral part of maintaining the nation's Islamic heritage and national culture (Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, n.d). Women still in the communities try and contribute to their full potential in the care of their home and family. For example, they are the mother, who has the responsibility of raising the next generation, a wife who runs the house, sister, and this makes the role played by women in building the society that cannot be neglected or underestimated for its gravity.

Women have achieved a lot to promote their personality, their existence, and their ability to show representation internally and externally. Emirati women received particularly in light of the State of the Union great attention and care, in building society and the development process. Women in United Arab Emirates have achieved some measures of legal protection in recent years (Wikipedia, 2016). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2008-2009 report, 21% of local women of UAE were part of the labor force, whereas 45% of Kuwaiti women were part of the labor force (Khamis et al., 2012). The role of women in UAE society has gradually expanded since

*Corresponding author: Abul Salam

†Email: abulsalam@uaeu.ac.ae

the discovery of oil. Before 1960, there were few opportunities for women outside the family and in early 1990s, there were five women's societies promoting various issues of importance to women, including health and literacy (Metz, 1993). It has been noticed in recent years that overall, a growing number of Emirati women playing role in many diverse fields became an issue at the forefront of development policies, and this was reflected on various sectors.

According to a major scientific study, comparing development and well-being among all 132 nations of the world found that The United Arab Emirates ranks number one in the world for treating women with respect, (Gulf News, 2016). The 2007 report on the progress of MDGs in the UAE states, "the proportion of females in higher education has risen remarkably at a rate that has not been achieved in any other country in the world" (Wikipedia, 2016). During the years 1990 to 2004, the number of female university students has grown to double that of male students. This is the result of the promotion and encouragement of women's education by state and family (UNDP, 2007). The ratio of literate females within the 15- to 24- year age groups reached 90% literacy overall in 2007 (Wikipedia, 2016). Mothers who are not working can encourage their children to take responsibility and work for whatever they wish to accomplish in life. The work gives the owner financial independence.

Challenges Faced by Working Women

Women play many roles and for ages have been a multi-tasker such as one who cooks food, does the domestic works, raises kids, and cares for everyone. She works 24X7, never complains and asks for remuneration (Singh, 2014; Mai & Thuy, 2015). The spread of the phenomenon of women out that led to changes in the structure and function of the modern family is the most important manifestation. There were several motives and causes for a woman going out to work, but the economic situation is the main motive in this community to improve the development and adoption of the women themselves, and sometimes it is women's work as a catalyst to raise the economic and cultural level of the family.

In some classes of women's work in order to uplift the level of education, access upscale social status and achieve various luxuries, but there are other motives that make women work, which raise the standard of living and enjoy the time and motivation to reach self-assertion and the achievement of social life. The participation of women working in the family enabled them to contribute to economic independence that puts them in a position different from what it is while staying as house women, exit of women to work provides them with a sense of competence and empowers them with a lot of power (Farhat,

2012). Working women are playing many roles such as role of professional, role of a wife, role of a mother and by communicating with their children, in addition to doing household chores. On the other hand they have to take care of themselves in order to be able to continue in the tender. Finding the right work-life balance for busy working women is so important that many women struggle with finding better ways to balance work and life and often this guilt comes from husbands, family, and friends. Preoccupation with women for long hours for her children makes them have a sense of neglect and this affects their personality and the like physiology, especially in the first few months of birth (Farhat, 2012).

Challenges Faced by Working Women in the Middle East

There were so many reasons that lead to the emergence of the challenges that are faced by working women in the Middle East. One of the reasons is the masculine community culture that restricts women's movement and intolerance of parents for the principle of women's work. Also, there spread a lot of risks that threaten women's safety, including poor security, the spread of crime, harassment and abduction and a lot of the problems that disappeared while and came back again to threaten and restrict women's movement (Wanninayake, 2016).

Challenges associated with the feminization of Arab women are characterized by fragility of the situation in light of the economic and social conditions due to low levels of education as compared with men. Poverty tends to affect women more than men, and poverty leads women to intensify the qualitative dimension of the inequalities especially with regard to the distribution of development and inequality in access to employment and inequality in pay compared with men (Teacher Creativity Center, 2015).

