Women in Contemporary Qatar: Their Rights and Welfare

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at the University of Leicester

By
Salah Al-Mannai, BA, MA,
School of Social Work
University of Leicester

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Dedication

"To my parents"
Abstract

The State of Qatar is in the process of change, a process that started only in the last decade. This change includes modernising its institutions, introducing democracy, and moving towards becoming a more open economy and society. The State authorities have introduced legislation, policies and guidelines to support and enhance these changes.

Women's rights have attracted much attention during this process and there has been concern to help and support women in taking up their place within society since there is a significant gap between the roles and rights of males and females in the State.

Qatari society is conservative; it has strong Arabic and Islamic values, norms and traditions. Therefore, research into women's issues is of great interest to the State authorities in helping them with their decision-making. Furthermore, the State lacks information, data and research regarding women's issues and this research is the first comprehensive study to be carried out on the rights of Qatari women.

The main aims of this research are to explore, examine and investigate the political, educational, work and welfare rights of women in Qatar. This includes identifying the obstacles which stand in the way of women's rights and offering recommendations regarding measures that would help in overcoming these difficulties.

The research aims to open, promote and explore issues concerning the rights of women and seeks to discover if any changes in values and norms have occurred since the new Emir took over as State ruler in 1993.

Extensive fieldwork has been carried out to provide the necessary data and information; also, a framework based on system theory, and the ideas of Islam and feminism, have been used to address the aims and objectives of the research.

On the basis of this work, a number of conclusions have been drawn.
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The State of Qatar is a small but rich country in the Arabian Gulf. The State has been in the process of change in every aspect since 1996, the year that saw the current Emir, Sheikh Hamad Al-thani, take over as the ruler of Qatar. The State is moving from a closed society with a strongly religious and Arabic culture to a more democratic and open economic society. One of the main issues of change is the rights of women and there is a need for women themselves to participate and be actively involved in these changes.

There is a great expectation that, during these changes, the values and norms within Qatari society will shift and this shift may represent a threat to the tribe, family and society.

Political activities in the State are controlled by males and women had never participated in the political life of the State in any form until recently. Thus, there is a large gap between males and females in terms of their political participation. This gap is the result of inequality in terms of social, workforce, cultural and gender issues. More specifically, it results from structural constraints faced by women. These may originate from within the household and, as a result, from family dynamics, from within society at large, or because of government policy. As such, they represent a combination of cultural, political and economic factors that shape the opportunity structure for women.

Perhaps Qatar is one of the most recent Arab countries to recognize the importance and impact of women in the development of their societies. However, the Qatari government is the first government in the Gulf States to give women political rights and most recently, in May 2003, it appointed the first woman minister in the history of the Gulf States. Unfortunately, the public's reaction to this change and towards women's rights to vote and nominate to the local councils was adverse. This
therefore, requires close investigation and proper documentation as it represents social, culture and traditional changes towards women and State welfare. From the welfare point of view, the state lacks clear policies towards women.

This research is the first research into women's welfare, and their civil and political rights in the State of Qatar. The goal of the research is to explore, examine and investigate Qatari women's rights in order to draw a general picture of the present situation of Qatari women and to provide recommendations and suggestions to the State authorities. This includes identifying the obstacles which stand in the way of women's rights and outlining recommendations regarding measures that would help to overcome these difficulties.

1.1 Research Aims and Objectives

The main aims and objectives of this research can be summarised in the following:

1. To investigate and analyse the current situation regarding women's welfare, employment, education and political rights in Qatar.
2. To analyse the recent changes in social values regarding women in the State of Qatar.
3. To investigate gender equity in three basic areas: participation, opportunities and promotion in welfare, employment, education and political rights.
4. To identify the main barriers to women's rights in society and the introduction of new policies.
5. To investigate and analyse any mismatch in attitudes between the younger and older generations of males towards women's welfare, and their civil and political rights.

6. To investigate and analyse the professional opinions and attitudes of both men and women towards women's rights and roles, and to discuss the main barriers to women's rights.

7. To investigate and analyse men and women's opinions and attitudes towards women's welfare, and their civil and political rights.

8. To identify and investigate the State's role in promoting women's rights.

9. To provide guidelines and suggestions to improve women's rights and status in Qatar.

1.2 Importance of the Research

The importance of the research can be drawn from the following points:

1. As far as the researcher is aware, this study is the first in this area in Qatar. Therefore, this research will provide the first data and discussion on women's rights in the State. This study can therefore be used as a guideline to the State authorities in their planning and decision-making to enhance the new, first, permanent constitution in April 2003 that stated:

   The citizens of Qatar shall be equal in public rights and duties.

   (Article 34)

2. This is a challenging and sensitive area to research in a country with a strong religious, cultural and Arabic tradition.
3. The State of Qatar is in the process of undergoing new changes, both politically and socially, especially after the commencement of the leadership of HH Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani, the ruler of the State. He has brought to the State a new political dimension by recognizing women's rights and roles.

4. This study can be used as a point of reference for a broader extrapolation in an attempt to find out more about the status of women in the Arabian Gulf in particular, and in the Arabic world in general.

5. The promotion of women's rights in the State may help in reducing the manpower shortages the State is currently facing.

1.3 Research Questions

This research will try to answer the following questions:

Q1: Are there any shifts in social values regarding women's rights?
Q2: What is the role of the State and elite women in promoting women's rights?
Q3: Are Qatari women ready to take up such civil and political rights?
Q4: What are the main differences in attitude between the older and younger generations with regard to women's welfare, and their civil and political rights?
Q5: What are the main barriers and obstacles facing the welfare, and the civil and political rights of Qatari women?
Q6: Is there a policy towards promoting women's welfare and their civil and political rights in Qatar?


1.4 Research Methodology

This research is the first research in the area of women’s rights and roles in the State. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a lack of comprehensive information and data regarding women’s rights in Qatar. In fact, this research has been sponsored to provide and analyse data, information and discussions in the field of women’s welfare, and their civil and political rights.

The main aim of this research is to explore issues concerning women’s rights in the State of Qatar. This has been achieved by carrying out the investigation in two stages. The first stage focused on collecting and analysing secondary data on Qatari women’s rights and roles, while the second stage focused on collecting and analysing data and information from fieldwork.

A positivistic approach has been used in this research for the prediction and control of the obtained data while a qualitative approach was used to understand and interpret women’s rights in terms of the understanding and experiences of both men and women.

This research has used both quantitative and qualitative research methods with variables focused on both levels of the research.

This research adopted the following strategies:

1. Literature survey

The literature survey is based on establishing the basic theories of systems, feminism and Islam from the perspective of women’s rights; special consideration is paid to Qatari women. The framework is based on women’s welfare, and their work, education and political rights.
ii. **Semi-Structured Questionnaire**
A semi-structured questionnaire was designed to investigate the opinions and attitudes of both women and men towards women’s welfare, and their involvement in politics, work and education. The questionnaires were also designed to investigate women’s opinions and attitudes towards their rights and roles, and to identify the main barriers and obstacles in establishing a policy for women’s rights in the State.

iii. **Interviews with professional males and females**
Interviews were used to investigate the opinions and attitudes of professional males and females in the State of Qatar towards women’s welfare, towards their civil and political rights, and the policies concerning women’s rights.

iv. **Case Studies**
The case studies were chosen from different sectors of Qatari society in order to explore the problems and obstacles facing women’s rights in society from an historical point of view and in terms of the backgrounds and experiences of individual women.

v. **Focus groups**
Currently Qatari society can be divided into two generations. These generations are the older generation from the pre-oil era, a generation which grew up under the old political system; and the younger generation, those of the oil era and the modernized political system. Therefore, it is essential to establish and identify whether there are any differences in the views and opinions of these two generations of males towards women’s rights and their impact on the rights of women within society, i.e. to investigate if there are any differences in attitudes in social values between the two generations. The older generation is represented by the fathers and grandfathers of women relating to this study while the
second generation is represented by husbands, sons and brothers of the women.
Focus groups were used to investigate the differences between the older and younger generations of males towards women's rights.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis
The thesis is divided into seven chapters. These chapters are:

Chapter One: The Introduction. This chapter introduces the main aims and objectives of the research, the significance of the study, the research methodology used, and the research's main questions. The chapter closes with a description of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two: The Theoretical Framework. This chapter presents and discusses the research's theoretical framework. The framework is based on system theory, feminist theories and Islam.

Chapter Three: Women in the State of Qatar. The chapter first provides background information on the State, covering its main systems: the political, social, educational and health systems. An overview of the historical and geographical background of the State is also provided. The chapter also introduces and discusses women in the State of Qatar.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology. This chapter presents and discusses the research methodologies that have been used. These include the women's case studies, the questionnaires, the interviews carried out with professional females, and the focus groups.
**Chapter Five:** This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the fieldwork. This includes analysis of the case studies, the questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions. It also includes the processing of the fieldwork data and the presentation of a critical analysis of the findings.

**Chapter Six:** Discussion: This presents a critical analysis of the main findings of the fieldwork. The chapter also uses the theoretical frameworks to support the main findings.

**Chapter Seven:** Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Work. This chapter presents the main outcomes and findings of the research, as well as providing suggestions and recommendations on how to develop this research further. The chapter also provides the State’s authorities with recommendations that can be considered and used in their planning.
Figure 1.1: Levels of the research
Figure 1.2: Structure of the literature survey
Chapter Two

Theoretical Frameworks
Chapter Two

The Research Framework

2.0 Introduction

Women represent an important half of any society and so their roles and rights cannot be dismissed. They represent an important element of society’s development as they are essential players in society. Women’s rights are fundamental human rights.

Qatar is in the process of modernisation and women’s issues have just begun to enter the State’s academic and political discussions. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to the injustice done to women due to lack of policies and guidelines that recognise women rights. This consideration should include legal structures, the awareness of communities and individuals who will take responsibility for contributing to the process.

Figure 2.1 shows the bases of this research’s main framework. Understanding the framework will help in understanding and evaluating women’s welfare, and their human civil and political rights. The research framework approaches the rights of Qatari women from systems theory, feminist theory, and Islamic teachings in order to investigate and analyse:

- Welfare Rights
- Civil Rights
  - Education Rights
  - Work Rights
- Political Rights
Chapter Two

The Research Framework

Figure 2.1: Research framework
2.1 The Values and Norms of Qatari Society

In order to understand women's rights, it is important to investigate and analyse the values and norms of society toward women and to investigate any shift in values and norms that have underpinned any social injustice toward women. The set of values and norms that control any society is the outcomes of various factors including religion, the family, culture and the mass media. Individuals within the society must interact within the social sphere according to these values and norms. This may be observed by their actions and words, as Petrie (1994) states:

Values may be seen as operating at different levels. At the level of the individual, they may be deduced from behaviour and, perhaps less reliably, speech.

(Petrie, 1994, p. 59.)

Values can be explained in a number of different ways:

Values are the basis of concepts of right and wrong of high quality and low quality, of what's preferred and what is rejected.

(Petrie, 1994, p. 60.)

Values constitute the individual through many sources: religion, family, training and professionalism. These values will impact on the individual's behaviour, attitude and reactions.

Personal values may derive from many sources: for example from training and professionalism, personal reflection on experience, or the influence of the mass media.

(Petrie, 1994, p. 61.)
Qatari society is conservative with a strong Arabic culture and traditions. There are still strong cultural and traditional influences permeating through the majority of the State’s activities, especially where women are concerned.

Qatari society still expects women to cover their faces at any time they are outside their houses or speaking to any one but close relatives. It is the norm in the street and in the State shopping centres that women’s faces are covered. Both the older and younger generations of women still cover their faces. This is part of the Arabian culture, especially the Bedouin culture and tradition. There is an increase in the number of women showing their faces but still this number is small compared with the total population.

One of the most crucial factors for Qatari women is their relation with men. This is limited by cultural and religious influences. Women cannot build any friendship with a male who is not related to them, neither can they go out for dinner or to any other social gathering with any non-related male.

The arranged marriage is still the most common method of organising marriage in the State. The bride cannot see, talk or discuss her marriage details with her groom until the wedding night. The first contact, regarding the marriage, is usually made by a third person, usually the mother or the sister of the groom. The introduction, in which the bride is described to the groom, is usually verbal. This includes the colour and length of her hair, her height, weight, education, interests, colour and size of her eyes. The discussion of the marriage details usually occurs between the families of both the bride and the groom. The arranged marriage is still the norm in the State regardless of the social class or education of the bride and the groom.

Women’s education has become the norm in Qatari society. The main problem, which still is not the norm, is mixed education. There is still a large number of people in society who are against mixed education,
especially in higher education and high schools when students are more mature. Qatar University, the main university in the State, is still divided according to gender, with separate colleges for males and females.

The mother within the family and within society as a whole is highly valued. The mother receives especial respect and care from her sons and daughters in her old age. It is part of the tradition and culture of Qatari society that the sons take their families to see their mothers and have lunch with her almost weekly. Daughters make the most of their social visits to their mothers and the sons share responsibilities, although the oldest is usually the one who manages his mother's needs and interests. Sons give their mothers money regularly and most of her shopping comes from her family.

2.2 Systems Theory

The original systems ideas were generated in von Bertalanffy's (1971) general systems theory. The theory is well-known and was established in the areas of biological, technical and engineering control; it is less well-known in social systems (Payne, 1994).

Society can be considered as a system and women are important part of this system. Qatari society has certain norms and values regarding women and women need to interact within this system according to these norms and values. So, Qatari women must interact within this system by covering their faces with veils, otherwise society will reject them and label them as deviance. Women interact with various parts of society, including the family, the work place, in shopping centres, and in carrying out social activities.

Systems can be either closed or open. A closed system does not allow interaction with any other system as the system does not accept any new values and norms to the system, (input to the system) nor provide values
and norms to other systems (output of the system); nothing leaves or enters the system.

**Family Systems**

The family plays an important role in shaping an individual's values and norms. The parent is the educator of his/her children and can direct them towards their own set of values and norms. Of course, the State, through schools and other state institutions, also has a role in directing children and individuals to assume a set of values and norms.

A woman needs to interact within her family according to the family's norms and values; this usually depends on the backgrounds of her and her husband. For example, if she and her husband come from a Bedouin background, she will need to interact with her husband and her children according to the tribal culture and traditions. This may demand that the husband is in full control of all the family's activities, with the man being the sole decision-maker on all family issues. She is expected to show full support for all her husband's decisions.

Figure 2.2 shows the interactions of the family system with another three main systems. The values and norms of the family continuously interact with the family system through the interactions of individual family members with the tribe's values and norms. The tribe is still very strict regarding women in various aspects: women cannot go out of the house without a male accompanying her, for example. These values and norms are transferred from one generation to another.

The family individuals also interact with the social system. This is achieved through interaction in the work place, in health institutes, and in carrying out social activities.

Finally, the Qatari family has undergone changes in their life styles. Families are now travelling outside the State for holidays and on
business. This includes taking holidays in Western countries, to the Far East, and to more open Arabic societies, namely Lebanon and Egypt. The family system is interacting with different values and norms from external systems.
Chapter Two

The Research Framework

Figure 2.2: Family system interactions
Chapter Two  The Research Framework

The Tribal System

Tribes have existed well before Islam and over the years they have passed their values and norms from one generation to another. There are several tribes in Qatar which travel from one place to another searching for food for themselves and their animals. In the past, they lived in a small area of land and the majority travelled over the Arabian Desert. The nature of their way of life, the environment and living separated from each other have created their tribal system which is purely a closed system since there is no serious interaction across the system boundary with any other system. One of the main characteristics of the tribal system is that women cannot interact with any other system, i.e. they cannot cross the values and norms of the system. (See Figure 2.3.) This led to the rule that, for a woman to interact with any male from outside the system, is unacceptable socially within the system. This represents deviance according to the system’s rules. A woman has work at her household activities and has very limited contact with the tribe’s activities. Women have been left for years to act according to the tribes’ values up to now.

Figure 2.3: The tribe’s interaction with external systems
Chapter Two
The Research Framework

The Social System

Women in the State of Qatar interact with various systems but modernisation has brought new values and norms in certain areas that represents a shift in, and thus a conflict with, the values and norms of the traditional systems. For example, a woman in a tribal system cannot interact, speak to or carry out any specific activity with a male who is not first kin: the tribal and family values reject such behaviour. However, the workplace may require a woman to interact with males. Figure 2.4 shows the main systems that frame the interactions of Qatari women. Each system has distinct values and norms.

The Qatari society has become more open society. Travelling outside the State has become part of the summer social activities for the most of the Qatari society. This means crossing the society system boundary and interacting with external system. External systems include Western, Far East and Asian.
**Figure 2.4:** The interactions of external and internal systems
Qatari women today need to interact with various systems within this society to satisfy the values and norms of each system. A Qatari woman will interact according to the values and norms of their tribal system so, for example, Qatari women are not allowed to interact with men in any way or contribute to any tribal functions that involve men. They are only allowed to interact with first kin.

The same woman will need to interact with the values and norms of the work system. Qatari women work in various areas and are no longer restricted to working in the education profession. Women in the work system may need to interact with males as well as having more freedom to express their views and opinions on various aspects of their professions.

In her daily life, the Qatari woman needs to interact with the social system according to these values and norms. The system may have changed in recent years due to changes in the economy and the arrival of a large number of non-national workers in the State. The image of a woman working in a shop, or having her own business, or walking on her own has started to be acceptable in the Qatari society.

In brief, Qatari women need to interact with various systems during their daily lives to justify the values and norms of each system. This is due to the fact that there is a shift in some of these systems due to changes in the economy, the arrival of a large number of non-nationals to the State and interactions with other systems.

The following sections discuss various systems that exist within Qatari society.
2.3 Women and Changes in Family Structure

The modernisation process has lead to an increase in job opportunities in various areas of the State. This, in turn, has led to changes in the family structure. The Qatari family structure has always revolved around the extended family with strong Arabic Bedouin values and norms. An extended family is one in which a large family lives close together and where members are dependent on each other. Families in this type of structure have strong kin relationships and are ruled by the head of the family. A collection of families from the same kin represents a tribe.

However, the structure of the Qatari family is now changing from the extended family into semi-nuclear family. The modernization of the State has led to the relationships between families as a tribe and within the family itself breaking down. This is due to changes in the economy and because job opportunities across the country have forced men to move outside their family and tribe area of living.

Changes in family structure have led to:

1. Weakened links with parents
2. Weakened links with the tribe.

Modernization has forced such changes in family structure but individuals and groups within society still embrace Arabic and Islamic values and norms. One of the widespread values is that fathers and mothers are looked after and cared for by their sons. Thus, the son may now, due to modernization, live in a separate house but this will still be close to his father’s main house. This type of structure is called the ‘semi-nuclear’ family structure (Al-Kaabi, 2004), as illustrated in Figure 5.2.
Figure 2.5: The structure of the semi-nuclear family, (Al-Kaabi, 2004, p. 199).
2.4 Feminist Theories

Opinions and attitudes towards women can be divided into two main schools of theory. The first consists of the anti-feminist school and the second comprises the supporters of feminism. The first school was stronger in the last century but has become weaker over the last few decades, especially in Western countries.

Anti-feminists believe in biological differences between the sexes and describe women as ‘physically weaker’, ‘emotionally less stable’ and, in intellectual terms, ‘less rational’ than their male counterparts. For example, the nature in terms of gender of sports performance and labour distribution is such that the failure of women to equal the performance of men is deemed to support such views. Thus, according to this school, male ‘superiority’ is to be regarded as ‘natural’ and ‘inevitable’ (Wills, 1982).

The non-feminist view is that gender and other structural variables are unimportant in explaining people’s success or failure in social and economic interactions. Markets should consider all individuals in meeting their needs.

Other schools that believe in women’s rights are not new and, in fact, there are several feminist theories but a comprehensive discussion of all these theories and their impact on women’s rights in the State of Qatar is beyond the scope of this research. However, this section presents briefly some of these theories and concentrates on postmodernist theory as the State of Qatar is in the process of modernisation. Postmodernism is the focus of this discussion, together with system theory and Islam, in order to understand the place of women in the State of Qatar.
2.4.1 Feminism within an Islamic Context

It is important that any feminist writer who writes about women and Islam considers two important factors. The first factor is the culture and tradition of Islamic society and its social systems, while the second factor is religious scholars. These two factors play a crucial part in establishing and developing the systems, values and norms of Islamic society regarding women since individuals interact according these factors.

The power of the state in promoting women's rights is also crucial as its policies have an impact on the role of women in society. It affects their social status and controls their livelihood. Afshar (1987) stated:

"all state policies have gender implications and affect the social status of women as well as their control over their livelihood"

(Afshar, 1987, p. 5).

All Arab states are ruled by males; they are the decision-makers concerning women's issues and therefore it seems that one of the main obstacles in these societies is the attitudes of men towards women. The main reason for this may be that the culture and tradition of Arab states have produced such attitudes, not Islamic principles. This problem was described by Fatima Mernissi:

"If women's rights are a problem for some modern Muslim men, it is neither because of the Koran nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interests of the male elite" (Mernissi, 1991, p. ix).
Indeed, far from being an obstacle impeding women’s rights, Islamic principles are viewed by many women as upholding them.

“Islamist women argue that they can benefit by returning to the sources of Islam”

(Yamani, 1996, p. 200).

Afshar (1998) expressed concern about the interpretation of various Islamic laws which seemed to benefit a male-dominated society while ignoring the rights of women.

“Muslim women, whose rights were trampled on by men, who took over the process of interpretation and law-making consistently denied women their God-given rights”


Shahidian (2002, p. 289) argued that measures benefiting women under the Shah’s regime in Iran ‘brought family relations more under the control of the state’ while Mernissi (1991) distinguished between two important issues in recent years. These are the divine message (risala) and political Islam. This is quite understandable as political gain plays an important part in shaping attitudes towards women. Politicians try to attract conservative groups within society by adopting policies that comply with their values and norms. Politicians try to attract the support of tribes by avoiding the promotion of any rights for women that might upset tribal chiefs.

The issue of culture and tradition has also affected the strategies of Islamic feminists. Based on a two year journey around Islamic countries, Femea (1997) found that Islamic feminists employ strategies
that often differ from the confrontational approach of their counterparts in the West, building instead on indigenous tradition.

Gulf State societies in general and Qatari society in particular, have a strong Arabic/Bedouin culture and tradition. Over the years, these societies have created conservative, closed systems which have very little interaction with other systems and, as a result, this has not allowed women any space to interact with others. This is for two main reasons. The first is the Arab culture itself that has extended over a thousand years and in which, in earlier days, female infants were killed immediately after birth. Secondly, there is the nature of the living environment as the majority of Arab families are Bedouins who moved from one area to another in order to survive. This has created a family system that encourages very little interaction with others.

