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RECLAIMING ADMINISTRATIVE CREATIVITY AMONG ACADEMIC WOMEN FACING LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

This study empirically investigates the correlation between the administrative creativity (AC) practices and leadership challenges (LC) faced by women leaders in the Saudi university context. It further explores whether supervisors' gender influences the strength of AC practices. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of encouragement and support that women leaders place on their AC. Utilizing a 5-point Likert-type scale, respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each topic using a survey-based study design. All female faculty members in leadership positions at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (IAU) comprised the study sample, and 74 valid responses (representing 90.2%) were obtained. Using means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients to characterize the variables, quantitative analysis procedures such as the independent sample t-test and ANOVA analysis were applied. Using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analysis, the relationship between gender and total AC was examined. Using StataMP 16.1 (StataCorp, College Station, TX), variables were inserted and the significance level was set at 0.05. The findings revealed that women academic leaders used encouraging AC practices (mean=4.25; standard deviation = 0.48), and there were no statistically significant differences between the groups. Moreover, after controlling for leadership position and years of experience (P>0.05), no significant gender differences were identified between respondent AC behaviors and supervisor gender. It is possible to conclude that both male and female leaders have an equal impact on the AC at IAU. The study also revealed a positive significant relationship between LC faced by women leaders and their AC practices (r=0.32; p<0.01); hence, women leaders are able to overcome highly rated LC while practicing a high level of AC. Owing to the richness and complexity of AC in the university context, a variety of recommendations are presented. Upper leadership at IAU should encourage AC behaviors in themselves and others by becoming role models for AC, and by developing a system that is able to identify and select naturally creative faculty for different leadership positions, while providing continuous creativity training and development programs. Most importantly, IAU may consider serious concentrated efforts for better representation of qualified and creative women into upper-leadership positions.

Keywords: Administrative Creativity; Academic Women; Higher Education; Leadership Challenges and Saudi Arabia.

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of globalization and the digital revolution, creativity has moved to the forefront of education policy and practices, as educational visionaries realize the transition from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy to a creative economy. Higher education (HE) is in an era where change, creativity, and innovation are emphasized. Today, the functions of universities are growing in a diverse and complex matter while facing continuous external environmental challenges on the political, economic, and social fronts. The survival of HE institutions can only be achieved under the leadership of conscious, curious, creative, imaginative, and risk-taking members, who are able and willing to play a major role in accelerating the change and creative processes (Al-Mansoori & Koc, 2019; Alshammri & Alenezi 2021; Zhou & George, 2001).

The definition of Administrative Creativity (AC) stems from the general definitions of creativity that focus on the role of the individual in the creativity process and the ability to invent new and creative ideas, whether that creativity is individual or collective. Creativity in management is related to renewal and addition of new ideas in the field of management, product development, team leadership, improving services to customers, and all known management functions which brings benefits to the institution, individuals and society.

Yosef & Rakha (2017) argue that administrative creativity with its core elements (fluency, flexibility, originality, sensitivity to problems, and risk taking) provides all the necessary resources to support the creative processes at any educational institution, which includes more freedom and autonomy at the levels of execution. Salam (2018) confirmed that creativity occurs in an interactive environment that supports the transfer of knowledge and accumulated acquired experiences. She further confirms the decisive factor for pushing administrative creativity is building a clear vision while challenging the strategies and providing motivation and support to the work environment. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2021) findings revealed that internal and external environment jointly shape creativity and showed [top leadership] as a mechanism linking creative and innovative teams to its administration.

Some scholars defined AC as a process that seeks to bring about a distinct shift at the level of organization, by generating a set of innovative ideas and implementing them by work members and groups; while other researchers have identified administrative creativity to be a mixture of practices that stimulate individuals to produce new and applicable ideas, solve problems and make decisions via an unconventional way of thinking, and find new methods of executing the [university's] functions, thus, ensuring the accomplishment of its goals with efficiency and effectiveness (Gaspar & Mabic, 2015; Mohammadi, 2020; Olsson & Paredes, 2019; Yosef & Rakha, 2017).

Therefore, today's effective academic leaders are practicing AC to a large degree and are connecting with their subordinates at a higher level like never before and working together to raise their creativity level by challenging their intellectual expertise and mental abilities in problem solving and decision making (Aldighrir, 2020; Alanezi , 2016; Lei et al., 2021).

