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A comparative analysis between the United Kingdom and

Qatar: roles of female public relations practitioners, perceptions

and their effects in the national context

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Module Number and Name: Comm5600 Dissertation and

Research Methods

Word Count: 14,903

Date of Submission: 17 September 2018

Abstract

This project aims to compare the similarities and differences between the female public relations practitioners in Qatar and the United Kingdom regarding the inequalities and challenges they face. Also, to explore the stereotypes and their effects on the participants in both contexts. Through the thematic analysis, the results showed that female participants in both countries face different equalities based on their context. There was a relationship between the stereotypes and their effects on the depth of the roles the participants can take. The perceptions also affected what kind of treatment these individuals were receiving. Overall, female practitioners whether in senior or junior positions do not have the same power as their male colleagues, the perception of the "soft" industry lives on, and these practitioners are associated with this view, and gender and age are barriers in task assignment. As a result, discrimination and forms of harassment occur due to the various perceptions. By using the qualitative method and semi-structured interviews, this project was able to contribute to filling the gap in the area of feminism and public relations and post-colonial feminism.

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1. Introduction

For years on end, women have been fighting to attain equivalent rights with men in the workplace. Feminism is a movement that champions for the rights of women and to show how women have been wrongly perceived by society due to their traits (Humm, 1989, p.74 and Delmar, 1986, p.8). Following the first movement of feminism, Simone de Beauvoir, distinctly argued that a female individual is not of secondary status, as the community she lives within makes of her to be because she is not a male (Beauvoir, 1949/1972, p.295). This thought has given way for critical thinking to be done on this topic, as women play an integral role in society and the economy as a whole. Flash forward to the twenty-first century, women around the world have still not achieved the fair treatment with the opposite sex, yet they are persevering nonetheless despite all kinds of prejudice and inequality that they face every day.

The focus will be on the public relations domain which can be defined as such a way of liaising between members of society and the corporation being represented through a correlative bond which involves an exchange of information (Harlow, 1976, p.36). The reason behind this decision is that the domain in the made up of

approximately more than sixty percent of females (PRCA, 2018, p.7). This percentage has not translated into women getting the upper hand in the industry. One of the reasons is how women and men are seen, as the term gender can be viewed as an individual's reciprocal actions with another and their intercommunication that then categorizes men and women and how they are thought of in society (Rakow, 1986, pp.23-24). Another interpretation, members of society have formulated the meaning behind this term and it the implications of this term on the males and females differs from region to region (Bradley, 2013, p.4).

This dissertation will aim to answer the following research questions:

1)   Is there a difference between conducting public relations in Qatar and the United Kingdom, regarding the role of female employees?

2)   What are the stereotypes of female employees in Qatar and the United Kingdom and how do they differ?

3) What are the effects of these stereotypes in these two national contexts?

The rationale for taking up this type of research is that firstly there is a there is a gap in the research regarding feminism and public relations, postcolonial feminism and what kind of challenges do women in non-western contexts face in this field (Fitch, 2016 and Rakow and Nastasia, 2018). Secondly, the researcher chose to conduct this research in these two countries as they are both seeking to enhance the status of women in their future plans (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008, p.22 and Government Equalities Office, 2017/2018, p.3). Thirdly, the researcher values the different voices of female practitioners across the globe; these voices will shed light on the inequalities in that particular context in order for further development.

The limitations of the dissertation were that the researcher could not explore all of the themes that were found in the interviews due to the word count. The nature of the comparative study was not the best choice for a Masters, and thus such a study could have been conducted on a doctoral level.

This dissertation consists of the following chapters. Chapter two will be the literature review that will discuss the schools of feminism,

gender, and public relations and culture and public relations and assess the gaps in the literature. Chapter three will be the methodology in which the rationale for the qualitative method, sample size, use of semi-structured interviews, ethics, and analysis will be presented. Chapter four is the findings and discussion where the analysis of the themes and connection to the literature will be presented. Chapter five will be the conclusion which summarizes the results and limitations of the study.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

This study aims to contribute to filling a gap in feminism and public relations. There are not many studies using the qualitative method which discuss the experiences of women outside the western context of the industry. The comparative study between the United Kingdom and Qatar will add insight to scholarship and reflect the differences and similarities regarding roles, perception and the effects of those perceptions in both local contexts.

Therefore, the researcher will attempt to answer these questions through the following research objectives:

1. Identify the challenges and inequalities that the female practitioners face in both countries in the industry.

2. Assess how these inequalities can affect the practitioners' roles in the industry.

3.   Investigating the similarities and differences regarding perceptions and their effects on the female practitioners in both countries.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, a detailed overview of literature which ranges from the following sections: the schools of feminism and public relations, gender and public relations and culture and public relations will be presented.

2.1 The Main Feminism Theories

2.1.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism which transpired from literature and politics has grown to address several areas in industries such as public relations. Liberal feminism takes its origins and values from the school of liberal philosophy and politics, this typology of feminism calls upon society to give female individuals better legislation and fair treatment in the workplace and other domains where a woman can make a difference and move forward in her career (Beasly, 1999, pp.51-52 and Tong, 1989, p.11). Inspired by the second wave of feminism, Betty Friedan reflected on the inequality that women are receiving through critiquing the Freudian notion that regarded women as the passive stay at home wives, who if strived to work outside the home was considered to be mentally distraught (Friedan, 1963, p.97 and p.105). However, several scholars criticized this school of feminism

at large. The main criticism is that of the initial theory of "liberalism" and the school of thought that roots from this philosophy as it is considered to be male influenced, also some of the aspects such as "individualism" diminishes some of the traits that have been found in female individuals (Jaggar, 1983, pp.27-48, Einstein, 1993, pp.152-155, 190-192 and Bryson, 2003, pp.155-160). Friedan was criticized for firstly, portraying a shattered, passive image of the wife who stays within her home, and focusing on a specific period of time and one country without accounting to all women (Bryson, 2003, pp.140-141, Humm, 1994, pp.40-41, Einstein, 1993, pp.177-179 and Evans, 1995, p.50). Various themes emerge from analyzing the literature, the first theme is that women should have the same rights as a man and this should be applied by law, the second theme is that women are continuing to defy expectations by pursuing a career. Although Friedan's work is pioneering and reflects on essential concepts of women empowerment, there is a gap in her work, as it is not up to date with the current era where there is a large number of women whom are working at the moment and have gone past that Freudian notion. The researcher agrees with the criticism that it has received as her work is limited in scope to women in one country and does not address women universally who have different obstacles and problems. Furthermore, the researcher finds that liberal feminism

school of thought to stand for important principles and is trying to contribute to the advancement of female public relations practitioners. Such as having the same pay as the fellow male colleagues; however, the researcher does find the criticism to shed some light on important issues such as that women should be celebrated for the traits that make them unique and they should not transform into men. Equal rights in the workplace should be given to the female without this comparison, as females can be rational and still have their feminine qualities which makes them who they are.

Linking it to the domain of public relations this area is quite prominent, and several female scholars have created research within this school to advocate for the progression of the place of the female practitioners in the field (Rakow and Nastasia, 2009, pp.254-256 and Vardeman-Winter, 2013, pp.338-339). The body of work within this area of scholarship mainly focuses on the challenges and obstacles that women face in the domain, such as that there is a lack of women in senior positions and unequal pay between both genders; however, most of the published literature has been in this area of research, and it is stated that feminism in public relations requires more scholarship as it is quite limited (Fitch, 2016, p.58 and Rakow and Nastasia, 2018, pp.456-457). While this school of feminism is the most

dominantly addressed regarding scholarship, it is evident that there is still a gap in the published work around the area of feminism in public relations as Fitch and Rakow and Nastasia have stated.

2.1.2 Radical Feminism

Radical Feminism focuses on the prejudice that women go through, regarding their gender, this school of thought has challenged how women are perceived in a society where the male individual is quite dominant (Beasly, 1999, pp.53-54 and Jackson and Jones, 1998, p.4). Scholars such as Kate Millet have argued that hereditary, somatic qualities do not equate to proven differences between a man and a woman in regards to sentiment and intuition (Millet, 1970/2000, p.29). Nonetheless, this school of thought was criticized by various scholars for taking into account the views of females from a specific color and race, rather than branching out to women from all of the backgrounds; furthermore, the beginnings of the concept of men being the dominant gender in society is not a notion that can't be traced and therefore no plan can be proposed to diminish it (Bryson, 1999, pp.28-29, Elshtain, 1981/1993, pp.216-217 and Tong, 1998, pp.88-89). Millett was also criticized for the lack of depth in her work that fails to recognize women of all status and complexion; furthermore, she also did not fully comprehend Freud's notions

(Eagleton, 1991/2013, pp.157-159 and Kaplan, 1986, pp.15-24). Various themes emerge from analyzing the literature firstly that women should not be judged based on their gender and be able to progress in their lives; secondly, not all women of various backgrounds are being taken into consideration. The researcher agrees that gender should not be a factor which dictates how women are perceived in society and the workplace. However, the researcher agrees to an extent with the criticism that these scholars and school of thought have received as their work does not take into consideration every woman of complexion and background; furthermore, not every culture and society is being taken into consideration. That is a weakness which the researcher has taken into consideration in the current project.