Islamic feminism was defined by Moghissi (1999) as follows:

"Islamic feminism is connected with the question of compatibility of feminism with Islamic teaching and scripture and the social and legal frameworks which have evolved in Islamic societies"

(Moghissi, 1999, p. 126).

Indeed, Islamic feminism as a term is not known in the State of Qatar. In fact, this term was created and developed in Western societies and in Western social systems. Western societies have their own values and norms and it is difficult to adopt any ideology developed in one system and to then try to impose it on a different one without taking into consideration the values, norms and key elements of that society. Islamic feminist ideology and the feminist movement do not exist within the boundaries of the Gulf States due to nature of their social systems. Instead, this ideology has been adopted and pushed in from outside the region.
It is important to mention here that different Islamic countries have themselves different cultures and traditions and so women's issues change from one Islamic society to another. For example, the perception of feminism in Egypt is totally different from that in Saudi Arabia because of the different social systems. The Egyptian system, for example, has produced a number of feminist writers, such as Zainab al-Fawwaz, Aisha al-Taimriyya, Huda Shaarawi and Saiza Nabarawai who have written about issues concerning women's rights. They have also formed a union, namely the Egyptian Feminist Union. There are also many feminist writers in Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The systems of these countries are different from the system in Qatar as in Qatar there are no feminist writers at all.

**Fundamentalism and Revivalism**

Fundamentalism as a term is used widely in the West to refer to views that aim to establish a society based on the same fundamental values as in the early years of Islam. However, Muslim scholars do not use this term and many have rejected it as unfair. They argue that this is revivalism rather than fundamentalism. Afshar (1994, p. 16) stated:

"Muslims themselves do not use the term fundamentalist at all: the twentieth century Islamists argue that they are revivalists, and are returning to the source of Islam to regain a purified version, long since lost in the mire of worldly movement."

There are two important issues regarding the interpretation of fundamentalism. Firstly, conservative societies take the view that fundamentalism is needed to protect their values and norms as they are afraid of shifts in the values of society. Many people regard feminism as a Western model that threatens their values and norms and so they fear
the concept. It is possible that this has led many to be more attracted to and protective of the values and norms of their social system as a weapon to oppose feminism. One of the important points here is that some feminist writers go far in challenging the values and norms of their society.

A good example is that the vast majority of Islamic countries stand firm against Marxist ideology regarding feminism. Although some Islamic countries, such as Yemen, Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan, have tried to adopt a Marxist ideology they have failed. Women’s issues have been a crucial factor in this failure because of the strong culture and tradition against feminist values.

The second issue is the scholars’ interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith, the sayings and practices of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him. This is because of the impact of culture and tradition on their interpretations of these holy texts.

“Scholars of Islam differ in their views about what the faith and its legal structure is”


Due to cultural differences, there is no one version of Islam that all Muslim countries can follow. This supports the earlier argument raised concerning the impact of culture and tradition on the interpretation of Islamic laws and judgments.

“There is no uniformity in Islamic law across Muslim countries”

(Hosseini, 1993, p. 15).

Therefore, it is noticeable that the views on certain issues of Islamic scholars who have lived in an open society, are different in various ways from Islamic scholars who have lived in a closed social system. Egyptian
and Iraqi scholars may have different views from Saudi Arabian scholars from the Najad area. The first scholars have lived in an open society while the second live in a closed social system. The values and norms of society have an impact on their opinions and views regarding some of the Islamic issues. The first scholars see no Islamic barriers against women driving a car in public, for example, while the second group believes that a woman driving a car is a threat to its culture and tradition and, furthermore, a threat to Islamic society. These differences are due to the nature of their social systems.

"If fundamentalism is about returning to the golden age of Islam, Muslim women argue that they have much reason for optimism and much room for manoeuvre"  
(Yamani, 1996, p. 200).

Qatari Women: standing between Fundamentalism and Feminism

Figure 2.6 shows that Qatari women are divided between two ideological schools. The first is a school that tries to keep the values and norms of society intact and sees any new ideology as a threat that might change the social system. The key elements of this school are some religious scholars and tribal leaders. The first see feminism as a Western ideology which represents a threat to Islamic teaching; the second see it as threat to their culture and tradition.

The second school is the feminist school; the key element of this school is external pressure. External pressures come from international authorities, human rights' agencies and United Nations' charters. Further pressure comes from Qatari society itself which has become more open than it used to be as it is now interacting with a variety of other social systems.
A further factor is the large number of non-national workers in the country who come from a variety of nations. They have brought with them their own values and norms and Qatari society has started to accept some of these within its own social activities.

In summary, the values and norms of any society play an important role in women's rights. In a system where males are dominant and are in charge of decision-making, they have affected the interpretation of Islamic views concerning the roles and rights of women. Islam in principle does give rights to women but, unfortunately, the State's power of control and the cultural background of scholars have denied them some of these rights. The next section discusses women's rights in Islam and how Islam has no objection to rights for women. It also reflects on the power struggle between men and women in recognizing cultural differences, the social system and postmodernism.

"Post-modernism takes hold and feminists deconstruct their views and allow more room for specifics and differing needs, demands and proprieties of women of different creeds and colours.

(Yamani, 1996, p. 201).

Figure 2.6 shows Qatari women placed between fundamentalism, a term used by the West and rejected by Muslim scholars, and feminism. Fundamentalism as an approach is supported by groups that believe in and are keen to keep the society systems, values and norms of the system, as they are without any changes.

The feminist approach is a result of the interaction if Qatari society with other external systems and this social system has seen changes due to changes in economy and the modernisation of the State. Therefore, Qatari women are trapped between the two approaches to their interactions within their own society.
Figure 2.6: Qatari women caught between fundamentalism and feminism
2.5 Women and Islam

Religion is one of the main sources of society’s values and norms. An individual’s belief will be expressed in his/her behaviour and in interactions with others within society. Qatari society is a conservative society with a strong religious and Arabic tradition. Therefore it is important to discuss women in Islam to use this as part of the framework in analysing women’s rights. It is also necessary to explain how Islam’s values and norms have been established and to identify any shift in the values of individuals, the family and society as a whole.

Discussing women in Islam in detail and with a critical analysis is beyond the scope of this research as there are numerous scholars’ views on various issues. Therefore, this research will concentrate on the main elements of this study’s aims and restrict the discussion to the contribution of Islam to the values and norms of Qatari society. This aims to enhance the discussion within the context of systems and feminist theories to shed light on the analysis and discussion of the political, education and employment rights of Qatari women.

This section discusses and analyses only the view of Islam towards women’s education, work, political rights and welfare. It also emphasises the Islamic beliefs concerning the family and society’s norms and values.

2.5.1 Arabic Women in Pre-Islamic Times

Qatar is part of the Arab land and the main population of the State derives from Arabic tribes. Arabs have believed in and have practised the Islamic religion from its early years. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of individual Qatari women carry out the practices of Islam.

Arab tribes existed well before Islam and already had their own sets of values. One of these values is generosity, for example; it is also
expected that members would help and support anyone foreign to their own tribe. Tribes would fight for others in case they fled to their land for protection.

In pre-Islamic times, women were treated very badly. One of the worst pieces of news the head of a family might receive in his whole life was if his wife had delivered a baby girl. Then, it was said, his face would change, he would become very aggressive, and would be unable to show his face to the rest of his tribe. Newly born girls were often buried alive. The main reason for this was because it was believed that only the male could carry on the name of his father and therefore his tribe. They also believed that women could be a source of humiliation to the tribe as any illegal sexual relation was a huge embarrassment and shame. Women were humiliated, treated without respect; they were treated like slaves and suffered all types of humiliation and torture (Mahrose, 1997: 225; Mursi, 1997: pp. 35-37); Al-Thabet, 1983: p. 35; and Al-Munajjed, 1997: p.12). They were looked on as trivial assets and treated as merchandise in markets where they were often bought and sold.

2.5.2 Women and Islam

The Islamic religion is based on the Holy Koran. This includes rules, examples and advice concerning proper conduct, as well as the history and organisation of the universe. It describes both the earth and the roles of human beings upon it. As such, the Holy Koran answers all the spiritual and material needs of Islamic society since it explains all aspects of life.

Islam came to set women free from the discrimination with which they were treated in pre-Islamic times (Jahilia). The first verse (aya) of the Islamic scriptures forbids the killing of daughters at birth.
Al-Munajjed (1997) argues that Islam raised the status of women from that of the pre-Islamic era. She describes how the unkind prejudices against women became illegal. She states:

*With the emergence of Islam, female infanticide, and sexual permissiveness were completely banned. Female infanticide became a crime against God, and the killing of a woman was considered a crime equal to that of killing a man. Islam sought to defend the rights of women and improve their standing. It decreased the marked differences that existed between men and women and recognised their independent status.*

*Al-Munajjed (1997, p. 135)*

Islam regards a woman as a mother, a sister, a wife, a helper and a supporter; it also described that males and females share the responsibilities, duties and rights. The Koran always refers to both males and females without ignoring women.

Islam also raised the status of women and gave particular importance to the status of mother. Islam says that 'Paradise lies under the mothers' feet' and paradise is the aim and dream of any Muslim.

*On the contrary live with them
On a footing of kindness and equity
If you take a dislike to them
It may be that you dislike
A thing, and Allah brings about
Through it a great deal of good*

*(Al-Nisaa 4: 19)*
In the Hadeeth (the sayings and practices of the Prophet Mohammed), it relates that a man came to the Prophet and asked him:

"Who is the one most worthy of my care?" The Prophet replied: "Your mother." The man asked: "Then whom?" He replied: "Your mother." The man further asked: "Then whom?" He replied: "Your mother." The man asked: "Then whom?" And the fourth time the Prophet replied: "Then your father."

The above has helped to shift social values from humiliating women in pre-Islam to the female as the way of reaching paradise (one of the most important tenets of Islam) by indicating the value of the mother. From that day until today the Arab mother has a special value in the hearts of her sons and daughters.

A woman is also a daughter and sister, thus having the same status as her brothers, as she is born of the same lineage and from the same womb.

He bestows female offspring upon whom He wills, and bestows male offspring upon whom He wills.

(Surat al-Shura (42), aya 49)

This indicates that there is no difference between males and females in creation.

Islam also describes a wife as a source of comfort for her husband, as he is to her:

And among His signs is this, that He created wives from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts.

(Surat Al-Rum (30), aya 21)
The responsibility of a woman in terms of faith is exactly the same as that of a man. Her financial status is also no less than that of a man and she has the right, like her male counterparts, to possess all types of wealth such as assets, property or money. She also has the right to use her wealth just as she wishes, as long as this is within the limits set by Islamic law. Therefore, she is allowed to buy, sell, trade, provide and take out loans, exchange assets etc. None of these actions need her to obtain the consent of any man, whether her father, husband or brother.

In many societies, women have had to fight for their rights: in many cases, their struggle is still continuing while Islam justly granted women their rights without them having to demand and fight for them. Allah stresses this equality in the following verse (Patel, 1997):

"For Muslim men and women - for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise - for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.

[The Qur'an, al-Ahzab 33:35]

While a number of virtues are mentioned in the extract above, the overriding message is that these qualities, rights and duties apply to both sexes to an equal degree. In the same way, the rewards of the afterlife are available to men and women alike, with each being judged according to his/her deserts. It can clearly be seen in the verse below that gender is not an issue:

*Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will we give a new life, and life that is good and pure, and we will*
It is clear that, in Islam, women and men are equal in a spiritual sense. This equality extends to worldly issues, such as education, which is a requirement for both men and women.

Islam does not distinguish between males and females when it comes to education. The Prophet Mohammed (SAW) said:

"Are those equal, those who know. And those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition.
(Quran, Az_Zumar: 9)".

Islam made education a duty of every Muslim regardless of sex. The Prophet (SAW) said:

"Seeking knowledge is a duty for every Muslim, male and female".

Islam also encourages followers to seek knowledge, regardless of their age. The Prophet said:

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave".

The Messenger of Allah once said:

"Acquiring knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim."

Seeking knowledge is very important for Muslims as all are
encouraged to educate themselves, to act upon what they have learned, and to pass it on to others.

The Prophet emphasised this message of equality between the sexes by setting an example. He stressed the importance of each person taking care of his daily needs, instead of imposing such duties on wives. Accounts of his life give examples which "modern men" may learn from: he looked after many of his personal needs, helping his wives in the house and even mending his own clothes. A'ishah (RA), his wife, reported that the Prophet (SAW) would help with the household chores, treat his family kindly, and ensure there was a pleasant atmosphere in the home.

He showed that no man is too important to look after himself and offered the following advice:

"The best among you is the one who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to his family."

"The most perfect believers are the best in conduct and the best of you are those who are best to their wives."

"Many women have come to the family of Muhammad complaining about their husbands. Those husbands are not the best of you."

"By assisting your wives in their household duties, you will receive the reward of sadaqah (charity)."

In the speech given during his Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet reminded Muslims of the importance of treating women equally:

"O people, fear Allah with regard to women."
Here, men are reminded to fear Allah’s retribution if they do not treat women as commanded since He is aware of everything.

Islamic teachings are very strict about the fair treatment of others. In the case of physical superiority, for example, Islamic teaching clearly states what are the responsibilities of the stronger party. Thus, because women are weaker in a physical sense, they are entitled to protection: men are answerable if they misuse this physical superiority. All kinds of both physical and psychological abuse, such as seclusion and unnecessary restriction of movement and travel, are forbidden in Islam.

However, certain references in the Holy Koran have given rise to much debate on the subject of women’s roles, rights and duties. For example:

"... And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them."

[al-Baqarah 2:228]

There is debate, for example, about the significance of the phrase "a degree (of advantage)". Some argue that it refers to the qualities of leadership, surveillance and maintenance that are given to men, while others suggest that it refers to the tolerance which is expected of men. Others assert that it refers to the natural gift, bestowed by Allah on men, for judging family matters and managing problems. The general consensus of most scholars is, however, that this refers to nothing more than the principle of guardianship. Allah (SAW) says, in another extract:

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means..."

[al-Nisa' 4:34]
Ali, Y. (1986) explains this by asserting that, because of the difference in the economic position between men and women, the man's rights and liabilities are greater than the woman's. Therefore, the verse above refers to the man's duty to maintain the woman and so, to an extent, outlines a difference in the nature of the two sexes. However, men and women are equal in the eyes of the law and, in certain cases, women (the "weaker sex") are entitled to special protection.

So, the equal potential and ability of both sexes is clearly recognised by Islam. However, men and women were created by Allah to be better suited for different, but complementary, tasks. Men are better at certain tasks, women better at others, but this does not mean that men are inherently superior. Many feminists, however, mistakenly assume that women may only achieve equality if they adopt a male role so, instead of valuing their femininity, they try to copy men and, in a sense, by aspiring to be like men and to embrace their values and behaviour, they elevate the masculine and diminish the feminine. This is destructive to the cause of women's rights and to society in general.

2.5.3 Women and Work

From a work point of view, Islam does not put any obstacles in women's way, provided that their activity does not interfere with their role as a wife and a mother because, according to Islam, a mother is the person child needs most during the primary years of its upbringing, and the role of mother is one which is accorded the highest status.

The Prophet Mohammed said that one of the responsibilities of all Muslims is work to support him/herself and his/her family. He indicated that a working Muslim will have a better status on the day of judgement.
On the status of a working individual, it was said:

*Anyone who carries his wood on his back is much better than anyone who lives on somebody else's generosity, who, when asked to pay, he may pay him or refuse.*

*(Muslim, 2/721) (Al-Khataib, 1995, p. 137)*

*There is no text that prevents a woman from seeking work if she so wishes, provided it is an occupation acceptable in Islam.*

*(Masquad, R. 2003, p. 175)*

*The Prophet's first wife, Khadijah, was a highly successful business woman, who was the Prophet's employer before she became his wife.*

*(Masquad, R. 2003, p. 175)*

### 2.5.4 Women and Political Rights

From a political point of view, women have the right to express their own opinions. According to the Prophet Mohammed, a woman expressed her own views in a discussion with the Khalifa Omer. After the discussion the Khalifa admitted openly that he was wrong and woman was right.

At the time of the Prophet, women, as well as men, gave ba'ah to the Prophet, which meant that they accepted his leadership and gave allegiance to him in their own right.

Women were consulted in political matters, especially if they were known to have a special talent in a specific area. Again, this shows that, in the early days of Islam, women's talents and opinions were highly respected and they were able to express their views openly.
2.5.5 Interaction between the Values and Norms of Islam and Tribes

Arabic tribes were established well before Islam and the tribes embraced many positive values before Islam, including generosity.

There is much confusion and misinterpretation concerning the rights and status of Muslim women throughout the Muslim world. This is largely because of the interpretation of Islamic law (the Sharia) by religious scholars. The position of Muslim women in society can be considered then, not to be attributable to Islam, but to traditions that do not follow Islamic precepts owing to the impact of different cultures from one Arabic country to another.

One of the main characteristics of the tribe is the strong kin relations. Tribes have a set of values and norms that must be obeyed by all the members and the head of the tribe, the Sheikh, is the ruler and the only decision maker. As explained earlier, the tribe is a closed system society with strong values and norms and with very limited interactions outside the tribe. Marriages must be within the tribe itself unless the sheikh gives his blessing to allow a member to marry somebody from another well-known tribe or family. A cousin should marry his cousin and a woman has no say in or right to choose her husband; neither can she refuse to marry her cousin.

The closed society of the tribe allowed women to have very limited interactions with other “worlds” and they were forbidden to have any interaction with males within or outside their tribe. This led women to become the symbol of the tribe’s integrity (Sharaf). Defending the Sharaf is the duty of the individual and the tribe collectively. For example, if woman committed adultery, this meant the Sharaf of the woman, the family and the tribe was destroyed and it was the duty of the family and the tribe collectively to repair the Sharaf. This was usually achieved by killing the woman and the man. Therefore, it is clear that the tribe would take extra measures to ensure that the ‘Sharaf’ of their women was kept intact and this was achieved by
introducing various rules governing women’s movements and interactions. This explains why women are not allowed to drive even though there is no evidence in Islam which forbids women to drive. In fact, women in Islam used to drive camels.

Islam has tried to change tribes’ values and norms and, over the years, this has succeeded to a certain extent. However, some of the tribal values still exist. The main factors for establishing these values can be summarised in the following:

**Life environment of the tribe**
The tribes used to live in deserts far away from each other. The nature of the desert and the life they led have an impact on the individual and the group’s values and norms. They rely on their own production to survive in the desert, living by breeding animals and using camels for transport.
The tribes had very little contact outside the tribe, that is, interaction with other societies. Men might interact with others to provide for their needs but women were not allowed to interact with others. This has helped to produce strong kin relationships and severe restrictions regarding women’s behaviour and their interaction with strangers.

**Strong kin relationships**
As the tribes are isolated from any interactions with other societies, the tribe members act as one unit to defend the tribe and support each other. Arabic history is full of stories which indicate strong kin relationships, especially during wars and catastrophes.

**Strict ruling system**
The Sheikh, the head of the tribe, is the ruler and his decisions and instructions are not negotiable.
2.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter presents a framework based on systems theory, feminist theory and Islam. This is necessary to understand, analyse and discuss the fieldwork information. Women represent an important element of the family, tribe, work and society systems as a whole. These systems have their own values and norms and women must interact according to these. There are several interactions between these systems and the systems of other societies and these interactions may lead to a shift in these values and norms, which, in turn, have an impact on the values and norms of the systems. Systems theory will be used to investigate if there is any shift in values and norms within the Qatari family, tribe and society towards women’s education, work and political rights.

Qatari society is part of the Arab and Muslim world. Islam represents an important part of an individual’s life within Qatari society and contributes in establishing the values and norms of society through the values and norms of individuals and groups. Therefore, it is essential, in analysing an Islamic society (Qatar), to include Islam as part of the framework.

There are several feminist theories that discuss women’s rights within society. Each theory has its weaknesses and strengths. This chapter has presented feminist theory which will be used to enhance aspects of systems theory and the Islamic perspective in the discussions regarding Qatari women.
Chapter Three

Women in the State of Qatar
3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the main features of the State of Qatar and considers, in particular, women in the State.

The State of Qatar is situated half way along the west coast of the Arabian Gulf, east of the Arabian peninsula. It is a peninsula that extends northwards covering an area of 11,437km². The territory of the State of Qatar includes a number of islands in the coastal waters of the peninsula.

The people of Qatar are the descendants of ancient Arabian lines of kinship. This is particularly due to the geographical location and proximity to the Arabian peninsula on the one hand, and to the close historical and cultural heritage which the State shares with the rest of the states in the Arabian peninsula on the other. The present population is estimated at 744,483 inhabitants (July 2000 est.), most of whom reside in Doha, the capital city. The rest of the population, however, lives in a number of towns and villages, including Dukhan, Umm Said, Al-Wakra, Al-Khor, Madinah Al-Shamal and other modern residential centres.

The geographical location of Qatar can be seen in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1: The State of Qatar

Principal Roads
Secondary Roads
International Boundary
National Capital
In the 1950s, the main developments were initiated to build the foundations of a modern state. Schools began to be built, along with roads, power stations and a hospital.

Qatar formulated a constitution in 1970 and formally declared independence on September 3rd, 1971. This date has remained as the country’s National Day since then.

Since 1995, and the assumption of power by Sheikh Hamad, Qatar has opened its doors wider to international investment, and the State has increased its potential for growth even further. Various production-sharing agreements have brought overseas oil companies back into the country to maximise the potential of reserves, while the discovery and development of the huge gas field to the north east of the country promise to augment the State's national wealth even further.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad Al-Thani was appointed heir apparent in 1979. He assumed the presidency of the Supreme Council for Youth Welfare at its outset until 1991 and the presidency of the Supreme Council for planning, considered as the cornerstone in establishing the modern state. His Highness was running the affairs of the country during the years that preceded his accession.

3.1 Education and Social Development in Qatar

Islam regards society as a natural place for human beings. It is the place where people can live together and co-operate to maximise each other’s welfare. Society is a collection of individuals, all equal and free, where the synthesis of the two result in unity (Qur’an 2:219).
In pre-Islam days, the pagan Arabs committed infanticide against females under the guise of social plausibility. The Qur'an condemns this practice and gives the child the right to be born.

> When news is brought to one of them (the birth of a female child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief. With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had. Shall he retain it on sufferance and contempt or bury it in the dust? Ah! What an evil choice they decide on? (Qur'an 16:58-59)

The merits of saving a human life have also been outlined in the Qur'an.