Challenges Faced by Working Women in the UAE

The UAE's achievement is perhaps the best typified in the evolution and growing prominence of Emirati women as partners and contributors in this remarkable nation-building process. The framework opportunity has given women the chance to participate in the development of their society alongside men. UAE has begun training women as muftis, or Sunni Muslim scholars who interpret Islamic law. The government has encouraged women's participation in economic development amid a rapid growth in the number of business women (Shihab, 2001).

UAE has Family Development Foundation which acts to promote the holistic development of family women and children. This opportunity is used to develop means and mechanisms to more effectively integrate public work, social welfare and to coordinate with relevant domestic and international organiza-

tions as well as experts to exchange information and expertise (Ghanem, 2001).

Despite many preconceptions and stereotypes about women in the Arab world, the lives of women in the UAE illustrate that such stereotypes do not necessarily apply in this country. The government's belief that women are entitled to fulfill active roles in society and become effective partners in the development process is grounded in the UAE and constitution, which guarantees the principles of universal social justice, in accordance with the tenets of Islam.

Educational indicators show that women's achievements in education have reached their targeted levels, and in some cases, exceeded those of men because of a strong desire among women to become financially independent and professionally successful. This is evident across the UAE that women today constitute a vital part of the nation's workforce and actively contribute to the country (Shihab, 2001).

Working Women in Al Ain

Working women in Al Ain are facing many difficulties such as the household and family responsibilities. Work helps women to be dependent on herself. Some women rely on housekeeper and leave their children with her because there is a lack of day-care for children in the departments and institutions. She depends on housekeeper to take care of them while she remains concerned for her children. Some developed countries provide day cares in the places where woman works (Sanhoury, 2014). There were some problems in the workplace faced by some working women such as they ignore women and they don't observe working women privacy when they develop internal regulations in the work. There is discrimination in treatment

between men and women and in promotions in work. Women must choose the work that is suitable for their nature as a woman, their lives and their abilities (AlBdawi, 2015).

A woman faces numerous challenges and problems every day, every time, and may be every second (Singh, 2014). Attitude of male co-workers is sometimes really humiliating and biased. It is considered that women are hired just to add color to the office environment. Therefore, this study was set to find out the challenges faced by working women as well as to examine the problems that emerged because of women's work in Al Ain city of UAE.

METHODOLOGY

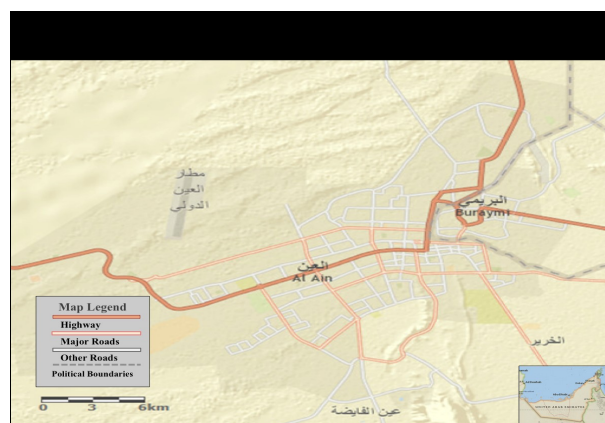
Study Area

The United Arab Emirates is a Middle-East country that lies between 22°50' and 26° north latitude and between 51° and 56°25' east longitude, in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia on the Persian Gulf. UAE is bordered by Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Persian Gulf and shares maritime borders with Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Iran (TEN Guide, 2015). The study area is Al Ain city that is located in the United Arab Emirates in eastern region of Abu Dhabi Emirates, south of Dubai and east of Abu Dhabi. The Eastern region covers an area of approximately 13,100 km² (TEN Guide, 2015).

Demographic Information of Al Ain

According to Statistics Center (2014), the Emirati population of Abu Dhabi is 613,368 people where 29% of the population of Abu Dhabi lives in Al Ain. The total Emirati population of Al Ain is 194,158 people.