Today, Saudi HE is going through a transformational stage where the empowerment of academic women and enhancement of their involvement in HE leadership have been clearly emphasized as targets of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and National Transformation Programs (NTP), with a target to increase women leadership representation by 30% by 2030 (Saudi Vision, 2016). These national strategic plans include a multitude of initiatives to further empower women leaders in HE, including training and development programs, reforms and legislation

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granting sufficient authority, as well as rewarding and recognizing creative accomplishments (Abalkhail, 2017; Alsubaie & Jones, 2017; Alfawzan, 2017).

Empirical research concluded that empowerment of leaders has a positive significant effect on the organizations' performance, and on improving their leadership practices, thus positively affecting their expertise, motivations, and critical thinking skills needed in facing this challenging and changing era in HE (Al-atawi & Marie, 2018; Alkhazali et al., 2020; Knezovic, & Musrati, 2018). Recent research (Alshammri & Alenezi, 2021; Bin Bakr & Alfayez, 2021; Bin Bakr, 2021) has concluded that Saudi academic women leaders are equally effective as their male counterparts and those they scored similarly to men on a variety of leadership aspects.

However, the academic literature on Saudi HE has highlighted some challenges facing empowerment of women in HE. Some were related to the work environment, such as women's absence from strategic policy and regulation making, administrative inefficiency, and the lack of professional exchange opportunities and effective networking (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Abalkhail, 2017; Bin Bakr, 2021). Other scholars revealed some organizational cultural and personal challenges such as the presence of hostile work environments that encourage stereotypes and biases against women, the lack of trust in women leaders, the lack of self-confidence, as well as problems in balancing domestic and social commitments, are prevalent among academic women (Alghofaily, 2019; Bin Bakr, 2021; Sanchez & Lehnert, 2018).

Individuals' creative abilities have begun to play a greater role in adjusting to the ever-changing conditions of the present. Faculty must bring their unique inventiveness to the organizational environment in this situation. According to Guven et al., (2021), in order to achieve this, individuals must derive personal enjoyment and fulfillment from their profession; thus, their job satisfaction is increased as the organizational creativity scores in the administrative aspects grew. Further research has revealed a significant correlation between the positive organizational climate and work satisfaction, which enhances performance in a practical and effective way (Aldaihani, 2019; El-Demerdash& Mostafa, 2018; Olson & Paredes, 2019). However, it has also been argued that employees' creativity may result in the case of a challenging work environment. Zhou and George (2003) argued that for challenges at work to become an inspiration for innovation and be used as an opportunity for organizations to grow, leaders must have an active and constructive response to these challenges; then, employees may try to alter the current work situation by coming up with new and better methods of doing things. The aforementioned is the essence of creativity, while supporting originality and encouraging critical thinking and creative problem solving is the essence of administrative creativity (AC) (Kelley & Kelley, 2012).

Previous studies have advised leaders to value curious faculty who question the status quo and explore new things. There are many advantages for AC to organizations, leaders, and subordinates, including having innovative and positive changes in both creative and noncreative jobs, developing higher engagement and collaboration among workers, helping adapt to uncertain conditions and external pressures, and improving the overall performances at different levels of the organization (Al-hajaya & Al-roud, 2011; Gino, 2018; El-Demerdash & Mostafa, 2018; Yosef & Rakha, 2017).

As previously mentioned, some studies have addressed AC practices in HE, while others have highlighted the numerous challenges women leaders in Saudi HE confront. To the best of our knowledge, however, no research has explored the relationship between AC and the obstacles experienced by women leaders in Saudi HE, and specifically at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University (IAU). This study provides recommendations for researchers and practitioners in

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various fields that may inform and guide senior decision-makers at various levels in the Saudi educational system, and in IAU in particular, and adequately support women in reclaiming their AC practices, which may in turn support the attainment of women empowerment into leadership roles at the university and national level.

The study and its topic are relevant in today's society as it contributes to the current literature by offering an empirical analysis of the levels of AC among women leaders and its relationship to the Leadership Challenges (LC) they encounter at work at IAU. Specifically, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

Q1: What are the perceptions of Administrative Creativity (AC) for women leaders at IAU based on the respondents' demographic variables (current position, supervisor's gender, and years of experience at IAU)?

