

# Original Research

## Do Saudi academic women use more feminised speech to describe their professional titles? An evidence from corpus

by Reem Alkhamash and Haifa Al-Nofaie

**Reem Alkhamash** Taif University [reem.alkhamash@gmail.com](mailto:reem.alkhamash@gmail.com)

**Haifa Al-Nofaie** Taif University [haifa.a@tu.edu.sa](mailto:haifa.a@tu.edu.sa)

**Received** 14.06.2020 | **Revised** 23.08.2020 | **Accepted** 18.09.2020

**Recommended citation format:** Alkhamash, R., & Al-Nofaie, H. (2020). Do Saudi academic women use more feminised speech to describe their professional titles? An evidence from corpus. *Training, Language and Culture*, 4(3), 9-20. Doi: [10.22363/2521-442X-2020-4-3-9-20](https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2020-4-3-9-20)

*The use of gendered occupational titles by women in higher-education settings has rarely been discussed either in the Saudi context or at the international level. This study investigates how Saudi women academics tend to represent themselves in their titles, in particular whether they use Arabic feminine or masculine markers. A corpus of 558,474 CVs was extracted from CVs published on Saudi women academics' websites at the two largest Saudi universities: King Saud University and King Abdulaziz University. The data gathered was analysed quantitatively. The frequencies of gender markers attached to positions' titles were analysed by adopting a corpus-based variationist linguistics. The findings reveal that the majority of Saudi women academics use more masculine markers in their academic titles than feminine gender markers. The study finds that both type of institution and the hierarchy of the academic discipline plays a significant role in the tendency to use masculine markers with the professional title, however, the academic discipline has no significant effect on the usage of masculine form. This study provides a cross-linguistic review of the use of gendered markers in other languages, such as French, German and Polish. It compares its findings with the findings of available international studies, a point that contributes to the significance of this study. It is hoped that this study will shed light on linguistic practices that should be reflective of policies that aim to empower Saudi women. This study contributes to a growing research of language and gender that focused on the linguistic representation of the titles of professional women and how grammar can be reflective of practices that are hindering women's empowerment in gender-specific languages.*

**KEYWORDS:** Arabic, self-representation, gender marking, occupational title, professional identity, higher education, sociopragmatics



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of generic masculine forms to refer to women is indicative of asymmetric usage of gender marking and is an example of masculine bias,

wherein women are perceived to hold a lower position than men in the social hierarchy (Cheshire, 2008). Damanhoury (2013) investigates the perception of Saudi women based on linguistic rep-

representations and whether this perception is reflective of their position in society. In particular, she investigates terms of address and references to women as well as the use of generic masculine forms to refer to professional women and other women in the Arabic language. The qualitative study uses interviews to understand the perception of females and finds the existence of linguistic sexism in Arabic to be the result of the marginalisation of women, which in turn is a product of social norms. Arabic poses a complex case in which masculine forms prevail in both everyday speech and formal correspondence (e.g. Damanhour, 2013), while more classical Arabic resources tend to distinguish between males and females. For example, many Quranic verses address males and females separately by their masculine (*Almuminoon*, meaning *male believers*) and feminine (*al muminaat*, meaning *female believers*) forms. On the other hand, we still find classical evidence of the use of the generic masculine plural form referring to both males and females. For instance, the masculine form *Almuminoon surah* (meaning *believers*) is directed at both males and females.

Hellinger and Bußmann's (2001, 2002, 2003) *Gender Across Languages* series offers linguistic analyses of masculine generics used in more than 30 languages from various language families. German is one such language, using masculine nouns to refer to mixed-gender groups; for example, the masculine plural *einige Lehrer* (*several teachers*) is used to refer to a group of male and female teachers. Hellinger and Bußmann (2001, 2003, 2003) find that feminine forms refer exclusively to females in German. Formanowicz and Sczesny (2016) argue that there are two strategies for reducing gender stereotyping in language use: neutralisation and feminisation. Neutralisation refers to the use of gender-unmarked forms to replace masculine forms, for example, the use of *police officer* instead of *policeman*. Feminisation refers to the use of a feminine form to increase the visibility of female referents, for example using *he* or *she* instead of *the applicant*.