> And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people...”
> (Qur'an 5:32)

Islam is entirely against abortion though some people have justified their action because they feared poverty. In Islam:

> Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin (Qur’an 17:31)

**School Education**

From a firm belief in the importance of developing the potential of Qatari citizens who represent the most valuable asset of the country, and that the development of human resources is the cornerstone of progress in any community, the Ministry of Education is sparing no effort in maintaining the development of the educational processes through all human, material and organisational inputs. Development encompasses educational leadership, inspection cadres, school administrators, teachers, students, school buildings and related facilities, miscellaneous educational services, the moral character of the profession of education, curricula, textbooks, educational evaluations and presentation aids and techniques.
Special Education
The special education section was established with the aim of removing all obstacles preventing the social adaptation of children with special needs and of catering for their vocational and scientific rehabilitation.

Special education first started in 1974 with one class at one primary school in Doha. In 1980 there were three classes, comprising 39 pupils and supervised by 8 teachers. In pursuance of the efforts exerted in this field, a special education institute for boys was officially inaugurated in October 1981, followed by another for girls in 1982. In January 1985, the names of the two institutes were changed by ministerial decision to be known as the Boys’ School of Hope and the Girls’ School of Hope. Two schools for those with learning difficulties, one for boys and another for girls, and two audio-visual schools, one for boys and one for girls, were inaugurated. The two “learning difficulties” schools accommodate 266 students and the two “audio-visual” schools accommodate 87 students.

Health Services
Health care services in Qatar are provided mainly through the Ministry of Public Health and the Hamad Medical Corporation, in co-operation with other ministries, health care associations (e.g. Red Crescent, Qatar Diabetic Association, etc.), health clinics operated by some public sector and government agencies (the police, army and industries), and privately operated health clinics. Major industries in Qatar that employ a relatively large number of personnel provide health care services for employees.

Basic health care in Qatar is provided free of charge to all residents including expatriates. However, a nominal fee for annual registration and for prescribed medicines has been introduced recently for non Gulf Co-operation Council persons to decrease misuse and the burden on the health care system. However, essential services such as emergencies, well-baby and maternal care, school health care, vaccinations against communicable diseases, etc. have been exempted from these charges.
3.2 Women in Qatar

The State plays an important role in supporting women to attain their rights and improve their status and roles in society. Qatari women, for their part, do not grudge any effort in asserting themselves and in proving their efficacy in the positions they assume. State of Qatar policy is to create an appropriate working atmosphere to conform to the familial responsibilities of Qatari women in addition to enhancing parity between men and women by providing equal opportunities for quality education and training. The State also aims to develop women's managements and leadership skills to contribute to the society, boosting the role of the social institutes concerned with women's affairs, particularly the Supreme Council of Family Affairs. The council is currently presided by HH Sheikha Mouza Bint Naser Al-Misnad, wife of the HH Emir. HH Sheikha Mouza has contributed massively to the Council's activities and committees. She plays an important role in increasing women awareness to their rights and role in the society, practically educating work and education rights.

The State of Qatar plays an important and essential role in helping and supporting family life. The State has put the family is the main focus of their policy and developments. The State of Qatar firmly believes in the women rights and role in the society.

The State takes family affairs seriously. The state has established a council to deal with family affairs. This council has been established by Emir Decree and called the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. Active women in the economic domain amount to 13.4% of the total number of economists domestically. Their percentage in government jobs amounts to 32% of the total number of employees. As many as 70% of these women are holders of college degrees.
3.2.1 The Role of H.H., the Wife of H.H. the Emir

Her Highness has an active role in helping, supporting and advising Qatari women to participate effectively on the State and social activities. She is the Qatari model and symbol for Qatari women particularly for the young generation.

H.H. Sheikha Mouza supports and participates in women's conferences which discuss women's issues and recommend solutions for the problems and challenges that confront women who work outside the home.

She has special interest to education programmes, maintaining a direct and continuous association with government and private education institutions. She frequently attends and effectively participates in the meetings of education leaders in all scientific, educational and sporting matters.

She plays an important and essential role in developing the current education of the State. She expresses her views and opinions in various aspects of education system in order to move forward to meet and cope with the mass changes in education system outside the State. She contributes positively to improve higher education and particularly women role in the system.

She encourages use modern educational system in order to cope with information age. This include the electronic information systems, modernise the communication systems and the teaching methods. The teaching methods that can benefit from the development of digital technology.

She supported the establishment of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, established in 1996. This is a private and independent entity. One of the first achievements of the Foundation was the establishment of the Qatar Academy whose council of trustees is chaired by a leading Qatari woman, Sheikha Al-Misnad. Among other pioneering projects that emerged from the H.H. Sheikha Mouza has given special attention to people with special needs. She recognises their right to break through social barriers in
order to participate positively in society. She has honoured them by supporting and sponsoring care activities carried out on their behalf. She has worked hard to establish specialized societies to care for the deaf, the dumb and the blind, such as the Al Noor Institute for the Blind. The National Committee for Children with Special Needs is another example. It was established in June 1998 with the initial aim of preparing an extensive study on the establishment and management of Shafallah Centre. The Committee is chaired by Sheikha Ghalia Bint Mohammad Al-Thani and has in its membership a number of medical doctors and specialists.

Her Highness, furthermore, has sponsored several ladies-only functions such as the conference entitled: “The Woman between the Family and the Workplace” which was held in 1997. The conference recommended a number of activities to help women achieve psychological equilibrium and stability, and outlined approaches geared to support and protect the family. She also sponsored the first and second women's conferences held in March 1994 and May 1996 respectively.

3.2.2 The Women's Affairs Committee

This committee is affiliated to the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, which was established in 1998. It is charged with caring for women's affairs in many ways: foremost, in proposing the policies, plans and programmes required to upgrade the potential of women culturally, economically and politically. The Committee is also concerned with encouraging women to participate in public life and to take up available work opportunities, especially in the field of education. It sponsors the general rights of women, their right to assume leading roles and key positions in society, and their role in the development process. Enhancing the role of private societies to enable them to carry out women-oriented functions and encouraging voluntary work
carry out women-oriented functions and encouraging voluntary work and participation in local and international activities dealing with women's affairs are also important parts of the Committee's goals.

3.2.3 Qatari Women in the Field of Education

The field of education has been the doorway through which women entered into the workforce. Statistics show that the number of Qatari female students in the State-run schools for the current academic year has risen at a greater rate than the number of male students (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 47). Working women also represent a sizeable ratio of 52% of the total workforce at the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 85).

Working women at Qatar University, either as staff members or as administrative personnel, account for more than 50% of the total workforce of the University (Qatar University Report, 2002, p. 17). They number 902 out of 1347 administrative personnel. The appointment of H.E. Mrs. Sheikha Al Mahmoud as Minister of Education on May 6, 2003, as the first woman ever from Qatar and the Gulf region to occupy this important ministerial post, having served since 12 November, 1996 as the under-secretary of the Ministry of Education, comes as a reaffirmation of the will of H.H. Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani to activate the role of Qatari women in the country's educational renaissance. Similarly, Dr. Sheikha Al-Misnad has been appointed to the post of Manager of Qatar University, thus being the first Qatari woman to assume this post.

3.2.4 Qatari Women in the Field of Health

Qatari women have participated in the health sector since the late 1960s. They first joined the nursing school which aimed to prepare
national cadres to work in this field. Qatari nurses represent 21% of the total number of 272 nurses working at the Ministry of Public Health (Women in Qatar, Ministry of Information, 2003, p. 56).

Young Qatari women have also seized opportunities in the field of medicine, graduating to work at Hamad Medical Corporation and in health centres. They also work in the field of preventive medicine, which comprises the sections of Contagious Disease Control, Vocational Health, Environmental Health, Food Control, Central Laboratories and the Al Matar Clinic. According to statistics from the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs and Housing, 2003, the number of Qatari women working in the field of health amounts to 579, compared to 365 men working in the same field.

3.2.5 Qatari Women in the Field of Charitable Work

Women's branches in charitable and voluntary societies play a pivotal role in extending all kinds of help inside and outside the country. They have also been instrumental in assisting with numerous other activities, including preparing field research concerning needy families and organizing charity fairs, donations and relief campaigns for stricken regions. Qatar Red Crescent Society was the first to set up a branch for women in 1982. Other societies followed suit and the Social Development Centre later joined the fold. Women work in these establishments both as volunteers and as staff.

Qatari Women in the Legal Field

Qatari women work at the Ministry of Justice, where three heads of section are female: these sections are Fatwah and Research, Legislation, and the Translation and Official Newsletter sections. There are also five female legal advisors in the Fatwah and Legislation House and one in the State Cases Section. Mrs. Mariam Abdullah Al
Jaber was appointed on February 24, 2003 as the first District Attorney in the Gulf region.

Qatari women also participate in the field of fine arts, photography, theatre design and the artistic direction of work for television.

Furthermore, Qatari women entered the two fields of essay and fiction writing as early as the 1970s through the work of scores of female authors, Professor A. Kadim, with a variety of approaches and creative aptitudes. The development of the Qatari press and the multiplicity of publications now available have provided a favourable atmosphere and a real incentive for many outstanding women writers to excel in this field.

3.2.6 Political Rights

The rights of Qatari women is to vote and stand as candidates in elections were secured by the opening speech of H.H. the Emir given at the ordinary session of the Advisory Council in 1997. He said in that speech that the State giving women the right to vote and to run as candidates in elections is a hopeful stride on the road of popular participation in executive as well as legislative work. The percentage of women who then participated in the municipal elections in 1998 reached 47%, (Women in Qatar, Ministry of Information, 2003, p. 72). It is worth mentioning here that the march towards democracy and freedom was further enhanced last year (2004) by the election of Mrs. Sheikha Al Jufeiry to the Municipal Council.

Qatari Women in the Field of Finance and Investment

The Qatari Women's Investment Company, the first of its kind in the whole region, was established in 1998. The Company is shared equally by a group of Qatari women and Qatar National Bank. A Qatari woman, Sheikha Hanadi Bint Nasser Al-Thani, holds the senior
management post of the Company. In November 2000, the Businesswomen's Forum, one of the most outstanding of its kind, was set up after securing the approval of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which decided that the forum would serve as one of the Chamber's committees. By doing this, the Chamber is trying to provide an encouraging social atmosphere for women to play their role in the development process, to increase their contribution in small trades and industrial projects, and to enhance their potential to take economic decisions.

A Qatari Woman as a Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

In February 2001, H.E. Sheikha Dr. Ghalaya Bint Mohammad Bin Hamad Al-Thani became a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child after winning one of the five empty seats contested by the 21 signatory countries of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The elections for the seats took place at the UN building in New York and Dr. Ghalaya represents the State of Qatar in this position for the following four years.

The appointment of Sheikha Hessa bint Khalifa Al Thani:

Sheikha Hessa bint Khalifa Al Thani was appointed on May 16, 2003 by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the United Nations Commission for Social Development for the period 2003 to 2005. Her selection, from amongst five other candidates from South Africa, Norway, Portugal and Holland, further supports the drive of Qatari women to occupy important posts within the United Nations' different bodies.
Restrictions

The activities of women are restricted both by law and tradition. For example, a woman is prohibited from applying for a driver's licence unless she has permission from a male guardian. This restriction does not apply to non-citizen women. The Government adheres to Shari'a as practised in the country in matters of inheritance and child custody. Muslim wives have the right to inherit from their husbands. However, they inherit only half as much as male relatives. Non-Muslim wives inherit nothing unless a special exception is arranged.

In cases of divorce, Shari'a is followed; younger children remain with the mother and older children with the father. Both parents retain permanent rights of visitation. However, local authorities do not allow a non-citizen parent to take his or her child out of the country without the permission of the citizen parent. Women may attend court proceedings but generally are represented by a male relative; however, women may represent themselves. According to Shari'a, the testimony of two women equals that of one man but the courts routinely interpret this on a case-by-case basis.

Women largely are relegated to the roles of mother and homemaker but some women are now finding jobs in education, medicine and the news media. Women appear to receive equal pay for equal work; however, they often do not receive equal allowances. These allowances generally cover transportation and housing costs. Increasingly, women receive government scholarships to pursue degrees at universities overseas. The Emir has entrusted his second wife, who is the mother of the Heir Apparent, with the high-profile task of establishing a university in Doha. In 1996 the Government appointed its first female undersecretary, in the Ministry of Education, and in March a woman was appointed vice president of Qatar University.

There is no independent women's rights organization, nor has the Government permitted the establishment of one.
Women to Vote in Landmark Qatari Elections

Women in Qatar are allowed to vote and stand as candidates in the State election. This is still not recognised by some of the neighbouring Gulf states, namely Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, as examples.

Kuwait has the only elected parliament in the Gulf but only some men can vote. In March 2006, for the first time in history of Kuwait, Kuwaiti women voted and nominated in local councils elections. Bahrain experimented with an elected legislature but the Emir dissolved it in 1975. Oman in October held elections for a consultative council in which women could vote and stand for office but Sultan Qaboos had the final say in appointing delegates to the council.

There are no elections in Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.

Qatar's Emir said the municipal council would have 29 deputies, all chosen by direct election. The council would have authority over a variety of municipal affairs.

Qatar's Women's Affairs Committee

The Women's Affairs Committee has devoted itself to the following:

- Taking part in preparing and following up the national strategy aimed at raising the profile of women in cooperation with the relevant UN organizations.
- Studying the project of the Personal Status Law in the State of Qatar and taking part in organizing a seminar on the subject.
- Preparing the report: "The Reality of Women in Qatar".
- Taking part in studying the agreement on abolishing all forms of discrimination against women.
- Studying the project on the Law of Housing.
Preparing for and organizing the national campaign for the early diagnosis of cancer (of the cervix, thyroid and breast).

Studying the Social Security Law.

Celebrating Arab and International Women’s Day.

Taking part in local, regional, Arab and international seminars and conferences relating to women’s affairs.

Qatar’s First Woman Minister

Qatar appointed Sheikha bint Ahmed Al-Mahmud in 2004 as the Gulf States’ first woman cabinet minister. She was appointed as Minister of Education and Teaching.

No, I did not expect to become ‘her Excellency the Minister’, although I do think that women are entitled to assume senior posts if they have what it takes to do so.
(Mahamoud, 2004)

The Emir gave his sister, Sheikha Hossa bint Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, the rank of minister when he appointed her deputy chairman of a higher council for family affairs in 2004 but she did not join the cabinet.

Mahmud said she would devote equal energies to male and female students but is still not sure whether they should mix in school.

“It is premature to speak about this issue,” Mahmud said of mixed educational institutions.

However, she pointed out that women have been participating in the decision-making processes at the Education Ministry for some time.
She herself spent some 30 years in this Ministry, initially as a teacher, before ending as its head.

Mahmud’s appointment came a month after another woman, Sheikha Al-Juffairi, also scored a first by being voted to Qatar’s municipal council. She said she had consulted her four children before accepting the post, as she did for all important decisions in her life.

Sheikha Al-Juffairi, the widow of a one-time director of the Qatari Post Office, said her two sons and two daughters “strongly encouraged” her to take up the challenge. She said her promotion from under-secretary to minister would not stop her devoting time to her family, although she regretted that she no longer found space for her main hobbies: writing poetry and reading.

“I will focus my energies on grooming Qatari generations that can keep pace with developments in the field of education in the world,” Mahmud said.

Mahmud, who is in her forties, said she did not feel intimidated when she took part for the first time in a cabinet session, especially since she had dealt with some of her fellow ministers before in the framework of committees.

Juffairi, the first Qatari woman to win elected office, said Mahmud’s appointment not only put “the right woman in the right place,” but was also a manifestation of “the confidence which the Emir places in qualified women.”

Qatari women have covered much ground in a short time “under the guidance of the Emir and with support from his wife, Sheikha Moza bint Nasser al-Masnad,” Juffairi said.

Mahmud’s appointment is “a source of pride for all Gulf states,” said the Qatari secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
which groups Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates alongside Qatar.

"And yes, why wouldn't a woman be named secretary general of the GCC?" Abdul Rahman al-Attiyah said.

3.3 Concluding Remarks
The main concluding remarks of this chapter can be summarised in the following:

- The Qatari authorities are taking steps towards increasing women's participation in the workforce, in political positions and in terms of their civil rights. These decisions represent a big step forward. On the other hand, this participation is still limited.

- Qatari women taking up new political positions represent useful role models for modern women. Women from the higher classes and from the ruling family are playing important roles in breaking down social barriers so that more women can participate in politics, in the workplace, and in demanding civil rights.
Chapter Four

Research Methodology
4.0 Introduction

Women's issues in the State of Qatar constitute a very sensitive subject, both for discussion and for the collection of information. This is due to the culture, religion and the traditions of Qatari society. Since Amir Hammad took over as the State ruler, the country is moving steadily towards democracy. In April 2003, he introduced the first State constitution with the support and encouragement of the Qatari people who voted in favour of it. Therefore, women's rights and roles are new issues in the State and in the activities of society. Examining the literature, it was evident that there is a lack of comprehensive research, information and data analysis regarding women's welfare and their political and civil rights. The State has recently guaranteed women's participation in the politics of the State, the nomination and election to the Central Municipal Council being an example. This right on its own is a significant achievement as the majority of Gulf States have denied this right to women.

In employment, before 1995, Qatari women were restricted to working only in the education and health services. This has been recognised officially by the government:

*For many years, the Qatari woman was victimized by the narrow-minded, stereotyped view that restricted her employment to the fields of education and health services, thus limiting her activities and her acts of giving.*

*(Dept. of Information and Research, 1999.)*

Because of this, it is now important to establish whether Qatari society is ready to address issues of women's welfare, and their political and civil rights, and to provide information to aid decision-making on women's issues. Therefore, there is a need for analytical arguments, statistical data and information in this area. This research is the first research in this area and aims to provide materials for researchers, educators and authorities. Therefore, this research may be described as exploratory research, which implies the
addressing of particular questions, rather than, for example, the more formal process of hypothesis testing.

There are two of methods that can be used to collect and analyze data: quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methodological approaches are more formal and pre-planned to a high level of detail, whilst the qualitative ones are less formal and the detail emerges only once the evaluator is in situ (Morrison, 1993).

This chapter presents the main tools used to collect the information needed to investigate the main research aims and objectives: women’s welfare, and their political and civil rights in the State of Qatar. Both sexes, male and female, have been used as subjects of the research investigation. Another angle of the research is to identify and compare the views and opinions of two generations, young and old, towards women’s rights and roles.

The fieldwork includes eight case studies from various levels of society; a semi-structured questionnaire to identify and investigate the opinions and attitudes of both men and women towards women’s rights; semi-structured interviews with six professionals (three high-profile women and three high-profile men); and focus groups for males from the older and younger generations.

4.1 Research Strategy

Due to the lack of available information and data in the field of women’s rights and roles in Qatari society, official documents, reports, policies and guidelines on women’s welfare and their political and civil rights in the State of Qatar were carefully analysed first. This analysis provides an insight into the government’s views and attitudes towards women.

The fieldwork indicated that there is a serious lack of official documentation, information and analysis concerning women’s welfare, and political and civil rights issues.

The second stage of this research was to carry out a comprehensive fieldwork analysis to achieve the research aims and objectives, as well as
to provide information for the authorities and for researchers into women's issues. The fieldwork involves focus groups, case studies, interviews and questionnaire analysis, and this work aims to provide information in order to investigate, identify and analyse the opinions and attitudes of women and men concerning in the following issues:

1. Women's welfare;
2. Women's political and civil rights;
3. Gender equity in the areas of participation, opportunities and promotion in welfare, and in women's civil and political rights;
4. Barriers to women's welfare, and their political and civil rights.

### 4.2 Scope of the Study

The research considers a wide scope of women's issues. A set of criteria was established in order for the sample to be selected:

1. Both sexes, males and females, are the main subjects of the fieldwork. Their opinions and attitudes towards women's welfare, and their political and civil rights, were sought and this was achieved by designing appropriate questionnaires.
2. Two different generations, the young and the old, participated in the survey in order to compare the two generations' opinions and attitudes towards women's rights and roles in society. This was achieved through the focus groups.
3. High profile male and female professionals participated in the study as they represent the views of the influential classes of Qatari society. Their views were obtained through interviews.
4. Women from various educational and social backgrounds were needed for the fieldwork survey. Their perspectives were obtained by carrying out case studies.
Based upon the above criteria, the research samples are shown in Table 4.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Selected Sample</th>
<th>Selected Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>8 Women</td>
<td>Social Worker, Housewife (Older Generation), University Lecturer, Professional Woman, University Student, Housewife (Younger Generation), High School Teacher, Manual Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Structured Questionnaire</td>
<td>397 Women and Men</td>
<td>191 Men, 206 Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
<td>6 High Profile Women and Men</td>
<td>3 Women, 3 Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Older Generation (10-15), Younger Generation (10-15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.1**: Research Samples
4.3 The Collection and Analysis of Secondary Sources

To achieve the research aims and objectives, both secondary and primary sources were used to collect data and information. There is a lack of documents, both public and private, concerning women's welfare, and their political and civil rights in the State. This is due to the fact that political rights and state modernisation only started in 1995: women's rights only came to the forefront shortly after this and the government's first constitution was announced in April 2003 to allow public voting. The vast majority of civil rights for women are based on the Islamic law, the Sharia, and so the main documents that can be analysed are based on this. The other problem in collecting and analysing documents concerning women's political rights in the State is the fact that this subject represents a sensitive political, social and religious issue. Due to these factors, there are few people have who have had the courage to take the lead in studying this area. However, government legislation concerning the following has been investigated:

i. Council voting and nomination legislation
ii. Child/ren custody legislation
iii. Women's educational rights
iv. Women's working rights
v. Legislation/guidelines concerning the abuse (both physical and mental) of women
vi. Rights and guidelines for working and/or pregnant women
vii. Working women
viii. Pension rights.

4.4 Fieldwork

In order to cover the main research aims and objectives, a combination of methods was used. Women's welfare and their political and civil rights in the State of Qatar are a phenomenon that is both new and challenging. Therefore, there is a need to analyse the opinions and attitudes of both
men and women towards these rights. Due to the Arab culture, men are dominant and therefore it is essential to investigate and analyse the opinions and attitudes of men towards women's rights. Women's opinions and attitudes towards their rights are also important to confirm that women are ready and willing to take up their rights and responsibilities within society. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect this information.

Case studies are also needed to collect information in order to investigate women's welfare and their political and civil rights from the point of view of experience, education, employment and social class.

Formal schooling and higher education in the State started only in the 1950s and dramatic changes in the economy and in communication systems world-wide, such as satellite and the Internet, have created an education gap between the older and younger generations of men. This research tries to investigate and identify this gap concerning women's rights and to ascertain the importance and impact of this gap on women's issues.

