

Empowering Women Researchers: Insights Into the Challenges of Academic Research Production in an Emerging Saudi University

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Abstract—Scientific research plays a pivotal role as it contributes to the development of nations worldwide. However, empirical research investigating the challenges of academic research production among female faculty members at emerging universities is scarce. This research explores the challenges, perceptions, and recommendations for enhancing research production in the Department of English at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. To achieve this, the study employed a qualitative paradigm utilizing case studies and qualitative interviews to collect the research data through semi-structured interviews with twenty-four female faculty members from the Department of English. The main purpose of this study is to uncover the challenges that female academics encounter in research development and propose applicable solutions. The findings revealed that a high number of teaching hours, large class sizes, a lack of funding programs, administrative workload, maternal responsibilities, and work-life balance were the most prominent challenges that hindered research production. The study offered several recommendations, such as decreasing teaching hours, minimizing class sizes, adopting a flexitime work hour strategy, providing more research incentives, and implementing childcare policies to promote research production among female academics.

Index Terms—challenges, female Academics, research productivity, solutions

I. INTRODUCTION

With worldwide technological advancements and the rapid need for globalisation, universities, represented by their academic staff members, are always viewed as the robust backbone of knowledge creation and transmission. Targeting creativity, self-efficacy, decision-making, and problem-solving, higher education systems have evolved according to the new worldwide vision, and university staff members have started to bear more responsibilities than before. In addition to teaching tasks, academics are requested to carry out competitive research publications with high impact factors, supervise innovative and original undergraduate research, attend to research funding projects, provide community service, and deliver and attend workshops, in addition to administrative workloads. In this demanding environment of numerous tasks and heavy workloads, university academics have begun to show signs of job dissatisfaction and career commitment frustration (Dorenkamp & Ruhle, 2019; Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019).

Academic work is not limited to research development; however, academic institutions also require their staff to excel in their teaching outputs, community services, counselling activities, undergraduate research supervision, administrative work, and producing high-quality research. This often neglects the human factor of work-life balance, which is an exhausting equation, especially for female academics, and cannot be ignored for the sake of research productivity (Greenhouse et al., 2003; Valcour, 2007). In the Saudi context, societal norms place significant emphasis on family responsibilities, which are traditionally viewed as the central role of women. Driven by Saudi Vision 2030 and the desire to maintain a sustainable socio-economic standard of living while balancing family demands, female academics are subjected to high pressure from teaching workloads and other factors, which results in delaying scholarly productivity.

With the Saudi vision of 2030, the 21st-century demands of research productivity, and the prevailing importance of research, not only to the progress of societies but also as models to the coming students' generation who benefit from this knowledge in their field of study, research production has been linked to the measurements of quality in the faculties and departments. In this race to gain reputation, rank, and accreditation, research productivity has become intertwined with the debate of quality versus quantity. Universities adopted policies such as publishing in high-index journals and high-impact-factor journals and dedicated various research funding programs for that purpose to encourage publication. Some researchers considered it a viable opportunity for both promotion and personal benefits alike (Reihanne et al., 2019).

Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, an emerging university in Saudi Arabia, was founded in 2009 and has five branches. The Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities in Al-Kharj is considered the main branch among the university's other branches. Being an emerging university, it has set its educational goals for internal and external master's and doctoral scholarships to finally come up with Saudi doctoral holders. To address the need for academic staff, the college contracts PhD holders from mixed nationalities.

In the domain of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), the Department of English Language and Literature, in the College of Sciences and Humanities at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, is divided into two sections: male and female. The two sections are segregated according to the culture of society. However, the two sections are dealt with as one department headed by one male staff member in the male campus. The two sections comprise a considerable number of staff members with various academic ranks and nationalities. They range from full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants.