Through traditional, discourse-oriented studies of discursive-constructed identities – be they indi-

vidual, collective, social, situational or personal – we have learned that the processes of identity formation are subsumed by many discursive practices such as indexicality, local occasioning, positioning, dialogism and categorisation (De Fina, 2011). As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) note, such processes aid researchers in unravelling 'how human dynamics unfold in discourse, along with rigorous analytic tools for discovering how such processes work' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 607). Indexicality refers to the indexing of specific personas and groups, such as the use of stance markers and style features, in the analysis of some linguistic features (see Johnstone, 2009). Other linguistic means of self-representation include the use of entire linguistic systems to index certain identities (see Gal & Irvine, 1995; Schieffelin et al., 1998). In sum, the construction of identity in discourse is a common research strand which articulates the linguistic means which formulate discursive practices of identity formation.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Construction of professional identity

Investigating professional identity has been the focus of many studies, namely, experimental, longitudinal studies as well as studies investigating the professional identity in gendered workplaces. In longitudinal studies, the focus has been on self-conception and the development of gendered professional identities (Cech, 2015). Cech (2015) finds that women engineers' conception of their profession is affected by the professional culture around them. In any professional culture, there are systems of meanings, rituals and symbols that are linked to traits of professional identity (Cech, 2015). The formation of professional identity is affected by individual differences, graduate training, cultural perspectives and ideology (McGowen & Hart, 1990). Some research has found that linguistic forms affect how children and adolescents perceive professions. For example, Vervecken et al. (2015) find that, in French, when professions are presented in the masculine form, men are viewed to be more successful in stereotypically masculine jobs and women are more successful in stereotyp-

ically feminine jobs. The results of their study, which used word pairs to learn more about the perception of stereotypical feminine and masculine professions, show more balance between the genders in ratings of competency; both genders are found to be competent. However, the study finds that children and adolescents perceive stereotypically masculine professions to be less warm than stereotypically feminine professions (Verweken et al., 2015). Feminisation of occupation has been correlated with occupation devaluation (Cacouault-Bitaud, 2001), and the use of masculine titles is correlated with prestige (Glick et al., 1995).

Similar to many male-dominated enterprises such as finance or law enforcement, academia is found to be perceived as a male-dominated workplace. Some studies have looked at the use of feminine forms in women's representation of their professions in higher education. For example, Lipovsky (2015) finds that French women have become more willing to use feminine job titles on their CVs and that the use of masculine job titles by females is determined by type of institution, occupational field and profession. In another context, Formanowicz and Sczesny (2016) find that Polish women psychologists prefer to use masculine professional titles because they may be devalued if they represent themselves as using feminine marker. This is common in languages where feminisation is novel (Formanowicz & Sczesny, 2016). In terms of hiring, Formanowicz et al. (2013) investigate how the evaluation of Polish women applicants is influenced by the grammatical form in which their profession is presented. Across three studies, female applicants using a job title in the grammatically feminine form on their CVs were evaluated less favourably than both male and female applicants using a grammatically masculine form.

According to previous research, academia is perceived as a male-dominated workplace in which success is associated with stereotypically male traits (Wynn & Correll, 2017). The feminisation of job titles in academia has not received sufficient attention, and research on this topic is scarce. One study conducted in Argentina by Per-

ona (2009) finds that the feminisation of job titles has become more tangible in higher education (HE). The improved gender equality reported in this study is attributable to the increased number of women working in HE. However, a thorough search reveals no studies on the feminisation of job titles in HE in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this paper is to examine the feminisation of academic job titles in the Saudi Arabian context, where women have been receiving more support recently.

## 2.2. Saudi women in higher education

Since 2013, Saudi Arabia has undergone social and political changes, with the number of female leaders increasing. There are now 34 Saudi universities at which women comprise at least 40 percent of the academic staff (Darandari, 2018). The recent Saudi trend of placing women in academic leadership positions has given them greater authority and contributed to the shifting position of women in the workplace. Male and female academics are now given equal opportunities to pursue higher education. As a result of women's change in position, the use of masculine forms has changed. The topic of gendered job titles in HE is therefore timely, due to the rapid political and social changes in Saudi Arabia.