Focus groups represent an excellent method that can be used to collect the information needed to investigate, identify and analyse this gap between the two generations. The focus groups provided a wide range of opinions and attitudes towards women's rights, with each participant contributing according to his understanding and beliefs. The main problem with focus groups is the possibility of one subject taking up most of the time, controlling the direction of the discussion and lobbying around his main opinions. This can be overcome by identifying the individual early on and trying to give attention to all the participants.

4.4.1 Case Studies

The case studies provided detailed information from the women's points of view about their rights and roles. Case studies provide individual histories, experiences, backgrounds and responses. This information is interactive, encompassing an individual's environment,
history, reality and inheritance. This can help in providing an insight, into and in identifying and analysing issues regarding women's welfare, and their political and civil rights.

**Case Studies Sample**

Eight women were chosen as case studies in this research. The case studies represent a wide range of social classes, from professional women to an unemployed housewife, to give a wider picture of women in the State. The main reason for choosing eight different women was to identify whether education, work, social class and age are barriers to women's rights. Choosing a mother-in-law as a case study can also help to identify the above barriers, as well as social factors, since the mother-in-law still plays a role in the family by trying to control daughters-in-law. It was evident that recruiting an uneducated or poorly educated woman to take part in this research as a case study was a difficult issue. This is due to two main factors. First, it would be difficult to contact such a woman and, second, she could not make a decision to volunteer as a case study before consulting her relatives. These problems were overcome by using female research assistants to make the approach and by being willing to wait for the relatives' decision.

The procedure used in all the case studies can be summarised in the following:

1. The purpose of participating was explained and the questions of the case studies outlined in a brief meeting with the participant.

2. The participant was given the case study questions and was then given two weeks to answer them.

3. The participants were able to contact the researcher or the research assistant for further clarification at any time during the two weeks they were given to complete the questions.
4. After the completion of the case study questions, a meeting to discuss these was arranged at the convenience of the respondents.

In most cases, when the selected woman refused to take part in the survey, an alternative case was chosen as a replacement. These case studies were:

**Social Worker**
A professional social worker was selected randomly from the social services department. This respondent was happy to take part as she was aware of the importance of social study on women's issues.

**Mother-in-law**
In order to identify the importance of social factors, and to compare the views of the older and newer generations, a mother-in-law was selected as a case study in this research. The mother-in-law in Qatari society still plays an important role in family life as a lot of young families live with or close to their parents. The social worker mentioned above asked if it was possible for her mother-in-law to participate in the case study. The mother-in-law accepted the idea after consulting various relatives.

**University Lecturer**
A university lecturer from Qatar University was randomly selected as a case study from a list of lecturers. Fortunately, when she was approached directly, she agreed to be one of the case studies of this research.

**Literate Housewife**
I asked a female associate to nominate at least 20 literate women they knew. Once I received the 20 names, I selected one randomly. The participant was then approached and agreed to be included.
**Professional Woman (with a Powerful Husband)**
A professional woman with a politically powerful husband was chosen as a case study. With the help of the Department of Social Sciences at Qatar University (the research sponsor), four women were short-listed and contacted. Three women accepted the invitation and one was chosen randomly.

**University Student**
A student was selected randomly from Qatar University. This was achieved through the help and support of the University authority, the research sponsor.

**High School Teacher**
A high school teacher was chosen randomly. Selecting a high school teacher was easy as the vast majority of employed Qatari women work in the education profession as teachers. First, the school was chosen randomly from the list of schools in Doha, and then the school was approached with the help and support of a female assistant. The headmistress, who was very helpful and supportive, provided a list of all staff names and randomly one teacher was selected from the list.

**Manual Worker**
A manual worker was chosen from the private sector. A company close to where the researcher lives was contacted so one of their employees could be selected. The company had only one Qatari female so she was selected as the only candidate available.

**4.4.2 Semi-Structured Questionnaire**
One of the main advantages of using questionnaires is the fact that a large number of subjects in several locations can be asked to contribute and confidentiality is guaranteed. Respondents can therefore be truthful
and findings can be assumed to be reliable and economical, both in terms of time and cost. They can also be filled in at the respondent's convenience and they are without outside influence; this decreases bias.

Although questionnaires have many advantages, there are also some disadvantages in using them. The main disadvantages of using questionnaires are: a possible low return rate can reduce the sample size and may bias the results; some questions may be omitted; it cannot be guaranteed that the questionnaire will be fully understood by every respondent, irrespective of design; and it is not always possible to provide verbal explanations of certain points raised by the questions.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
In this study, respondents were reassured, by a statement on the covering page and verbally by those who helped to distribute the questionnaire, that their answers would remain confidential and that their anonymity would be maintained. This was to ensure that respondents were free to voice truthful opinions, safe in the knowledge that there would be no comeback from superiors.

Questionnaire Design
All the questionnaires had a covering page attached. The covering page assured the respondents that all their completed answers would be treated confidentially and that there was no way that they could be identified. Verbal explanation was also used to confirm the written statements. Confidentiality was taken seriously because of the sensitivity of the issue in the State.

In designing the questionnaire, there were various factors that were taken into consideration. These were:

- The questions were translated into the Arabic language in order to avoid language problems.
- Time: the questions were designed to save as much time as possible.
Sweets were distributed as a reward token for completed questionnaires.

Assistants were used to help the respondents in case they needed clarification or needed the questions to be read.

The questionnaire was designed and distributed equally randomly to 500 males and females with a covering page. The questionnaire had four sections covering the main aims and objectives of the research. (See Appendix 1.) The first section of the questionnaire requested personal details from the respondent. The main aim of this section was to gather the respondent’s personal information, including gender, age, marital status, and the number of their children. Section Two presented questions regarding political rights. This section aimed to discover the opinions and attitudes of both men and women towards women’s political rights in the State and the main barriers obstructing such rights. Issues concerning civil rights were presented in Section Three. This section aimed to reveal the opinions and attitudes of men and women towards women’s civil rights in the State and the main barriers regarding such rights. Section Four covered women’s welfare rights. The questionnaire closed with a section on the future of women’s rights. This section gave the respondents an opportunity to express their views on the present state and the future of women’s rights in Qatar.

**Distribution Strategy of the Questionnaire**

**Gathering Information**

Due to the sensitivity of direct contact with women because of religious and social factors, the author used the following strategies to distribute and collect the questionnaires:

1. Permission was requested from the targeted shopping mall authorities to carry out the survey in advance.
2. Shopping centres in the State open daily from 8am until 12 midnight. The centres are open for both sexes every day apart from
Thursday. On Thursday the centres are open only for women and their families (females accompanied by a male relative).

3. Questionnaires were distributed on Thursday and Friday as this represents the weekend in the State and so the vast majority of families go shopping on these two days. The other reason for selecting these two days is that Thursday represents the shopping day of women and their families. This allowed many conservative women and their families to participate in the survey. Friday is the main holiday day in the State and, as a result, shopping centres are busy on Friday since many people go shopping then. Friday is also the day when both sexes shop. (After the fieldwork was completed, the State's weekend changed to Friday and Saturday.)

Questionnaires were distributed between 9am and 12 noon and from 6pm to 10pm. These hours represent the busiest part of the day for shopping as, in the afternoon, the vast majority of the State's population rests.

4. A station was established at the entrance to the mall for distributing and collecting the questionnaires. The station provided pens and chairs and tables to facilitate the completion of the questionnaires.

5. A reward was given for every collected questionnaire. The reward was a box of sweets.

6. No pressure was placed on potential respondents and no specific time was given to complete the questionnaire. This was because of the varied educational backgrounds of the respondents. In some cases it took a long time for a respondent to complete the questionnaire while it took a short time for well-educated respondents.

7. A female relative was used as an aide in distributing and collecting questionnaires in the women's malls (shopping centres).

8. A brief explanation was given about the aims and objectives of the survey and its sponsors.

9. The questionnaire was checked before the reward was given.
10. Pre-addressed envelopes were given to respondents who wished to respond by post due to lack of time or to enable respondents to think more before completing the questionnaire. No follow-up letters were sent to ensure the returns of the questionnaire due to social factors since the vast majority of participants were reluctant to give their address for correspondence. The respondents were asked to return the questionnaire to the distribution station. With the help and support of the malls' management, a box was left at the station during the centre's opening hours for receiving questionnaires.

There are only four main shopping centres or malls in the State but these cover the State geographically. All the shopping centres of the State were selected as research fields for distributing the questionnaires. This helped in obtaining respondents from various parts of the State, thus allowing geographical based distribution. The malls in which questionnaires were distributed were:

1. City Centre Mall
2. Centre Mall
3. The Landmark Centre
4. The Mall

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in the field area to detect any unclear wording and hidden problems and to ensure the outcomes reflected the research aims and objectives.

_Pilot work can be of the greatest help in devising the actual wording of questions, and it operates as a healthier check, since fatal ambiguities may lurk in the most unexpected quarters._

(Oppenheim, 1968, p. 26)
Questionnaires were given to a group of women and men (four men and four women) after briefing them about the aims and objectives of the survey. The group was of mixed generations: old and young. After completion, the researcher discussed the clarity of the questions, asked how respondents felt about these, and requested any suggestions for improvement. The questionnaire was then modified and some corrections were made to make it clearer. Then, the outcome of this pilot was processed to investigate the outcome of the responses in line with the main aims of the research. This process was undertaken to ensure that the outcomes met the research’s aims and objectives.

4.4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information from six high-profile professionals of both sexes. Semi-structured interviews helped the interviewer to be flexible, and to modify and extend the discussion on issues related to the research aims and objectives. The respondents were encouraged to be open and explore their own ideas and views without embarrassment. The confidentiality of the interviews was reconfirmed to reduce the possibility that in-depth questions might embarrass the respondent (Cicourel, 1964).

Another problem with face-to-face interviews is that meanings that are clear to the interviewer may be vague to the respondent. To overcome this problem, the questions were asked slowly and clearly, a respondent’s understanding of the question was also examined by asking him/her indirectly, for example, if the question was clear, if the question should be repeated, or if the respondent was happy with the question. The interviewer also recorded the responses and, in cases where the response was far from the expected answer, the question was asked again to ensure answers related to the question. Controlling the interview process can be difficult due to various factors. This usually depends on the personality of the interviewer,
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the respondent and the culture (for example, respect and behaviour during social communications). Qatari culture and tradition highly respect visitors, guests and officials. This interview mixed the official and the social, with the interviewer as a guest. Therefore, the respondents in this research were excellent examples, showing respect for the interviewer, as well as showing appreciation for the research. Therefore, controlling the interview was not difficult and all went as planned.

A final problem with interviews, raised by Cicourel (1964), is that variations in mutual trust, social distance and control can occur between two interviewees. An attempt was made to build mutual trust before the interviews took place. This was achieved by emphasising the aims and the importance of the research and by identifying the researcher in pre-interviews.

Fielding (1993), and Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), raised the issue of cultural differences and the wording of questions. To handle this problem, careful consideration was given in selecting the interview samples, as well as preparing the interviews.

Both sexes were chosen to reflect the opinions and attitudes of both sexes towards women's rights. The selected respondents represented various high-profile professionals and so each respondent represents an important element of this social class. For example, the female Qatari doctor represents the model of a successful Qatari woman. She also represents the potential of women to make an educational and social contribution. Female lawyers in the State represent the voice of women's rights. Through their education, they have the awareness and the legal power to be a voice for such rights. Therefore, choosing a female lawyer represents an important aspect of the interview selection.

A university lecturer was chosen as she represents the educational sector. Education is the main form of employment for Qatari women. Three males from various social classes were also chosen, namely
from the police force, and the legal and education sectors. These sectors represent the main employment sectors in society.

Open-ended questions were used to create the final format of the interviews. (See Appendix 3.) The questions gave the respondent an opportunity to explore his/her views and to offer the possibility of leading on to a discussion regarding any new issue related to women’s rights in the State.

The interview respondents were assured confidentiality at the beginning of the interview. They were also provided with information regarding the aims and the importance of the interviews. The interviews in this study focused on identifying the main barriers and obstacles facing women’s welfare, and their civil, economic and political rights.

A semi-structured interview was designed for six high profile men and women. The selected respondents represented the middle-aged generation (30 to 45 years of age). Their responses could then be used as independent views concerning generation conflicts. The chosen questions covered the main aims and objectives of the research through the main points of the designed questionnaire. This was to achieve consistency in the research analysis.

**Interview Design**

The interview schedules were based on initial consultations with the research supervisor and the respondents; an interview was also piloted. As a result of the pilot interview, minor changes were made to make the interview questions clearer and more closely related to the aims and objectives of the research: women’s rights and roles.

A female research assistant, a social worker with a degree in social science, was used to carry out the interviews with women who wished to be interviewed by another woman due to social and religious
factors. The interviewer was selected from among ten candidates who volunteered to help in carrying out the interviews. She was given guidelines, instructions and training and was advised on how to conduct and record the interviews. A pilot interview for the research assistant was also carried out to provide feedback for her on her strengths and weaknesses. After the interview, the research assistant reported back to the researcher with the outcome of the interview. If any gap existed, or if more information was needed, the research assistant went back to the respondent for more information and clarification. This happened on one occasion.

The interviews were carried out in a relaxed atmosphere and at an appropriate time and place to suit the interviewees.

The semi-structured interviews aimed to explore and investigate the following:

- The role of the female elites in promoting women's rights.
- Opinions and attitudes towards women's welfare, and their political and civil rights.
- Barriers and obstacles to the achievement of women's welfare, and their political and civil rights.
- Barriers facing agencies for women.
- Sources of government support available to women with children.
- Problems and obstacles facing women's rights.

### 4.4.4 Focus Group

A focus group is a means of interviewing at least four interviewees at the same time (Bryman, 2001). A Majlis represented an appropriate place to carry out the focus group. This is an evening gathering place for men and is a cultural and traditional place for relaxation and social intercourse. A Majlis may be the only place a group of males can gather to discuss daily issues and so could also provide a mix of men
from different educational backgrounds, social status and social class. Therefore, the researcher decided to target Majlis as a field for focus groups.

There is no need to obtain official notification to attend any Majlis in the State as they are open to anyone. Over the years, each Majlis has built its own group of attendees. When discussing a specific issue, especially a political issue, permission from the Majlis's owner (a Majlis is usually part of a private house) is needed due to the sensitivity of the subject. Two Majlis were chosen as locations for the focus groups. The first was for the older generation of my father's age and the second was for the younger generation. The Majlis owner's permission to attend and discuss the issue was sought in advance. This was also needed as the owner needs to prepare food and drink, a part of the Majlis tradition.

The focus group questions were planned and their introduction was also given serious consideration by the researcher. The introductory part was mainly to emphasise the aims and importance of the focus group discussion. It offered a large time space to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents' views and opinions and the researcher also promised that the main outcomes would be presented to the Majlis after the completion of the research.

The Majlis is usually held from early evening until early morning, although the time depends on the age of those attending. Typical activities are playing cards, and discussing sport and social and political issues.

The Majlis was my target for the focus group and I chose the Majlis for many reasons but mainly because it is a place where a close age group gathers; it is also a place where people come to discuss and entertain themselves, without any official commitment. The main problem at the Majlis was how to introduce myself and the topic to the members since this was a change from their normal Majlis discussions.
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I discussed the selection of the Majlis with a number of people, mainly my father, certain relatives and my father's friends. I listed the criteria for selecting the Majlis, one of which was that the Majlis should be attended by my father's generation (that is, the older generation) and that it should have a traditional interest in discussing social, economic and political issues. I tried to avoid a Majlis where card-playing was the main activity in order to avoid any discontinuity in the discussion.

I spent a number of days planning my night at the Majlis, preparing my questions and thinking about the best way of introducing the questions, where I should sit, how I should get their attention etc. I was rather concerned about the attitudes of members towards discussing women's issues.

For the younger generation group, I chose the selected Majlis for the following reasons:
The vast majority of the attendants were aged between 18-26 years old. This age represents the generation after the discovery of oil and the generation which had gone through the new educational, economic and political changes. Because the Majlis is open to anyone who wishes to attend, the attendees are random though, due to the duration of the Majlis' establishment, each Majlis has its own attendees.
The education backgrounds of the attendees vary but the attendees of the selected Majlis included a university lecturer, a student, an army officer, an office worker, and retired and unemployed people, as examples.
Social backgrounds are also varied. The attendees included married, single and divorced men. Some were from higher social classes, such as a Sheikh from the ruling family, and others were ordinary labourers.
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The Majlis in the State, as in most of the GCC countries, have become places to discuss political and social issues. Therefore, the attendees are in a perfect place to discuss women’s issues.

I chose Majlis which fulfilled the above criteria and identified these with the help of relatives and friends. I approached the Majlis’ owner to obtain his permission to discuss women’s rights, explaining the main reason behind this discussion. He was very helpful and was, in fact, enthusiastic about the idea. I agreed a time with him.

In the evening of the agreed day, I arrived with one of my relatives: a cousin. It is better, as part of the Arabic tradition, to be accompanied and introduced by someone who knows the Majlis.

I found the Majlis’ owner waiting outside. He took me in and I found he had organised a special meal for the attendees; the Majlis was full. He told me that he had already told the Majlis about the activity for the night and I was very pleased to have gained his help and support. After finishing the meal, I sat at the centre of the Majlis to help control and manage the discussions.
Figure 4.1: Research samples flow chart.
Chapter 5

Fieldwork Analysis
5.0 Introduction
There is a lack of information and data related women’s right in the State of Qatar. This is partly due to the fact of the sensitivity of women’s issues. Therefore, this fieldwork data and information represents the first comprehensive insight into this area. Beside the sensitivity of the issue, it may see strange that a male researcher has taken the issue. Due to the nature of the research, the researcher has spent several months in the fieldwork in order to access and explore any issues raised in the fieldwork. The researcher was open-minded for any raised issue, which could help and support the aims and objectives of the research. The main problem in the fieldwork was in contacting females unknown to the researcher. This was due to culture and religion factors. Friends and family and relatives were used to overcome this problem. This chapter presents, discusses and analyses the fieldwork outcomes. This includes the responses to questionnaire, focus group, case studies and interviews.

5.1 Questionnaires Analysis
A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed; 250 of them sent to women and the other 250 aimed to men in Qatar’s main four malls. The distribution was randomly distributed to any one entering the mall. Research assistants, initially females, helped in the distribution of the questionnaire; they were members of the station that the researcher established in each mall. Two main points have been noted in this distribution. A total of 397 questionnaires were received (78%). The rates were 48.2% (191 out of 397) males and 51.9% (206 out of 397) females. This is a very close to sex equally distributed, and it’s a very light response rate.
The respondents can be divided into categories, young generation, i.e. below to 25 years old and over 40 years old. Figure 5-1 shows that the 42.8% of the respondents were 25 years old and under and 42.8% were over 40 years old and older. This ratio will help to explain any differences in opinions and attitudes between the young generation and the old generation towards women political rights.

Figure 5.1: Age of the respondents

Figure 5.2 shows that just over half of the respondents were married, 55.2%, 34% of the respondents were single, 8.6% divorcee and only 2.3% were widows.
Political Rights

One of the main aims of this research is to investigate attitudes towards women's political rights in the State of Qatar. The State government has recently a resolution declaring that women have the right to vote on the local council elections. This is the first time in the history of the State that the local women have such right. Therefore, this section is aiming to analyse political rights through investigating males and females opinions and attitudes towards this right by distributing questionnaires.

Figure 5.3 shows that the majority of the respondents, males and females agreed that the women are ready to take part in the political life, to vote and to nominate to the local council election, of the state of Qatar. 60.9% agreed or strongly agreed and only 20.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This is a very good indication, bearing in mind the State is one of the most conservative Arabic state with a strong Badwin culture and tradition.
When the respondents were asked about the new governmental legislation, which has given women the right to vote they appear to have increased in favour of these women rights, more rights in the new constitution. This may be due to fact that the decision is a governmental decision in which many feel they are protected to express their views. Figure 5-4 shows that 74% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the new legislation is correct and only 7.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
Table 5.1 shows the relationship between sex, age and martial status and women political rights. It is clear that the younger generation are more in favour of political rights. The majority of divorcees' are also in support of women political rights.

There are only a few who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the government decision to give women the vote.
Table 5.1: The relationship between sex, age and martial status and women political rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women are ready to take part on the political life of the State</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New legislation for women rights is correct</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New legislation for women rights is correct</th>
<th>18-20 Years</th>
<th>21-25 Years</th>
<th>41-50 Years</th>
<th>51 Years and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-20 Years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 Years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 Years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 Years and over</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women are ready to take part on the political life of the State</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Women Civil Right**

Women civil rights is an important elements of any debates on official and non-official meeting, social related laws. There is a conflict between the strong Arabic Boudwin culture and the new attitudes towards women civil rights.

Both males' and females believe on the women maternity rights. This is due to fact that women family commitment is a priority. Almost all the respondents have agreed that women have the maternity rights.

Custody of the children of the divorced women are strongly supported by women and less enthuse by men's'. This is may due to culture factor. Culture believes the male or his family should custody the children in case of divorced women. They believe that the children are having the family name and they must custody the children to protect the family name. The other culture attitude is that women cannot cope with the finance and social morale to support her children.
Figure 5.5 shows that the vast majority of the survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that the family is the main source of care for children. This indicates the nature of the society, their values and norms to look after their children and lack of the State child care services.

This also indicates that Qatari women have an important role to play in childcare. For a mother to carry out her duties effectively towards her children, she needs the help and support of the father of the children, the state and society as a whole as it is a difficult, if not impossible, task for a mother alone. One of the state's duties is to establish a welfare system that recognizes that women need to carry out their duties within society.
Figure 5.6 indicates that a majority disagrees or strongly disagrees that the family should be the main source of care for a disabled child/children. This is because of the large financial commitment and the continuous care that is needed. It is also because of the awareness of families concerning the help and support for people with special needs in developed countries.

Childcare agencies are new in the State and they do not perhaps yet recognise the importance of establishing partnerships with parents to help and support children with special needs (Al-Kaabi, 2004).

Figure 5.6: Families should be the main source of care for their disabled child/children.
Although State of Qatar is a wealthy state and its citizens enjoy a much better standard of living than those in the vast majority of Arab countries, there are still poor families in Qatar who cannot meet the demands of modernisation and the new standards of living.