Being an emerging university, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz seeks to increase its rank among other universities in the Kingdom and worldwide by raising its publication rank. It adopted many research programs to motivate its faculty members for research. Many faculty members find it difficult to publish in highly indexed journals due to their specialisation, the lengthy review process (which may sometimes end with rejection), and the expensive fees of these journals. Furthermore, some of these journals may undergo rank re-evaluation after paper submission, in addition to other work-life issues. The university exerted significant effort to encourage its staff members to engage in research productivity. It has provided various research fund programs, internationally funded conferences, and research writing workshops to motivate faculty members to get engaged in research development. Research development and publication showed rapid growth from 2019 to 2024 across different types of journals, including ISI, WOS, and emerging citations.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Australian Research Council (2018, p. 9) defined research as “the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way, to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings.” Therefore, some criteria were established to measure research productivity that include papers published in journals, books or book chapters, presentation of articles at conferences, and research grants (Adkins & Budd, 2006; Ito & Brotheridge, 2007). Akerlind (2008) classified the reasons that push researchers to undertake research into four categories. The first category includes researchers’ intention to satisfy institutional requirements and obligations, such as those related to promotions. The second category encompasses researchers’ keenness to expand their knowledge within their field. The third category includes researchers’ interests, such as gaining recognition, salary increases, and awards. Finally, the fourth category represents researchers’ desire to contribute to and benefit the world with knowledge in their field of study. Akerlind (2008) described the last category as the highest level, transforming researchers from self-centred individuals who use research for personal benefits and interests into productive, honest researchers who seek global welfare.

In this regard, research productivity was divided into two categories. On the one hand, ‘quantity research’ is measured by the volume of research output, including book publications, articles in journals (mainly peer-reviewed), book chapters, research grants, and conference papers. On the other hand, ‘quality research’ is measured using bibliometrics such as h-index publications, citation rates, translations of articles, reports, or books, creative works, patents, and all research involvement. Accordingly, researchers initially choose the type of research they conduct according to the purpose of their development (Akbaritabar et al., 2018; Butler, 2003; Carpenter et al., 2014).

However, research productivity has been linked to institutional, faculty, and departmental measurements of academic and research performance, and is defined in terms of ‘publishing articles, gaining research-related grants, and citation-related factors’ (Adkins & Budd, 2006; Ito & Brotheridge, 2007). In addition to ranking universities and departments, research productivity has been used as a key criterion for assessing faculty members’ performance in terms of promotion, annual evaluation, salary increases, academic workload reductions, and contract renewals (McGrail et al., 2006). However, female faculty members, more specifically, face several challenges in research production that many institutions tend to overlook.

Many studies divided these factors into personal/ individual and institutional/ environmental factors. These institutional factors include, but are not limited to: excessive workload pressures (Kendagor et al., 2012), lack of institutional research support (Hoffmann et al., 2014), excessive teaching loads (Alghanim & Alhamali, 2011; Jung, 2012; Webber, 2011), unsupportive institutional research policies (e.g., reward and incentive systems), inadequate institutional research culture, insufficient time for research, limited colleague collaboration on research productivity (Shin & Cummings, 2010), insufficient orientation to research development guidelines across different fields, lack of guidance on publication parameters for various indexed journals, and insufficient training in statistical programmes, software, and analysis (Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007).

Some studies investigated the relationship between workload and work performance, with job satisfaction and career commitment as mediating variables. Results showed that increasing workload impacts staff members, even the most enthusiastic and active ones, leading to depression, job dissatisfaction, and a lack of career commitment. Excessive workload causes faculty members to feel stressed, lose personal motivation and self-confidence, experience a diminished sense of loyalty towards their institutions, and fall short in performing their academic goals. They reported that an increased workload for staff members leads to a decreased ability to satisfy students’ needs and institutional requirements, and a higher incidence of errors in their work (Nugraha et al., 2018; Martin-Sardesai & Guthrie, 2018; Melin et al., 2014). Rahman and Avan (2016) defined workload as “the amount of time spent in performing a portfolio of researching and teaching tasks, facilitating co-curricular activities, and being involved in meetings, among others”.

Some studies went even further, investigating the relationship between staff members’ physical and psychological health, as well as their emotional attachment to their work, in relation to job stress and career satisfaction. Results showed

that faculty members' physical and psychological health was negatively impacted by what they termed a challenge between 'the quality of work-life balance,' which resulted in work dissatisfaction and declining emotional eagerness for work performance (Jalal & Zaheer, 2017, p. 97; Jou et al., 2013).