This school of thought is found in the domain of public relations, as this theory is one of the most dominant in terms of scholarship (Golombisky, 2015, p.396). Radical feminism in this domain sheds light about the prejudice that women go through which is based on the male-dominated society, this prejudice leads to women not being able to project their voice on issues, being undermined since one gender has more authority than the other and that women are not seen as individuals who are distinct (Rakow and Nastasia, 2018, p.457).

This school of feminism is a vital school to examine; another weakness is that it does not take into consideration the number of women who are in senior positions despite living in this society. While the weakness stated above are taken into account, since several women have broken the glass ceiling; however, it is essential to see how far have women come regarding overcoming prejudice in the workplace and the impact it has.

2.1.3 Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminism focuses on the experiences of women in countries which are outside of the Western context; it looks at gender and issues that arise within the local countries outside of the lens of the former colonizing countries (Ashcroft et al., 2000/2007, p.93 and Gamble, 1998/2001, pp.297-298). One of the foremost postcolonial feminists Chandra Mohanty looked at how female individuals were perceived from a Western context, as it shows that all female individuals from all parts of the world have gone through the same happenings which have impacted their lives, which is not the case as every woman in every culture is different in her way of life and how she is seen in the society she lives within and therefore this reflects poorly for the females that are being analyzed (Mohanty, 1984, pp.334-338). Another scholar, Edward Said stated that the

representation of Arab society has been problematic and antagonizing in terms of how the west appears to present it in a false light in a variety of areas such as how females are perceived to be passive and powerless; furthermore, showcasing that western culture is better than others (Said, 1978, pp.6, 11-14 and 207). However, this school of feminism received criticism, as it was believed that a new movement of women together as a dominant force should appear and focus on the problems that females face around the world, rather than having a secluded approach that may generate hostility (Connell, 2015, pp.55-61). Also, Said's work has been criticised as a not well-researched piece of work, instead Said defends his point of view adopting an ethically superior approach and shoots accusations of prejudice on that basis (Ibn Warraq, 2007, pp.18-19).

It is evident that there is an ongoing academic debate in which the researcher finds that all of these scholars have raised valid points. Said's literature is justified from one perspective in an attempt to clear a false image about Arab culture and Arab women, as stereotyping women under one label is a wrongful doing; however, the researcher agrees that Said did not consider to see how the west developed this point of view. The researcher believes that Ibn Warraq's point of view is respected regarding opinion, but the style

of writing that the scholar adopts is itself an antagonizing way of writing, in which he inflicts that argument on Said. Looking closely at the profile of Ibn Warraq and Said they are both different scholars who have a set of different experiences in which have contributed in their way of thinking and writing, both should be respected, but the researcher does not believe in a limited perspective from either end.

There are several elements that emerge from analysing this text, firstly that women from developing countries want to tell their story with their voice outside the lens of the west, secondly, there is some uncertainty around how this school of feminism plays in terms of being inclusive with others and how discursive is the content at hand. The researcher finds that women from other cultures have the right to tell their own story from their environment and setting that they are in without doubting that others may misinterpret it. Connell fails to see that this notion she is advocating for has not happened quite yet, if it were a reality and if every woman were rightly represented than by all means this would not be a problem.

In the domain of public relations, this area is not a prominent school, and there is an apparent gap in the research in this area (Rakow and Nastasia, 2018, pp.457-458). This is where the researcher will

contribute to filling the gap by providing insight into the challenges that women face in the public relations domain in Qatar, which has little to no research conducted on this topic.

2.1.4 Postfeminism

Postfeminism is sought to be distinct from other schools of feminism present in the prior movements, it analyses the various depictions of females in mainstream media such as television and film, it focuses on enabling women to believe in themselves and make their own choices as long as they are happy and convinced in choosing them (Tasker and Negra, 2007, pp.1-2, Genz, 2009, p.21, Gamble, 1998/2001, p.43, McRobbie, 2004, p.256). Expanding on this notion, this school of thought looks at the fact that women are free to express themselves in a sensual way, if they have taken the decision to do so, this way of thinking has moved away from how a man thinks into what a woman wants, if that is what she truly desires (Gill, 2007, pp.151-154). However, this also presents a contradiction in which women are told to believe in themselves and embrace their choices and as they come under fire for doing so (Gill, 2007, pp.161-164 and McRobbie, 2004, pp.259-261). Various scholars from this school of thought have had different stands, Faludi writes that the role of the capable, strong woman is no longer reflected in mainstream media in

the current century, as it was previously, this change in representation translates that the industry is showcasing their public antagonism towards women (Faludi, 1991/1993, pp.178-187). Echoing this notion, McRobbie writes that it is vital to focus on what are the representations in film and television are illustrating such as the conflicting message of the main protagonist in popular television series "Bridget Jones Diary", in terms of aiming to be a successful woman; however, always aspiring to have a male partner in the back of their minds in order to be genuinely fulfilled (McRobbie, 2008, pp.20-21). This school of thought has received criticism regarding no longer taking into consideration the various issues that women go through every day and what the prior movements of feminism fought for such as fairness in treatment between genders (Murray, 1997, pp.44-45).

Several themes appear from the literature above there is a contradiction between what is actual fulfillment for women regarding choosing a career or going back to their private life and taking care of aspects in that space which then interferes in her individuality and the representation of that integral element. There is also conflict in what the media is trying to communicate to women regarding whether their messages are positive or negative, post-feminism is against

what other schools of feminism have proposed earlier and want women to make their own decisions on how they express themselves whether it is controversial or not.

Connecting this school of thought with the field of public relations, postfeminism is present in the public relations domain through how various representations of what a female public relations practitioner does and is in terms of personality and individuality is expressed on television series such as the female who uses her own connections and sensuality to get ahead in her work in "Sex and the City", a woman who attends parties and shows that she does not any crucial work in "Absolutely Fabulous" and the unmarried, eye-appealing and pearl-white skin woman who appears to be a person of low ability level; however, she conducts powerful tasks and shows that there is a much more intricate individuality deep inside in "True Blood" series (Johnston, 2010, pp.8-14, Fitch, 2015, pp.608-613 and Edwards, 2018, pp.203-204). These representations feed into how the outside world perceives what a female public relations practitioner is, the typical representations found in "Sex and the City" and "Absolutely Fabulous" are problematic as they do not give any depth to the female individual being portrayed and does not represent every woman who works in the field. The researcher finds Fitch's analysis

very thorough regarding how the author distinguishes that there is more to a character than what appears to be this approach needs to be adopted. The researcher also agrees with the criticism that this school of feminism has received regarding not looking at other crucial problems that women face such as issues in the workplace, in which the representation of these employees in the media affects them directly.

2.2 Liberal and Radical Feminist Public Relation Theories

Cline et al. published one of the first studies in this area of research. In the year 1986, the purpose of the study was the inclination of female individuals to take on less senior jobs which had a low financial earning, this study used the mixed model method in which the results revealed that despite the ever-growing number of women in the field, female individuals have low earning jobs with subordinate titles in the work field (Cline et al., 1986, pp. II-1 – II-3 and V-10).

Furthermore, Toth and Cline published a subsequent study in 1989 that used the quantitative method, the objective was to examine their views on the growing number of women on taking senior positions, and the implications of background that help an individual in their

professional career, the findings varied and showed that a considerable percentage of both females and males agreeing that the financial earnings will decrease as a result of the impact of the increasing number of women in the field and it will not be possible for females to have the similar progress in their careers at the pace of a male (Toth and Cline, 1989, cited in, Wrigley, 2010, p.251 and Cline and Toth, 1993, pp.187-188).

These studies have served a foundation for all feminist public relations theories and studies; it showcases several essential elements that first of all the increasing number of women in the industry poses a problem for the female public relations practitioner's growth regarding attaining senior positions and monetary income. Second of all the perception of women becoming managers and growing at the same pace as men have never been seen in a positive light by both genders according to the study, which means that it is essential to see if this perception has changed over the years. While Toth and Cline's studies are fundamental studies in the area of feminism in public relations, there is a gap in the follow-up study which is that it did not incorporate the qualitative method, which would have given the reader more insight regarding the participants' views on this topic.

Following "The Velvet Ghetto" studies, Hon was one of the first scholars to develop a "feminist" theory in the domain of public relations. In the scholar's study the qualitative methodology was used to examine the constituents within an organization that would contribute to the prejudice of female public relations practitioners, which included the evident patriarchal effects in the job, perceptions of women and men working in the field and giving equal priorities between the job and personal life, this theory mainly highlighted two main points, in order to have a "feminist" framework the partisanship positioned at women must be indicated and   measures should be taken to solve this issue (Hon, 1995, pp.27 and 65).

Following Hon's theory, Aldoory and Toth developed a feminist theory in which it revealed the reasons why there is a disparity in the process of advancement in a professional position, appointment of position and income regarding female public relations practitioners although they make the majority of the employees in the public relations domain, the scholars study used the mixed method model, the results showed that female public relations practitioners were not able to progress in their careers as fast as men or have the same income rate mainly due to the assumptions about women's gender that effects their expertise, and favouring male public relations

practitioners as they do not make up the majority in this domain

(Aldoory and Toth, 2002, pp.103, 109-110, 123, 125). There are

several elements in the literature that women face all kinds of

prejudice in the field, and that female practitioners are still not being

treated in a fair way in comparison to the other gender. Also, despite

the domain being female dominated, society still places labels on

women and prefers men thinking that they can salvage this field

better. The researcher will explore if these notions are still in full

play in the current age and day.