Figure 5.7 shows that the vast majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the poor families should get extra help from the State. This response reflects the nature of the society, a mix of Arabic culture and religion. They both have commitments toward needy families.
There was no clear evidence on opinions concerning whether women and men should both take on caring responsibilities, Figure 5.8. However, there is a gap between males and females opinions. The figure shows that there is a gap between males and females opinions, females are more in favour of males to take on caring responsibilities compared with males. This may be due to the impact of the Arab culture on individual opinions as, in this tribal culture, the woman’s main job is seen as caring. There is a shift towards men taking part in caring responsibilities due to changes in the roles of women within society, especially since working women find it hard to find the time and the energy to cope with all their responsibilities.
Figure 5.9 indicates that there is a split in opinions regarding the entitlement of men to paternity leave. This split may be divided between the two generations. The older generation tends to have a strong belief that motherhood is purely a woman’s concern while the younger generation tends to believe in the responsibility of a man to support and help his wife during the maternity period. This may also be due to the education factor as education has helped in increasing men’s awareness of the difficulties facing by women during pregnancy.
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Fieldwork Analysis

Figure 5.10 indicates that the majority disagreed or strongly disagreed that the household is the responsibility of men regardless of the gender. This may reflect the Qatari society values and norms, household responsibility is women responsibility.

Figure 5.10: Men should take on household responsibilities.

Figure 5.11 shows that the majority agreed or strongly agreed that women should get state help to care for their children. This represents a shift in values from being embarrassed to asking for help from the State to look after children, to feeling that the state should help and support women in caring for their children.
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Figure 5.11: Women should get state help to care for children.
5. 2 Case Studies

It is essential to study individual women as case studies. This will help to identify factors that helped to form and affect their personalities and attitudes towards the welfare, and the political and civil rights of women. There were certain problems surrounding the selected individuals giving details of their lives to a male researcher due to social factors. Educated females were more willing to participate in the research while the less educated ones were more difficult. All participants had sought permission to participate and had asked their husbands or relatives if they might take part in the surveys. Unfortunately, in the great majority of cases, the refusals had come from male relatives. The reasons for such refusals were to protect their female relatives from entering into any political areas of discussion.

**Figure 5.12**: Research case studies
Case Study 1: A Social Worker

Mrs A comes from a middle class background. Her father, who is a factory worker, divorced her mother (a housewife) when she was 11 years old due to social problems, problems mainly between his and her family. The family had been denied any State help and support due to the absence of any social security system in the State. The mother went back to her parents' house with her daughter without any rights in relation to her husband. Her mother got married to her cousin soon afterwards according to tribal tradition. The new stepfather worked as a headmaster of a local primary school and he was very strict. The stepfather came from a strong Bedouin background, a very conservative Arabian tribe. The mother accepted the marriage quickly due to the negative attitudes towards divorced women in society. At the time, there was no social security to support her and her children. Another brother and two sisters from the new marriage completed the family. Mrs A's stepfather was more concerned about running the school than about any political or women's issues and his views have been reflected in the whole family as there is no space for discussion or any sort of disagreement. The political arena in his time was restricted to the ruling family and families close to the ruling family.

Mrs A's stepfather accepted the marriage to his divorcee cousin because his cousin represents his family's dignity or "Sharaf" among other tribes and in society as a whole. It is part of the tribal culture and tradition to preserve a family's sense of dignity and propriety among other families. One of the most serious issues facing tribes is their sense of dignity (Sharaf) relating to a woman's sexual behaviour towards men. Any woman indulging in illegal contact, or any sort of contact, with men can bring shame to the family and to the tribe, as well as in society at large. This is unacceptable behaviour on religious, cultural and traditional grounds. For women, sexual intercourse, without legal marriage within
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the tribe is the worst scenario that a tribe can face. Therefore, tribes encourage early and quick marriage for divorcees to ensure there is no chance of illegal sex that can create a serious problem for the tribe. A cousin has the primary responsibility for marrying his cousin; in Arabic tribal tradition a cousin has, to some extent, both the right and the duty to marry his cousin ahead of other men.

Before her mother's divorce, Mrs A enjoyed the full attention and love of her parents who lavished her with affection and gifts on every occasion as she was the only child in the house. This changed after her parents divorced and, more significantly, following her mother's second marriage. Then she had to endure physically abusive treatment from her stepfather under the watchful eyes of her silent mother. She spent most of her time either at school or with friends to escape her stepfather's abusive behaviour. She was a hard worker at her school and her mother was her motivator to achieve her educational goals. She was, in her own words, very kind to her stepbrother and sisters, helping them and supporting their needs. From an early stage of her life she loved social activities and was interested in social problems. She said, "When I was young, I always dreamed of having the power to solve people's social problems. Social problems hurt me a lot."

She went to university at the age of 18. Now, Mrs A is a dedicated social worker helping women who are abused by their husbands or by a member of their family. She offers them counselling, as well as temporary accommodation, helping them to find a job to make them more independent in their lives. Although Mrs A vowed never to get married and let any man control her life, nonetheless, by a twist of fate, she met the man who later became her husband. This has changed her opinion and she now acknowledges that not all men are the same. She married him without any pressure from anyone. She has also found that the happiness in her new married life has a positive impact on her personally
as well as on her work. Two daughters, who are both now attending the local primary school, have completed her life.

Her husband is a civil servant at the Ministry of the Environment. He joined them after finishing a Master's degree in Civil Engineering at a highly reputable university in Britain. His political views are concentrated more around environmental issues and less on the foreign policy of the current government.

Mrs A is very interested in becoming involved in debating social issues, mainly to do with women's welfare and civil rights. She likes to be involved in decision-making and also likes to be involved in politics to help and support women's rights. She stressed that political involvement must be through a democratic system.

Despite the non-traditional aspects of their relationship, the childcare in the house is totally Mrs A's responsibility. She looks after her children's daily care and her husband does not take any responsibility for this. He also receives no financial help, support and advice from the State.

**Case Study 2: A Social Worker's Mother in-Law**

Mrs B is a 58 year-old housewife who has been married for 40 years. She has no formal education. Her parents were illiterate and never received any form of education; they lived a very simple life. During her life, women have been restricted to domestic activities and she grew up within the family without showing any interest in women's issues. Her generation did not know of or hear debates about women's rights and roles. She married from within her tribe when she was 18 years old. She did not see or hear about her husband until the wedding day. In her time, as in many cases today, the bride cannot see or talk to her groom until after the official wedding, which is basically a religious ceremony without the attendance of either the bride or the groom.

Mrs B has lived a very quiet life and has seen both the pre- and post-petroleum eras. Her arranged marriage is very successful; there is no
real problem between her and her husband or any trouble within the family. She has never worked and she has never received any formal education. She has four sons and three daughters. All her children have successful lives; all are professional, have had a successful education, and now have good careers. She dedicated her life to her husband and her children and was always very keen for her children to be well educated.

There is, however, tension between her and her daughters-in-law. Friction between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law is a common problem in society. The main tension is due to the fact that she is against women's right to work and uses her successful children as a model. She believes there is no need for women to participate in politics or leave their homes to work. Social problems, she feels, start when a woman begins to work outside her house, leaving her children with a child-minder. The only solution to this problem in society is for women to stay at home and look after their husbands and children.

Her husband once beat her physically at an early stage of her marriage. She explained that this was her fault and said that she feels that a husband has the right to punish his wife if she does something wrong.

Mrs B has no help, support or advice from the State, nor does she receive any State benefits. She has never heard about State welfare and the State's responsibility to support women and provide pensions for the elderly.
Case Study 3: A University Lecturer

Ms C is a twenty-eight year old university lecturer. She comes from a highly privileged and intellectual family; one of her brothers, for instance, is a medical doctor and another one is well on the way to being a dentist. She also has an older sister married to the ambassador of an influential foreign country and her father is a prominent professor and head of department in the University of Qatar. Although Ms C’s mother had only a secondary school education, she too is an intellectual who has taken up freelance journalism in the last 10 years after her children became more independent. She uses her articles and short stories to convey her feminist views on the major issues of the day.

Political issues are sometimes a prominent feature when the family sit down for a meal or when they are hosting a party. Their political views vary from a strong supporter of the current government (the father), a middle stance (the mother and Ms C), the critical views of her brothers, to apathy in the shape of her older sister whose life revolves around her family and social events.

As a child Ms C enjoyed the affection of her parents, as well as her brothers and sister, as the youngest child. Her childhood was spent in private schools and on foreign holidays. The model in her life was, and continues to be, her father; as a result she has followed in his footsteps to become a university lecturer. Her present social life still continues to revolve around the high society circles where currently she holds a position in a well-known women’s club in the city.

Although Ms C holds strong feminist views on various issues, she is planning to get married and have a family after she has established herself as a lecturer and thinker. Her fiancé, despite his less privileged background, has had a very good education that ended by him gaining a
PhD in political science. Having a wide variety of friends, including foreign dignitaries and government ministers, has become an integral part of his current position.

Ms C is very interested in becoming involved in politics and in gaining high political status. She believes that Qatari women are ready to take up their rights. She is also a very motivated person and is interested in nominating herself for the State council. Her fiancé is very supportive and keen for her to take on such a role; he believes in her ability to manage the political pressure.

Ms C believes that Qatari women should have welfare, political and civil rights equal to those enjoyed by males. She is not happy about the current participation of women in the political life of the State but is strongly in favour of extending women's rights. She commented:

*Time is in favour of Qatari women taking an active role in the State's political life. Qatari women's political rights are at their birth for the time being. It needs time and effort for these to reach maturity. I am happy and fully support the government's approach to women's rights.*

Ms C seems to have the political will and attitude to be involved in the political life of the State. She stated:

*I am dreaming of having an active political role. I am dreaming of having political responsibilities. Sometimes I wish I were part of the political arena to reply to males' political views when I hear/read them and I have found myself short of replying.*

As a lecturer and an educator in the Women's College, Ms C smiled and shook her head when she started discussing women's rights in
education, health, marriage and work. "I don't think I need to comment on this issue," she replied. She is quite convinced that rights MUST be part of any government policies. She stated:

*The old age of confining women behind the four walls is gone. We need, as families and as a society, women with full rights in education, health, marriage and work in order for women to play a full role in society.*

Ms C and her family have never received any help, support and advice from the State.

**Case Study 4: A Professional Lady**

Mrs D is a 38 year-old professional lady. She is married to a powerful, professional husband. Her husband was educated in the USA and she lived with him there for 8 years. Her father was a schoolteacher and her mother was a housewife. To have a teacher father in the 1960s in the Gulf region is a rarity. Her parents have no interest in internal politics apart from the Middle East issue, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Her father was very interesting and analytical on the subject of the conflict and Mrs D used to sit to hear his views on the issue. As a teacher, a lot of people came to him for consultation on social and political issues. She never heard him talking about women's welfare, or their political and civil rights.

Mrs D has two brothers and one sister. The oldest brother is a lawyer while the second brother is a petroleum engineer. Her sister is a head teacher of a primary school.

Mrs D was a very sociable person in her childhood. She was very close to her father. She says that she was a good listener with strong opinions
from an early age. She was interested in reading and listening to real stories, and also to social and political stories. She joined the first girls' school in the country and was taught closely by her father at home. She was always at the top of her class during her school career. She used to read poems that politically supported Palestine at school events. Mrs D’s model in her life is her father. Her father is a hard-working teacher with strong opinions. He used to lead his local community in social and political debates.

Mrs D completed her schooling at a Qatari high school and then got a degree in social sciences from the USA. Her Qatari background, together with her USA education, has contributed towards her personality and views.

She is a manager in a government office for social affairs. This has helped her to contact various people at different levels. She is now, according to her, well aware of the social changes taking place for women. She enjoys her work and her job has a high social status as numbers of women in high government office are limited.

The life and the responsibility of her husband have led her to be more interested in the country’s social and political life. Her husband has high status within the government and he has many social and political contacts. Her friends are mainly interested in the social life of the country due to the nature of her work.

Her main political interests are family relationships and women’s rights. She regularly involves herself in discussing and advising on women’s issues, being a quiet defender of women in civil and political life. The other issue which really interests her is the new political right for women of voting and nominating in council elections. This step has thrilled her and she hopes that Qatari women will take this opportunity to take on a leading political role.
Her international interest is mainly focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Iraqi issue; she admires the development in Western countries and would like to see this development in Qatar compatible with Islamic views.

Women in the early sixties were without any rights; they married early, had no formal education, no job nor any formal income. A woman generally depended on her husband or a close relative for support. Mrs D's visit to the USA opened her eyes to women's roles in the social and political life of the country. She felt deeply sad when she compared the education, work and social security for pregnant women in the West with what Qatari women could expect.

She is very pleased with the new developments in the country relating to women, mainly those which give women the right to vote and nominate in local elections. She is strongly in favour of changes in the social service system for women, and in granting allowances for mothers, pregnant women and single mothers.

**Case Study 5: A University Student**

Miss E is a twenty-year old university student. She is active and outspoken among her peers and comes from a background which is above the poverty line. Her father is a caretaker at the girls' secondary school where she got her high school certificate while her mother is a housewife who believes in old values and traditions such as that a woman should stay at home and look after her husband and her children. Her young brother is still at school. Her two older sisters have already had arranged marriages and had children before she finished her schooling. The only views concerning women's issues the family holds revolve around the social standing of women. Her mother never had any financial support, help or advice from the State.
As a child she enjoyed the love of her mother more than that of her father who thinks that males in the family should be held in higher esteem than the females. So, most of her time during her childhood was spent playing with girls and never with boys; she also worked hard at school which paid dividends when she was accepted into the pharmacy department of the University of Qatar.

Miss E, who is in the second year of her degree course, has had to overcome strong opposition from her father to attend university and has achieved this with the help of her mother and an old family friend. Although she found life at the university totally different from that at her old girls' school, she nonetheless soon got used to the idea of discussing political and social issues.

She mixes with males occasionally during the university terms but she continues to find the company of girls more comfortable. She has no objection to debating issues with males but it has to be within an official environment, not on their own. She is full of ambitions in life, being well aware of what is happening in the world through watching different channels on satellite. She uses the Internet almost daily and contributes to the chat rooms. She is willing and enthusiastic to participate in politics in future if she finds the right atmosphere socially.

She blames males' negative attitudes towards women for their lack of participation in politics.

*Women in the State are victims of males’ negative attitudes towards participation in the political life of the State. We still have males who do not accept women driving in public. This must be changed and the State must take steps towards changing this attitude.*

She also believes that attitudes towards women's participation in society are improving but still fall short of being recognised as full and equal rights.
The main reason that women are not comfortable to debate political and social issues in a public place is due to the negative social attitudes towards women who go behind doors mixing with males.

She replied carefully when she was asked how social attitudes towards women’s rights could be improved by saying:

*Education is the tool for women’s rights in the State. I mean males’ and females’ education.*

**Case Study 6: A Literate Housewife**

Mrs F is a 34 year old. Her parents come from a poor family. Her father works as a labourer at the oil refinery and her mother is a housewife. The father has not received any formal education. She has three sisters, one of whom has already had an arranged marriage and now has two children; the second sister is engaged to a relative, and the third is still at secondary school. She also has one brother studying mechanical engineering at the university; he is in his final year. There is total apathy about politics in the family apart from the brother who is an active member of one of the Majlis. He has strong views on the government’s standing on current issues and on regional political issues.

Her childhood was spent with the affection of her parents on the one hand and constant arguments with her sisters about who owned this or that piece of clothing on the other. As she grew up her arguments shifted towards her parents as they tried in vain to force her to go to school instead of hanging around and playing in the house. Despite not learning to accept responsibilities as a child, she has proven herself to be a very capable mother in raising her young family. Her social life mostly
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revolves around her mother and sisters as well as selected girl friends from her younger days.

She married by an arranged marriage and did not see her husband until the wedding day. Her husband is a builder who has had a primary school education and shows no interest in any political subjects unless they are to do with construction and local issues. He comes from a long line of builders, which includes his grandfather, father and uncle and so, working as a builder is the most rewarding career he could ever have wished for. Mrs F has no ambitions towards becoming involved in politics or discussing women's issues. She believes there is no need for women to be involved in politics. She has never had any financial support, advice and help from the State during her marriage. She is also not aware of any women's pension rights.

Case Study 7: A High School Teacher

Mrs G is a thirty-nine year old high school teacher who has a privileged background. Her father is a member of the local council and her mother is the daughter of a prominent minister so politics and women's rights are high on the agenda of the family's everyday life. She has one brother who is an army officer and therefore politics for him is a taboo subject as discussing politics is not allowed in the armed forces.

As a child she lacked nothing except her parents' close attention which she got from the nanny due to her parents' political commitments. She had a very strict upbringing with regard to correctness in eating, speaking and behaving in a 'lady-like' manner at social events.
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Her job, as a teacher in a private high school, somewhat reflects her strict background. She only socializes with people who are her equal in society. Politics has continued to be an important part of her life as she married a newly elected member of the State council. She has one daughter who is being brought up with the help of a nanny, as she was herself.

Her husband’s background is similar to her own in terms of social standing. His father is an ex army officer who is well respected and who graduated from a foreign university with a degree in economics. On his return home he chose politics as a career by turning down a high position in the Ministry of Industry. Mrs G is fully supportive of women’s rights and is known as always directing social discussions towards women’s rights. She has the full support of her husband to participate in politics.

Mrs G responded to the new legislation that gives women political rights by saying:

\[I am \textit{happy with the new legislation that gives women political rights. I know it needs time for women to play an active role in political life. It is a good start. It needs time but I believe time is in favour of Qatari women.}\]

Mrs G suggests that there is a gap between her mother’s generation and the new generation; this gap is wide and deep. “Our mothers’ generation lacked education and social experience, and men had power and domination.” This led to silencing women’s voices demanding the right to participate in the political life of the State.

\[Qatari women \textit{used to be the main problem for women’s political rights. Their voice has not been heard anywhere and their contribution in social and industrial life has been unsupported.}\]
In her view, the State is moving in the right direction. Women’s education is expanding with new legislation that supports women’s political, educational and work rights and this has created a new generation of women. This generation, according to Mrs G, holds the hopes and dreams for political participation.

_The new generation of women is our hope and dream. This generation can take it forward. The new generation is better equipped to contribute to political life. They are more experienced and educated than our mum’s generation._

**Case Study 8: A Manual Worker**

Mrs H is a forty-four year old factory worker. Her father died in a car accident when she was 11 years old while her mother was a housewife who had to go to work as a cleaner in a private house to support the family. The mother’s main concern was to look after her children and make sure that none of her children could taint the name of the extended family or the tribe. Therefore, the mother always reminded her daughter not to mix with males or to build any relationship with a male. She remembered that her mother always kept reminding her:

_You represent your father and his tribe’s name. Never, ever think to destroy this name by having a relationship with a male._

She has two younger twin brothers. Politics was not something the family talked about. Earning their daily bread was, and remained, their main concern.
Her childhood was a happy one. She attended primary school and her dream was to become a nurse until her father’s death. She had to grow up fast in her own mind and had to learn to take responsibility even though her body was still that of a child. She left school at the age of 14 to become a worker in a textile factory to support her mother and ensure the continuing education of her brothers.

Recently she has been promoted to the role of a unit supervisor where she has responsibility for 20 workers and 16 units of machinery. Most of her social life revolves around the factory’s co-workers and her family that comprises a husband and two children (a boy and a girl).

She was married by an arranged marriage to a relative who is also a factory worker. She did not see him until the wedding day. She likes her work because she grew to love it from her teenage years.

There is no need for women to participate in the political life of the country. Our tradition and culture is more important than political participation.

She believes that the main concern of women should be to concentrate on looking after their husbands and children and to work if the family is in hardship.

Women’s involvement in politics will lead them to spending more time outside the house. This is not good enough to look after their husbands and children.

Regarding this, she stated:

I am in favour of women’s rights in education and work.
She is quite angry that the State failed to provide any financial support to her mother when the family was in serious hardship and she criticises the lack of any support for bringing up children.
5.3 Focus Groups

The issue of women's rights is very sensitive in any Arabian Gulf State due to social and religious factors.

The State of Qatar has no elected parliament but in recent years a freely elected council has been established and women took part in this election for the first time in the State's history and in the history of the vast majority of the Gulf States. Oil was discovered in the State in the late seventies and the largest gas fields in the world have been discovered recently. The discovery of oil has changed the State in various ways: economically, socially and politically.

Socially, the discovery has split the State into two generations: the generation before the discovery of oil and the generation post-discovery. The older generation has lived in a very conservative society, in religious and cultural terms, with very limited access to education and health. Their houses and style of living were very primitive. The new generation enjoys a high standard of living. Therefore, it is very important to establish the opinions and attitudes toward women's rights of both generations.

This section presents the focus group discussions carried out with the older and younger generations. The main reason for selecting the two groups is to establish and identify whether there is any match/mismatch in opinions between the two generations concerning women's rights. This was achieved by discussing whether the groups were or were not in favour of women's involvement in voting and nominating in political activities, in the right of women to work and to receive an education, and in supporting women's civil rights. The discussion also involved women's welfare and social care services. Regarding civil rights, only marriage was discussed due to lack of time. The focus group participants were also encouraged to discuss the reasons behind their opinions and attitudes.
The outcomes from this focus group were then related to the other outcomes from the analysis of the questionnaires, the case studies and the interviews.

The occupations of the Majlis attendees vary as there are no special rules or membership regulations related to the jobs or professions of members. The attendees can vary from a Bedouin who lives in the desert, to a minister in the government. High-profile guests, even State rulers, sometimes participate in the Majlis' activities. Therefore, the Majlis is a mix of participants who come from various social classes and occupations.

There is also no specific rule regarding age for attendance at a Majlis although the vast majority are mature adult males. However, the tribe, social class, interests, age and occupation of the Majlis owner are important factors in attracting men to attend the Majlis. Therefore, it is easy to identify Majlis according to the ages and generation(s) of their participants as each generation has a lot in common in terms of interest and values. The Majlis are for men only.

5.2.1 The Older Generation

This Majlis represents my father's generation. The vast majority of the attendees are over 50 and are married. On the night of the discussion, the occupations of the participants varied considerably. Four were retired, three Bedouins lived through trading, and five members were still working in government jobs.

I opened the discussion by asking them about their views concerning women working, and towards women's political and welfare rights. The first reply came from Abu Hamza.

Abu Hamza was shy in replying and tried to keep his opinions to himself. With encouragement from his peers he asked shyly why women would want to be involved in politics. He said: "They are well looked after. We (males) have provided all their home needs." Then
he complained that he could not understand why they needed the trouble, saying that he felt it was better for them and for men too not to be involved in politics.

It is still common in the conservative society of the Gulf States that democracy and women's rights are viewed as Western ideologies. A woman's right to work is generally seen as a way of allowing freedom and liberation to women. Work will allow women to mix freely with males and this is against religious practices. Therefore, it is not surprising that Abu Ahmed was against women's right to work. He felt that the right of women to work is a Western custom and against the norms and traditions of Qatari society. He believed that copying the West in allowing women to work is a wrong decision; his main argument was the issue of mixing. This is the main issue in some other Arabian Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia.