FIGURE 1
Study Area



Source: (Google Map, 2015)

Climate

UAE has a sub-tropical arid climate; it is warm and sunny in winter, hot and humid in the summer. In the coastal areas, the humidity is particularly high. Rainfall is virtually non-existent, with occasional short showers occurring mainly in winter from December to March. Localized thunderstorms sometimes occur in summer (TEN Guide, 2015).

Al Ain has a desert climate with year-round sunshine; however in the winter temperatures range from only $5^{\circ}C - 30^{\circ}C$, which run from December to February, and it can feel cold early morning and in the evenings.

In the summer, which runs from May to August, temperatures can reach as high as $50^{\circ}C+$ and even September and October can have high temperatures. Rainfall is sporadic, falling mainly in winter from November-March and averages 12cm per year in most of the emirates. Rain is more common in Al Ain due to its proximity to the Hajar Mountains (TEN Guide, 2015).

Relief

Al Ain is famous for its underground irrigation “aflaj” system, which is based on irrigation and watering farms and palm trees. Includes seven oases, Al Ain Oasis is considered the largest of these oases and the smallest one is aljahli oasis.

The rest of these oases are: elqtarah, the mutared, and Jimi, and Muwaiji, Healy Oasis. Jebel Hafeet is located at the border between the Sultanate Oman and the UAE and it has a restaurant at the top and Mercury resort where you can enjoy the beautiful watching of the entire city of Al Ain (Wikipedia, 2013).

Socio-Economic Activities

Before the discovery and export of oil, the economy of Al Ain was dependent on agriculture, the extracting and trade in pearls, fishing, and seafaring (Shihab, 2001).

It also includes aspects of the old traditional heritage, including the establishment of racing camels and breeding them. Still traditional irrigation based on aflaj system is used in some areas where the distribution of groundwater is through a network of tunnels where this aflaj ends in open channels pouring water in ways directed and regular (Ghanem, 2001).

Labor Force in Al Ain

After seeing the relative distribution of the estimates of the labor force for 15 years and over by region and type (2013), it was found that the city of Abu Dhabi has been divided into three sections that are the Abu Dhabi region, Al Ain and the

Algarbiaa Region.

Through statistics, it was found that the city of Al Ain has the largest labor force of women i.e. 23.5% as opposed to the Abu Dhabi region with 15.9% and Algarbiaa 4.1%, they have a percentage of the labor force much larger than men.

The female labor force is concentrated in the city of Al Ain from age 20 to 44 and the highest proportion of 25 to 29 by 22.7% (Statistics Center, 2013).

Data Collection

Data were collected using questionnaires, consisting of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The researcher used questionnaires printed in English, online survey to collect responses.

In the process, the researcher also observed observable phenomena to check the responses and made judgments based on the research subject. For the purpose of primary data collection exercise, convenience sample was used to select 150 women living in Al Ain city.

Data were analyzed using SPSS software to see the relationship between selected variables. Data have been presented using graphical techniques such as bar graphs, pie charts and frequency tables, depending on the nature of the data.

A form of narration has also been used to supplement the presented data.

RESULTS

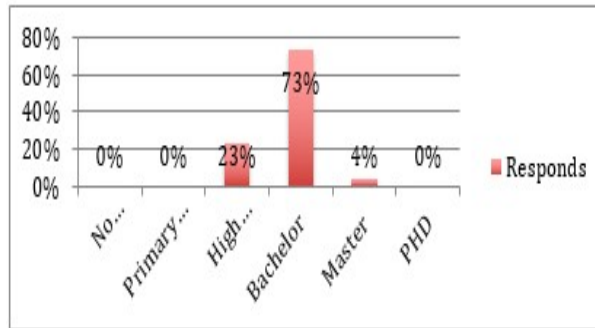
The main goal of the study was to find out the challenges faced by working women in Al Ain.