It is worth noting that women's dissatisfaction with the low number of women leaders in higher education has been a universal issue and is not linked to a particular country or culture (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). Haifa Jamal Al-Lail (2020) of ACE commented on Vision 2030: *'Vision 2030, a roadmap to the future created by King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, specifically calls for a vast improvement in the status of women, driven by a new focus on education, openness, and equality. No one is so naïve as to think that the status of women in Saudi Arabia will change overnight, but Vision 2030 is not a public relations campaign. It truly offers real hope and encouragement for Saudi women.'*

Since the government's announcement of its strategic goal of women's empowerment, many governmental institutions have increased in female-occupied leadership roles. In Saudi higher

education, new positions have been created and women have participated more in decision-making. Of the newly created titles, the Vice Presidency for Female Student Affairs is one of the most remarkable. To fill the position, the Ministry of Education asked Saudi universities for nominations. The Minister of Education then announced the appointment of 14 Vice Presidents for Female Student Affairs, and the new position was the highest position for women in Saudi Universities. The main responsibility of the Vice President for Female Student Affairs is to supervise administrative and academic work on female campuses and to coordinate with other Vice Presidents at each Saudi university. A recent study conducted by Al-subaie and Jones (2017) and based on data from the Saudi Ministry of Education found 61 female deans at Saudi universities, compared to 330 male deans; this indicates a high gender gap of 269. The status of each Saudi university in terms of female dean appointments is determined by its president's decision to empower female leadership. A female dean is the head of the deanship or college and is in direct contact with male and female staff and students. These developments in Saudi women's position in higher education raise questions as to how Saudi women academics (i.e. professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers and teaching assistants) represent themselves. Therefore, the goal of the present study is to investigate this phenomenon as it concerns the use of job titles in CVs.

### 2.3. Sociopragmatics and pragmatic variability

The focus of sociolinguistics is the relation of variations in linguistics to social and cultural factors, such as age, class, gender and ethnicity. Sociolinguists have paid attention to the pragmatic features of language in interaction, a focus now known as sociopragmatics. The term 'sociopragmatics' was first adopted by Leech (1983) to illustrate how pragmatic meanings reflect '*specific local conditions on language use*' (Leech, 1983, p. 10). Leech (1983) provides the example of politeness as investigated across different cultures and language communities – a study of particular in-

*'Since the government's announcement of its strategic goal of women's empowerment, many governmental institutions have increased in female-occupied leadership roles. In Saudi higher education, new positions have been created and women have participated more in decision-making'*

terest due to the variability in the principles of politeness – and states that its sociopragmatic analysis should account for various social situations and social classes. He distinguishes general pragmatics from sociopragmatics, stating that the latter is concerned with '*how communication of pragmatic meaning involves speakers' presentation of their identities*' (Leech, 1983, p. 159). Linguistic strategies such as word choice, prosody, tone of voice, degree of grammatical complexity and interactional routines transmit the identities of speakers while they perform identity. In self-representations, people display their identity by constructing themselves through pragmatic choices (LoCastro, 2013), and they do so by self-representations of features such as social roles (e.g. project manager) or group memberships (e.g. female, academic or Muslim) (Spencer-Oatey, 2007).

The theoretical framework which underpins the field of sociopragmatics is interactional sociolinguistics (IS) (Bailey, 2008; Schiffrin, 1995). IS, developed by John Gumperz in his efforts to establish a general theory of language and society, generally focuses on the meanings of face-to-face interactions, taking into consideration the sociocultural knowledge of interlocutors (Bailey, 2008). Language use and identity form an important sociopragmatic topic of IS, and the focus of IS is not limited to interactional meanings obtained from audio- or video-recorded data, but also includes communicative written works which express the participants' identities. For example, Martiny (1996) investigates forms of address in French and Dutch from a sociopragmatic angle. The forms of

address studied include nicknames, generic proper names, occupational titles, honorific titles, kin titles, terms of endearment, offensive terms and common, generic nouns. Employing a model of sociopragmatic variability, in particular the statement that *'language varies according to speakers' age, class, education, religion, ideology, sex, etc.'* (Braun, 1988, p. 18), Martiny (1996) argues that variability in address forms is affected by social class and can show *'language-specific and subgroup-specific tendencies'* (Martiny, 1996, p. 774). Recent sociopragmatic research has investigated the relationship between gender and language. Research following the interactional strand investigates the use of sociopragmatic strategies in workplace interactions (Baxter, 2010; Holmes, 2006). Many such strategies are analysed in terms of perceived masculine norms associated with establishing powerful status, such as leading meetings, authorising decisions, issuing bald directives and disputing others' statements. Other sociopragmatic strategies are viewed as following perceived feminine norms, meaning that they lean towards acting politely, for example, expressing approval, hedging to express disagreement and providing positive feedback (see Holmes & King, 2017).