He said: "It is wrong to copy the West. The West has its traditions and culture and we have our own. There is no need to copy and try to simulate them. We do not need women to be involved in politics and to send our wives out to work, leaving us to look after the children. This will lead her to mix/argue with males. This can lead to many social and political issues."

I then tried to explore the issue more when I pointed out to him that Islam is not against women's right to work and that there is no religious quotation against this right as long as the right environment is provided. The vast majority of the group agreed that Islam gives a woman the right to work to support her family as long as the working environment is right. "If Islam is not against women's right to work, then why are the majority of you against this?" I asked politely.
Women's Political Rights

Politics is very sensitive area, requiring courage in order to be involved in it. Democracy, as envisaged by the West, is not well established in the State in particular and in most of the Arab states in general as the degree of democracy varies from one state to another. As a result, political activists need protection from any sort of punishment to allow free speech and the expression of political views. In some Arabic countries, expressing political views against the government is a serious crime which carries a serious punishment. This can even mean execution. The best protection to be had is state legislation supported by an independent court but, unfortunately, both of these are lacking in Arabic states. Therefore, it was good to hear Abu Ali concentrate on political protection. He expressed his concern for the protection of women which he believed to be an issue of legislation. The State's political system needs to be improved to cope with and accommodate women's political rights.

Political life in the Gulf region is unstable generally and more protection is needed for politicians in general and women in particular before moving forward. This is a legislation issue before anything else.

Another point concerning the Majlis is the social attitude towards women's political rights as most believed that women are not ready to nominate themselves and take a serious role in active politics. This is because most of them have not seen or experienced women's rights since women who are actively involved in politics have not been seen in the State's history as politics were restricted to men only. Therefore, Abu Ahmed's comments reflect the attitudes of his generation.

_I do not think our society will accept women's rights in politics. It is not part of our culture and tradition._
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Abu Azam went further by saying:

*I believe our culture, religion and tradition are not in favour of women's involvement in the political life of the country.*

It is still part of Qatari culture, especially among the older generation, that it is socially embarrassing for a woman to win a debate with a man regarding a politic issue as most men still believe in male power over women even in views and opinions. This is what Abu Hamza imagined when he tried to envisage a political debate between female and male colleagues.

*I cannot imagine, and it will be very funny to watch, a Qatari woman arguing with a Qatari male live on TV. This would have a tremendous social effect on the male if he were defeated.*

There is still a feeling among the older generation in the State that politics should be restricted to males. This is due to the danger which politicians may face during their political careers and this has been built up from the experiences in some of the Arab countries. The other factor that the older generation has not experienced is women’s involvement in politics. This is due to a lack of information and knowledge concerning women’s participation in political life in other states due to a lack of communication. It is also due to a lack of knowledge regarding the freedom of the press which the younger generation enjoys. Also, no women participate in politics in neighbouring countries, mainly in the Arabian Gulf states, and therefore they believe there is no need for women to be involved in politics. They see women’s roles as only looking after their husbands and children, forgetting their contribution in terms of their views and opinions in helping society forward, as expressed by Abu Ahmed.
There is no need in our society for women to be involved in politics. We have enough males to play political roles. Leave the women to look after their household responsibilities and to look after their children and husbands.

Women's Right to Work

Women's right to work was an important issue raised with the focus group. This is due to the fact that there is a lack of manpower in the State and a low percentage of Qatari women who are employed. There are shortages in the professional, as well as in the skilled and semi-skilled sectors. This is mainly due to the fact that the country is being built politically and economically at a very fast rate.

I tried to raise the question of the right of Qatari women to work and looked around the Majlis seeking a response. The Majlis went silent for a while as they tried to collect their thoughts carefully since there might be more than one answer to the question.

I then chose Abu Abdel-Aziz who is in his early fifties. He said:

I like to see women working in the teaching profession or as a doctor. It is convenient for them. Women then have more time to look after their husbands and children.

A convenient job, according to him, is one in which more time is spent fully separated from contact with men as this is safer. I mentioned that, as a medical doctor, a woman would need to spend a lot of time away from home, maybe more than working in an office in any industry. I explained:
Working as a medical doctor, she will work with patients. She will be respected and everybody will listen to her. She will be acting as their boss. She will mix less with people on a regular basis.

I asked if he was saying that one of the most important points in order for a woman to work is that she should be separated from males in the work environment.

He agreed with others in the Majlis that time can be very important but mixing with males is the most serious issue. Mixing with males, according to them, can create a “Fahsha” (a sexual relation). This, according to religion and culture, is a serious social crime and therefore families and individuals try to avoid any problems related to their females.

Discussing the issue of a woman becoming a boss as a factor in women’s employment, the vast majority of the Majlis members believed that becoming a boss would give women the opportunity to protect themselves from people who still try to offend women at work.

Women’s Right to Education

When I raised the issue of the right to education the Majlis members thought deeply as if they wanted to ponder this internally before they came to their answer. An answer came from the youngest of the Majlis who said:

*We are in favour of women’s education. We have daughters and sisters who are well educated and we cannot find any reason to be against it. We are proud of the educational achievements of our daughters and grand-daughters.*

When I asked if any one of the Majlis was against women’s right to education, nobody answered as all of them agreed with this right.
When I raised the issue of women’s welfare, many attendees asked what I meant by that as they had not heard about it or were not aware of it. I started by asking what they thought about a woman’s right to have a pension at the age of 60 years. Abu Ahmed replied:

*I believe it is a fair right. Elderly women should receive a State pension regardless of their situation. We are a rich state and the government should take a decision on this issue.*

The social factor, it seems, still has an impact on the opinions of the older generation towards women’s pensions as another Majlis attendee stated:

*I do not like and do not want to see my wife standing in a queue demanding help and support from the government. Angrily he asked, where are the husband’s and the sons’ responsibilities?*

Another comment was:

*The Qatari family is well off financially. Therefore, I don’t think there is a need to beg from the State.*

For opinions on women’s welfare rights, I asked the Majlis about their opinions on this. The first response on this issue stated:

*It is a shame on the family if the mother or the wife was to be looked after by the State’s social care services.*

The above statement reflects the impact of social factors on the opinions and attitudes of the individual. In the Arabic culture, males
have responsibilities towards their female relatives, particularly those who are elderly.

Concerning women's rights during pregnancy, the group was decisive on this issue. A typical response was:

*A woman should take paid holiday from the third month of her pregnancy.*

For women with a young child or children, the group was also decisive:

*A woman should take paid holiday from the birth of her child till the child starts school. The mother is the only one who is appropriate, able and suitable to care for her child.*

The above two statements reflect the culture of society towards women.
5.2.2 The Younger Generation

I sat calmly in the centre of the Majlis and the eye of all the attendees turned towards me waiting for me to start. I felt at the beginning that everyone had something to say. I tried to find the right words and the right way to broach the subject as a man who wanted to discuss women’s rights with them. I pulled my papers to my chest, trying to find the right words at the beginning, as I did not already know any of them and they did not know why I was researching women’s issues. I moved a little and started to explain why I needed to carry out this discussion. I explained that it is important for society as a whole and for the State authorities. Everybody was listening carefully.

Women’s Political Rights

It is usually difficult to discuss political issues but the State is more liberal now than at any other time. I tried to avoid any other political issues other than women’s political rights but the recent governmental legislation allowing women to vote helped to elicit an atmosphere in which to discuss the political rights of women.

I asked the group if the members were in favour of women’s political rights. The vast majority of the Majlis nodded in agreement, indicating that they were in favour so I then asked them to discuss why they were in favour of these rights. The first person, who seemed to me to be interested in politics, and who worked in a government office, replied by saying:

*I cannot isolate women from any part of society any more. This is due to the fact that now Qatari women are well educated. It is due to national, regional and international demands or, may I say, pressure.*

I then asked the group about his opinion. The vast majority of the group agreed that there is a need to change attitudes towards the increasing number of women being educated in Qatar. Women’s
participation in politics and their right to vote and nominate is guaranteed worldwide and in the vast majority of Arab countries. Unfortunately, this right is ignored in some parts of the Arabian Gulf, namely in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

It seems that the education of women is a very important factor influencing women to press for their political rights. Education has broadened women's understanding, thinking and ability to be involved in political issues, as well as helping women to discuss various topical and controversial political issues in the region. The new communication systems, satellite and the Internet have broken down many barriers to reading, listening and viewing about political issues. Al-Jazeera TV based in Qatar is the most liberal TV in the region and has a special programme devoted to the discussion of women's issues. This is called "LL-Nessa Fakat" and is for women only. One of the group responded regarding the role of the media, saying:

> Women and society should be thankful to Al-Jazeera due to their efforts in promoting and educating people about women's roles in society and about women's rights.

The majority got excited and wanted to participate as the discussion moved towards the Al-Jazeera satellite station. Fahad replied by saying:

> Al-Jazeera's contribution is not only relevant for women's political rights but also for their ability to discuss political issues openly. This has helped to create a political environment in the family and in society. This has helped women to discuss political issues within their environment, thus leading to an increase in their interest in politics.

Qatar is a conservative country with a strong Arabic tradition. Women, until recent years, could have no political rights. Therefore, it was not surprising to hear Ahmed stating that:
Women's political rights are related to social factors. Society needs time to accept fully the idea of women playing a major role in society. Society has not experienced such involvement.

Recent government legislation to give women the right to vote in council elections is a positive step towards full political rights. Women have voted in the last election for the first time in the State's history and this participation has seen no problems socially. The government planned the election well and women took up their political rights equally with men. The government's attitude towards women's political rights has helped society to accept women's rights as the government is highly respected in Qatari society.

The other important issue raised by Abdella is that of the women themselves. He argued that it is necessary to establish whether women themselves are ready mentally, educationally and socially to accept political involvement. It is unacceptable to force women to take roles in politics for the sake of it and before they are ready; training must be given first. A participant said:

*I don't know if women themselves are ready; it would be better to ask them. Maybe they do not want to be involved in any political rights. Maybe they are not ready yet to nominate themselves to the council.*

I then asked the group how women could be helped to take up their political rights. One responded:

*We need to train women. This can be achieved by involving women in council elections and in clubs and societies as the first step.*

Training women is a very important issue to promote their political activities. This can be achieved by helping and supporting women to become involved in voting and this, in turn, can be achieved by
government encouragement, giving women the legal right to vote and nominate themselves to the council as a first step. Pressure groups must also become more active and the media need to play their role in promoting women’s political rights.

The Right to Work

Qatar has seen sharp changes in its infrastructure, and in its educational, economic and political systems in recent years. To cope with these changes more manpower is needed yet Qatar, like most of the GCC countries, is lacking in manpower. Women, as a resource to fill this shortfall, have never been taken seriously in most of the Arabian Gulf States.

The younger generation is more oriented towards the new life style by travelling abroad, owing an expensive house, a nice car, etc. This, of course, requires financial resources to achieve such a life style. A working father only does not earn enough any more to meet the financial needs of such a family and this has led many men to encourage their wives to work as an extra help to solve their financial problems. This was summarised by Abu Najim’s comment on this issue:

*It is difficult to meet our living requirements without my wife working. Life is getting more expensive.*

This shows that changes in the expectations placed in women are driven by the demands of changing lifestyles. This comment was supported by those of Rashid when he said:

*I believe the life style of our generation has changed, especially in the last 8 years. I personally cannot meet the demands of my young family without my wife earning.*
Sitting comfortably, I tried to move the focus of the group towards women’s rights to work. I felt more comfortable and relaxed when I start talking about this because I felt that the group would be happy to discuss this issue with me. This is due to the fact that discussing politics is more difficult as the State is in the process of moving towards democracy. Therefore, I asked the group if anybody was against women’s right to work. The group kept silent for a moment and one of the group replied with smile: “It depends on what you mean by the right to work and the type of work”. I replied that I meant that a woman had the right to work at any paid job within the norms and traditions of Qatari society in order to support her family. He replied with a big smile that, in that case, all of the company was in favour of a woman’s right to work. Then I raised the question of what were the main reasons for their support of a woman’s right to work. Ahmed replied confidently:

The main reason, as I understand it, is that the demands of life today are totally different from those fifty years ago. It is difficult to look after the family financially. We, as the younger generation, like to spend our holidays abroad, live in a nice house and own a good car. The standard of living in the State has changed sharply. Both males and females need to work to meet these changes.

Fahad nodded his head, confirming his agreement with Ali and, when Ali stopped to think, Fahad added briefly:

Our generation has a different culture from that of our fathers’ generation. We are contributing to cultural changes.

What Fahad said interested me and I tried to encourage him to add more to this important point. I asked him to explain what he meant.
He said:

_We are able to gather together as young people today to discuss political and women's issues openly. This was unacceptable in our fathers' generation. We spend our time doing sport, travelling and meeting in Majlis. Our fathers used go fishing. (Fishing was the main source of income for the vast majority of the State before the discovery of oil.)_

The above statement is interesting. The first point is that the State has moved from being a state that depended mainly on fishing and diving for its main income to a state that now follows the more Western tradition of office working. The discovery of gas has created various large companies whose work is based around an office style of working although the State still lacks any large manufacturing companies. The companies that have been created within the education and health sectors have absorbed almost all the younger generation, creating a population of office workers. This population shares many interests, such as sport, travel and spending evenings in the Majlis. This is due to the fact that this population shares much the same standard of living, holidays and working hours. Furthermore, they live close to each other.  

Alla raised another important point: the issue of children. He said:

_Another problem, I believe, is the issue of children. Children's demands today are totally different from in our fathers' age. Education is the main factor. The father today has to follow the educational progress and health of his children. In our fathers' age, the child worked with his/her father from an early age without any formal education._

This is an important point. The education in the State has two dimensions: the public and the private systems. The public schools
are free and are controlled, managed and administered by the Ministry of Education which provides the teachers, syllabuses and facilities. Due to the lack of manpower in the State, the private sector offers more variety in terms of the syllabus and teaching methods. There are American, British and Arabic schools in the private sector and they charge a fee. There is a feeling among families that the education offered in the private sector is much better value for money than that offered in the public sector. Therefore, families have to work harder to increase their income to enable them to send their children to a private sector school and one of the ways to increase the family income is for the wife to work.

Abdel-Majed mentioned another reason why there is support for working women:

Importing non-national female workers to work in various sectors of the State to meet the demands of the labour market has helped society, and especially the younger generation, to accept women's right to work. They have seen and experienced working women and it has now become the norm to see females working in a bank, shop or office.

Due to the lack of manpower, the State has used a massive number of non-nationals to work in various sectors to meet the needs of the labour market. Part of this imported labour consists of women. The example set by non-national women workers plays an important role in promoting women's right to work.

Due to changes in the economy of Qatar, there is no need any more for a woman to stay at home looking after her children and husband as it used to be in the past. Children become part of the education system at an early age and husbands better appreciate the role of women by taking some of the cares and responsibilities of the house and children from the woman's shoulders. One participant said:
Chapter Five Fieldwork Analysis

It is better for a woman to go to work to use her time effectively. Staying at home is no longer needed as the children go to schools and kindergartens. Women today are more educated than in our mothers’ age. We have female high school and university graduates. It is essential to use these potential skills to develop our country which lacks manpower.

The above comment is a very important point that was raised in this focus group. Qatar lacks qualified manpower. Therefore, it is important to use women as part of the workforce to meet the needs of the labour market. This can be achieved by training women with the help and support of the government. The Qatari market is now more open and is moving fast towards privatisation.

Education Rights

Education rights took less time as all the Majlis agreed that women should have full education rights. Women should have the right to attend any education course they want and should have full education rights as one of the attendees stated:

There is no religious, social or political stand against women’s education rights. I cannot understand anybody who is against women’s education.

Qatari women have full education rights as there are no legal rules, guidelines or bias against women in the education system. Qatari women today are present in all levels of the education system and Qatar has many female Ph.D. students in Europe and in the States.
Arranged Marriages

The family still plays an important part in the marriages of their sons/daughters. It is still common for a bride and groom only to come face to face for the first time on their wedding day. Females are the starting point for the marriage. They identify the girl first as a suitable bride for their son or brother. This contact can come from a relative, colleagues at work or at school/university, or a neighbour. A contact between the females of both families arranges a visit to talk about the marriage and makes the arrangements needed for a meeting of the men concerned. This is followed by the men from the groom’s side visiting the bride’s family to make it official. This is a typical marriage process in the State.

However, arranged marriages can create a problem within the family as Rasheed started to tell in his story:

When I was twenty years old, my father approached me and informed me that he and my mother had found a suitable bride. He was quite excited as if he were the one who was going to be married. The problem was that they approached the bride’s family without knowing my feelings towards the woman.

I took a deep breath and politely told my father that I needed to think a bit. I needed more information about the woman. He replied as if the answer was not related and said: “I will give you a week before I make it official.” I thought about it very carefully and approached my very close friends to express my feelings. I came to the conclusion that there was no way I was going to marry this woman due to the lack of anything in common between us apart from our relative. I informed my father politely of my decision by making excuses. My father refused all my excuses and finally I told him I did not want to marry this woman. My father was very upset and our relationship has not been at all good since.
Until recently, the groom was not even allowed to see a picture of the bride.

**Women’s Welfare**

When I changed the subject of the discussions and moved towards women’s welfare, the group was more interested as I was talking about women’s welfare and their rights. The first response from the Majlis stated:

> It is part of any modern society that elderly women should have a State pension.

The culture puts pressure on the sons of elderly women to care for them and there is a need to contribute more to the expenses of elderly women due to changes in demand and the style of living. Abdel Aziz, a newly married 23 year-old government employee, expressed this:

> It is time for the government to take some responsibility for elderly women due to the changes in the financial and life commitments of their sons.

Another comment focused on the State’s responsibility. One of the Majlis attendants stated:

> The State should reward the mothers and grandmothers of the State. They should be treated as senior citizens.

Concerning social care, one participant stated:

> There is a need for the State to support the elderly in their homes.
For women's rights during pregnancy:

A woman should take paid holiday from the
third month of her pregnancy.

For women with young children, Jasim commented:

A woman should have paid holiday to bring up
her child. The current paid holiday is not
enough. There is also a need for home care
services at the early stages after the birth.

The above statements indicate that there is a shift towards demanding
that the State takes more responsibility for family issues.
5.4 Interviews

In the previous sections, the analyses of the focus groups, case studies and questionnaires were presented. These need to be analysed together with the views of both males and females in more detail to gain a clearer insight into and understanding of issues regarding women's political and civil rights in the State.

Six interviews were carried out in total, three with participants of each gender. Semi-structured interviews were designed for this purpose. (See Appendix C.) The interviews sought to explore males' and females' perceptions and opinions concerning women's political and civil rights. The interview schedules were based on initial consultations with the research supervisor; an interview was also piloted. As a result of the pilot interview, minor changes were made to make the interview questions clearer and more related to care agencies in the State.

The interviews themselves were carried out at the participants' convenience, either at their offices, homes or in cafes. Each interview lasted between one and two hours, depending on the interviewees' answers and their willingness to expand their responses.

All the interviews were tape-recorded, apart from who did not wish their interviews to be recorded. Extensive contemporaneous notes were also taken for each interview. The recordings were not routinely transcribed but were used as a source of confirmation or clarification of the written notes where appropriate.

Barriers and Obstacles

Although women have achieved a lot in their quest for civil and human rights, Qatar is still nonetheless a male dominated society and is still resisting women entering parliament, which is still considered to be
traditionally a male preserve. In the women’s view, it is this male dominance in politics that is the main reason for women not taking up their full political and civil rights. There is a serious lack of women in high political or governmental ranks in the State. This point was fully supported by the three females in the interviews as Mrs A stated that:

_The men are dominating the power in the State. They are the decision makers on behalf of women. This is the reason if you ask me._

All interviewees agreed that there is a shift in favour of giving women political and civil rights. They agreed that the new generation is more enthusiastic about moving in this direction than the older one. This is may be due to education and communication with the outside world due to the dramatic changes in communication systems. It needs time for the younger generation to take a serious role in the State’s political life. She stated that:

_The old cultural dominance of the male dominated society, especially the older generation, still carries great weight in determining the political rights of women._

The same issue was then put to the male interviewees. They agreed that men dominate the power of the State but this is not due to the men’s attitudes towards women’s rights. The main reason for this dominance is the fact that women in the State are not ready to take part in politics as Mr E summarized:

_Qatari women are not ready to participate in political life or to take up serious governmental positions due to the fact that education for Qatari women starts much later than for men._
There are no official parties in the State and the ruling political group has been established for a long time. The group represents well-known people whose families have been traditionally involved in politics. Politicians in the State are close to each other, socially, economically and in terms of their roots. Therefore, it is difficult for individuals to enter political life from outside the group. Women are no different, as women have never existed in this group at any time in the State's political history. For women to be accepted as part of this group, it will need a lot of effort and many people will need to be convinced. As one respondent stated:

*The political arena in the State is restricted to men only. It is difficult for a woman to break in. The arena has built its own culture and tradition.*

Political experience in the State is short when compared with more advanced nations and so Qatari society has not experienced women being involved in politics. Society is not properly prepared to accept women's involvement in political life of the State and yet social factors are essential to the acceptance of women in such roles. Changes in attitudes and views are needed regarding the traditions otherwise it may not be accepted by society for someone's wife, sister or mother to be in the public eye. A participant said:

*The social factor is the most essential factor for women's involvement in politics. There is a need to change the social factor.*

**The Necessary Changes**

A discussion ensued with the interviewees about whether they thought such changes were coming or not. The women were more confident that these changes will happen and that women will take up their political and civil rights. The men believed that this will happen as well but thought that it would take more time. Mrs C commented that:
I am quite sure the change will come sooner or later, but, in my opinion, it will not be until after the next council election.

In Mrs C’s opinion the change will come within five years. However, the male interviewees believed that it would be at least ten years before women would have their political and civil rights. Mr B commented:

A lot of work is needed before women are ready to take up political and civil rights. Society is not ready and women are not ready.

A good time was spent in discussing what changes were needed to allow women to take up their rights. Pressure groups are noted as being an important channel to support women’s rights and to educate society as Mrs A summarised:

The changes will come in two phases. Firstly, the pressure and lobbying by women’s groups will yield more results as they grow in size and power. Secondly, a new generation of men who will be less resistant to change will be in control, which will make it easier for women to venture into new avenues.