2.3 Gender and Public Relations

Aldoory emphasized that the label of "gender" in the public relations

field has only hindered female public relations practitioners due to

the fact that members of civil society established it; therefore, it

should be re-examined in order for it to be inclusive of both females

and males (Aldoory, 2005, pp.668, 672-675). From another hand,

scholars have also advocated that the concept of gender to be looked

at the lens of performance as it is more or less a role that men and

women carry out and duplicate over time (Butler,1990, pp.133-141

and Golombisky, 2012, p.21). Edwards examined this notion further

by stating that this notion would have implications on how

individuals lead their lives if they carried out actions based on their

gender (Edwards, 2018, p.197). Building on this notion, Yeomans analyzed this perspective by viewing the aspect of managing sentiment in the public relations domain, as women usually would be given specific roles that involve communicative capabilities, diminishing their chance to showcase their abilities in other areas, based on the perception of what each gender can handle (Yeomans, 2010, pp.10-12). This notion also sheds light on why women are still not able to attain senior positions in the field, despite that both men and women possess the ability to be in a position of power despite their gender (Dozier, 1988, p.7 and Place and Vardeman-Winter, 2018, pp.166-171). However, some females believe that some companies which have a less-rigid working environment may be able to advance better to senior positions better than other organizations, although this may be further from the truth (Wrigley, 2002, pp.47-48). Several themes emerge, the concept of gender needs to be looked at from various angles in order to understand how it is affecting society. Women are expected to conduct their jobs in a certain way in the public relations field, and women and men are not given the same tasks based on suppositions of what each gender is good at. This showcases that women are still not having the same treatment as men and are not being seen as equals. The researcher

does not rule out that these suppositions still are being practiced on women today and will explore this further in the upcoming chapters.

2.4 Power and Stereotypes

Regarding the concept of power, it is said, from one hand it is a force that creates explications and contributes in establishing a person's representation in the public which then effects what kind of responsibility they take on (Heide, 2013, p.670 and Berger and Luckman, 1966, pp.70-97). From another perspective, this authority is said to be subjective and can have multiple effects and meanings based on the individual exerting this force, in the public relations domain, the concept of power is usually viewed from one lens and the various interpretations of this term are not taken into consideration; in addition, it is said that this is a force that can be granted or removed based on an individual basis (Aldoory, 2005, pp.668, 673-676 and 680 and Leitch and Motion, 2013, p.671). Furthermore, some women who have influence have the capability to bring other fellow women colleagues down, due to them being threatened by their potential advancement in the company (Wrigley, 2005, p.11).

These various perspectives have implications on the female public relations practitioners working in the domain. Preconceptions may be established such as that the industry typecasts these individuals into being a specific type of female such as a woman who was hired and retains the position just for her good looks; a woman who was appointed because she is desirable in a sensual way and feeds into this desire; a woman who overworks herself in order to show that she is capable of doing what a man can do, a woman who is considered to be bossy by men just because she is more senior than them, a woman who attends a lot of social happenings and dresses up for the occasion is considered to be a promiscuous woman and women are born with the ability to communicate better than men which contributes to what types of roles and tasks they are given (Grunig et al., 2008, pp.310-312 and Frohlich and Peters, 2007, pp.229-241).

Several themes emerge from the literature above; power is not a force that has uniform effects on individuals, people can use it in order to lessen of other people. A female practitioner is subject to a judgment which results in several labels being bestowed upon her whether she is of senior or junior status and women could turn on against each other in order to feel more secure. It is clear that there is an evident connection between power and stereotypes, as women who make up

the majority of the domain are still being judged by men and women both no matter their individuality. Labelling should not be present in the field as female public relations practitioners have more than one layer of individuality than what appears to be present in the eye, relating to Fitch's analysis. Furthermore, the implications of these typecasts could be that it may affect their growth in an organisation, the tasks they are given and what roles can they lead in this organisation. The gap in this research is that it describes these inequalities to all women and there is no specific prejudice to women from different countries; the researcher strives to contribute to filling that gap.

2.5 Lack of diversity in the public relations field

The public relations domain has been scrutinized for its lack of inclusion of individuals from different backgrounds. From one angle, it shows that individuals who do not have fair skin tones and are of non-western ethnicities do not make up a high percentage of the working environment (Pompper, 2014, p.68 and Pompper, 2005, p.144-145). Furthermore, some scholars have called on to understand why this problem exists and what does this issue mean to current practitioners employed, as this concept is a product of specific conditions in the domain, and it is needed to bring more distinct

individuals away from the typical profile that is employed (Aldoory, 2005, pp.674-677). From another perspective, female practitioners have experienced prejudice due to how old they are, a female who has a higher number in "age" experiences prejudice regarding employment and position in an organization (Pompper, 2011, pp.468, 470-476 and Roscigno et al., 2007, pp.320-329). Therefore, scholars have urged to look at all of these elements such as the binary that individuals are assigned, how old someone is, background and skin tone as inter-crossing factors with each other (Dill and Zambrana, 2009, pp.1-5 and Crenshaw,1991, pp.1241-1245). Furthermore, this leads to an individual with dominant characteristics to hold senior positions while others are left outside this opportunity (Vardeman-Winter and Place, 2017, pp.329-340).

Several themes emerge from analyzing the literature that prejudice is resilient on female public relations practitioners who do not make up the popular profile for employment, the factors of race, background, age, and gender should be studied together as they are all connected. Prejudice is an essential element which is tied to power and leads to stereotypes being formed about that individual. Being too old or of a different tone of the skin is a particular label that the field will place on that individual and this should be changed in order to have

different types of thinking from various people. The researcher agrees with Aldoory, and the issue should be explored in further depth in order to come to a solution which will reinforce positive change. The researcher also agrees with Dill and Zambrana and Crenshaw as in the world today these factors are not studied as one, and the field should be taking all of this into consideration in order for female public relations practitioner to move forward.

2.6 Culture and Public Relations

Culture itself as a concept is an intricate and challenging term to define or put in context, as there are several elements which intertwine with this concept which include the intersection of individuals living in various communities that are composed of different norms and thinking (Du Gay et al., 2013, p.5, Williams, 1977, pp. 11-12 and Barakat, 1993, pp.15-16). Especially that this crucial factor can influence how people lead their lives and the roles they take on in their professional and personal lives. Arab culture entails warm generosity, "collective," humility and dignity (Ayish, 1998, p.33, Feghali, 1997, pp.351-352 and Theodoropoulou, 2015, p.11). Simultaneously, the Western culture has the following central values independence, centered around one person's goals rather than

a group and not responsive to sentiments (Triandis, 1989, pp.509-510 and Triandis et al., 1988, pp.324-325).

Building on the last notion, the sociocultural perspective of public relations has been addressed as an important factor as it highlights that the profession is powerful in creating an impact on the values that are given to individuals living within a community and the way that life is practiced (Hodges, 2013, p.856, Edwards and Hodges, 2011, pp.62-63 and L'Etang, 2008, p.216). Since culture plays a huge role in society, this sociocultural perspective can also affect gender and in specific female individuals living in a community (Hodges, 2013, p.857). Therefore, it is crucial to shedding light on this concept to further understand the implications that impact female public relations practitioners, and this can be examined from looking at the element of "identity" within this context. "Identity" is a driving force that gives an idea of what a person stands for and showcases in terms of background, whether they are female or male, their complexion among others, these characteristics shape how that person looks at themselves and conducts their role in the workplace or daily life; furthermore, this concept is initiated by society (Curtin and Gaither, 2005, pp.101-102).

Linking the notion of culture and the concept of "identity" it is evident that it plays a role in shaping the lives lead by the individuals experiencing it. Furthermore, since women are an integral part of society and make up the majority of the public relations industry, the term "cultural intermediary" also applies in this setting in which this individual can contribute in affecting how individuals view the surroundings around them (Hodges and Edwards, 2014, pp.89-90). This can be an implication on a person's identity, and for the objective of this research paper, the research paper will be exploring how this could affect female public relations practitioners across various countries.

Based on analyzing the literature above, the researcher will argue that there are elements of the velvet ghetto still present in the public relations domain today and the researcher advocates for a postcolonial feminist perspective in order to showcase the different challenges that women face in the field in their own culture and setting.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology and research approach that was taken for this dissertation will be presented. The justification for the qualitative research approach, the advantages, and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews, sampling method and size, research instruments, ethics, and method of analysis will be outlined below.

3.1 Advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative method

This research project will undertake the qualitative approach to answer the research questions. The approach was selected for several reasons, firstly the exceptional nature of this method allows the researcher to comprehend the experiences and obstacles that the participants faced through the projection of their voice, this is one of the primary goals of this research project (Gubrium and Holstein, 2012, p.30-33 and Bryman, 2016, p.403). Furthermore, these experiences stem from sensitive issues that are occurring in the public relations sector and society, this requires the researcher to apprehend the messages when the participants are reflecting on their memories whether negative or positive; furthermore, recognize the setting that these experiences are taken in (Hennink et al., 2011, pp.8-10 and Silverman, 2010, pp.6-8). Moreover, having deep intercommunication with the participants, allowing participants to

speak freely about their exposure to the research topic and synthesizing the data collected to initiate conceptual notions is an advantage that numbers or figures could not provide, even when analyzed (Davies, 2007, pp.135-136 and 140). The advantages listed above showcase why the researcher found this approach to be the best for this project.