Educational Status

The results in Figure 2 indicate that the majority (73%) of the population in Al Ain have bachelor degree followed by (23%) having high school with only a few (04%) having master degree. There's no denying it when it comes to education and employment, women are on a roll, all over the world. Young women are also making strong progress in higher education in UAE. According to Dubai Women's College, 50-60% of its 2,300 students proceed to seek employment upon graduation (Anderson, 2015).

Finally, society and the state play a significant role in the decision of many girls to pursue higher education. In UAE young women are less mobile, they need to work near their families and as such cannot commute for work to other emirates or to faraway locations.

FIGURE 2
Educational Status of Respondents

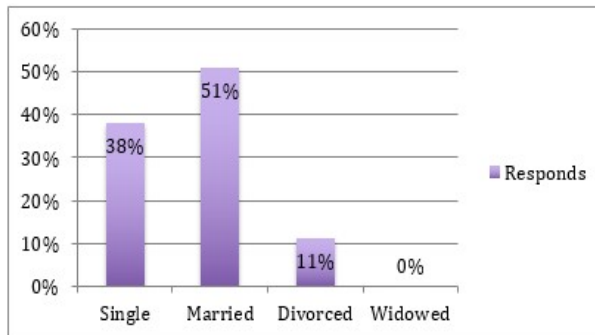


Marital Status

The information collected from respondents was established and the results in Figure 3 show that the married status was the

most dominating at 51% while the single at 38% followed by divorced at 11%.

FIGURE 3
Marital Status of Respondents

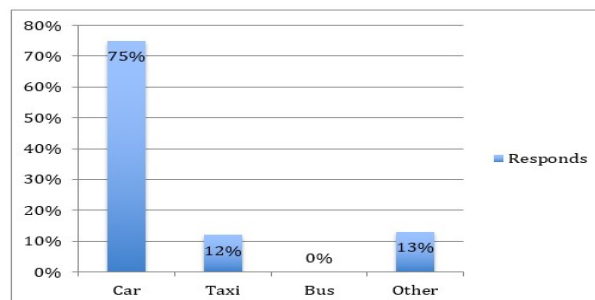


Type of Transportation

There were many types of transportation used for women while going to work and it depends on the condition of women. Figure

4 shows that the type of transportation mainly used is the car at 75%, followed by others at 13%. While 12% used taxi to reach their workplace.

FIGURE 4
Type of Transportation

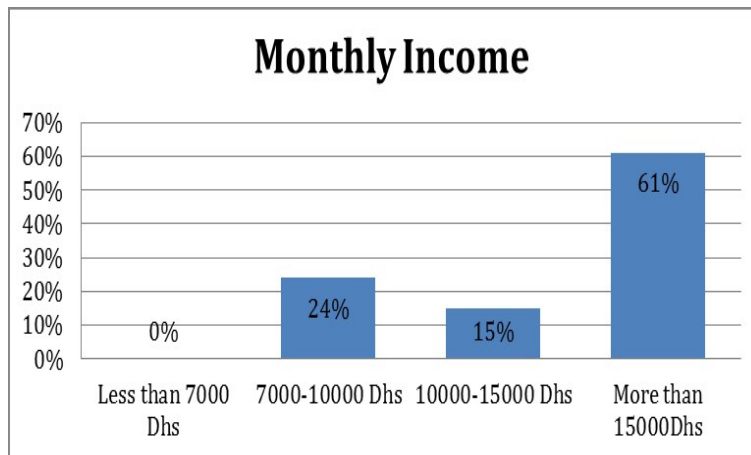


Monthly Income

Sometimes it is the monthly income that is the main attraction for the influential women to work. Figure 5 shows that 61% of working women have the average of monthly income of more

than 15000 AED. 24% women are getting between 7000 to 10000 AED per month with around 15% getting around 7000 AED. Result also indicates that most working women in Al Ain have high income jobs.