There is no official women’s group in the State demanding women’s political and civil rights. An important step, however, is that an important, well established and widespread Qatari TV satellite channel is now broadcasting a weekly programme discussing women’s issues. This programme is called “For Women Only” and it invites well-known women guests to discuss issues related to women’s rights. The programme started last year and is now playing a major role in educating society in general and, in particular, in raising awareness concerning women’s rights. An interviewee commented:
A lot of work still needs to be done if these rights are to be developed and extended in the State, especially in trying to keep the bells of change ringing in the corridors of power, as well as continuing to show that women are one of the most essential parts of society and they need to be recognized as such.

Mrs C commented strongly on male power domination and the slow changes within society. She stated:

In fact, changes towards women rights are happening every day, but they are few and slow in coming. This is to be expected since the main power lies in the hands of males.

**Women’s Opportunities in Education**

Early years education is open to everyone, regardless of sex, religion, nationality or race. This governmental view has helped to build schools for females and has also helped females persuade their parents to allow them to join the schools. Males and females are separated after the early stages of education.

Higher education is free and is open to Qatari women. The main problem is that social attitudes towards some disciplines have lead women not to enter these areas and then men become dominant. For example, men dominate the field of engineering while in education and the social sciences women are dominant. All the interview respondents agreed that there is no bias in the education system in the State. It was stated:

The availability of free education has helped women to be on an equal standing with men in getting the education they desire though they tend
to be concentrated in nursing, teaching, science and medicine, and less in engineering.

Women's Opportunities in Employment

The vast majority of employment for women is in the education sector with school teaching being the most common job for Qatari women. This is may be due to the lack of industry in the State and to the culture and traditions of society. Society has not experienced women working in a garage or in a manufacturing company, for example. The older and younger generations see the education sector as the best place for women to work. This may be because working in education offers shorter working hours and another factor is that the work deals with young people. According to the men:

There are equal opportunities in employment. The law does not distinguish between males and females in promotion and salaries. Education is a traditional job for females. Women are pushed by their relatives towards this tradition because it is accepted by society.

In leadership positions, however, Qatari women are still far from taking a proper share. Mrs B stated that:

Although on the face of it women may seem to have the same rights, in fact, Qatari society is filled with women who have experienced difficulties in their attempt to break into non-traditional areas of work. There are still few women who are the boss or the person in charge of a company or government department and for those who succeed in taking charge at the top, resentment, resistance to change and lack of co-operation would dominate their working lives. Having said that, there are some women who have been successful.
In recent years, the State authority has appointed women to various leadership positions. For example, the State has recently appointed the first female minister and the first university president in the history of the State and the Gulf States. An interviewee noted:

_The State is taking a lead in encouraging women to take up leadership positions. I believe the cultural factor is still the main barrier._

**Sources of Support**

Legislation policies and official guidelines play a major role in supporting women’s rights. This is can be addressed by decision makers. However, the main problem is that the decision makers are men so a man is generally making decisions on behalf of women. This is does not reflect women’s own ambitions. As Mrs B put it:

_It is difficult for a man to make a decision on behalf of women’s rights. I would like to ask what experience and feelings a man has during the maternity period. There are so many examples. I find it difficult to accept that a male will represent me. Only a woman can represent women’s issues._

The private sector is still in its infancy in the State. Services are controlled by the State and social services and social welfare are all managed and controlled by the State. Although Qatar is a rich country, its social services and welfare do not reflect its wealth. Women’s rights in social services and maternity care are lacking legislation and an assessment of their needs through discussions is needed to improve women’s rights. An interviewee mentioned:
Childcare in general and care for children with special needs have become great concerns to families and society. Maternity leave is granted only for a short time to working mothers and, in practical terms, it isn’t sufficient to make their children secure. Therefore many women take unpaid leave or put their children into a private nursery.

There is a need to change the social care and welfare systems to reflect women’s rights. There are many voices calling for the introduction of a system such as flexible hours to make working mothers’ lives easier but the government has not yet adopted such a policy.

Abuse of Women

Violence against women and wife abuse still exists in society but it is not believed to be widespread. In keeping with Islamic law, all forms of physical abuse are illegal. As an example, the maximum penalty for rape is death. The police actively investigate reports of violence against women and in the last few years, the Government has demonstrated an increased willingness to arrest and punish offenders, whether citizens or foreigners. A participant said:

_Education has had a major impact on reducing the abuse of women. Qatari women now are more educated and more informed than in our mother’s generation. We know our rights within the system and society._

The State economy and HH Amir have helped to improve the life style of families. They tend to travel abroad for entertainment, shopping and to enjoy the weather. This has helped indirectly to educate men and women about women’s rights. In fact, women practise some rights abroad that are
denied in their own country. For example, they can drive a car freely without incurring any social problems. As Mr A states:

*Life styles have improved sharply in the last decade. Travelling abroad and taking holidays have become part of the life style of the family. This has helped women to observe and "practise" women's rights.*

One of the most important issues challenging Qatari women today is the extension of their political rights to make them equal with men, i.e. the right to be elected as an MP and to have a greater say in government policies concerning women’s issues, especially those that affect working mothers. A respondent noted:

*Scholarships abroad for males, and females in particular, to study and research abroad have helped.*

Lifestyles in the State have changed sharply in the last few decades due to the discovery of oil. The new governmental approach on how to manage the country is also another important factor that affects changes in life styles. Women, as an important facet of society’s needs, have changed to meet the new changes in life styles. As Mrs B states:

*What I need as a woman in my daily life is different from what my mother wanted when she was at my age. She was busy in the house working all day and waiting for my dad. Her communication outside the house was very limited. It was restricted to visiting her family and my dad’s family. I am now interacting more with the environment around me. Financially, she relied totally on my father. My father was the sole decision maker in the family. In my case, I need more money to support myself and my family. I have to go to work and prepare myself for work. I need proper transport and proper holidays and entertainment to relax. I am socially*
better equipped. I have daily contact with my colleagues at work and contact with my ex-university colleagues.

Sharp changes in information technology and the birth of digital communication have lead to the creation of communication facilities and improvements in communication systems. Satellite TV is one of the most beneficial of these improvements. TV takes up a significant proportion of the family’s time and has also become an important source of information, education and entertainment. Women’s issues are part of the majority of the programmes, movies and news so it is not surprising that communication is playing an important role in promoting women’s rights. This was stated by Mr E:

*I believe TV promotes women’s rights. With new satellite systems, which the vast majority of Qatari families have, women start asking their husbands very good questions about their rights.*

Women leaders are an important factor in the promotion of women’s rights. Leaders can take responsibility and push for a more active role for women’s rights in society. Qatari women are in serious need of a female elite to take on leadership to help and support women in fully participating in the civil and political life of the State. Due to the lack of education, work opportunities and the denial of any political participation, the older generation of women lacks any women who can lead by example. An interviewee noted:

*Our mothers’ generation has lacked women role-models to represent them in society. We need women models to act as examples to convince and persuade the general public about women’s rights and roles.*
Since HH Sheikh Hamad took over as ruler, the government has taken a serious step towards improving women’s rights. The ruling family has encouraged and supported its women in participating in the social and political life of the State. Sheikh Mozza, the State ruler’s wife, represents a well-respected, known, active, hardworking and powerful Qatari woman and is a model for the younger generation. As one interviewee put it:

_The Amir’s wife, the State ruler’s wife, represents an excellent model for the modern Qatari woman. She can lead by example. Her involvement in various political, social and educational bodies has given Qatari women a leading model that they themselves can achieve._

Sheikh Mozza is working tirelessly to serve her society in general and Qatari women in particular. She promotes women’s rights and roles in society directly and indirectly. She is taking women on a very important step towards participation in political and social activities. Indirectly, Sheikh Mozza appears on national TV and on the satellite channel participating and taking a leading role in social and educational activities. Directly, she is involved through her speeches and writing on women’s issues, her participation and her support for families and women. It was also said:

_Sheikha Mozza, the State ruler’s wife, promotes, helps and supports Qatari women in taking their positions in society. This is clear in her involvement in various women’s social activities._

**Women’s Welfare Rights**

The next focus of the study is the welfare rights of women. All the interviewees agreed on the need for establishing a State welfare system that recognizes and makes clear women’s welfare rights. This is needed as the
State is moving steadily toward democracy, becoming a more open society. As one of the interviewees stated:

*There is a need to establish a welfare system that recognizes, identifies and ensures women's rights. It is the right time to establish such a system.*

All the high-profile professionals agreed that it is the State's responsibility to introduce a comprehensive State welfare system that recognises women's welfare rights. One of them stated:

*It is the political and moral responsibility of the State to establish a comprehensive welfare system that recognises women's welfare.*

Interviewees agreed that the future of women's welfare is bright due to the increased number of elite women in various State jobs and activities. They can be used to drive the initiatives for women's welfare. The importance of these elite women was stated by two of the interviewees:

*The State's elite women are playing an important role in promoting women's welfare. There is a need to support them from all angles of society.*

The State has not previously experienced any welfare systems such as arrangements for caring for children and the elderly. Qatar is a wealthy country and this has led to a lack of awareness among the authorities of the importance of establishing a comprehensive welfare system that recognizes women's welfare.

Regulations and entitlements for paid leave for women during pregnancy and the early years of childcare are still not clearly identified in the State. This was stated by one of the interviewees:
The vast majority of high profile figures in the State are aware of the importance of women's welfare and their rights during pregnancy and after the birth, rights such as paid holidays and the need for advice and financial support.

The next phase of the interviews was directed at the main problems and obstacles facing the introduction of a welfare policy and system in the State, especially because the State has no financial problems which might hinder the introduction of such a system. One of the interviewees expressed her views regarding the main problems and obstacles:

_The main problem in establishing a welfare system for women in the State is the lack of qualified manpower to write, manage, administrate and understand welfare systems. Another important problem is the lack of drive amongst women themselves for a welfare system in the State._
Chapter Six Discussion
6.0 Introduction

It is important here to establish two phases in the ideas, style and approach of political rule in the State of Qatar. The first phase is that pre HH Sheikh Hamad, the current ruler of the State, while this current era is the second phase. This is necessary because of the significant differences in the country's development and approaches to political issues. Qatar now adopted a more democratic approach and is more open to other countries, mainly the United States and the Western nations.

The State of Qatar has seen striking moves towards democracy and economic reform since HHS Sheikh Hamad took over in 1995. Qatar signalled that it had entered the democratic era by accentuating a propaganda reform when it abolished local press censorship and allowed freedom of expression. Women, pre HHS Sheikh Hamad, did not enjoy any welfare, civil or political rights. The decision of HH the Emir to allow women to vote and nominate in local councils in 2003 was the first serious step towards achieving women's political rights. This was a brave and challenging decision due to the fact this was the first such initiative in the State and in the history of the Gulf States. It was also HH's decision to form a committee to draft a permanent constitution, with the intention of preparing the country to enter the new millennium with a solid constitutional base. The constitution was published and democratically supported by both men and women.

This chapter presents a critical analysis of the fieldwork and documentation analysis; it also relates the discussion to the research framework. (See Figure 6.1.)
**Figure 6.1**: Key issues of the discussion
6.1 Women's Rights and Social Justice

It is essential that both the authorities and society at large look at women as human beings, as full citizens, and as important elements of society, essential contributors to the whole. Society, without the full involvement of women, will never develop to its full potential. Women need social justice yet, as it now stands, women are denied their potential role in society and there is a lack of social justice. Power is in the hands of males predominantly as, up until May 2003, there had not been a single woman in any of the political institutions. The Qatari authorities have now appointed the first female minister in the history of the State and the Gulf States. They have also appointed the first woman as president of Qatar University. These are encouraging steps but there is not a single woman on the appointed Consultative Council and there is not a single woman on any elected local council.

This lack of social justice is due to two main factors. The first factor is the social attitudes toward women's rights and, secondly, political power which males have dominated for a long period of time. There is still a lack of recognition and understanding of women's rights in Qatari society. There are still views, mainly among the older generation, that the involvement of women in politics and in general social events is not the norm; in fact, some feel these are unacceptable social acts. This may be because society has not seen and experienced any such involvement due to the lack of communication and interactions with outside, closed societies.

Qatari society is still male-dominated; women are represented by men concerning various women's issues so men take decisions on behalf of women in matters of social services and social care, for example. The prospects and hopes for social justice in Qatar are represented by two factors. The first factor is the current positive approaches towards women's rights and the second factor is the appearance of Qatari women who can be seen as role models for their peers. Sheik
Moza, the Emir’s wife, who is well educated, aware of women’s rights, and active in society, is a good example.

6.2 Democracy and Women’s Rights

It is difficult to answer the question of whether women can take their rights in an undemocratic society. It is difficult to discuss and push for women’s rights before political changes that move towards democracy have been achieved. Open democracy allows individuals to express their views and opinions regardless of their sex. Once this right is granted and established, women can express their opinions openly and demand their rights, resisting any bias towards males in political and civil rights issues. Thus, they could achieve the views of liberal feminists: equal opportunities in all aspects of society.

The State of Qatar has been moving from a closed system to a more democratic and open society since 1995 (Al-Kaabi, 2004), interacting more with other values and norms. This was the year of accession of the present Emir, HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, who has brought a modern and more positive approach to the management of the country’s affairs, along with an all-pervading sense of optimism. The country has adopted an outward-looking attitude. It is now a cosmopolitan and open society, while still retaining core values and Qatari traditions. One of the most important aspects of the new era of HH Sheikh Hamad is his approach towards democracy. In his era, the country has seen the first Central Municipal Council election in the history of the State. Women voted and were nominated for the first time even though none of the nominated women won a seat in the council.

The most important highlight of HH’s era is the establishment of the first permanent constitution in the history of the State. The new constitution has been voted for by both adult men and women. The participation of women in voting and nominating in the local elections represents an important step towards women’s political
rights in the State. This right is a leading example for the majority of Gulf States as women in some of these states are still lacking this right.

6.3 Women's Political Rights

Firstly, Islam as a religion is not against the political right women to vote and nominate. The first step towards achieving women's political rights is to consider women themselves. Women's own voices should be those demanding and pressing for the rights, rather than leaving it for men to decide when and what political roles women can be involved in.

There is a need for improvement in women's political education and support for their involvement in various political activities. For the time being in the State of Qatar there is a feeling that some people blame the women themselves for their lack of political participation. There is a lack of interest and involvement in any political activities in the society and the main reason for this is women themselves and their families, according to some males. This research indicated that there is still a strong Arabic culture in the State that cannot accept women's political and civil rights. In reality, the main reason for this is the lack of real political democracy in the State, which is, of course, male dominated.

In reality, the consequences of political participation, especially if it is against the government's policies, involves rivalry and challenge, an aspect which both women and their families cannot easily consider. The vast majority of the rulers in Arabic countries are not prepared to accept political opposition. Therefore, there is a need for political reform to move the State towards democracy and to protect politicians. Fortunately, there is a sign that events are moving in this direction in the leadership of HH Sheikh H in Qatar. Despite this, there are many factors hindering women's political participation. These are summarised in Figure 6.2.
Chapter Six

Discussions

The State's main power is in the hands of men who make decisions, argue and negotiate on behalf of women. There is a lack of female participation in politics and society has not experienced democracy and women's rights as such. The older generation of society has lived through difficult times and women have been restricted to household jobs, having little education as the schools only started in the 1950s. Therefore, social attitudes towards women's political rights still need to improve, especially among the older generation.

Establishing legislation will help Qatar to move forward toward women achieving their rights. Without legislation women may have little chance to explore these rights and there will be no support to uphold them as politics is a dangerous field to be involved in. Legislation from the authorities, together with the support of the ruling family, will definitely help in encouraging women to push for their political rights.

The legislation that gave Qatari women the right to vote and stand as candidates for the first time in the Arabian Gulf region was a brave decision. More legislation to encourage women to participate in the country's political life will help women to participate more in the political life of the State.

Most of the Arabic countries are not democratic countries. Opponents often face oppression and, in some countries, torture. In fact, it is common to hear of opponents being in prison, and being tortured or in exile. Governments routinely oppress opposition so there is often no real opposition to ruling governments. This has created a negative image of politics which is a hard and dangerous route to follow. This has led women and their families to avoid involvement in any political activities.

The Qatari culture demands, as a priority, that women look after their children, husbands and household activities. This is a big commitment as the number of children in the average family is high compared with Western society. Women in the Arabian Gulf are the
'princesses' of the house and so family commitments have restricted women’s participation in politics.

It is also important to discuss "appointment" as a tool to encourage and promote women in political life. The State ruler has the power to appoint a woman to a political position, as a minister or as a member of the consultative council. There are two dimensions in the "appointing" approach. The first is positive as the appointment can be used as an education and training tool to create women politicians. The "appoint" approach is the only approach through which a woman can build up her political experience and thus can serve as a model for other female politicians as there is no other alternative. The second view believes that this approach lacks any criteria for the nomination to be decided upon and can therefore be discouraging to women. A failure to meet the demands of a political appointment could reflect negatively on society's attitudes. Then, another female in the same political role might not be accepted since a model of failure would not convince others to follow.

However, it could be argued that males also can fail in certain political roles and this does not seem to discourage followers. Therefore, I believe the "appoint" approach would promote, encourage and build positive role models for women to take up their political rights.

It is understandable that there are differences between the younger and older generations towards women's political rights. The younger generation is in favour of women's political rights due to their education, lifestyle and communication with the outside world. Young women are in favour of political rights and the main problem, according to professional females, is the attitude of men. This research indicated that younger women are well equipped to take an active role in politics.
Figure 6.2: Factors hindering women's political rights
6.4 The Role of Women's in Women's Rights
Women themselves are the main element of women’s rights. Their voice in the State and society should be loud and clear.

Women's education
Regular education in the State of Qatar started in 1952 with one school for boys in Doha, comprising 240 students and 6 teachers. The bases of the modern educational curricula were drawn up in 1956 when school stages were specified as primary, preparatory and secondary. Girls’ education came after this date. The number of male and female students in all stages and types of day government school reached 69,504 in the school year 2001-2002. The university of Qatar was started in 1973 with two education faculties, one for males and one for females. It has continued to expand and diversify its activities year after year until it was finally proclaimed a fully-fledged university in 1977. The number of Qatari females working as members of the teaching staff at the university is 89 as opposed to 80 Qatari males (Qatar, 2001). Qatari women have been encouraged to work due to the economic demands of new life styles in the State.

*Education is an investment which individuals seek to acquire for future returns in terms of higher incomes and better or more commodities.*
*(Becker, 1975)*
6.5 Women's Rights and Society
The discussion in this section is focused on the social attitudes of males and females towards women's rights.

6.5.1 The Male as a Model of Power
As Qatari society has not seen any woman leader in the political history of the country, males have developed an image of power, leadership and the ability to face problems. This image has developed fully over a long period of time and is partly due to a lack of education and interaction with the outside world. The model of the traditional Arab male, and his bravery, generosity and power, have developed through stories, events and accounts of battles. This has led to male domination and the generations have been educated over the years to accept this image until more recently. There has also been a lack of political women to follow as role models in recent years. Male dominated society has established a political structure over the years and this has led to difficulties in changing it. Changing a well-established structure needs time and effort; this has been recognised by many researchers in the field of feminism.

Feminists have long recognized the problem that women face in achieving within established power structures, and the feminist options offered have been to establish feminist non-hierarchical structures either within the bureaucracy or in alternatives to it. (Denhardt and Perkin, 1978; Hooyman and Cunningham, 1986; Van Den Bergh and Cooper, 1986.)
Women’s oppression, because of their sex and often also because of ethnicity and class, has compounded their difficulties in securing general justice in multiple arenas, both public and private (McKay, 2000).

*Gender and feminist analyses reveal the state is in almost all cases male dominated and a masculinity construct because legal systems reflect this power relationship.*

*(Pettman, 1996)*

Currently, the males in Qatari society are making decisions on behalf of women in various issues, seeing themselves as the protectors and maintainers of women. They express the view that they know more than the women themselves about what women really need. A man who is making decisions for a woman has a unique experience, having feelings and values which may be reflected in action that is different from what the woman wants.

Males can understand how women feel but a male can never feel exactly the same as a woman. This is a fact that cannot be ignored as the sexes are different biologically, socially and culturally. For example, how can a man feel the same as a woman during her pregnancy or when she delivers her baby? There is no scale for measuring feeling in any case. Therefore, it is essential that women take a key role in making decisions related to women’s issues.

It is also important to mention that what has led to the location of power in male hands is the fact that those men have made women dependent on them by denying women the opportunities for education and employment. Women are financially dependent on their families and their husbands. This has led to the gradual development of male dominated power in society.
6.5.2 Women and Social Barriers

One of the main problems facing the Qatari woman in her role in society is the social barrier. There is a need to break down this barrier in order for women to seize their opportunity to participate fully in society.

Figure 6.3 illustrates the social barriers obstructing women's rights. These barriers include the State power dominated by men, family pressures, men's attitudes, and tribal culture and tradition. Society has still not come to terms with seeing women take positions that they have never taken before and so it is difficult to see Qatari women discussing political issues or demanding a women's pension scheme. This has always been classified as a male-only area and has, therefore, created an image against women and a desire to keep them in their positions.

The other factor is family pressure. This is, of course, related to social attitudes. The family does not want to be seen to be breaking the values and norms of society and so it puts pressure on its females not to take the opportunities offered as this may represent a shift in their values and norms. If the woman succeeds in persuading her family to allow her to take up her political rights, there is another factor: her tribal values and norms.

Despite this, education for Qatari women has played an important role in the development of women's rights. Qatari women represent the majority of students in the undergraduate programme at Qatar University. This may be due to the positive attitudes of the older and younger generations towards women's education. Education now represents a family commitment towards the family's females. This has contributed positively towards rights for women. Qatari women have become more aware of and educated about their rights.

The other important factor in this area is the attitude of younger males towards their future brides. The younger generation prefers educated and employable women to help and support the State's new lifestyle. This has led families to encourage, support and help their
families gain education and employment, balanced, of course, with the social factor that such education and employment must accord with the values and norms of society.

*I prefer my bride to be educated and employed in the medical or education sectors.*

*(Young male, focus group)*

The values and norms of the tribe still present an important part of the State's activities. Qatari women need to interact within society according to these values and norms, particularly in the tribal environment, in tribe marriages and in social visits. According to the tribe and its values, a woman should be looked after by her family and if this family cannot provide the necessary care and help the tribe will take care of the woman's needs. A woman who is seeking help and support from the State in looking to support her welfare, represents shame to the tribe.

Tribes have never experienced women's participation in politics and therefore this is a threat to the tribe's values and norms. The current open system and policies have led to a shift in the values and norms of society, particularly regarding the role of Qatari elite women, as will be discussed later.
Chapter Six Discussions

Figure 6.3: Social barriers
**Single and Married Women**

One of the main findings of this research is that there is a positive attitude towards women's rights for married women and less encouraging attitudes towards rights for single women. In-depth discussions were conducted with males to establish why they were in favour of more rights for married women than single ones. For example, males are in favour of a married woman's rights to drive a car in public but are not in favour of single women enjoying the same right. More than one respondent was happy for his wife to drive the car in order to go shopping but was reluctant to allow a single daughter or sister to drive to the university.