Palander-Collin and Nevala (2011) investigate the sociopragmatic aspect of references to people in texts. They state that the choice to refer to a person by their first name (e.g. Mary) or by their academic position title (e.g. Professor Smith) takes into consideration people's social roles and relations.

Lipovsky (2015) investigates whether legislative reforms in France (namely, antidiscrimination and equal-opportunity laws) have an effect on French women's selection of occupational titles. The focus of Lipovsky's (2015) study was to investigate the selection from a second-wave feminism perspective. In other words, since French nouns may be feminine or masculine, are professional women more inclined to use feminised occupational nouns to represent themselves? The study finds that, in the selection of occupational titles, French women present their professional identity by how they construct their gender. Representing their pro-

fessional identity with feminised nouns means that 'linguistic and social equality for women in the workplace' has been achieved in France (Lipovsky, 2015, p. 97).

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This paper investigates whether Saudi women academics tend to use language to represent their professional titles using gender-fair language by using the feminine morpheme or gendered language by using the masculine morpheme in their choice of professional title. The paper specifically analyses the gender-marking selection of Saudi women academics in light of recent developments in Saudi policy empowering women in the workplace. Considering recent research in language and gender indicating that the prevalent use of feminine nouns in gendered languages is indicative of a changing society (Formato, 2019), this study explores whether the changes in Saudi society have any bearing on the language use of Saudi academic women. The extent to which demographic factors (i.e. Saudi women academics) may explain the practice of gender marking in Saudi women's academic discourse will be investigated. A corpus of 558,474 CVs was extracted from CVs published on the websites of Saudi women academics at the two largest Saudi universities. The frequency of gender markers attached to academic titles in these CVs was analysed.

A corpus of CVs of Saudi women academics was compiled. CVs were chosen for the study because they contain self-representation in the form of the professional identities of their authors (De Fina et al., 2006; Dyer & Keller-Cohen, 2000). This study's analysis of CVs is meant to test whether Saudi women academics prefer to use masculine or feminine gender markers attached to their academic professional titles. As previous studies have found that quantitative analyses may reveal variation of use, the present study considers whether the variation is statistically significant and whether certain demographic variables may affect certain preferences of gender markers. As the study adopts a corpus linguistic approach, it follows Baker's (2010) holding that, in studying linguistic varia-

tion, language users may be categorised by demographic. These categories serve as explanatory variables in sociolinguistic studies. Baker (2010) provides examples of demographic variables used to explain results in sociolinguistic studies, including gender, age, social class, occupation, geographical location and sexual orientation.

It is standard practice at Saudi universities for teaching faculties to publish their CVs on the uni-

versity’s website for the purposes of networking. In order to analyse CVs systematically, a corpus was established as follows: (1) Saudi universities were stratified by region, and the largest universities with CVs available online were chosen; (2) relevant data were collected from the university websites, and two corpora were created and stored offline for accessibility; (3) CVs were categorised by pertaining colleges.

Table 1  
*Corpus size*

NAME OF UNIVERSITY	NO. OF COLLEGES	CORPUS SIZE
King Abdulaziz University	14	307,905
King Saud University	13	250,569

Table 1 represents the corpora of CVs of Saudi women academics from the two largest Saudi universities. Outdated CVs are a possible weak point in the data. Also, some CVs lacked the previous experience of women academics and listed only their names and a brief description of their current positions. The study took an inclusive approach and included any information which increased the chances of finding linguistic variation in the use of titles. Some faculty members were more prone to have an updated English CV and a short Arabic CV; these include those working in the departments of medicine, pharmacology and medical science. The CVs for this study were collected from 14 colleges from King Abdulaziz University and 13 colleges from King Saud University.

With a sociopragmatic approach to analysing variation of the use of gender markers in academic position titles, this study’s design applies corpus-based variationist linguistics methodology (CVL) (see Baker, 2010; Szmrecsanyi, 2017). The variables identified for this study are: academic fields, rank of academic position and type of university.

The first variable of the study reported in this paper is academic fields. Work opportunities in STEM fields are most likely to be in a mixed-gender work environment. There is a high male-to-

female ratio in these fields’ teaching staff. For humanities, education and social science fields, there are more female teaching staff than male teaching staff, and work opportunities are most likely to be in segregated work environments (see El Nagdi & Roehrig, 2019).

The second variable is rank of academic position. Policy reform which advocates for increasing work opportunities for Saudi women involves blue-collar jobs (Alkhamash, 2016). These jobs were occupied by females, and no evidence is found for the use of masculine form in these job titles. Although the lowest ranks of such occupations are now feminised, academic occupational titles have never been linguistically investigated.