The disadvantages for this approach are that firstly it is viewed as not objective regarding that it comes to the researcher's view on what is seen as an essential aspect in the project, as there is no particular order or composition to this type of research (Bryman, 2012, p.405). Secondly, due to this lack of composition, other scholars find it difficult to produce a study with similar content, as every person conducting the research has a particular style (Bryman, 2012, p.405). Thirdly, the number of participants is usually not large enough in comparison to other types of methods and the details behind selecting the individuals participating, and the evaluation of the data is often not stated in a comprehensive manner (Bryman, 2016, p.399). The researcher agrees that these disadvantages are crucial to take into consideration in any project; however, as found in other types of methods there are always pros and cons, but that does not imply that one is better than others. Since the researcher is conducting a

comparative study between two countries of different culture and examining the inequalities in both contexts, the qualitative approach is the best way, despite the disadvantages listed.

3.2 Advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is the approach that was chosen for this project. It can be described as the act of reciprocating knowledge between both the interviewer and the participant, asking unrestricted inquiries based on the subject (Mason, 2002, pp.62-63). One strength of this approach is it allows the researcher some ease in communicating with the participant, as questions can be asked in no particular order and the participant has more time to develop their response (Denscombe, 2017, p.204). Secondly, since this method is quite thorough, it is an excellent way to gain insight into topics which are not spoken about usually (Hennink et al., 2011, p.131).

The cons are that firstly the researcher needs to be able to transition from one topic to another regarding interview questions (Hennink et al., 2011, p.131). Secondly, the interviewer needs to be capable of establishing engagement with the person being interviewed, in order to pick up on important detail and gain more insight (Hennink et al., 2011, p.131). Due to the nature of this project, this approach was the

most suitable as there is more than one theme in the interview guide. Also, the interviewer asked these questions to participants from different contexts; therefore, it was essential to use this approach in order to follow-up with the interviewee and understand how the answers were developed.

3.3 Sample Size and Instrument Selection

The research topic chosen is an original subject which requires public relations practitioners from both Qatar and the United Kingdom; therefore, the researcher started the recruitment process by late March as soon as the information sheet was approved. The researcher faced many difficulties in attaining participants'. All in all, more than more than 100 emails and over a dozen phone calls for follow up were involved in the process. A considerable amount of emails that were sent to practitioners from various positions were not acknowledged which required the researcher to conduct phone calls to ensure that the email was received. The researcher received several rejection emails from agencies in the United Kingdom because the practitioners were unavailable due to their day to day work and time constraints.

The researcher was able to interview five female public relations

practitioners in the United Kingdom and seven female public

relations practitioners in Qatar and one female public relations

practitioners who used to work in Qatar but has relocated to another

market, which adds up to a total of 13 participants. The participants'

interviews were conducted in May 2018 and July 2018. The

experiences that the participants have from working in the industry

range from 2 years to 20 years. Their positions ranged from Account

Executive to Managing Director and have been selected from multi-

national public relations agencies, small-medium public relations

agencies and corporate organizations who have in-house public

relations teams. The participants come from a diversity of ethnicities

and professional backgrounds having some worked solely in one

market such as the United Kingdom or Qatar, others who have for

longer and have acquired experience from the following countries:

Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Furthermore, some of the

participants have worked in both Qatar and the United Kingdom, and

in Qatar but relocated to another market. This vast range of expertise

and knowledge have provided this research project rich data.

This research project adopted a combination of the following

methods of sampling: Convenient in which the participants selected

were easy to reach (Bryman, 2012, p.201). Snowball that allows the researcher to build on the number of participants, based on the referral from other individuals partaking in the project (Bryman, 2012, p.201). Since the researcher worked in the field prior, she was able to connect with some former colleagues and invite them to partake. Some of these colleagues referred her to other individuals in the industry who were invited as well. The researcher had no prior connection with the referred individuals. There were two participants from the United Kingdom who partook based on the researcher's research of agencies who cared about gender; however, there was no prior connection with them, this could be a type of random sampling. While this selected way does not shed light on all the public relations practitioners working in both respective countries, it was the most appropriate to tackle this project given the difficulties of recruitment listed in the prior paragraph and limitations in access and time constraints.

The length of the interviews lasted from 18 minutes to 42 minutes depending on the depth and details of the interviewee's responses. Some participants provided lengthy responses while others were reluctant to answer the question or did not wish to provide any further detail when asked a follow-up question for further

elaboration. During the interview, the researcher always assured the participants that there is no right or wrong answer and asked them to take their time to answer the question as some of the participants were concerned that they were not providing the right answer to the question.

The researcher has used the following research instruments to conduct the interviews:

Interview guide: The interview guide consisted of twenty questions from three different sections: gender, stereotypes, and stereotype of female public relations practitioners working in Qatar and the United Kingdom.

Phone and Garage Band Recorder: Due to the different demographics that the participants are situated some interviews had to be conducted via phone and were recorded through the garage band program.

Face to Face and Voice Memo recording: Several interviews were conducted face to face which allowed the researcher to reap the advantages of the research method chosen. They were recorded via the voice memo program.

Transcribed Data: All of the interviews were transcribed in detail

which was used for analysis (King and Horrocks, 2010, pp.142-143).

3.4 Ethics

It is important to note that the researcher used to work as a public relations practitioner in one of the agencies in Qatar; therefore, some of the participants recruited have been from that agency, due to the researcher finding difficulty in recruiting all of the participants from different agencies. However, this did not pose a conflict of interest, or a breach of ethics as all of the participants have signed the consent form and read the information sheet and interview questions before the interview. The researcher changed the names of the participants and organizations to safeguard their identity, and the interviews were transcribed in detail (Edwards and Mauthner, 2012, pp.16-17, Layder, 2013, pp.16-19, Christians, 2000, pp.138-140 and Mathews and Ross, 2010, p.226). The connection with some of the ex-colleagues did not affect the researcher's analysis as the researcher only knew some of these participants in her prior work as mere associates in the professional setting. After the researcher left, there was no friendly relationship or anything further. These individuals were invited, and they chose to participate because they wanted to contribute to this project. Also, the rest of the participants, the researcher never had a prior relationship with. The interviews were conducted outside the participants' professional environment and

after work hours. Furthermore, the researcher does not have any

initial plans to work in that agency in the future.

3.5 Analysis

The interviews were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach which examines the content and patterns found through allocating a label that represents the words and messages pertaining in the data (Guest et al., 2012, p.10 and King and Horrocks, 2010, pp.149-151). The researcher undertook the "inductive" method in which the results presented were based on the participants' interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.83). This was the best approach as there is not much literature about gender and public relations in the Gulf region. Furthermore, this would also highlight the issues that the participants have emphasized in the interview.

4. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion for the themes that were found in research question one, two and three. Some of the participants were found contradicting themselves, and some were media trained while others were forthcoming with their answers. Due to the brevity of this dissertation, this chapter was focused on a certain number of themes and quotes, as the interviews were rich in text. A sample of the interviews can be found in the appendix section.

Research Question 1: Is there a difference between conducting public relations in Qatar and the United Kingdom, regarding the role of female employees?

United Kingdom

Age and gender can be barriers for task assignment

Three out of five participants have stated that age and gender could play a role in what kind of tasks could be allocated to them.

Therefore, this effects what kind of role can they play in the organization and the limitations of these barriers.

Rachel: "… working in the corporate crisis sector when big organizations are riddled with issues or are facing some of the biggest challenges that they may ever come across in their careers and business lifetime… they feel more comfortable with a mature male leading them through that then they might be a female. Certainly, I don't think necessarily it's my gender would ever be… I am not ruling it out it may be a barrier at some point, it's not one that I faced currently but certainly, I think my age potentially is one… you know trying to command that respect if there is an older male in the room I think I would lose out, but likewise, I would probably still lose out to an older female ..."

Rachel is from a British background and has a senior position in the company. Her quote has several elements; firstly women are not the first preference in handling difficult situations that their client comes across. Secondly, there is a contradiction in how gender is justified, it may not start as a defining factor, but it may be a problem later on. Thirdly she makes a statement about how age could be the issue.

Rachel is unaware that age, gender, and race all are connected to one another.

Catherine: "We do a lot of the more iteming work maybe, so I do more things like reporting, creating lists, and contacting media… as I mentioned before they do more as presenting and speaking to clients our content team is mainly male so more hands-on things like video production and photography tends to be more male as well… well maybe because that section requires certain skills so you need able to use videos and cameras and maybe just in that industry and sort of creative field it might seem that men could do that better."

Catherine is a practitioner who is in a junior role in comparison to Rachel and is not from the same origins. Her quote has several elements firstly; women are given more administrative and social tasks in comparison to men. Secondly, she states that men possibly do those tasks better than women, the researcher finds this problematic as men and women can do any task as long as there is training and guidance. Men are capable of doing administrative work just as women can present well in front of a crowd. The researcher could notice that Catherine was unhappy with this categorization

from her tone of voice; however, throughout the entire interview, she was quite selective and reluctant to state her full opinion.