Individual/ personal factors include, but are not limited to, age, and lack of time because staff members have many other duties that affect and conflict with research production (Alghanim & Alhamali, 2011; Angaiz, 2015; Hoffmann & Koufogiannakis, 2014; Kaya & Weber, 2003; Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007; Stafford, 2011; Webber, 2011). It was also reported that gender and marital status are significant factors affecting research productivity. Moreover, it was affirmed that family responsibilities affect female scholars more than their male counterparts (Creamer, 1998; Kaya & Weber, 2003; Usang et al., 2007; Webber, 2011). More importantly, fundamental individual factors that challenge staff members, particularly females, in research production include: a lack of motivation and curiosity in research (Williams, 2013); lack of confidence (Kasetsart, 2009; McGrail et al., 2006); and lack of research ability and scholarly academic skills (Kendagor et al., 2012).

In a study conducted by Shauman and Xie (2003), a female-to-male research productivity comparison was drawn across four academic fields: social sciences and education, arts and humanities, natural sciences and engineering, and medical and professional fields. The comparison was based on two main level categories: personal versus career characteristics. Personal characteristics included the researchers' age, the PhD program, the field of research interest, and family status. Moreover, gender and social factors were considered intervening factors that may affect research productivity. Career characteristics included the type of academic institution, i.e., whether it is a research-oriented or a teaching-oriented institution, the faculty member's academic rank, hours allocated to teaching, types of research funding, and research assistance. They also identified the long interval between the bachelor's degree and the doctoral degree as a career characteristic affecting research productivity.

Results of the study showed female-to-male lower rates in all four academic fields. However, the lowest publication rates were observed in the fields of arts and humanities, social sciences, and education, more so than in other fields. Moreover, the social sciences and education, and the arts and humanities showed the lowest rates of gender differences in publication productivity compared to other fields. Results also identified the long timespan between the attainment of bachelor's and doctoral degrees as a factor affecting research productivity. Greater delays in degree attainment led to increased delays in publication and overall career competitiveness. Results also showed that female academics take longer than their male counterparts to complete their doctoral degrees due to family responsibilities that hinder their academic study. Female academics' careers are presumed to be significantly affected after marriage and childbearing. Results also highlighted the high female-to-male ratio of those who quit their academic careers for the sake of their families, take many maternity leaves, and have no publications at all.

Turner and Mairesse (2003) linked age to research productivity, maintaining that faculty members start their careers as active researchers, but with age, their motivation declines. In contrast, Shin and Cummings (2010) pinpointed that if aged 'highly productive researchers' are not retired, they become the most productive individuals in their fields. Moreover, active, though aged, senior faculty members and full professors can serve as mentors to novice researchers, providing them with experience and confidence, which positively affects research productivity.

Sotodeh et al. (2014) reported low rates of research productivity among faculty members due to the long hours they spend on teaching, preparing exams, and grading students' papers. Abouchedid and Abdelnour (2015) revealed that Arab faculty members' research productivity is considered relatively low compared to non-Arabs. They attributed such outcomes to institutional factors, including the institution's vision toward research, the type of institution, and the role it plays in motivating faculty members to facilitate the research process, which ultimately leads to job dissatisfaction. Alzahrani (2011) conducted a study to investigate the barriers faced by Saudi faculty members in conducting research. The study results showed that the most persistent barriers among Saudi faculty members were a lack of research facilities, a lack of colleague support, and a lack of research funds.

Gallagher (2015) and Mason et al. (2013) stated that female academics are less fortunate than male counterparts in the field of research productivity. When female academics decide to have a family, their commitment to their career may be reduced as society expects much from them. They describe this as the 'baby penalty,' and Williams and Segal (2003) describe it as the 'maternal wall.' Ghodsee and Connelly (2011) and Benard and Correll (2010) maintained that female academics spend a significant amount of their time and energy on family care and household responsibilities. This often puts them behind men in terms of research productivity, years of experience, academic competence, and delays academic promotion, which eventually leads to job dissatisfaction and a lack of career commitment. Mayer and Rathmann (2018) revealed that female academics are satisfied with publishing in less prestigious journals to meet their work requirements and maintain a family-work balance, while men pursue the most competitive ones. They attributed this difference to unequal institutional support.

III. METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

A. *Research Questions*

When measuring research productivity in the Department of English, no reference is made to gender. It is treated as a single department; no female-to-male ratio comparison is made in research production. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the number of research articles developed by female academics is significantly less than that

conducted by their male counterparts due to a multitude of factors, all of which contribute to academic demotivation among female academics regarding research productivity. Despite a significant amount of research having addressed factors affecting academics' research productivity, such as workload types, institutional motivation, and work-life balance, among others; however, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first scholarly study to set its objectives to explore the challenges impacting research productivity among female academics in an emerging university. It aims to recommend solutions to alleviate these challenges, thereby empowering and motivating female scholars for academic research productivity. Henceforth, the present study sought to address four main themes as follows:

- The institution's role in research production.
- Researchers' tendencies towards research development.
- Challenges in research development.
- Proposed solutions to the phenomenon in question.

B. Research Design

The present study employed an interpretivism paradigm, underpinning ontological, epistemological, and methodological insights. It aimed at revealing the multifaceted realities of female scholars regarding their experiences with research productivity. The research's perspective contradicts positivism, which seeks a single reality and a singular correct way of knowledge. At the ontological level, where multiple realities or reasons exist rather than a single one, the research sought to explore the challenges behind the delay in research productivity. This necessitates an epistemological position of engagement with the research's participants, involving interaction rather than detachment, to ascertain their points of view regarding the phenomenon in question. These qualitative studies required an 'idiographic' methodology (case studies) and research instruments (qualitative interviews). This necessitated collecting data on an individual rather than a group basis to ascertain individual, rather than collective, perceptions of the variables impacting research productivity among female scholars. Qualitative case studies are used to understand and preserve the holistic nature of the research phenomenon in its natural setting, and to investigate ethical concerns such as biases and contextual challenges, while ensuring methodological rigour through meticulous data collection and contextual analysis (Cohen et al., 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

C. Participants of the Research

Research participants included twenty-four female faculty members from the Department of English at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. Participants were purposively selected as they are all PhD holders (expected to conduct research), occupy the ranks of associate and assistant professors, and are of diverse nationalities. The purposive sampling technique is suitable for qualitative case studies to fulfil the study's purpose (Etikan et al., 2016; Patton, 2002). All participants willingly participated in the research. The researcher is a member of the same department and is not detached from the variables impacting research productivity. However, she did not partake in the data collection and analysis to guarantee fairness and unbiased results.

D. Instruments of the Research

Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, rather than in a group setting, to guarantee confidentiality and to delve further into the participants' responses. Data validity and reliability were assured by the following two methods: First, by preparing the interview questions to ensure they suit and cover the research objectives, by establishing the time and place of the interview, and by obtaining the participants' consent to align with research ethics. Second, the participants' responses were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure data reliability (Kvale, 1996). To ensure data validity, the interview questions were reviewed and checked by external members, detached from the study, who made modifications to the questions to suit and align with the participants' cultural background (Bloom et al., 2009). More critically, the researcher served as a moderator for the study.

E. Procedures of the Research

In the summer of 2024, face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews were conducted with the female participants to delve into their perceptions of the factors that cause delays in research productivity and to recommend solutions to motivate female research productivity. Demographic data were collected, including the number of female PhD holders in the department, their academic rank, their age in comparison to their rank, and their number of publications. The demographic data of the faculty members are shown as follows:

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS

Demographic Information	No. of Female PhD holders = 24
Academic Rank:	
Associate Professor	4
Assistant Professor	20
Age	All between 40 and 50
No. of Publications (2019-2024)	Varied among them