The third variable is type of university. The included universities, King Saud University and King Abdulaziz University, share the same status in Saudi higher education. Both are well-established and top-ranked and are the oldest universities in Saudi Arabia. Many studies have compared both universities due to the similarities between them (see e.g. Shaker & Babgi, 2009). The research question for this study is: what gender-marking practices do Saudi women academics use in the selection of their titles at the two largest Saudi universities?

In the construction of its hypotheses, this study was informed by Lipovsky's (2015) research, which finds that type of institution, field of work and profession determine gender-marking practices that professional women use to represent themselves in their CVs. This study has one hypothesis for each variable.

Hypothesis 1 concerns the field of work variable: women academics who work in the fields of engineering, computer science, science, medical science and health science use different gender-marking practices than those who work in the fields of the humanities, education and social sciences.

Hypothesis 2 concerns the variable of rank of academic position: women academics who are assistant professors, associate professors and full professors use different gender-marking practices than those occupying the assistant teacher and lecturer positions.

Hypothesis 3 concerns the type of university variable: women academics who work at King Abdulaziz University use different gender-marking practices than those who work at King Saud University.

The semiotic factor is about significant variation of linguistic expressions in accordance with the paradigms, objectives, concurrence, and incongruity of perceptions about linguistic options used to designate objects and phenomena, awareness and adjustment of choices by communicating entities.

The first step to the system of data analysis was determining the frequency of feminine and masculine titles (that refer to women) in the corpora of this study. Sketch Engine analysis software was used to upload each college corpus in the two universities. Each professional title was then searched, and concordance lines were checked manually to validate the feminine or masculine use. Frequencies of feminine and masculine forms were reported. In determining the frequency of occurrence of feminine and masculine professional titles, tokens were counted manually and then double-checked via a computer search. Cross-tabulations and a chi-squared test were employed to identify the statistical differences (if any) in the use of feminine

*'This study reveals that the masculine form used for academic positions is dominant. Associate Professor is not used in the feminine form; no evident feminised variation is witnessed in the corpus for Associate Professor. There are rare cases of feminising the title Full Professor and even rarer cases of feminising Assistant Professor. Only the titles Assistant Teacher and Lecturer have been used variably in the corpus'*

and masculine self-representation. The results were explained in terms of how linguistic practices are reflective of social practices.

#### 4. STUDY AND RESULTS

This study reveals that the masculine form used for academic positions is dominant. *Associate Professor* is not used in the feminine form; no evident feminised variation is witnessed in the corpus for *Associate Professor*. There are rare cases of feminising the title *Full Professor* and even rarer cases of feminising *Assistant Professor*. Only the titles *Assistant Teacher* and *Lecturer* have been used variably in the corpus. However, it is clear that masculine marking dominates feminine marking in academic titles across all disciplines. The main results are summarised in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2 shows the results pertaining to the professional field variable. Clearly, there are no significant differences in the use of gender marking for academic titles between types of academic field. This means that Saudi women academics' preference for particular, gendered academic titles (masculine or feminine) is not determined by their disciplines. This refutes Hypothesis 1 stating that Saudi women academics in the fields of engineering, computer science, science, medical science and health science use different gender-marking practices in professional titles compared to those who work in the humanities, education and social sciences.

**Table 2**  
*Observed frequencies in the use of gender marking in academic positions by type of scientific field*

TYPES OF SCIENTIFIC FIELDS	MASCULINE MARKING	FEMININGE MARKING	ROW TOTAL
Engineering, computer science, science and medical and health sciences	2,067	390	2,457
Humanities, education and social sciences	1,950	791	2,351
COLOUMN TOTAL	4,017	1,181	4,804

Note: The chi-square statistic is 1.2244. The p-value is .2685. The result is not significant at  $p < .05$

The results concerning the variable of academic rank are shown in Table 3. The level of academic rank is found to significantly influence the use of gender marking ( $p$ -value  $< .00001$ ). This confirms Hypothesis 2, which states that Saudi women academics who occupy top academic levels such as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Full Professor positions used different gender-marking practices than those who occupy lower positions

such as Assistant Teacher and Lecturer. The feminine marker for the titles of Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor is used only 8 times across the corpora, while the masculine marker is used 1,822 times. Although the feminine marker is used more frequently with lower academic positions (Assistant Teacher and Lecturer, 783 instances), masculine position titles remain dominant for these positions (2,206 instances).