Q2: Is there a positive and significant correlation between LC and the AC at IAU?

Q3: Does a supervisor's gender influence the perceptions of AC for women leaders based on the aforementioned demographic variables?

Q4: What source of encouragements and support do respondents identify as important to reclaim their AC?

METHODS

Sample and Data Collection

A survey research design was used to address the study objectives. The sample of this study were identified as all full-time women faculty members holding different leadership positions at IAU during the Fall academic year 2019/ 2020; the total number was N=82. The list was provided by The Office of the Vice President for Female Student Affairs at IAU. The researcher presented the study objective during the annual meeting for IAU women leadership hosted by the Vice President on February 2020; afterwards, she contacted the identified faculty via internal email and their voluntary participation was encouraged, with assurance of data confidentiality and data security. The overall completed and usable responses were N=74 representing a 90.2% response rate.

To ensure the validity of the survey, a panel of eight faculty experts in the field at IAU reviewed and presented recommendations, and adjustments were made based on their opinions, and a convenient sample of 17 participants were chosen as a piolet and reliability tests were administered to insure the internal constancy of the items. The survey included three sections:

1. Participants identified the demographics: gender of their current supervisor, and their current leadership position, and the number of years of experience in holding leadership positions at IAU.
2. Leadership Challenges (LC): participants were asked to rate the LC they faced at IAU using a 30-item scale developed by the researcher. Detailed description of this section and the analysis related is available in a previous study by the author; sample questions included the phrases "*Poor female representation in top councils and committees*" and "*predominance of men in top leadership positions*"; the Cronbach's alpha of the LC section was 0.88 indicating a high measure of reliability (Bin Bakr, 2021).
3. Administrative Creativity (AC): participants were asked to rate the level of their own AC practices using a 15-item scale developed by the researcher; five items were adopted from Scot and Bruce (1994), four from Zhou and George's (2001), and the remaining six were developed for the present study. Sample questions included three phrases measuring "*originality*," three measuring "*flexibility*," three measuring "*risk taking*," three measuring "*analysis capability*," *three measuring* "*problem solving capabilities*"; these included: "*I suggest new ways to achieve goals or objectives*," "*I use new approaches for problem solving*," "*I support and promote others' creative ideas*," "*I am never afraid to take difficult decisions and face high risks,*" *"I am keen on recruiting creative individuals for various work teams*," "*I come up with creative solutions to problems*." The Cronbach's alpha of the AC section was 0.89, indicating a high measure of reliability.

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For section 2 and 3, the respondents were requested to indicate the degree to which they agree/disagree with each item using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 "*strongly disagree*" to 5 "*strongly agree*". Following section 3, participants were invited to answer an open-ended question by listing the most encouraging practices they expected from IAU upper leadership that may help reclaim their own AC.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study used the statistical tool StataMP 16.1 (StataCorp, College Station, TX) and the significance level was set at 0.05. The following quantitative analysis methods were conducted:

1. Mean scores and standard deviations (SD) were calculated for each item of each section of the survey. For interpretation purposes, the rating was segmented into five categories averaged as follows: strongly disagreed (less than 1.50), disagreed (1.50-2.49), neutral (2.50-3.49), agreed (3.50-4.49), and strongly agreed (at least 4.50).
2. An independent sample t-test and ANOVA analysis was employed to describe the variables and correlation coefficients.
3. A Pearson correlation test between the participants' AC and LC was implemented to identify the correlation between them.
4. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the association between gender and overall AC.

RESULTS

Q1: What are the perceptions of women's administrative creativity based on the respondents' demographic variables (current position, supervisor's gender, and years of experience) at IAU?

Table 1
THE RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic variables	N	%
Leadership Positions		
Dean	9	11.5%
Assistant dean	30	41%
Department Chair	22	28.2%
Other	13	19.2%
Supervisor's Gender		
Male	32	42.%
Female	42	57.7%
Years of experience		
More than10 years	26	33.3%
10 years or less	48	66.7%
Total	74	100%

The respondents' demographic characteristics are reported in Table 1. The total number of returned usable response was n=74 surveys, representing a (19.2%) response rate. Most of the respondents held the position of "*assistant dean*" (41%), and (57.7%) had "*female supervisors*", while (66.7%) had "*10 years or less*" of work-experience in a leadership at IAU.