The main reason for this attitude is because of “male and female relations” since there is a general suspicion concerning any relationship between a single female and a male. There is the concern that this may lead to a sexual relationship and any extra-marital sexual relationship between a male and female is totally unacceptable socially, culturally and religiously as it is an embarrassment and an insult to the family name, usually directed at the males of the family. In fact it is a serious crime against both the State's law and Islam.

It is believed that married women are more settled sexually and socially and therefore there are fewer sexual worries in this direction. The fieldwork indicated that there is no compromise towards any type of relationship between males and females apart from work/education related matters. In many cases, men cannot face the rest of society if any female of their family has an illegitimate sexual relation as the "Sharaf" (dignity) is part of their social values and cannot be compromised. There is a strong belief, especially among the older generation, that the family must protect the Sharaf by all means and at any cost, even using force if necessary. A few decades ago any woman who abused the family Sharaf by having a sexual relationship faced the death penalty; usually this was carried out by a member of her family.
Male concerns regarding their Sharaf has led to strict control of the movements of closely related females in order to protect the family name. Single women driving, in the eyes of many males, may encourage illegitimate relations and destroy the family Sharaf. This has lead to the view within society that women should not have the right to drive, this view being particularly popular among the families with strong cultural and traditional beliefs, also those belonging to religious groups. However, the more educated people within Qatari society have acknowledged the Sharaf issue by saying that women today are well educated and aware of the social impact of any illegitimate sexual relationship with a male. The benefits and advantages of giving women the right to drive are more important than leaving women without these rights. The argument also emphasises that it is only a small minority of women who abuse their rights in the eyes of society.

Marriage and Divorce

It is still common today for marriages to be arranged and it is quite common within Qatari society that women get married without seeing the groom until the wedding day. There is still a feeling among people in society that the groom, who is a stranger, catching sight of their daughter or sister is against their Sharaf (dignity). A woman can only see her husband's picture through one of his relatives, usually his sister or mother.

A divorced woman is in a dilemma since society tends to pre-judge her and blame her for the failure of the marriage. This was indicated in the case studies. Arranged marriages are quite common in the older generation and women tended to accept their fate without any serious right to prevent a marriage which was not acceptable to them. The younger generation now demand to see their bride's picture or to see her after the wedding party.
Women's Employment Rights

The fieldwork analysis shows that there is a shift among the younger generation towards giving women the right to work while the older generation believes there is no need for women to do paid work. The majority of males are in favour of women's employment within the health and education sectors. The main reason for this attitude is the fact that these males have experience and have seen females working in these two sectors since it is now the norm to see women working in these areas. Women working in industry and in offices in the public and private sector, however, are a new experience for many Qatars.

The current attitude towards women working is changing and the number of working women is increasing. This may be due to the factors shown in Figure 6.4. These factors are important in encouraging, supporting and promoting women's right to work. The main factor is that Qatari women are now more educated and better prepared to take a job. The second factor is due to changes in the family structure since young families are now more independent. This means that the wife needs to work to meet the family's financial commitments. Changes in attitude are being driven by economic change and financial pressures on the family.
Figure 6.4: Factors influencing women’s right to work
Expansion in education for females

A decade ago the number of schools and higher education institutes was very limited; also, the number of families willing to send their female children into education was very small. There was fear about changes in the education of females beyond schools due to social attitudes concerning women taking a leading role in society when the only model of power was male-dominated. There is also a feeling that higher education might lead to women interacting more regularly with males, which is not part of religious expectations and the culture and tradition of society. An important factor in this fear is that Qatari society has not seen or experienced women working in manufacturing industries; this is new social behaviour because such industries have only started in the last few years. Families and women have had no experience of women working in this type of industry in terms of social reaction and the impact on the family. Any change in social behaviour needs time and effort to influence attitudes before they become part of the social norms.

Changes in family structure

The family structure is changing from the extended family to the semi-extended family structure (Al-Kaabi, 2004). This semi-extended family has emerged for two main reasons. The first reason is that the family within society has strong links among members as they act, on many occasions, as a unit, mainly in dealing with problems, celebrations and mourning. There is still strong respect for and obedience to the head of the family, the father or grandfather. On the other hand, members of families are increasingly building their houses separately and are more independent financially and socially because they often manage their own households. These changes in family structure have made their own demands in terms of meeting the needs and well-being of the family, mainly by supporting the family financially. This need has encouraged males to allow females to seek employment.
The change in family structure has helped to change the opinions and attitudes of the women themselves towards women's rights. Men have found themselves dependent on their wives working to support the family financially. This change can explain the differences in views between the younger and older generations.

**Encouragement for the private sector and economic change**

The policy of the State's government is to encourage and support the private sector and the open market. The market is more open now than at any time in the history of the country as the private sector is expanding and the market is open for the employment of women. The State lacks manpower and therefore this sector will be forced to search for women for employment.

**Urbanisation**

The discovery of gas in the State and the leadership of HH Sheikh Hamad have helped in creating modern cities in Qatar. Building new cities has encouraged migration from the deserts and small villages to the main cities, to encourage opportunities for jobs and better lives. Members of the older generation, who have lived most of their lives in the deserts and small villages without serious contact with other communities within the State or with other cultures, represent the hardliners against women's rights to work and their political rights. The new cities have created jobs and the opportunity to observe women participating in various aspects of employment in the cities by the example of expatriate and non-national females. This has an effect on the new, positive attitudes of the younger generation towards women's right to work.

**The birth of industry**

One of the State's policies is the encouragement and support of industry through direct investment and other measures including
establishing industries based on oil, gas and local raw materials. This includes providing incentives to encourage investment in the private sector for industrial development projects, developing the required infrastructure for such projects, and issuing the necessary legislation concerning foreign investment in domestic economic activities (Qatar, 2001).

\[
\text{During 2000 the State issued 70 industrial licenses, 9 expansion licenses for existing projects and 24 revamp licences for some industrial projects. (Qatar, Information Subjects, 2001)}
\]

The vast majority of industries in the State are newly established with the real means of production and expansion occurring within the last decade. For example, the Chemical Fertilizer Industry (QAFCO) was inaugurated in 1997 with a design output capacity of 1500 tons of ammonia and 2000 tons of urea per year. This development needs manpower in order to run these industries and one of the main problems in the State is lack of manpower, especially qualified manpower (skilled and semi-skilled). One of the resources that the State needs to meet the demands of industry is the potential of women. This has previously been ignored or the State has not been aware of this potential. Qatar is not the only Gulf State suffering from this problem as there is a similar difficulty in Saudi Arabia where Saudi women need to be involved in technical and vocational education to take part in industrial development (Shetawai, 2002).

### 6.6 Pressure Groups and Women’s Rights

There is no official women’s organisation, union or club within Qatari society which can negotiate women’s rights. However, there are women with powerful husbands who can play an important role in the
adoption of women's rights. These women lead the State as role models for modern Qatari women to follow.

Al-Jazzera, a TV satellite channel based in Doha, has built international fame and won a wide-ranging audience at regional level and among Arab communities throughout the world due to the creditability that the channel enjoys and to the free, balanced and unbiased handling of local, regional and international affairs. The channel is a political and educational channel without any other programmes. One of the most important programmes for women is "Lel-Nessa Faqat" (For Women Only) which has discussed women's rights at various levels. This programme invites, on a weekly basis, various educated, powerful and professional women to participate in discussing important topics concerning women's issues and it has to increase awareness of women's rights and roles which is very important in educating women about their rights within society.

Another factor, which can be considered in terms of a pressure group, is the era of 'Globalisation'. Globalisation can be seen from a social point of view as the interaction among sets of social norms and values to create a more acceptable set of such values. It is generally recognised that it needs time and effort to introduce norms and values that will be accepted globally. This is due to many differences, namely, the culture, religions and traditions of many people. Each individual society has built up its norms and values over a long period. However, the new era of communications has enabled communication to be facilitated among many societies through many different and easy forms such as transport, the Internet, satellite TV and global cooperation; this has helped in the recognition of other norms and values. One of the important aspects of globalisation is women's rights and roles in society.

Santos (2000) used globalisation in her analysis as one of the more sensitive aspects of social, political and cultural dimensions. Globalisation can consist of a set of social relations.
Santos defined globalisation as:

\[
\text{the process by which a given local condition or entity succeeds in extending its reach over the globe and, by doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social condition or entity as local. (Santos, 2000)}
\]

Local cultural roots are the identity of any elements within any society worldwide. The family, the locality and society have their own identities and these identities stay within the local aspect. This view is highly supported by Santos (2000):

\[
\text{There is no global condition for which we cannot find a local root, a specific cultural embeddedness (Santos, 2000)}
\]

Localities will keep their identity, societies and local differences, however. By examining some Gulf State cities, namely Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and Doha, the capital of Qatar, it is clear that there is no doubt, to any visitor or local person, there are differences in these two cities. They have perhaps the modern structure of Western cities but have kept their local identity. The point here that must be focused on is that globalisation has an impact on civilisation, norms and values. However, changes in norms and values are slower to change as localities try to keep their own cultures and traditions. For example, seeing a woman wearing trousers or with her hair uncovered when walking or shopping in any Doha market or in Dubai a few decades ago was unimaginable and unacceptable as a norm within society. Today, however, it is quite normal to interact with, watch and see women from various backgrounds in a Doha market or in the street. Nonetheless, globalisation within the State of Qatar must not conflict with the basic ideology of Islam.
6.7 Concluding Remarks

The main outcomes of this chapter can be summarised in the following:

- HH Sheikh Hamad has espoused a new approach in favour of women's political and civil rights, having supported women's issues on many occasions. The highlights of his decisions are women's right to vote and nominate in local council elections and the appointment of a woman as the Minister of Education. These are leading actions in the Gulf States as the majority of Gulf women have been denied these rights. Undoubtedly, women's rights and roles in the State have improved since 1995, the year HH Sheikh Hamad took over as the State Emir.

- Women in the State are now enjoying a considerable degree of freedom and most of this came to fruition in the era of HHS Sheikh Hamad. Jobs for women opened up and many opportunities are now available in the market. Career expectations are better and women, including many mothers, have begun to take up paid work. Legal changes and changes in family structures have also made it possible for a woman to contribute financially for herself and for her family. The main factors in this expansion are due to the following factors:
  - Expansion in education for females
  - Changes in family structure
  - Encouragement for the private sector and economic development
  - Urbanisation
  - The birth of industrial development.

- There is a group of women with powerful husbands within Qatari society who are providing role models for other women. Their involvement in various social, political and educational activities has built a new image for women within society. They
are leading the way to gain more rights for women within the values of Qatari society. The free TV channel, largely the Al-Jazzeran satellite channel, and the modern communication system, the Internet and satellite TV, have had a major impact on women’s rights in the State. Culture and tradition are strong in the State and these have had an important impact on women’s rights. The main problem is relationships between males and females, especially in the case of single women.

- There is a growing acknowledgment in Qatari society that women have the right to receive a high-level education and to work but, in many social groups, mainly within the older generation, this is still not the norm and women are contained by traditional family behaviour. Many women will have to face this dilemma as they are increasingly encouraged to take up opportunities but privately are expected to maintain the family unit.

- “Appointing” and “Quota” approaches are important tools to promote women’s rights in Qatari society.

- Establishing policies and creating legislation by the authorities are important in encouraging, helping and supporting women’s political and civil rights.
Chapter Seven
Conclusions and Recommendations for Change
7.1 Conclusions

The State of Qatar is a mix of two generations: one generation which lived under a conservative and closed society with strong Arabic Bedouin values and norms, and a generation which lives in more open society with all the attractions of a modern lifestyle. Qatari women are balanced between these two generations. The State needs women to participate in all aspects of its activities in order for them to take their rightful place within society.

This chapter presents the main outcomes of this research and provides recommendations for changes that need to be carried out in order to promote women's rights.

7.1.1 The State and Women

This research indicates that there has been shift from the family to the State in terms of responsibilities towards women. This represents a shift in social values and norms. Society strongly believes in the responsibility of males towards their female relatives but beliefs have shifted, largely due to changes in society as it moves from being a closed system to a more open one, and as the family moves to a 'semi-extended' model.

The State currently has no welfare system to help and support elderly women, single parents and families with financial needs.

7.1.2 The Role of Elite Women

One of the key contributions towards women's rights is the participation of elite women in various leadership positions in the State. The elite women who have taken this role are from the ruling family and other well-known families. They have a major role to play in promoting women in the State and this is one of the most important factors that is contributing to shifts in values within the country.
7.1.3 Society and Women

Qatari society is in the process of change; it is in a transition period moving towards changes in certain social values, especially concerning the family and women. The modernisation of the new State has created a social structure that has placed pressure on individual women to move from one social value to another, depending on the social activities involved. For example, a woman taking part in activities with her tribe or close kin may interact differently to suit the values and norms of the tribe's social structure system. This may differ from her behaviour in a workplace system where the values of modernisation have penetrated the system. For example, dealing with males is not acceptable in a tribal system but is the norm in a workplace system. This indicates that Qatari women respond to the social system while this may not reflect their real personality.

One of the key issues of Qatari society and Arab societies as a whole towards women is to keep them interacting within the values and norms of the family and social systems. At the heart of this value is sexual conduct, known as “Sharaf”. Over the years various steps have been taken to protect the family's “Sharaf” and a set of values and norms have been built within society to insist that women must interact in accordance with these values.

The recent changes in economic, job and promotion opportunities and in open market policies have contributed to the reduction of family ties and have broken down family structures.
The older generation believes that women's rights threaten the values and norms of the family, the tribe and the State. Women's participation in the political life of the State is extremely difficult for the older generation to accept as it has not seen or experienced such participation. The other important factor that has contributed to this attitude is the fact this generation is the generation of a more closed conservative society.
7.2 Recommendations for Change

This section presents to the authorities recommendations for changes to support and enhance women's rights.

7.2.1 Establishing a Welfare System for Women

The State is in the process of building its systems and therefore it is an excellent opportunity to introduce a welfare system that gives women welfare rights. The system should include the following:

**Pensions**

Elderly people in the State still depend on their sons or their close relatives to support them financially and morally. Therefore, there is a need for change and the State must take up its responsibility towards the elderly. This can be achieved by introducing a package of benefits for women over 55 years of age and men over 60. The package should include the following:

- **Financial support**
  
  A monthly payment scheme needs to be introduced. Married couples should get more than a single person.

- **Eid Gifts**

  Eid represents an important part of the life of any individual Qatari citizen as it represents a religious and social gathering and community solidarity. Therefore, the State should introduce a scheme of giving special benefits to the elderly in Eid so that they feel they are part of the larger family of the State. It will ensure that they feel appreciated and cheered at this important time of the year.
Transport

One of the main problems for the elderly is transport due to the State's climate which is very hot in summer (temperatures reach 50 C). Therefore, the elderly need appropriate transport and the State can provide special air-conditioned buses to allow the elderly to travel.

Maternity and Paternity Leave

The current maternity leave is short and is not well defined. The husband has no right to take paternity leave to support his wife. The welfare system needs to recognise both maternity and paternity leave.

Introducing Homecare Services

The State has no form of homecare service for the elderly and the welfare system should recognise the need for this. There is a need to provide homecare services for elderly women in their homes to help them with their daily needs. The elderly are currently cared for by their relatives, most of whom are unqualified helpers with no experience in care for the elderly. The system should also recognise the need for rights for women during pregnancy and for childcare. A system of homecare assistants and advice for women in the early months after the delivery of a child should be introduced to support and help women, thus reducing stress. There is also need to provide financial, health and education assistance during a woman's pregnancy.

7.2.2 Equal Opportunities

The State needs to introduce equal opportunities policies. It needs to introduce legislation which emphasises women's rights. The State's new constitution states clearly that there should be no discrimination against citizens based on their sex and therefore there is a need for
guidelines and policies to implement and enhance the State’s constitution.

7.2.3 Changes in Society’s Attitudes
There is a need to change society’s attitudes towards women’s rights. This can be achieved by the following:

1. Making changes to early age education programmes,
2. Establishing clubs and societies for women,
3. Helping and supporting social activities that promote changes in attitudes towards women,
4. Using TV, radio, local newspapers, national newspapers and websites as tools to change social attitudes towards women.

7.2.4 Changes in Employment and Education Systems
There is a need to change the current systems of employment and education by:

Providing equal job and promotion opportunities for women. For the time being, there is a very limited number of women in positions of leadership. These are restricted to elite women. The State needs to expand women’s participation in positions of decision-making and leadership.
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Dear Participant,
I am a doctoral student at the University of Leicester, UK, working on a thesis on the status of women in Qatar. The research is sponsored by the University of Qatar.

Your contribution is valuable and important to the outcome of this work. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you could help and support the research by completing the attached questionnaire.

All your completed answers will be treated confidentially. There is no way that you could be identified
If you have any further comments, please write on the attached sheets.

Thanks for your help and support

Salah Al-manni
University of Leicester, UK.
Questionnaire

Please tick the appropriate box with (√)

1. Personal Details

1. What is your gender?
   1. Male □
   2. Female □

2. What is your age?
   1. 18-20 years □
   2. 20-25 □
   3. 26-30 □
   4. 31-35 □
   5. 35-40 □
   6. 41-50 years □
   7. 51 and over □

3. What is your marital status?
   1. Single □
   2. Married □
   3. Divorced □
   4. Widowed □
4. **How many children do you have?**

1. None □
2. 1 child □
3. 2 children □
4. 3 children □
5. 4 children □
6. 5 children or over □

2. **Political Rights**

5. **Women are ready to take part in the political life of Qatar.**

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □

6. **The new legislation which gave women the right to vote is a correct decision.**

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □

7. **Women should be allowed to nominate themselves to parliament.**

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □
8. Women should be encouraged to have political opinions.

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □

9. The main barriers to women taking part in politics are:

a. Men’s attitudes towards women

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □

b. Social attitudes

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □

c. Religious prescriptions

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □
d. The political arena is dominated by men

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e. Women are not ready to participate in politics

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f. A parent’s or husband’s attitude

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<td>5. Strongly Disagree</td>
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3. **Civil Rights**

10. Do women have maternity rights?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Don’t Know

11. The custody of children on divorce is biased towards men.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Agree
   3. Neutral
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

12. Women have the same rights as men in job promotion.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Agree
   3. Neutral
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

13. Women are treated equally in relation to wages and salaries.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Agree
   3. Neutral
   4. Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree
14. There is a bias against women with children in promotion.
   1. Strongly Agree □
   2. Agree □
   3. Neutral □
   4. Disagree □
   5. Strongly Disagree □

15. There is a bias against women with children in job opportunities.
   1. Strongly Agree □
   2. Agree □
   3. Neutral □
   4. Disagree □
   5. Strongly Disagree □

16. The government should provide child allowance paid to women.
   1. Strongly Agree □
   2. Agree □
   3. Neutral □
   4. Disagree □
   5. Strongly Disagree □

17. There should be maternity leave with pay for all women.
   1. Strongly Agree □
   2. Agree □
   3. Neutral □
   4. Disagree □
   5. Strongly Disagree □
18. There should be a special health care agency for pregnant women.
   1. Strongly Agree □
   2. Agree □
   3. Neutral □
   4. Disagree □
   5. Strongly Disagree □

19. There should be a law to make male violence against women a crime.
   1. Strongly Agree □
   2. Agree □
   3. Neutral □
   4. Disagree □
   5. Strongly Disagree □

20. There should be a law to protect women in marriage against violence, either mental or physical, by husbands against their wives.
   1. Strongly Agree □
   2. Agree □
   3. Neutral □
   4. Disagree □
   5. Strongly Disagree □
21. The main barriers for women's civil rights are:

a. **Family responsibilities and culture**
   1. Strongly Agree [ ]
   2. Agree [ ]
   3. Neutral [ ]
   4. Disagree [ ]
   5. Strongly Disagree [ ]

b. **Religious beliefs**
   1. Strongly Agree [ ]
   2. Agree [ ]
   3. Neutral [ ]
   4. Disagree [ ]
   5. Strongly Disagree [ ]

c. **Lack of women's voices in society**
   1. Strongly Agree [ ]
   2. Agree [ ]
   3. Neutral [ ]
   4. Disagree [ ]
   5. Strongly Disagree [ ]

d. **Decision-making is dominated by men**
   1. Strongly Agree [ ]
   2. Agree [ ]
   3. Neutral [ ]
   4. Disagree [ ]
   5. Strongly Disagree [ ]
e. Women want educational and other opportunities equal to men

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □

f. The fear of change in society

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □

g. Men's attitudes

1. Strongly Agree □
2. Agree □
3. Neutral □
4. Disagree □
5. Strongly Disagree □
4. Please express your views on the present and future state of women’s rights in Qatar.

Thank you very much for your help
Appendix B

Case Studies
Q1: Parental background
   a. Parents’ social history
   b. Parents’ education
   c. Parents’ political interests
   d. Parents’ work commitment
   e. Brothers’ and sisters’ interest in politics

Q2: Women’s backgrounds
   a. Childhood interests
   b. Childhood education and environment
   c. The childhood hero/model
   d. Educational development
   e. Social life
   f. Current job and responsibilities
   g. Social involvement and responsibilities

Q3: Family background
   a. Husband’s political interest
   b. Husband’s education
   c. Husband’s Work
   d. Friends’ education and political interests

Q4: Profession
   a. Status of the profession in the state
   b. Happiness at work
   c. Current national interest
   d. Current international interest

Q5: Main political events during respondent’s life
   a. National changes
   b. International changes
   c. Current national interest
   d. Current international interest
   e. Civil rights
Q6: Main welfare during respondent’s life
   a. Maternity benefit
   b. Pensions
   c. Homecare
   d. Financial support for children
   e. Child care support
Appendix C
Interviews
Opinions and Attitudes of Professional Women
Q1: What do you think are the main barriers to women having full political rights in Qatar?

Q2: What kind of civil rights do women in Qatar enjoy?

How can these rights be developed and extended?
When do you think this will happen?

Q3: Do women have the same opportunities in education as men?

Q4: Do women have the same opportunities in employment as men?
If not, why not?

Q5: What sources of support are available from the government for women with children, as mothers?

Are there plans to develop family friendly policies in the work place? e.g. flexible hours.

Q6. Are policies and forms of support being developed by the government in order to address the issue of violence against women?

If so, what are these?

Q7: What do you think about the current and future welfare available for women?

Q8: What do you think are the most important issues for women?