**Table 3**  
*Observed frequencies in the use of gender marking in academic positions by academic ranks*

ACADEMIC RANK	MASCULINE MARKING	FEMININGE MARKING	ROW TOTAL
Top level: assistant professor, associate professor and full professor	1,822	8	1,830
Lower level: assistant teacher and lecturer	2,206	783	2,989
COLOUMN TOTAL	4,028	791	4,819

Note: The chi-square statistic is 548.9369. The p-value is  $< .00001$ . The result is significant at  $p < .05$

**Table 4**  
*Observed frequencies in the use of gender marking in academic positions by type of university*

TYPE OF UNIVERSITY	MASCULINE MARKING	FEMININGE MARKING	ROW TOTAL
King Abdulaziz University	3,017	409	3,426
King Saud University	1,016	380	1,396
COLOUMN TOTAL	4,033	789	4,822

Note: The chi-square statistic is 169.2716. The p-value is  $< .00001$ . The result is significant at  $p < .05$

As seen in Table 4, there is significant variation in using feminine markers between the two universities investigated ( $p$ -value < .00001). Clearly, masculine marker use is statistically different between women academics at King Abdulaziz University and King Saud University. This supports Hypothesis 3, which states that Saudi women academics who work at King Abdulaziz University use different gender-marking practices compared to those who work at King Saud University.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Since the increasingly-prevalent use of feminine nouns in gendered languages is indicative of a changing society (Formato, 2019), this study investigates whether the changing Saudi society – particularly, the attention paid to women’s status in the country – has influenced the language use of Saudi women in academia regarding CVs. The quantitative analysis of gender representation in professional identity is useful in describing trends in Arabic language usage. Furthermore, such quantitative analysis determines which factors may have contributed significantly to variation of usage. This method of analysis is not without limitations. For one, the analysis in this study did not consider the views of Saudi women academics and their justification for the predominant use of masculine language. Interviewing a sample of Saudi women academics could contribute to an understanding of their awareness of their language choices and their attitudes towards the feminisation of job titles in general.

The results of this study reveal that the majority of Saudi women academics tend to use masculine markers in their job titles. The overall trend in usage relies heavily on masculine markers in academic titles in these women’s CVs, with some fluctuation of usage in the lower ranks, where the feminisation of titles is more common. The study finds that academic women who are in the lower rank in the academic career use feminised professional titles, while academic women who are in higher rank in their academic career use masculine forms in their professional titles. These findings seem to be in accordance with Lipovsky’s (2015) study,

which claims that type of position affects women’s choice of masculine or feminine titles on their CVs. Lipovsky’s (2015) analysis finds that French women associate the use of masculine markers in job titles with prestigious occupations, and explains that women tend to prefer the masculine form as a way to valorise their occupation. Similarly, Saudi academics who hold higher academic degrees prefer to use masculine titles rather than feminine ones. This could be due to a perception of prestige associated with the masculine titles as found in other research (e.g. Glick et al., 1995). The findings may indicate a hierarchy of perceived prestige which leads to the prevalence of masculine forms in higher academic positions. Also, contrary to the belief that the feminisation of job titles cultivates agency for professional women in highly regarded professions, this finding may suggest that Saudi academic women might not be aware of the effect of feminising their titles when it comes to representing their professional identity. It might also mean that there is a prestigious association of top-level academic positions with masculinised titles, a belief that might be held by Saudi women academics.

In testing the second hypothesis, regarding the relation between type of gender marking and academic field, the results show that Saudi women academics in scientific fields do not use gender markers differently than those in the humanities, education or social science. This finding is in contrast with studies suggesting that women in STEM fields are more aware of gender bias in the workplace (El Nagdi & Roehrig, 2019).

This study found a significant relationship between type of institution and the use of gendered job titles. King Saud University, one of the oldest universities in the country, was established in 1957, and King Abdulaziz University was established later in 1967. The two universities are in different locations, which does seem to influence their female employees’ use of gendered titles. It could be that the two universities bear many similarities, as they are located in the largest cities of Saudi Arabia and have the largest number of Saudi academics. This finding is also in line

with Lipovsky's (2015) conclusion suggesting that institution type actually determines the use of gendered job titles.