There are several similarities and connections between the findings and the literature, the quotes reflect the subliminal inequality that female practitioners are experiencing beneath their positions in the workplace (Beasly, 1999, Tong, 1989, Rakow and Nastasia, 2009 and Vardeman-Winter, 2013). This is reflected by the type of tasks that these female practitioners are being assigned; furthermore, if they are initially the preferred gender or age for the task at hand (Yeomans, 2010 and Hon, 1995). This prejudice does not only hinder female's practitioners' progression but also affects the extent of how they can perform their role and what they can take on. Although Rachel and Catherine are from different positions, they both experience this form of prejudice in the domain today. This is definitely an element of the "velvet ghetto" that is still found in the current century (Toth and Cline, 1989, cited in, Wrigley, 2010 and Cline and Toth, 1993).

Qatar

Female practitioners are not taken seriously

Five out of eight practitioners have shown that they were not taken seriously in comparison to their male colleagues. All five are of senior positions and come from different backgrounds and companies.

Nour: "I meet some clients, I guess, who yeah maybe wanted to hear something from a man instead of from you, in which case, I would just work with my colleagues, my male colleagues to basically say to them, Come to this meeting. Here's what you're going to say. Say it. And it would be done. Yeah. I think those are the extent of the issues. I think. I mean, there isn't sort of a ... Not to do with PR per say, but on a management level, I think there are some people who do have issues with women, especially young women, being in positions of power. I became a managing director at the age of ... Yeah, I was like 26, 27... But it was a lot, I think, for some people to take. And they were just like, how on earth are you the same person? How are you one the same level as me? I think that just sparked lots of insecurities amongst them because they are older male…"

Nour's quote has several elements to it firstly; there is a contradiction in what she states as she says that there is no problem within in the

PR domain when in fact it is. Secondly, she showcases how women are not taken seriously, and she had to at times defer back to a male although she was in one of the highest positions of power, thirdly this issue can be sparked from the society's view on young women in power.

Maya: "I think that this market generally takes men more seriously and with that naturally, if you are a male practitioner in the PR field, then you automatically have an advantage over a female practitioner because you are going to be more taken seriously in front of a client… And also there's a cultural background which is a patriarchal community and society that we operate in. So even this type of discrimination, male versus female comes from the female clients themselves. Like it doesn't necessarily have to be from the male clients."

Maya's quote like Nour has several similarities such as that that men have the upper hand in the PR domain, also women are not taken seriously due to their gender and this stigma could be found in the society and also from other females pitting against each other. Linking the findings to the literature, there are several similarities.

Firstly it could be that society is used to seeing women have certain positions within the domain and this could elude to seeing females carry out a particular role and having a limited amount of power in comparison to males (Butler, 1990, Rakow, 1986, Golombisky, 2012 and Edwards, 2018). Women in power is a new concept that is rising in Qatar as part of its plan for the nation; however, in the present moment, that stigma against women is still clearly present. However, it is important not to stereotype the culture, as different participants have different opinions, so the researcher will refrain from placing a label on this rich and complex concept.

From another perspective, this could be due to the "identity" that society places on women in the "collective" culture which has transpired to the public relations domain which is made up of a considerable percentage of women (Hodges, 2013, Edwards and Hodges, 2011 and L'Etang, 2008). This distinct individuality is made up of members of society and is not an accurate representation of what women are capable of (Curtin and Gaither, 2005, and Aldoory, 2005). This representation does not do justice to the female who plays a pivotal role in the domain and the community as a whole (Hodges and Edwards, 2014). While these women are in senior positions, so the glass ceiling could be broken in contrast to what

Dozier, 1998, Place and Vardeman-Winter, 2018 and Wrigley, 2002 state however it is the equal treatment between both genders that remains.

The researcher does not suggest that this problem of appointment has not been solved entirely, but in this context, it is not the core of the issue. From the context of power, while this force can have different implications for the individuals intended, this power can be inflicted by females as well, as seen in Maya's quote (Heide, 2013 and Berger, and Luckman, 1966, Leitch and Motion, 2013 and Wrigley, 2005).

Culture itself is an intricate concept and not easy to set parameters about (Du Gay et al., 2013, Williams, 1977 and Barakat, 1993). It is crucial to note that the researcher advocates that each culture and individuals living in those spaces should be respected for their differences and highlighted for their unique values that make them distinct; furthermore, the researcher rejects the notion that one culture is superior to the other.

Furthermore, the researcher champions the postcolonial feminist approach as it allows for different voices of women from around the world to be heard and told (Ashcroft et al., 2000/2007, Gamble,

1998/2001, Mohanty, 1984, Said, 1978 and Rakow and Nastasia, 2018).

When comparing both countries, we can notice that women in both contexts have still not earned the fair treatment in comparison to men, while women may be in senior positions and have broken the glass ceiling technically, it's not enough. Female practitioners can still feel the wrath of inequality. When looking at relationships between participants, in Qatar we can see that Nour had much opportunity to grow faster than Maya, although Maya has more years of experience in the field. This shows your background does matter in this industry, but despite reaching these senior positions, the participants still find themselves in situations where their voices are not valued, and they are underappreciated.

This could be seen as well in the United Kingdom, where female practitioners who possess talent and high capabilities are still seen as either not the preferred gender for the task at hand or are given soft tasks that don't meet their full potential. It is evident that women in both contexts are still receiving unfair treatment and equality is yet to happen for women in the workplace. Most of the participants from both countries state that there is no difference between genders in

task assignment in a Managerial and Director role; however, there are some participants who are assigned different tasks. Most of the participants had conflicting statements stating that gender would never be an issue and would relate the problem to another factor, but what is at large is that the connection between gender, race age and background is not seen.

As an answer, there is a difference, not in conducting public relations, but on the obstacles and perceptions these individuals are receiving in their distinct setting which can affect their progression and the depth of their role. However, the researcher advocates for further research in this area in order to explore more in-depth into the topic, as there were several limitations to this study which will be outlined in the conclusion.

Research Question 2: What are the stereotypes of female employees in Qatar and the United Kingdom and how do they differ?

United Kingdom

Theme: Female public relations practitioners are targets of socially constructed identities

Representations from popular culture cross over to society

Two out of five participants from the United Kingdom and one participant from Qatar who has worked previously in the United Kingdom have spoken about how the representations of female public relations practitioners on popular television shows have fed into the stereotype and categorizations that women are perceived into:

Rachel: "I think the industry generally is a bit, a bit marked by stereotypes like madmen … Samantha from Sex and the City, she is glamorous, she is good looking, and lots of her relationships are based on her look and her sort of her attitude and the way she

behaves. I think that is something that is dying out, but I think it sometimes a stereotype that people associate with PR."

Rachel's quote has several elements to it in which she refers firstly that the field has these perceptions derived from popular culture; however, she does not mention that it is the females who are working in this field that are affected by these generalizations. Secondly, she contradicts herself when she states that these generalizations are evading away. However, she goes on to say that individuals from society still until this day make that connection; therefore, this stereotype is still alive. The researcher noticed as an observation from interviewing Rachel that she was trying show that women are better than these stereotypes that circulate around them, and she indirectly reflects this on herself, as this representation does not do herself justice.

Catherine: "I think when people think of public relations they think of it as being something very sort of glamorous, going to parties and talking to journalists and things, so I think there was that TV series I think it was it Absolutely Fabulous which was about PR… That they are more sort of the consumer side and all they talk about is fashion and drink and yeah getting drunk in parties. So, I think for males I

think it might be a little more serious than that I think yes they do go to parties and stuff but they are more sort of suited and business…"

Similar to Rachel, Catherine's quote illuminates several elements such as firstly that this character in the infamous television series carries out social activities that do not represent the actual hard work that goes into the profession of public relations. Secondly, she shines a light indirectly on the stereotype that consumer public relations is unserious and that is what usually women get associated with. Thirdly, she indirectly shows a comparison of how men and women are perceived, as such, she refers to men who go to parties still are being looked at as serious, but women, on the other hand, are not perceived as such and instead are generalized by the public.

There are similarities between the findings and the literature. This theme reflects the postfeminism aspect which is an area of feminism that isn't very much discussed in public relations (Fitch, 2016 and Nastasia and Rakow, 2018). There are two conflicting sides, from one side these characters in these programs are all free women who use whatever ability they have, and in the case of Samantha her body to get ahead in their jobs and the school of feminism cheers women on to embrace their decisions and way of thought (Tasker and Negra,

2007, Gill, 2007, McRobbie, 2004, Genz, 2009 and Gamble, 1998/2001). At the same time this has negative implications on the women such as Rachel and Catherine who don't have the identity of these characters, and yet they are thrown into this typecast; furthermore, each female has several sides to her identity; therefore, giving one label to a female is quite problematic and unfair (Johnston, 2010, Edwards, 2018 and Fitch, 2015).

The researcher believes that there are some elements of truth to the claim of (Faludi, 1991/1993) as there isn't a diversity of representation in female public relations practitioners in the media. Also to the criticism of (Murray, 1997) which contributes to the overall problem and the fact remains that the problems women have not been overcome and this school of feminism doesn't seem to be presenting many benefits to the real working women in this field. In-depth research is needed to portray all kinds of women of different personalities and identities in the media.

Qatar

Theme: Different stereotypes for different kinds of women

Four out of the eight participants from Qatar and one participant who used to live in the country and but no longer practices public relations there. They stated that they have been stereotyped in various ways depending on the different situations they have encountered, these women come from different ethnicities, and all hold senior positions in the field.