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Table 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, RESULTS OF ANOVA AND T-TEST FOR OVERALL PERCEPTION ON AC BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC-RELATED VARIABLES.

Demographic Variables	N	Mean	SD	Level	f-valve/ t-value	P-value
Leadership position						
Dean	9	4.53	0.40	High	1.45	0.24
Assistant dean	30	4.22	0.29	High		
Department chair	22	4.24	0.49	High		
Other	13	4.10	0.53	High		
Years of Experience						
More than 10 years	26	4.31	0.45	High	-0.86	0.40
10 years or less	48	4.21	0.50	High		
Supervisor Gender						
Male	32	4.21	0.47	High	-0.47	0.64
Female	42	4.27	0.49	High		
Overall AC	**74**	**4.25**	**0.48**	**High**		

Note: *p<(.05) significant

Table 2 contains the means and SDs for AC based on respondent demographic variables, as well as the independent sample t-test and ANOVA analysis results pertaining to the differences between groups for each variable. The results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences between groups (p> 0.05), and the majority of respondents evaluated the AC levels of women academic leaders to be comparable regardless of their leadership position, number of years in leadership positions, or their direct supervisor's gender.

As shown in Table 2, there is an overall "*high*" level of AC among women leaders with a mean average of 4.25 and SD = 0.48. The highest mean rating was for participants holding deanship position (m=4.53), while those with more years of experience also rated a slightly higher level of AC (m=4.31) when compared to less experienced ones (m=4.21). Further, a very similar rate of AC was observed among respondents with male and female supervisors.

Q2: Is there a positive and significant correlation between LC and AC at IAU?

As noted in the "*data collection*" section, detailed analysis of the LC was presented in a previous study by the author. The overall LC mean was calculated to be m=3.42 with a SD=0.60 (Bin Bakr, 2021). Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for AC (m=4.25; SD=0.48). A Pearson correlation coefficient was undertaken to determine the link between overall LC and overall AC for women faculty members holding leadership roles at IAU; a strong positive correlation was detected (r=-0.32, p<0.01).

Q3: Does a supervisor's gender influence the perceptions of AC for women leaders based on the aforementioned demographic variables?

Table 3
RESULTS OF ANOVA AND INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR THE PERCEPTION ON AC STRATIFIED BY GENDER BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC-RELATED VARIABLES (N=74).

Demographic Variables	N	Mean	SD	Level	f-value/ t-value	P-value
Male supervisors						
Leadership position						
Dean	6	4.47	0.40	High	1.11	0.36

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Assistant dean	15	4.15	0.51	High		
Department chair	2	4.50	0.33	High		
Other	9	4.10	0.45	High		
Years of Experience						
More than 10 years	11	4.28	0.11	High	-0.55	0.59
10 years or less	21	4.18	0.11	High		
Female supervisors						
Leadership position						
Dean	3	4.64	0.45	High	0.78	0.51
Assistant dean	15	4.30	0.38	High		
Department chair	20	4.22	0.53	High		
Other	4	4.12	0.71	High		
Years of Experience						
More than 10 years	15	4.33	0.13	High	-0.63	0.53
10 years or less	27	4.23	0.09	High		

Note: *p<(.05) significant

Table 4
RESULTS OF THE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE ASSOCIATION OF AC AND GENDER ADJUSTING FOR LEADERSHIP POSITION AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE.

Administrative Creativity	Beta-Coefficient	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
Gender (Reference Male)	0.07	-0.19,0.33	0.593

According to Table 3, there was no statistically significant difference between AC and leadership position among respondents with either a male or female supervisor (p>0.05). Further, there was no statistically significant difference between AC and years of experience among respondents with either a male or female supervisor (p>0.05). Overall, results may imply that male and female supervisors have the same effect on the AC practices of women leaders at IAU regardless of the demographic variables identified in this study.

The results of the multivariate linear regression analysis between the association of the overall AC and the supervisor's gender after adjusting for leadership position and years of experience are reported in Table 4. The findings indicate that there is no significant difference between AC and gender after adjusting for leadership experience and years of experience (p>0.05). It may be argued that women with different leadership positions and different number of years of experience have similar AC practices regardless of their supervisors' gender.

Q4: What source of encouragement and support do respondents identify as important to reclaim their AC?