All Saudi universities work under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, which moves steadily towards achieving the country's Vision 2030 and drawing attention to the empowerment of women. As such, Saudi universities are expected to work in tune with this vision. Recent examples of the empowerment of female academics at some universities include hiring female academics in leadership positions. Although masculine gender markers are dominant in the analysed CVs, feminisation of some job titles is also apparent. The type of institution and the level of academic position appear to be a factor affecting the feminisation of job titles. Future studies may compare the number of feminised job titles at Saudi universities over the years and thus measure institutional changes in terms of the linguistic variations in professional titles.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the linguistic representation of professional titles of Saudi women academics in relation to three factors: type of profession, type of academic field and type of institution. Similar to other existing studies on gendered titles, this

research sought to study a male-dominated context; no such studies have considered the repercussions of continuing to use masculine gender marking in occupational titles associated with women. At the international level, feminisation of job titles in higher education has been discussed in a few contexts (Formanowicz & Sczesny, 2016; Lipovsky, 2015); however, this issue has not been widely examined.

Further research on this topic will lead to a better understanding of the impact of women's empowerment on their linguistic representation through their academic and professional titles. Linguistic representations of women in professional settings have rarely been discussed in the context of Saudi higher education or at the international level.

The study finds that masculine gender marking dominates the women academics' CVs. The majority of Saudi women academics use masculine markers to represent their academic positions. It was found that type of institution and the level of academic position have a significant effect on the women academics' choice of gender markers. The findings suggest that we have yet to wait for a linguistic change in the form of using feminised professional titles which reflects national policies aimed at empowering Saudi women.

## References

- Alkhamash, R. (2016). *Metaphors of national reform: The press discourse of female journalists on women's work in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral dissertation). Queen Mary University of London, UK.
- Alsubaie, A., & Jones, K. (2017). An overview of the current state of women's leadership in higher education in Saudi Arabia and a proposal for future research directions. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(4), 1-15. Doi: [10.3390/admsci7040036](https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci7040036)
- Bailey, B. (2008). Interactional sociolinguistics. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of communication* (pp. 2314-2318). New York, NY: Blackwell Publishers.
- Baker, P. (2010). *Sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics*. Edinburgh, UK: EU Press.
- Baxter, J. (2010). *The language of female leadership*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Braun, F. (1988). *Terms of address: Problems of patterns and usage in various languages and cultures*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4-5), 585-614. Doi: [10.1177/1461445605054407](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407)
- Burkinshaw, P., & White, K. (2017). Fixing the women or fixing universities: Women in HE leadership. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(30), 1-14.
- Cacouault-Bitaud, M. (2001). Is the feminization of profession a loss of prestige? *Travail, Genre et Sociétés*, 5(1), 91-115. Doi: [10.3917/tgs.005.0091](https://doi.org/10.3917/tgs.005.0091)