Khadija: "That's the thing. It could be perceived differently for a man and woman. Ambition for women would be like, Wow. You're super scary, or You're being really difficult, or You're being bad, whereas if a man said that, it could be perceived more like, Oh, he's assertive, but I haven't noticed that it stops your progression."

Khadija's quote has several elements firstly she sheds light on how society perceive a female as an individual who has something wrong with her, in comparison to a male who is always being taken in a positive light despite having the same aspirations. From a second angle she contradicts herself when she states that these views don't affect women's progression, the researcher believes that women would not be affected by these views. If these views are not that important than the aspect of the impact of perceptions would not be discussed thoroughly. Lastly, Khadija's quote eludes to the effect of

patriarchal society and how men and women are looked at through that lens.

Lila: "I think that is the most difficult part because again being a female is much more difficult to consult than being a man because they take you less seriously because we have stereotypes like… if you are disagreeing than there is something wrong…if you are being strict or professional than you are being moody or pmsing… so these stereotypes are difficult to deal with… overall they are not just in this region, but it is more difficult for people to take you seriously…"

Lila's quote has some relationship with Khadija regarding the stereotypes that women are being cast in. Upon analyzing, it can be found that women who have an opinion seem to be seen in a negative light as what she says regarding offering advice to her clients is not well heard, especially if it is with men. This is a problem that the researcher can relate to from her professional experience, as this an issue that not only one woman has faced but plenty on end. Relating Lila's quote to Khadija, this shows that this stereotype does affect women on a professional level and it goes as far as trying to convince the client that what is being said is right.

Nour: "I think there's one stereotype that people will assume of any women, whether they're in PR or not. And it's if you're strong or you're strong-minded, you have a very clear point of view, people will often take that to be a negative thing. They'll call you all sorts of names. You're a bitch because you're stubborn on your point or you're too hard or something. Whereas if it was a man, you wouldn't give it a second thought because that man is clear, knows what he wants, communicates it and moves on…"

Building on what Khadija and Lila stated, Nour's quote showcases the following elements firstly that as stated above if you are a female who is not this soft woman you are viewed as a person who is adverse as opposed to a male who like Khadija stated is seen just like a confident person who is quite sure of himself. The researcher believes that this is extremely unfair and is a form of prejudice against the woman who based on her gender has to be almost like a working machine, ready to go the extra mile in convincing hard-headed mindsets of her opinion, while the other gender seem to be comfortable in the fact that they don't necessarily have to have this experience.

Relating the quotes to the literature, it is evident that the powerful voice of women working in this field is not seen in a positive light, rather women are seen as individuals who are either too pushy or too strong-willed to get their way, while the other gender does not have this problem at all (Grunig et al., 2008 and Frohlich and Peters, 2007). This problem could come from the concept of power and the effects of when power is performed on different individuals the results can vary which is evident in this case one gender is exempted from these perceptions while the other isn't (Aldoory, 2005 and Leitch and Motion, 2013). This then affects how a reflection of one gender is portrayed in society since this is a force that is given to certain individuals in society who can cast and state what they want (Heide, 2013 and Berger and Luckman, 1966).

It is evident that women who have a powerful voice is translated in a negative way, instead it seems that women of this caliber are intimidating and the value in their opinions and voice is not appreciated, which is quite conflicting if women make up the majority of the domain and yet this is the treatment that they are receiving. These perceptions should not exist in the twenty-first century and certainly should not be in the workplace where both men and women should ideally be respected for their expertise.

United Kingdom and Qatar

Theme: The perception of the "soft" and "misunderstood" industry prevails in the 21st century

Three out of five participants from the United Kingdom and six out of eight participants from Qatar have stated that they face the perception of having a "fluffy" job, and they are in a "misunderstood" domain which then drags them down with that perception, this is a stigma that women have been faced with more than two decades ago. Furthermore, this perception has affected the female practitioners working in the corporate domain who still has a hard time defying this stereotype that is indirectly placed on them as individuals. Mary, Rachel, Maya, and Salwa all have senior positions in their respective organizations.

Mary: "Largely female orientated, slightly fluffy, don't really know what you do, and you know, and I think all of this, you know, most of that, is pegged on this is a female orientated industry so by default it does cause some sort of image of women working in this world and I think that's down to slight ignorance… I even have friends that say oh 'she's the fluffy PR girl,' she runs parties, no."

When analyzing Mary's quote, the participant shows that firstly there is a connection between the industry and the female practitioner. Secondly, the perception of what people think of these females is quite evident as she does tasks that require social skills and not any strategic thinking and thirdly the fact that the public relations industry is made up of a majority of females which shows why this perception would exist and why it still exists today.

Rachel: "I think one of the stereotypes we have faced slightly with PR as an industry is that PR is a bit fluffy if you wanted a better word it's a bit of a soft industry where is its value is party planning and product pushing in particular from the corporate and crisis perspective seeing the value that PR has and the benefits we bring to our clients I quite resent that stereotype, and I think it is something often associated with glamorous girls and actually the stuff we do is quite gnarly, gritty and morally challenging work…"

Rachel's quote has several elements that like Mary she establishes that firstly there is an indirect connection between profiling the industry in a certain way and how the practitioner has the same image. Secondly outsiders think that her job does not require any critical thinking while on the contrary, she refers to her job to be quite tough and even sometimes "morally challenging" that is

striking, although Rachel did not expand on what that term really means it begs the question what kind of work are her clients making her take on. Which brings back attention to the fact that her job is certainly not easy and defies the generalization being placed on women in this field.

Maya: "…Oh, I work in PR, it's quite vague. People don't necessarily understand what it means, but it also comes with, Oh yeah, you got a fluffy little job. It's not that, Oh, that's a very intense profession that can require a lot of like knowledge and skill. And that makes me feel sometimes that maybe I'm in the wrong place because I do want to prove my value in something that is appreciated, you know… I have several times considered changing careers or shifting into a different space…."

Similarly, Maya's quote has several elements which are that just like Rachel and Mary, firstly she is caught in this spider's web filled with misconceptions about her job and what she does. Secondly, she points out to the fact that this may be from the title of the industry itself and thirdly, there is a feeling of un-satisfaction and

underappreciation which has caused her to give thought in changing her profession altogether.

Salwa: "…The field, unfortunately, is oversimplified into this word, public relations, which back when they were coming up in the '30s or '40s... A lot of government offices here in Qatar today, public relations refers to a department where people do protocol work, receptions, welcoming international guests, VIP management. Unfortunately, yes. I do think there is this perception that women in public relations are all about the networking and the relationships and so on when actually a lot of us are strategic thinkers and managers and leaders. We don't get credited for them all."

Salwa's quote shares the same sort of tone as Maya and the rest of the participants, it has several elements which is that the name of the industry does elude to people doing different jobs and tasks which undermine what the real job constitutes of. Also, how women are dragged with this generalization and are seen as just mere social individuals and not people who are capable of conducting critical thinking.

Linking the participants' quotes to the literature, female public relations practitioners are still living to a certain extent in the "velvet ghetto" scenario as described by scholars more than twenty years ago. Referring to this study, women are still not looked at seriously, they are still perceived as women who do easy jobs and are not viewed the same as men (Cline et al., 1986, Hon, 1995, Aldoory and Toth, 2002). While all of the participants are in senior positions which shows that there is progress regarding appointment in jobs in comparison to early study, that perception still exists today which still affects women working in the field today. There are several reasons for the continuum of this view which could be boiled down to how individuals of a community view of what constitutes in being a female and male, and what kind of tasks should a woman do which is then translated to the workplace (Aldoory, 2005 and Yeomans, 2010).

This is linked to the tasks such as party planning that was described by the participants earlier. While in reality women today in the corporate sector of a senior level are not doing these tasks that perception is still there. Furthermore, building on what is stated earlier, the concept of the domain being made up of a significant number of women does take a toll on the perception of women not

being taken seriously, which then aids to what kind of work do these individuals actually do (Bowen, 2003, Wright, 1997 and Pompper and Jung, 2013). The researcher believes that this view of the industry is quite outdated and it is a shame that this view is still present in the modern day. It begs the question of how much will women live in this shadow that is cast on them because of this false image. The public relations domain has certainly evolved ever since Cline et al.'s study, and so has some aspects in her study such as some women being able to break the glass ceiling; however, while that is still on the agenda of liberal feminism it is also down to reversing this image which still occupies the minds of people today. It is evident that female practitioners are frustrated with being associated with this misconception and are tired of this image. It has even affected some to the point of changing careers altogether, which is a shame to see.

Upon comparing these two countries, it's evident that female practitioners from both countries have experienced stereotypes stemming from inside and outside the industry. The differences between both countries the United Kingdom, the media plays a role in shaping these stereotypes that the female practitioners are subjected to. In Qatar, it comes from within the industry and how

they are viewed by male colleagues and clients. What is similar between both is that female public relations practitioners from both countries have stated that the perception of the domain which is viewed as soft and fluffy does tie in with the practitioners. This shows that this stereotype is universal and is found around the globe and has not been resolved, which aids the researcher's argument that there are elements of the "velvet ghetto" still present today; furthermore, using the postcolonial feminist approach allows us to understand the various challenges and perceptions that women in different countries experience.