FIGURE 5
Monthly Income

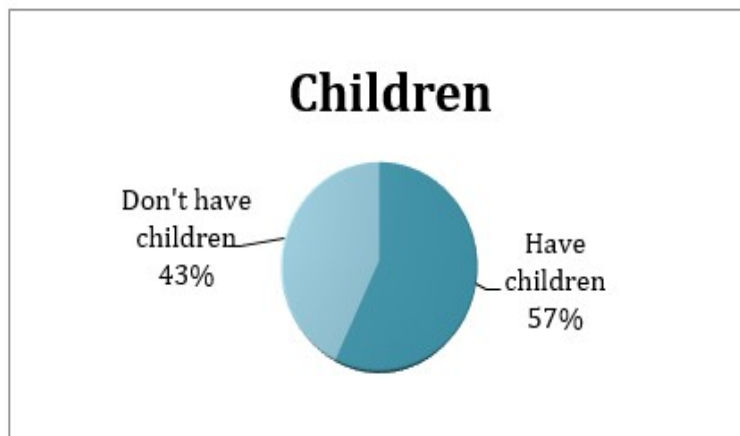


Children Care

Sometimes child care and work are compatible. Children need care and they affect women’s work and contentment. One of the

extraordinary social transitions occurring in the last half of this century is the transformation of family structures and the rapid entry of women into the formal labor force.

FIGURE 6
Children



In Figure 6 it can be seen easily that 75% of the respondents have and 43% do not have children so it didn't have high effect on appetite for work. The result in Figure 7 shows that those who are working women preferred to leave their children with family, daycare or housekeeper. Most of them preferred house-keeper with 43%, 35% of working women like daycare, and

22% like to leave their children with family.

Workplace

There are different places in which women can work, some of them are mixed places and most workers are women.

FIGURE 7
Children Care

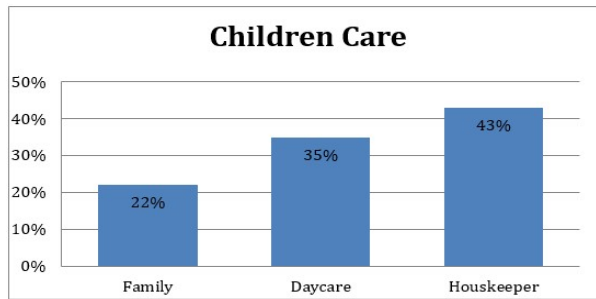


FIGURE 8
Type of Workplace

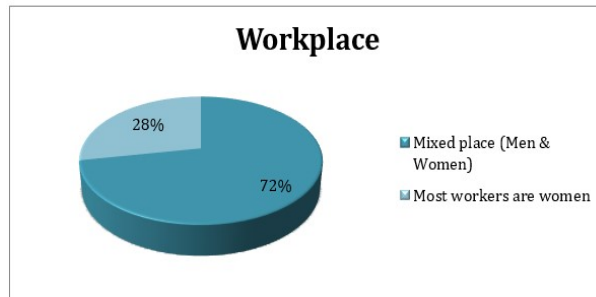


Figure 8 shows that more than 70% women worked in mixed place. While, 28% of working women worked in place where most workers are women, because some of the workplaces need women to work beside the men to help.

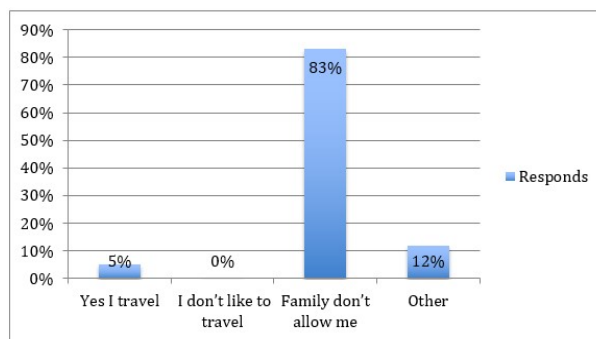
Job and Travelling

Some jobs require women to travel. There are reasons that

prevent working women from travelling.

There are many reasons preventing women from travelling. The result in Figure 9 shows that for most respondents, family doesn't allow women to travel; it's about 83%. While 5% of respondents chose "yes I travel". However, 12% of respondents chose other reasons that could be material or moral. On the other hand, no one chose "don't like to travel".