- Cech, E. (2015). Engineers and engineeresses? Self-conceptions and the development of gendered professional identities. *Sociological Perspectives*, 58(1), 56-77. Doi: [10.1177/0731121414556543](https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121414556543)
- Cheshire, J. (2008). Still a gender biased language? *English Today*, 24(1), 7-10. Doi: [10.1017/S0266078408000035](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078408000035)
- Damanhour, M. (2013). *Saudi perceptions of linguistic representations for women in use of Arabic language* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Newcastle University, UK.
- Darandari, E. (2018). Navigating through tough waves towards inclusive leadership: A case study from Saudi Arabia. In L. Stefani & B. Patrick (Eds.), *Inclusive leadership in higher education: International perspectives and approaches* (pp. 92-107). New York, NY: Routledge.
- De Fina, A. (2011). Discourse and identity. In T. A. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (pp. 263-282). London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- De Fina, A., Schiffrin, D., & Bamberg, M. (2006). *Discourse and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dyer, J., & Keller-Cohen, D. (2000). The discursive construction of professional self through narratives of personal experience. *Discourse Studies*, 2(3), 283-304. Doi: [10.1177/146144560002003002](https://doi.org/10.1177/146144560002003002)
- El Nagdi, M., & Roehrig, G. H. (2019). Gender equity in STEM education: The case of an Egyptian girls' school. In K. Fomunyan (Ed.), *Theorizing STEM education in the 21st century* (pp. 315-317). London, UK: IntechOpen.
- Formanowicz, M., Bedynska, S., Cislak, A., Braun, F., & Sczesny, S. (2013). Side effects of gender-fair language: How feminine job titles influence the evaluation of female applicants. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 43, 62-71. Doi: [10.1002/ejsp.1924](https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1924)
- Formanowicz, M., & Sczesny, S. (2016). Gender-fair language and professional self-reference: The case of female psychologists in Polish. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 10(1), 64-81. Doi: [10.1177/1558689814550877](https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689814550877)
- Formato, F. (2019). *Gender, discourse and ideology in Italian*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.
- Gal, S., & Irvine, J. T. (1995). The boundaries of languages and disciplines: How ideologies construct difference. *Social Research*, 62, 967-1001.
- Glick, P., Wilk, K., & Perreault, M. (1995). Images of occupations. *Sex Roles*, 32, 565-582. Doi: [10.1007/BF01544212](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01544212)
- Hellinger, M., & Bußmann, H. (2001). *Gender across languages: The linguistic representation of women and men* (Vol. 1). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins. Doi: [10.1075/impact.9.05hel](https://doi.org/10.1075/impact.9.05hel)
- Hellinger, M., & Bußmann, H. (2002). *Gender across languages: The linguistic representation of women and men* (Vol. 2). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins. Doi: [10.1075/impact.10](https://doi.org/10.1075/impact.10)
- Hellinger, M., & Bußmann, H. (2003). *Gender across languages: The linguistic representation of women and men* (Vol. 3). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins. Doi: [10.1075/impact.11](https://doi.org/10.1075/impact.11)
- Holmes, J. (2006). *Gendered talk at work*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Holmes, J., & King, B. (2017). Gender and sociopragmatics. In A. Barron, G. Yueguo & G. Steen (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 121-138). London, UK: Routledge.
- Jamal Al-Lail, H. (2020). Women's leadership in Saudi Arabia. *American Council on Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/Communities/Women's-Leadership-in-Saudi-Arabia.aspx>
- Johnstone, B. (2009). Stance, style, and the linguistic individual. In A. Jaffe (Ed.), *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 29-52). New York, NY: OUP.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London, UK: Longman.
- Lipovsky, C. (2015). Gender specification and occupational titles: An investigation of French women's CVs. *Sociolinguistics Studies*, 9(1), 93-113. Doi: [10.1558/sols.v9i1.18244](https://doi.org/10.1558/sols.v9i1.18244)
- LoCastro, V. (2013). *Pragmatics for language educators: A sociolinguistic perspective*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Martiny, T. (1996). Forms of address in French and Dutch: A sociopragmatic approach. *Language Sciences*, 18(3-4), 765-775. Doi: [10.1016/S0388-0001\(96\)00046-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0388-0001(96)00046-0)
- McGowen, K. R., & Hart, L. E. (1990). Still different after all these years: Gender differences in professional identity formation. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 21(2), 118-123. Doi: [10.1037/0735-7028.21.2.118](https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.21.2.118)
- Palander-Collin, M., & Nevala, M. (2011). Sociopragmatic aspects of person reference in Nathaniel

- Bacon's letters. In P. Pahta & A. H. Jucker (Eds.), *Communicating early English manuscripts* (pp. 102-117). Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- Perona, E. (2009). Women in higher education in Argentina: Equality or job feminization. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 27(1), 155-160.
- Schieffelin, B. B., Woolard, K. A., & Kroskrity, P. V. (1998). *Language ideologies: Practice and theory*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Schiffrin, D. (1995). Interactional sociolinguistics. In S. McKay & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language teaching* (pp. 307-328). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Shaker, R. E., & Babgi, A. A. (2009). Women in dentistry: A perspective on major universities in Saudi Arabia. Part 2: Analysis and statistical data. *The Saudi Dental Journal*, 21(3), 107-112. Doi: 10.1016/j.sdentj.2009.03.002
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2007). Theories of identity and the analysis of face. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(4), 639-656. Doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2006.12.004
- Szmrecsanyi, B. (2017). Variationist sociolinguistics and corpus-based variationist linguistics: Overlap and cross-pollination potential. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, 62(4), 1-17. Doi: 10.1017/cnj.2017.34
- Vervecken, D., Gygax, P., Gabriel, U., Guillod, M., & Hannover, B. (2015). Warm-hearted businessmen, competitive housewives? Effects of gender-fair language on adolescents' perceptions of occupations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 1437. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01437
- Wynn, A., & Correll, S. (2017). Gendered perceptions of cultural and skill alignment in technology companies. *Social Sciences*, 6(45), 1-28. Doi: 10.3390/socsci6020045