Research Question 3: What are the effects of these stereotypes in these two national contexts?

United Kingdom

Theme: Discrimination is still present in the field

Four participants out of five have stated they faced a form of discrimination whether it be age, race or gender. This is an effect or by-product of the stereotypes that women face in the domain.

Eliza: "… So in the first job that I worked in as a graduate I had been there for quite a long time but people sort of still knew me as a kind of young and enthusiastic graduate I suppose even though I was in quite a senior role, and I remember being told in appraisals things like go and buy a smart suit or tie your hair back for meetings, so you look older. But I think maybe that was more of an age thing than a… I don't know would they have said that to a woman I don't know. But I remember feeling quite upset about that at the time. But in the current organization that I'm in, I feel really well supported as a senior leader whose a woman."

Eliza's quote has several elements firstly even though she was in a senior role in her prior organization she was still undermined as a practitioner and was judged more on appearance and age rather than skills and capability. Her reflection on her experience showcased that although she spent a long time in the organization, she was still viewed as someone who is not serious. This shows that discrimination against women regarding age is still alive and well and like Rachel there is a connection to age, gender, and race.

Catherine: "So yeah, as I am saying it might be harder to climb higher because in general women are slightly less listened to and not

technically just about gender but l feel if you are not white as well I think that hinders you as well … so yeah."

Catherine's quote has several elements firstly shows that women's opinions are not taken seriously, and female practitioners still struggle to make it to the top. Secondly, there is a contradiction in what she states that race may be a factor but not gender necessarily. However, both race and gender are factors that are connected upon assessing their relationship. Catherine is in a junior role and from a different background in comparison to other participants. In relationship to Eliza who faced difficulties in a senior role, Catherine also does in a junior role. What is evident that all of the participants have faced inequalities which all have a connection to one another, but are unaware of that. Linking the quotes to the literature the findings do match what has been reported by scholars. Female public relations practitioners still face discrimination such as Catherine because of race (Pompper, 2014 and Pompper, 2005) and Eliza for her age, although what is distinct is that the company wanted her to look older, when the scholars stated that there was prejudice against women of an older age trying to find their way in the company's hierarchy (Pompper, 2011 and Roscigno et al., 2007).

This shows that there is a gap in the research in this area and more studies need to be conducted. Furthermore, the participants did not see that there was a connection between all of these factors which are gender, background, and age and were adamant that this form of prejudice was not due to the factor of gender (Dill and Zambrana, 2009 and Crenshaw, 1991). Since this issue has not been solved yet, the researcher does believe that there should be further investigation on why it is still ongoing and why is this domain not inclusive and not giving equal opportunities to everyone (Aldoory, 2005 and Vardeman-Winter and Place, 2017).

Qatar

Theme: Forms of harassment are still present

Six out of eight participants have voiced that they have experienced prejudice such as hostile body language and undesired forms of sexual harassment against them.

Shawqia: "I think it depends from region to region. It also depends from company to company. So, in this region in this country, I was on the client side in my previous role. There, yes. I faced a lot of resistance being female because it was a male-dominated company. So, I wasn't allowed to have a voice even though I did. It's not openly

spoken about, but you do get to know by body language, which is a sad part…"

Shawqia's quote has several elements firstly that she faced harassment based on her gender and the fact that she is a female. Secondly, she was silenced due to the nature of her company and which gender is in power, thirdly she faced antagonistic body language because she tried to showcase her strength and ability, fourthly she states that this behavior could happen in various parts of the world. It is evident that Shawqia has experienced this type of harassment which affected her satisfaction in her job which led her to leave, as every woman should be able to portray her voice with no exception.

Salwa: "... I've faced some aggressive body language from male colleagues where they're trying to make a point, so they spread their legs really wide, cross their arms. Or they come and tower over me while I'm sitting down. Most significantly I faced a management situation where I had people on my team who are of both genders, male and female, and I could see that the male person was being

aggressive towards the female colleague and I tried to find as many other reasons that could've been the reason and I could not. I could not come to any conclusion unfortunately except that he'd zeroed in on her because she was a woman…"

Salwa's quote shares similarities with Shawqia and has several elements firstly that not every man is a skilled professional and should be deserving of the senior position attained. Secondly, some men from the Middle East think they are better than women, and through demeaning behavior, they try to show their large ego and power, thirdly women are not being respected by some men in the workplace, and these males simply carry on with no accountability for their actions.

Maya: "… I think there have been the off cases of people who have been inappropriate. I've been very lucky, again, not be put in situations where I'm outright sexually harassed as in like, it's very inappropriate, but there are times when I felt people have overstepped their boundaries, overly touchy every time. He's like, Hey, how are you… but they always try to put it in the situation of like, Oh, you're like my little daughter type of thing. No, it's not acceptable…"

In relationship with Salwa and Shawqia, Maya's quote has the following, firstly there is a contradiction in her quote when she states that she was not officially sexually harassed when in fact she did face a form of sexual harassment. Secondly, she draws on the connection that some men try to hide their behavior by saying they mean it in a friendly way, thirdly these men seem to go on with this behavior without any fear of the consequences of their actions.

Linking this to the literature, this problem could be linked to the concept of power and who holds and exercises it; furthermore, who receives the effects of this power (Aldoory, 2005 and Leitch and Motion, 2013). It is evident that women have in this domain are receiving the adverse effects of this power, and nothing is being done about it, this form of prejudice has been practiced in the domain on a global basis for decades and yet it still prevails until today (Serini et al., 1998 and Hon, 1995). It is also evident that these individuals who are being antagonistic to these women are not taking into account the responsibility for their actions or even taking into consideration that these forms of harassment and sexual harassment are punishable by law and is addressed in the country's legislation. The problem is that members of the higher management are not addressing these attempts of harassment and nothing has been taken seriously. Therefore, the

researcher finds that more women need to be assigned in positions of higher management where the serious decisions are taken, and better representation and response for such issues can be found (Beasly, 1999, Jackson and Jones, 1998, Golombisky, 2015 and Rakow and Nastasia, 2018).

Men should not think they can get a free pass at women because of the suppositions of their gender (Millet, 1970/2000). Furthermore, it is hard for women to speak out about this and are scared of the consequences regarding employment or even what society will think sometimes. The law is there to protect every resident and citizen and if higher management can't help, seeking a higher authority will. Overall, this can be characterized as an effect of the soft industry that women have been thrown into if these stereotypes did not exist then women would not have to face these unwanted and undesired serious issues (Wright, 1997 and Pompper and Jung, 2013).

When analyzing the findings and discussion for these two countries, there are differences regarding the type of effects that each practitioner is receiving based on the setting that they are in. In the United Kingdom, it is evident that women are receiving discrimination due to their age, gender, and race. In Qatar, female practitioners are receiving different forms of harassment ranging

from forms of sexual harassment to antagonistic body language.

What is similar is that female practitioners in both countries are experiencing different forms of prejudice based on the stereotype that the industry and members of society have inflicted on them. This shows that there are elements of the velvet ghetto still present in the public relations domain today and through the postcolonial feminist perspective the different challenges that women face in the field in their own culture and setting, can be analyzed and have light shed on them.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings and discussion showed that female public relations practitioners face different stereotypes in their national context. The researcher noticed a relationship between the effects of these stereotypes on the roles of female public relations practitioners. For research question one, the researcher found that every participant can carry out their role; however, it is the challenges and inequalities that they face which shapes the depth of their role and how much power is held, despite some participants reaching senior positions.

For research question two, various stereotypes are cast on female public relations practitioners which come from outside and within the industry. There were different emotions which ranged from frustration about these stereotypes to a contradiction that they are dying out.

For research question three, the effects of these stereotypes paint a terrible picture to members of society and individuals in the industry that women are the weaker gender, which allows for discrimination and forms of harassment to occur. If this image was not present, women would not have gotten this treatment.

Overall, the similarities were that practitioners in both contexts face various inequalities, whether in a senior or junior position. The differences are the types of challenges based on the local context they are operating in. The findings did aid the researcher's argument.

The research process was filled with several challenges and difficulty, the recruitment process was tedious and almost felt like there was no hope. Scheduling interviews was also challenging as the researcher needed to conduct them before the participants went on summer break. The writing process at times was confusing, as the interviewer needed to decide on what content to keep in the literature review and findings and discussion. If there were more time allocated, the researcher would have conducted the mixed model as a method to gain more insight.

The limitations of this study were, the sample did not represent the entire industry in both countries, the researcher could not include all of the themes found in the interviews due to the brevity of the

dissertation, and the nature of the study could have been chosen for a doctoral level.

The researcher recommends the following:

1.   Future studies in the area of public relations and gender to be conducted in the Gulf region, as there are little studies done about this area.

2.   Countries such as Qatar and the United Kingdom to conduct a national research project regarding gender and the public relations industry, in which all of the practitioners are being taken into consideration.

The researcher hopes that this project could be taken into consideration as an enlightening conversation starter to spark positive change in the industry. The researcher is indebted to the participants who shared their experiences, and it's through those powerful voices that a difference could happen.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Transcription – Sample (Names of companies and people are changed for confidentiality). Additional transcripts have been removed for publication purposes.

Interviewer: Okay so as an opening question I would like to ask you can you please tell me what position do you have in this organisation and what is your role?

Participant: So… I am a senior account manager in the corporate PR practice here in Yellow Garden public relations.