F. Data Analysis Techniques

Adopting Creswell's (2016) model of qualitative data analysis, three techniques were involved in the theme-generation process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding involved reviewing the audio-recorded data attentively and transcribing it verbatim, which resulted in the classification of the study questions. To guarantee the validity and reliability of the data, an external auditor (not a participant in the research or the researcher) was invited to evaluate the study process and results. Axial coding was used to group the research categories into related ideas and concepts, and the data was examined for similarities and differences. Selective coding linked the research categories into a core category that encompassed all aspects of the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study questions were grouped into four main categories: The first category addressed the participants' tendencies towards research development. The second category addressed the institution's role in research production. The third category addressed the challenges that female scholars face in research development. The fourth category addressed the proposed solutions offered by the female staff to overcome these challenges. The qualitative analysis of the participants' responses pinpointed the following themes about the first three categories as follows:

1- Tendencies towards research development

Research development is of great importance for scholarly academics as it contributes to the development of scientific knowledge, participation in conferences, raising the socio-economic level, scholarly promotion, increasing salary, among other benefits. In this category, participants were questioned about their aptitude for research development in terms of their age compared to their academic rank, number of publications compared to academic rank, and the timespan between PhD attainment and their first publication. Twenty participants expressed their frustration regarding the delay in research development. An interviewee exclaimed, *"We still hold the position of assistant professor, though many of our students have become our colleagues. We know that we are growing old, and we have not achieved any remarkable advancement in the field of academic writing. We almost lost self-confidence in our ability to develop research. We do not know how to find topics worth researching. We need research mentors to guide us. We hope there is a good research collaboration among colleagues who have high research aptitude for writing to motivate us."* Most of them reported that there are at least five to seven years between PhD attainment and first publication. A respondent commented, *"I have not developed a single paper so far, it is annoying and disappointing."* The other four associate professors reported that academic writing is not an easy process for female scholars; a participant said, *"Though we wrote, published, and got promoted, we sacrificed many things for it"*.

2- Institution's role in research production

Academic institutions should motivate their staff members towards research development. They may offer financial incentives such as research grants and conference participation funds. They may provide support services including research assistance, access to resources, availability of statistical software programs, and technical support. They may provide mentoring/guidance regarding research methods. Some universities adopted policies like reducing teaching/administrative loads to help in research development and reducing the number of students in the classroom to alleviate the teaching load. In this category, participants were questioned about the university's policies to motivate their academic writing.

One of the respondents declared, *"The research grants are neither frequent nor rewarding, while publishing in high-indexed journals is extremely expensive. Most of the university's research grants are offered to scientific fields, while social sciences and humanities are neglected."* A respondent commented, *"Though the university provides a good number of workshops and other academic writing services, we are overwhelmed with teaching and administrative loads that make it difficult for us even to attend."* Another participant added, *"Not all academic institutions should publish. Some are teaching-oriented, others are research-oriented!"* *"As an emerging university, if it wants to raise its rank, it should reduce teaching/administrative loads to give us time for research development,"* an interviewee concluded.

3- Challenges in research development

Challenges in research development can be attributed to institutional or personal factors or both equally. It is the institution's role to motivate its staff members towards academic writing by alleviating work pressures, as they may negatively impact the scholars' physical, psychological, and mental health. Moreover, work pressure may lead to job dissatisfaction, a lack of career commitment, and job leakage. In this category, the participants were questioned about two main themes: publication challenges and work-life balance challenges. Regarding the former, most of the twenty assistant professors asserted that publication in high-indexed journals takes a long time and is expensive. A participant exclaimed, *"We are satisfied with publishing in less prestigious journals to satisfy our university requirements and to maintain a family-work balance"*.

Another staff member exclaimed, *"I like conducting research, but I cannot spend my salary on publication in high-indexed journals. Either the university funds our publications, or we will publish in affordable, unindexed journals."* Another added, *"We work as a group on one paper to share publication fees, but finally the university gives only a quarter mark to each of us!"* They all asserted that publication in high-indexed journals requires knowledge of the publication criteria and frequent searches for reputable journals. They confirmed that academic work and publication require patience

and perseverance. One associate professor declared, *"We participate in national and international online conferences because we cannot attend physically. We cannot leave our families, and the university does not afford it"*.