The aim of this question was to gather respondents' views on the types of upper-leadership practices that may provide the encouragement and support needed to reclaim and enhance their AC. Of the 74 respondents that completed the online survey, only 40 completed this open-ended question, representing 54.1% of the sample group. The respondents' statements positively linking leadership practices to AC have been summarized, categorized, and grouped as follows.

Encourage intrinsic motivation (14): A total of 35% of respondents identified some suitable forms of encouragement that may support their intrinsic motivation. Statements included the following: "*I need to feel an open-minded presence in my work environment, encouraging the exploration of ways to explore new ideas*," "*We need our leadership to become creative in acknowledging creative successes on the personal and team level*," "*All efforts for creativity*

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need to be praised and encouraged, even the unsuccessful ones which did not lead to successful changes," "*supervisors must be cautious in criticizing bad ideas in public settings*."

Grant Freedom (32): Overall, 80% of the respondents expressed the importance of granting autonomy and freedom in execution of their work. Statements included "*Inclusion in setting the strategic plans and goals at IAU*," "*I need to feel free in choosing the methods I view as appropriate to get the job done*," "*My supervisors need to accept mistakes/give leaders space to learn from their own mistakes*," "*I need to be granted the necessary power and authority to solve complicated problems*."

Allocate resources (25): A total of 62.5% of the respondents identified three types of resources (people, time, and money) and considered them important sources of encouragement and support for their AC. Statements included "*The budget allocated for any project/or initiative need to be transparent and clear upfront*," "*reasonable timeframes for job completion must be granted/don't look for quick wins/please no impossible deadlines, no time for creativity*," and "*choosing team members based on their qualification and experience in subject matter is crucial*."

Secure training and development program (20): A total of 50% of the respondents identified providing local and international professional development and a variety of training programs as most encouraging for AC. Statements included: "*provide regular scientific seminars and workshops on AC throughout the academic calendar*," "*mandate specific workshops in AC core skills, such as brainstorming, problem solving, and critical thinking*…," and "*encouraging the participation in international conferences/pay for all expenses for professional development programs*."

DISCUSSION

The creative individual is considered the most successful source of investment in any organization. Therefore, universities high interest in creativity is not limited to the advancement of tools and techniques, but rather making actual changes in the attitudes and behaviors of its leadership. The crucial role of AC should be appreciated through its notable efforts to create an atmosphere which enables individuals at all levels in the university to demonstrate their optimum creative capabilities in a way that positively affects their morale, increasing their enthusiasm to search for creative solutions to the problems they face, leading to

Improving their job performance, thus, driving the growth and development of the organization.

This study is significant because it develops an understanding and awareness of the nature of AC. It empirically investigates the relationship between both AC and LC and the influence of the supervisors' gender on AC in the Saudi HE context, as perceived by women academic leaders at IAU. The findings revealed that women academic leaders adopted encouraging AC practices (m=4.25), and that there were no statistically significant differences among the groups ($p>0.05$), where similar levels of AC practices were adopted regardless of participants' leadership position, years of work experience, or supervisor's gender. This is a promising finding that may indicate that women leaders in HE have overcome their fears to take challenging decisions and have rediscovered their confidence in their creative abilities to derive new ideas and challenge the status quo. Creativity is the most sought-after trait in leaders today, and coming up with new and better ways of doing things is the essence of creativity (Kelly & Kelly, 2012; Zhou & George, 2003)

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Furthermore, findings indicated that female leaders practice similar levels of AC with both male and female supervisors; no significant difference was observed regarding the respondents' AC practices and their supervisors' gender after adjusting for leadership position and years of experience ($p>0.05$). These results are similar to those reported by Bin Bakr and Alfayez (2021) and Kim and Shin (2017) that indicated that female leader' practices are as effective as those of their male counterparts in HE.

The study also revealed the positive significant relationship between LC faced by women leaders and their AC practices with a correlation coefficient of 0.32 ($P<0.01$). This finding indicates that women leaders practice high levels of AC while they face high levels of work related and personal challenges with means of 3.42 and 4.25, respectively. This finding may reflect a high level of self-motivation among women leaders, and that they could have an inner passion to solve the problems they face at work and have a strong determination to overcome the many challenges at the personal and wok environment level at IAU. This finding is in line with Amabile (1988), who identified the individual's motivation to be the most important component of creativity and found that people will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the challenges of the work itself. Zhou and George (2001) also revealed a positive relationship between job challenges and creativity when perceived organizational support for creativity was high.