Interviewer: And how long have you worked in the field of public relations?

Participant: I have worked for about four years and have interned a little before that as well also in PR Comms.

Interviewer: And your role is basically to look after clients and do all sorts of things revolving that? …

Participant: Correct it is predominantly account management and client services, managing those relationships and the managing day to day running and leading those accounts.

Interviewer: So, moving on to the first section of this interview I am going to ask a preliminary question which is do you think gender is an important factor in the public relations domain?

Participant: … it is an interesting question, I think… yes, yes, I do I think the role of gender has changed a lot. I think the industry generally is a bit, a bit marked by stereotypes like madmen and the old Ad guys of times gone by. Communications obviously is all part of that industry but it is slightly different. I think in PR generally women have quite a predominant role in lots of PR companies certainly the more consumer boutique PR fashion brands, booze brands, lifestyle brands have a lot of girls working with them. So its, its a definitely more female orientated than other industries but certainly marked by some general stereotypes I think in the early days.

Interviewer: I see, and I was going to follow up on that…. if so in what ways? You have told me that it is marked with some

stereotypes… can you think of any other ways that you would say that gender is particularly a factor or would you leave it at that?

Participant: … I think another one would really be just, maybe not gender but I suppose its a stereotype of the industry, it is quite a glamorous industry or can be or has certain stereotypes of being quite glamorous and its' also about relationships and building those sort of ties with clients. I think that potentially, well certainly when PR people are represented… for example, Samantha from Sex and the City, she is glamorous, she is good looking and lots of her relationships are based on her look and her sort of her attitude and the way she behaves. I think that is something that is dying out but I think it sometimes a stereotype that people associate with PR.

Interviewer: Ok, and do you think that gender has affected your role in this organisation that you work in? If so, how? Could you tell me about any situations or examples that demonstrate these effects?

Participant: … I think, I would like to think here in this company and also generally in the industry particularly in the UK, that most women feel supported and have not been effected by sort of barriers based on their gender that said, just an interesting observation when I

first started and I interned my team was predominantly male, significantly so… there were two other girls and I mean the team was smaller but there were two girls in the team and I came as an intern, now we have two men in the team and about fourteen women. So, I think it is a positive thing, at the same time it shows you… some imbalance one way or another. I don't know if this is the company's sort of compensating trying to get more women in… or if its just there are not guys out there at the moment. But it certainly seems to be an issue.

Interviewer: I see, do you feel that there are advantages in being a male practitioner in the public relations domain? if so, do you feel that there any disadvantages in being a female practitioner in the public relations domain?

Participant: I wouldn't say sort of straight advantages and disadvantages, I think there are like any industry there are some traditional stereotypes and for example working in the corporate crisis sector when big organizations are riddled with issues or are facing some of the biggest challenges that they may ever come across in their careers and business lifetime… they feel more comfortable with a mature male leading them through that then they might a

female. Certainly, I don't think necessarily its' my gender would ever be… I am not ruling it out it may be a barrier at some point, its' not one that I faced currently but certainly, I think my age potentially is one… you know trying to command that respect, if there is an older male in the room I think I would loose out, but likewise I would probably still lose out to an older female because in doing what I do, experience and sort of gravitas are what really drives respect and the ear of the client when they really need your support and that is something I am still working on as a more junior consultant.

Interviewer: I see… I think this question is sort of answered but have you faced any problem throughout your job related to your gender? If so, can you please provide examples, if there are any?

Participant: I think no, essentially no I have not … as I say its just interesting the environment that I have been in has become predominantly more female. It used to be and I do think of examples a bit like Mad Men… it used to be quite a male dominated team of fairly sort of swav executives… and there was a lot of pressure on that. That said, I found that quite a brutal environment but I therefore learnt a lot and I would not change how I got my experiences… you know it was a lot of tough love in a male dominated team

Interviewer: and do you feel do you feel that there are certain assumptions about female practitioners working in the UK? The UK in general as a country and if so what are they/could you provide examples?

Participant: I am not sure if there are any straight assumptions I think one of the stereotypes we have faced slightly with PR as an industry is that PR is a bit fluffy if you wanted a better word it's a bit of a soft industry where is its value is party planning and product pushing in particular from the corporate and crisis perspective seeing the value that PR has and the benefits we bring to our clients I quite resent that stereotype and I think it is something often associated with glamorous girls and actually the stuff we do is quite gnarly, gritty and morally challenging work and … I don't feel like it gets necessarily the respect it deserves… I think it is changing a lot especially in based on… with the advertising world is changing … in that people hate adverts… everything is hashtag spon hastag ad paid partnerships and so people are moving more and more to PR to get coverage that actually drives real change and real value and real sort of respect without having to literally pay for an advert. And so, I think that world is shifting but we still have some way to go. I still

still feel like when I say I work in PR, I would often say I would work in corporate communications rather than PR because I worry that or it frustrates me that people would say Oh Rachel must push products and party plan and that is not how I see the industry and I don't think that is how others should but unfortunately, I still feel quite strongly that it is there.

Interviewer: My follow up question to that is, if so, have these assumptions affected you on a professional level? How? How did that make you feel, if that has happened to you personally? Have you ever had an instance basically that someone says well Rachel you do party plan or what do you really do … or anything like that …

Participant: I have never had that exact scenario… but as I say I would I am always a bit funny about when people say oh what do you do and it would be very easy to say I do PR but I do have a real issue with saying that because I really think it underplays what I do and I don't want to be stereotyped with that oh its' just like PR is for some sort of fashion brand or jewellery brand and there is nothing wrong with that its just not how I see the industry and it plays down on what we do. I don't think I have ever been sort of called out on it as such but it certainly affects the way I think about my job and I

know that when I have been asked sort of say what I do… I go about it in quite a long-winded way and then people are like ok I still don't understand I say oh well I do corporate PR and they are like oh PR I know what that is… but again it frustrates me because I feel like their views of PR are not what I am trying to get across but that might be my own personal issue rather an industry one.

Interviewer: And do you feel that your organisation provides a fair chance for female practitioners to grow professionally? If so, could you provide examples?

Participant: Yes, absolutely… I think well yes… we had the gender pay gap report come out recently which was disappointing…. I appreciate that there aren't many women in senior positions here so by default there is a pay gap. But there is a lot of talk about the problem and no real emphasis on any solutions … I mean people like me are the people they the company should be talking to… I love this company I want to remain in it I am very engaged in it and care about it and want to be one of the female senior leaders down the line what are they doing to engage people like me and make sure that I don't leave or I don't do something else and to make sure that they have enough females reaching those levels. I think we are very supported

at a team level and even a practice level… and certainly the amount of women in the PR practice says that there isn't an issue there but it starts to dribble off as you go further and further up… and while I appreciate right now that is the lay of the land… there is still very little focus on what is actually being done to change that… its' just sort of a temperature take of ok here is a situation… yeah but what are we going to do to resolve that… how are people like me gonna be able to get to the top and what is this business doing to support me and make sure its equal for me and for others in the business.

Interviewer: So, do you feel like that there are some measures being taken but not enough at this moment?

Participant: Yes certainly… I mean you know… its' also something that the government has pressured companies to do in reality to issue the gender pay gap report or whatever… the company as far as I am aware the company has not made any pledges to try and make that equal… it probably has but I am not aware of them and its' something I am interested in so they should certainly be pushing it harder… I am also not aware of definitely what is the plan… I am not saying it will be solved overnight but what are they going to do to make that better its' very easy for all of us to sit around and say oh

there is a problem there is an equality problem but how are we going to resolve it and how is this company going to help me get there and not to be a barrier for people like me when I get there.

Interviewer: I get you, moving on what types of tasks do women typically get assigned in this sort of field?

Participant: So, it would vary entirely depending on your role there is certainly no discrepancy between the tasks that you would do at my level if your male or female it would be exactly the same. So, my level day to day things… I am pushing into the account director sort of role depending on the accounts so it's the day to day, leading of the accounts managing client liasion reviewing and center checking and tone checking all documents and activity across the account, being the sort of face and the voice of the account on calls and meetings, leading the sort of planning budget and finance stuff on the account and then starting to help a lot more with the kind of strategy and planning of the account and the strategy of around how the team will grow, on a team perspective I also at this level you have a role to be a line manager it is not something you have to but it is widely recommended and so I have two line manages as well who I also

mentor and ensure that they are hitting their goals and targets and helping them progress.

Interviewer: Those two questions that I will be asking is exactly what you said: the types of tasks do women typically get assigned? and the types of tasks do men typically get assigned? and why do you think that is? So at your level as you said there is no difference between a man and a woman at the sort of manager level.

Participant: No, no and in theory there is no difference between what would be required between a man and a woman at any level I think particularly in the UK that is where the pay gets a problem because we are getting better and better at yes ok giving women those equal roles but they are not being recognized fairly and financially for those roles so there is a rumour here this is entirely confidential but its fine…

Interviewer: Of course, don't worry

Participant: there is a rumour here that one of the female Managing Directors who shares the MD ship is paid significantly less than the guys.

Interviewer: Really?

Participant: Yes, whether that is true or not I have no idea it would not surprise me in any way whatsoever… but there is no difference at all in her role, if anything she has the larger of the teams to be the managing director of the expectations, the targets, everything over her head is exactly the same, she is potentially paid less for that role.

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