FIGURE 9
If the Work Asks You to Travel

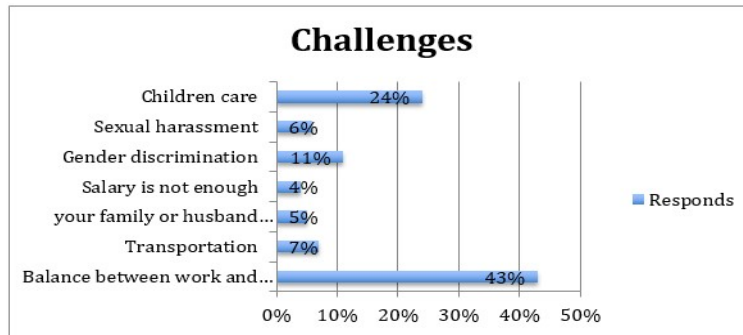


Challenges

Women face many challenges in the work that could be trans-

portation, gender harassment and other challenges.

FIGURE 10
Challenges Faced by Working Women



Being a working mom may be more stressful than you realize, but that doesn't mean it's not possible. Figure 10 shows that majority 43% of women mostly balance between work and house. Women had the responsibility of home and work and she can't stand between them. While, children care got the second highest percent of respondents at 24%, because of the availability of private nurseries for children. On the other hand

harassment got 6% of respondents while 11% of respondents reported on gender discrimination.

Reasons Preventing Women from Work

There are many reasons preventing women from working or causing challenges for women in work.

FIGURE 11
Reasons Preventing Women from Working

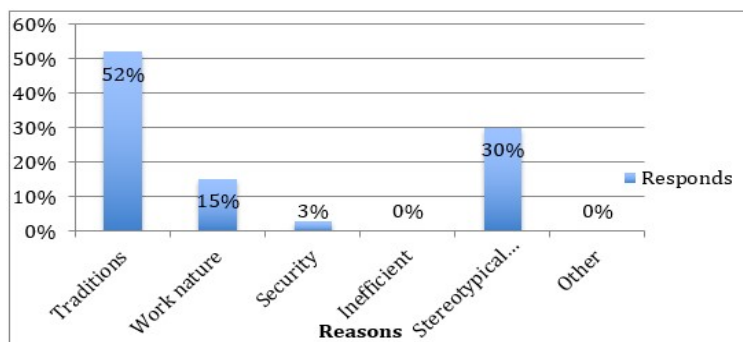


Figure 11 showed that more than half (about 52%) of respondents see that tradition is the main reason. While, 30% of respondents agreed on stereotypical portrayal of women which men think that woman's place is home and her main job is to raise her children and take care of her husband and house. However, 15% of respondents indicated that work nature is one of the reasons. Some workplaces require working at night and women can't stay out of the house at work. While, 3% of respondents agreed on security. On the other hand, no one chose inefficiency.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there was not a single participant who sailed through their careers without experiencing a range of challenges, some of which were deeply unpleasant or unsettling. To face challenges successfully, women need to be self-confident and should keep themselves up to date with the latest happenings in the world of technology.

The internet has now solved the problem of limited opportunities, as every internet savvy person can access the world of knowledge and information. So women should keep surfing the

internet to increase their knowledge.

Good communication skill is also a necessity; it helps in building social network which in turn helps in appraising whenever there are new opportunities available. Meeting deadlines is also important to prove yourself worthy.

Another most important thing is to maintain balance in work and personal life. There is a need to educate men and tell them to respect other women like they respect women in their families. They should show flexibility in their attitude and should accept that women can perform even better than them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was clear that the Al Ain has achieved impressive improve-

ments in many social and economic development. But this area should try to manage its own issues related to women. For example, consider activities for raising awareness among line managers of women's health and wellbeing at work in order to minimize the challenges as well as how best to support employee health, well-being and career development across the life course, and especially in later life, through HR policies, procedures and practices.

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