The current study further explored what women leaders need to enhance/reclaim their AC. From the sampled respondents, 54.1% considered their direct supervisors to be an important source of encouragement and support to foster their AC; their responses were categorized under four main recommendations: grant freedom in job execution, allocate required resources, encourage intrinsic motivation, and secure quality training and development programs.

These findings are concurrent with Catmull (2008) and Amabile (1998), who considered the key to creativity, is giving people autonomy to the means concerning process, but not necessary the ends, and that clear, specific strategies and goals often enhance peoples' creativity. This is because allowing people autonomy and freedom in their work process provides a sense of ownership and will also allow people approach problems in ways that make the most of their creative-thinking skills and develop their expertise, thus supporting their creativity (Amabile, 1988). The findings further considered time to be an important resource for creativity in exploring unconventional ways of thinking and allocating new methods of execution, which was also supported by Amabile (1988) who suggested that a leader's time and effort should be channelled to support creativity at work, and not trying to allocate resources needed to get the job done, and warned leaders against giving fake and/or very tight deadlines, which may stand in the way of creativity, the former will create mistrust and the latter will make people feel overcontrolled and create burnouts.

Respondents specifically expressed the importance of feeling that their work is appreciated by their direct supervisors and important to the organization. Encouraging practices included "*being praised for coming up with new ideas, rewarded for creative successes, and not being criticized or punished for unsuccessful proposed ideas*." These findings are not surprising since providing harsh criticism or being skeptical of new ideas could make leadership appear as if they are looking for reasons to reject new ideas, thus fighting creativity. Motivational theories have focused on the importance of rewards and prizes and considered them as major factors that lead to highly motivated faculty (Bin Bakr, 2018; Bin Bakr & Ahmed, 2015; Andrews, 2011). Other studies have established a positive correlation between motivation and creativity among

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workers in different work settings (Al Ghamdi, 2016; Zhou & George, 2001; McCaffrey, 2015; Kelly & Kelly, 2012).

As previously mentioned, the findings provided some insight into the richness and complexity of AC practices among women academic leaders at IAU. However, this study has a few limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, this research was conducted at a single Saudi Arabian university, and the results are representative of the women faculty, but cannot be applied to other places in Saudi Arabia. Second, there are limitations to the questionnaire method of data collecting. Therefore, future research could involve qualitative and mixed data collection approaches. For instance, interviews in which participants give a detailed description of the most and least creative events in their careers could be transcribed and analyzed. To experimentally obtain a deeper understanding of AC at IAU and/or other HE institutions, thereby studying the relationship between different leadership styles and their impact on creativity and innovation, additional research is required. A longitudinal study could be used to investigate how women's AC practices may alter over time, as well as other intermediary variables that may influence these practices.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature by providing an empirical examination of the level of AC among women leaders in the Saudi university context, investigating the effect of LC on AC, and exploring whether a supervisors' gender affects the strength of AC practices among respondents. This study presents recommendations for improving AC in the university context; in particular, upper leadership at IAU should encourage curious and creative behaviors in themselves and others by making small changes to the ways they lead their direct team members and the whole university. First, they need to act as role models for AC. They can encourage AC throughout the university by being creative themselves; thus, granting freedom and autonomy to direct team members, allocating the needed resources for different projects (time, money, and people), and adopting new and challenging reward and award programs, which may have a positive effect on self-motivation and enhancement of creativity among its workers. Second, upper leadership need to hire for creativity, and develop a system that can identify and select naturally creative leaders who are willing and have the potential to implement AC practices. High levels of AC practices need to be fostered at all levels of leadership throughout IAU. The system should be able to identify those team members with low levels of creativity and engage them in activities designed to raise such level. Third, and most importantly, this study suggests that women leaders in Saudi universities are as effective as their male counterparts in AC, and they can utilize a high level of AC practices regardless of the different LC challenges they face at work, which may ultimately pave the way for innovation and creativity in HE. Consequently, this study suggests that universities must strategically employ serious efforts to boost the proportion of qualified women in executive leadership roles.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author reports no potential conflict of interest in this study.

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