Regarding work-life balance challenges, all Saudi participants agreed that their families, physical, physiological, and mental health are priorities, and they are willing to sacrifice their academic careers for them. A participant asserted, *"It is difficult to balance academic roles (teaching, researching, and community service), with family duties (mother and spouse)." One exclaimed, "I am not so satisfied with my academic career as I sacrifice my personal life for it." Another said, "I developed some psychological issues due to disappointment in research development delay." A third said, "I do not enjoy psychological and emotional peace of mind as I must spend my vacations in developing research." Another stated, "I developed some physical issues due to sitting for long periods of time for conducting research." Another added, "My academic career does not provide me with mental health as I worry about my career stability all the time." "I plan to quit my academic career for better job opportunities," another participant affirmed. Another respondent said, *"Much of my time and energy is directed to teaching rather than research development. I have to sacrifice one for the other."* *"Work pressures demotivate me towards research development,"* another affirmed. However, all non-Saudi female academics declared that they could strike a work-life balance. One said, *"I left my family behind till my tenure ends."* Another said, *"My husband has no job here, so he cares about the children."* A third one said, *"We have to write research and take part in all tasks assigned to us, or they may terminate our contacts"*.*

Proposed Solutions

The categories derived from the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews are used to present some viable recommendations raised by the participants to overcome such challenges to empower female scholars towards research productivity. Recommendations were categorized under the following themes:

1- Research grants for female scholars

Fellowships or research grants can be provided only to female academics, particularly those who have just finished their PhDs or have just returned from maternity leave to continue their academic journey. Fresh PhD holders need to have research mentors in their early research career to get oriented to academic writing skills and guarantee chances of professional academic research growth. One interviewee said, *"Research grants can be offered to female scholars who return from maternity obligations to help them reintegrate into academia and regain momentum in their research. They may fund mentorship programs, conference attendance, research expenses, and childcare assistance."* Another added, *"These initiatives will motivate women scholars to make important contributions to their fields and will prevent academic career leakage among women in academia by removing societal, and financial barriers"*.

2- Teaching-oriented or research-oriented institution

Most universities combine teaching and research in their educational systems to guarantee high-quality education and to keep up with worldwide standards. However, a key to success is to create a comfortable environment for faculty members to write and foster a culture of balance for generations' benefit. One participant commented, *"For emerging universities, I believe it is better to concentrate on teaching in the first place."* Another said, *"Classes with large numbers of students require instructors, not researchers"*.

3- Flexible time work

Educational institutions can create a positive work atmosphere by allowing flexible scheduling, remote work options, and blended learning to boost productivity, increase faculty well-being, and provide family-friendly policies that ensure job commitment. A respondent declared, *"The university should consider offering flexitime specifically for female faculty members to encourage writing and research, particularly in the early career stages or after maternity leave."* *"The university should align our class schedules with our responsibilities, such as childcare or caregiving duties. This will promote healthy mental and psychological well-being, ultimately boosting our research productivity,"* another participant elaborated.

4- Reducing administrative loads

Reducing administrative workloads for female faculty members will free their time to research and writing. Much paperwork can be conducted online. An interviewee confirmed, *"The university should consider allowing female faculty members to hold all administrative work online, such as faculty meetings, paperwork, documentation, and students' academic advising."* Another respondent said, *"I see it as bureaucratic to meet in person for affairs that can be handled remotely; it is a waste of time."* Another respondent elaborated, *"We can be on campus only for essential responsibilities; it will work out as occurred during the pandemic"*.

5- Family support

Academic family support policies promote work-life balance, lower stress levels, and improve the well-being of faculty members. Universities may adopt policies of flexible work schedules, childcare support, and parental leave to increase faculty members' productivity and cultivate job satisfaction and career commitment. One of the participants said, *"We repeatedly pledged for on-campus childcare centres for our children to promote a sense of release while we are in our classes."* Another added, *"The university might pay for external childcare service as I need to deliver classes, have meetings, meet my academic advisees, and attend workshops."* A third respondent elaborated, *"I suggest the university extend female faculty's maternity leaves and provide paid leaves for female faculty members who have children under school age"*.

6- Research development workshops

Academic institutions offer workshops to their faculty members as they guide them to research development mechanisms, refine their research writing skills, share research interests, and cultivate new research ideas. One of the participants said, *"We need institutional platforms tailored to female scholars to exchange feedback, co-author papers, and engage in interdisciplinary research."* Another participant elaborated, *"Male faculty scholars develop more research than female ones as they do not have similar family responsibilities, so we recommend that they assist female faculty members in research development"*.

7- Promotion Policies

Universities adopt various policies to promote faculty members. However, consideration should be paid to the multifaceted tasks performed by the faculty members. A participant of the research said, *"We need a new policy for promotion based on evaluation according to teaching, administrative workloads, community services, attendance, and participation in conferences, seminars, and workshops."* *"Focusing on research development alone is unfair as it is not the only task performed by university staff members,"* another elaborated. She further mentioned, *"Our university should move from strict promotion policies like publication count to community engagement and faculty assessment."* One more added, *"We need to conduct research to benefit readers, not because it is a prerequisite for promotion, or because it is linked to our salaries and annual appraisal"*.

The research results show consensus among female faculty members indicating that they face challenges in academic research development due to a cohort of factors. On the personal or individual side, age compared to academic rank, the number of publications compared to academic rank, the timespan between PhD attainment and first publication, and life-work balance cause female staff members to lose self-confidence in academic writing. The timespan between bachelor's degree attainment, PhD degree attainment, and their first publication indicates a great challenge for them. Shauman and Xie (2003), Angaiz (2015), Kaya and Weber (2003), Hoffmann and Koufogiannakis (2014), Alghanim and Alhamali (2011), Webber (2011), Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007), Stafford (2011), Usang et al. (2007), Webber (2011), Kaya and Weber (2003), and Creamer (1998) asserted that the longer timespan between the bachelor, master's and doctoral degrees attainment, the more delays in publication and career competitiveness in general, which is attributed to the family loads that female academics carry. Female academics' careers are highly affected after marriage and childbearing. They may spend longer periods than their male counterparts to complete their doctoral degree, some may quit their academic careers for their families, some may take long maternity leaves, and others may spend all their academic careers with no publications at all. This is described by Gallagher (2015) and Mason et al. (2013) as the 'baby penalty' and Williams and Segal (2003) as the 'maternal wall.' This result also coincides with that of Mayer and Rathmann (2018), who showed that female academics lose their academic dreams and publish in less prestigious journals to satisfy their work requirements and to maintain a family-work balance.

This delay is also attributed to the excessive teaching/ administrative workload that the female faculty members perform. Though the female staff did not refer to any gender bias in the distribution of academic and administrative tasks, they indicated that the institution should consider the responsibilities that they carry compared to their male counterparts. The heavier the workload, the less they can satisfy their students' needs, and the more errors they make in their work. Excessive workload causes faculty members to feel stressed, lose personal motivation, and fall short of performing their academic goals (Martin-Sardesai & Guthrie, 2018; Melin et al., 2014; Nugraha et al., 2018).

More significantly, delay in publication, due to excessive workload pressure, is an annoying factor that creates an intervening variable of job dissatisfaction, lack of career commitment, and lack of loyalty towards academic institutions (Martin-Sardesai & Guthrie, 2018; Melin et al., 2014; Nugraha et al., 2018), along with a lack of motivation and curiosity in research (Williams, 2013), lack of confidence (Kasetsart, 2009; McGrail et al., 2006), and a lack of research ability and scholarly academic skills (Kendagor et al., 2012). Moreover, the results indicate that excessive workload and job stress negatively impacted female faculty members with physical and psychological fatigue leading to a loss of emotional eagerness to career productivity and career dissatisfaction, which was described as a challenge between "the quality of work-life balance," (Jou et al., 2013; Jalal & Zaheer, 2017. p. 97). This also goes in line with the idea that female academics feel job dissatisfaction and lack of career commitment when they find themselves set back behind men in research productivity, years of experience, academic competence, delay of academic promotion due to the dual role they play and the desire to achieve this life-work balance (Benard & Correll, 2010; Ghodsee & Connelly, 2011).

On the institutional side, the results showed a scarcity of research grants and conference participation funds, which is considered another factor that delays research productivity among female academics. This coincides with what (Adkins & Budd, 2006; Alzahrani, 2011; Ito & Brotheridge, 2007; McGrail et al., 2006) stated that if publishing in high-indexed journals will be considered a criterion for promotion and annual appraisals, universities should provide their members with frequent and rewarding funds to afford research publication. Moreover, the results highlight a significant factor about the nature of the institution. Some institutions define their roles as research-oriented or teaching-oriented according to their goals and responsibilities. Not necessarily for all academic institutions to publish. Emerging universities need to raise their rank via high-indexed publications, neglecting the excessive teaching/ administrative tasks performed by the staff members. This goes in line with the findings of Shauman and Xie (2003) who considered that among the factors affecting research productivity is the nature of academic institution whether it is research-oriented, so it will increase the types of research funding, and research assistance to raise the faculty member's academic rank, or teaching-oriented, so it pays no attention to the faculty members' academic rank as they are overwhelmed with teaching hours.

Moreover, the results go in line with Abouchedid and Abdelnour (2015) and Sotodeh et al. (2014) who attributed low rates of research productivity among faculty members, especially Arab faculty members in comparison to non-Arabs, to the long hours they spend on teaching, preparing exams, and correcting students' papers, and the institution's vision towards research and the type of the institution.

More interestingly, the results showed the female academics' desire to contribute and benefit the world with their knowledge, which Akerlind (2008) described as the highest level that turns the researchers' image from self-centred, who use research for personal benefits and interests, into productive honest researchers that seek the world's welfare. However, the results showed that female academics must satisfy the requirements of the institution as academic writing is linked to promotion, salary increase, and annual appraisal (McGrail et al., 2006).

V. CONCLUSION

The research revealed some factors contributing to academic writing delays among female faculty members in the Department of English at Sattam bin Abdulaziz University—Al-Kharj in Saudi Arabia. It examined three primary factors that affect work-life balance: teaching responsibilities, administrative duties, and financial rewards. The research showed that female academics experience an internal conflict between their academic profession and family obligations. Female Saudi faculty members consider personal and social life to be of utmost importance. After childbirth, some female faculty members postpone their academic pursuits, which delays their academic progress, leading to an extension of the timespan between the different academic ranks. However, due to socio-economic circumstances, they are keen to retain their positions amidst the psychological conflict of work-life balance.

Majority of female faculty members devote their time to teaching duties and administrative tasks, such as preparing courses, grading tests, and conducting academic advising and community services. However, the university requires female faculty members to publish their work in highly indexed journals, which is a criterion for promotion, annual appraisal, and salary increase, creating a conflict in the quality of work-life balance.

Moreover, the institution does not provide enough regular, substantial funds or grants for its members. It is difficult to afford expensive publications. Moreover, the struggle to achieve work-life balance results in mental, physical, and psychological unwellness, which produces depression and lack of self-confidence that eventually leads to loss of career commitment and job dissatisfaction.

However, the research raised some recommendations to motivate and empower female faculty members towards academic writing. As an emerging university, it may support its members, particularly female members, by reducing teaching and administrative duties to free some time for academic writing. It may also reduce the number of students in the classroom to decrease the time spent on grading exams. Dedicating research mentors to early PhD holders is another plausible solution to motivate female members and orient them to academic research writing.

Furthermore, the university may adopt a flexible time system by allowing diverse teaching modes to alleviate teaching and administrative loads, support female members with their maternity duties, and create a strong sense of job commitment. On-campus childcare centres, an extension of female faculties' maternity leaves, allowing paid leaves for female faculties whose children are under school age, and research platforms tailored to female scholars to assist them in their research development are among the most appealing recommendations to motivate female members, boost their productivity, and create a sense of job satisfaction.

As an emerging university seeking to raise its rank nationally and internationally via publication and by obtaining high-ranked faculty members, it should include enough research grants and conference funds in its scientific research system, specifically for social sciences and humanities. Furthermore, it might revise its promotion policy to incorporate all tasks performed by female faculty members; promotion criteria could include teaching, administrative duties, community service, academic advising, and attendance and participation in conferences, workshops, and seminars.

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