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DECENTRALIZATION IMPLEMENTATION IN SAUDI ARABIAN
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

MOHAMMED ALAKLABI

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

May 2024

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Mohammed Alaklabi

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation with profound gratitude to my late father, whose unwavering support, guidance, and belief in me have been constant sources of strength throughout my life. His presence, even in spirit, continues to inspire me.

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DECENTRALIZATION IMPLEMENTATION IN THE SAUDI ARABIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Mohammed Alaklabi

University of the Incarnate Word, 2024

Within the specific context of Saudi Arabian high schools, I conducted a qualitative study to gain a greater understanding of how decentralization, a significant reform initiative, affected principals and teachers. The study centered around participants' perspectives, challenges, and successes. I actively sought recommendations for improving the decentralization process, focusing mainly on the voices of key stakeholders. The results focused on the voices of these influencers to provide practical guidance for future reforms and improvements in the quality of education for Saudi high schools. In selecting a qualitative study, I employed an interpretive design to explore the experiences and perspectives about decentralization, as perceived by high school principals and teachers in Saudi Arabia. This study was conducted in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where decentralization reforms have already been implemented. I looked at recurring themes and patterns that appeared in the participants' narratives because this approach allowed for a greater in-depth examination of their insights and recommendations about the decentralization process. In reviewing the collected interviews, I gained a greater understanding of their experiences and the challenges they faced. The research was specifically designed to capture the nuanced and context-specific aspects of the decentralization implementation within the high school system. High school principals and teachers experienced the impact of the decentralization implementation in a variety of ways, but the main finding revealed that while

decentralization was seen as a positive step toward school autonomy, it simultaneously presented challenges related to decision-making, resource allocation, and communications among principals and faculty. The results of the study contributed to a deeper understanding of the process of decentralization in Saudi high schools and provided insights to educational policymakers and practitioners. The research clearly showed that the decentralization of Saudi Arabian high schools is a complex process, encompassing a range of advantages as well as a number of challenges.

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Chapter 1: Background on Saudi Arabia's Decentralization

The United Nations has highlighted improving educational quality as one of the leading sustainable development objectives to build on the progress made through the Millennium Development Goals, which launched in 2000. As part of this effort across the globe, educational programs and plans are moving towards more decentralized systems, including decentralized curricular models, which are expected to improve teaching and learning results while also making it possible for the whole educational community to participate in decision-making. Decentralized models encourage entire communities to collaborate on creating teaching, learning, and administrative procedures (Aburizaizah, 2020). Globalization, along with the emergence of a knowledge-based economy, has driven nations to re-invent and re-energize their education systems to improve access and quality, as a way to improve their countries' global competitiveness. As a result, numerous countries have implemented reform strategies to improve various parts of their educational systems (Meemar, 2014).

Saudi Arabia's educational institutions have historically been highly centralized, with the Ministry of Education (MOE) overseeing the education standards for the country (Meemar et al., 2018). The MOE, based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital city, is traditionally in charge of hiring personnel, establishing educational policies and curricula, distributing financial resources, selecting textbooks, and overseeing and administering educational endeavors. The Saudi Arabian education system serves a substantial geographic region, and large numbers of pupils, and the MOE makes even the simplest decisions. The influence of the MOE has been instrumental in the transformation of the education system in the country.

Because the value of educational decentralization has been seen, it is reasonable to assume that the quality of education in Saudi Arabia can be improved through the

implementation of decentralization. Such decentralization can be accomplished by giving school principals the authority to take on and carry out a range of delegated duties and responsibilities. To date, school principals have begun adapting decentralization at the local level. Doing so has made them aware of the challenges that they face and the value of decentralization, as well as an understanding that the decentralization of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) educational system is vital for improving the quality of education in the KSA.

Much effort has been made to advance educational opportunities for young people in the Arab world, where enhancing the quality of education has long been a priority. The KSA is no exception. The King Abdulla bin Abdul-Aziz Project, which began in 2007 to reform education, is a good example of the KSA's commitment to reform (Alyami & Floyd, 2019). The Tatweer program was established as part of the initiative to improve the country's educational standards. The word Tatweer means "development" in Arabic. The initiative aims to improve teachers' professional development and the educational environment, integrate technology and digital models into the curriculum, and develop comprehensive curricula aimed at meeting students' capabilities. Additional goals include fostering learning skills and creativity, helping students develop their general talents and interests, and deepening conceptions of social and national coherence through a variety of activities (Tatweer, 2010).

The Tatweer initiative strives to generate educational efficiency by altering school structures, procedures, and roles. The goal is to move from a highly centralized educational system, which has been blamed for excessive bureaucracy, stifling of initiatives, and fear of taking risks (Jreisat, 2012). One of the central elements of the Tatweer Program is that essential components of decision-making are delegated to the school level through a process of decentralization (Tatweer, 2010). This focus on decentralization enables the Tatweer initiative to

allow for more shared and dispersed leadership in the day-to-day operations of each school. The initiative represents a significant shift in the country's educational policy and practice (MOE, 2010).

Historically, education in Saudi Arabia was limited to the teaching of reading, writing, and recitation of the Qur'an, with further education limited to religious studies in the KSA's major cities. The KSA has traditionally possessed one of the most centralized education systems globally (Albeladi, 2016; Alyami & Floyd, 2019; Meemar et al., 2018; Poppink & Palmer, 2018), where decisions were made from the top down without school autonomy. Studies have highlighted the centralization of education as a substantial impediment to improving the KSA education system (Alamri, 2021).

However, towards the end of the 20th century, Saudi Arabia's educational system changed significantly. The Saudi education system underwent many modifications in the direction of decentralization, which has provided principals with more power (Meemar et al., 2018). To address bureaucracy and promote school decentralization programs, the MOE in Saudi Arabia gave school principals additional decision-making authorities, in line with the global trends in decentralization of educational authority. The KSA participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the results placed the KSA as one of the consistently lowest performing countries, including in the 2021 edition. This is indicative of the current low quality of education. These findings have prompted the KSA's monarch to institute educational reforms aimed at decentralizing the educational system to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of education.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the benefits of decentralization, Saudi Arabia's educational system remains highly centralized, reflecting the country's culture and the traditional responsibility of the MOE in Riyadh in making significant decisions related to education throughout the country (Alyami & Floyd, 2019). The decentralization of education was a complex process that involved distributing power and responsibility to regions, communities, and schools, including giving schools new financial and administrative responsibilities that increased the complexity and critical nature of the role of school employees, particularly principals. Additionally, the shift to decentralized education meant that the relationship between schools and local governments changed significantly, leading to confusion among principals and other stakeholders (Alyami & Floyd, 2019).

The centralized nature of the current system is reflected in the country's power distance score, 72 points, which indicates that power is unequally dispersed in institutions and organizations, and that citizens accept and respect the established hierarchy (Hofstede Insights, 2022). As a result, the recent shift in power, and the MOE's decision to lower hierarchical levels that included placing educational offices in cities and with superintendents and principals, has contributed to the confused nature of educational authority in Saudi Arabia (Alyami & Floyd, 2019). In navigating hierarchical, authoritative, and formal leadership patterns while focusing on turning schools into productive learning communities, school leaders faced significant challenges. Furthermore, given the rising demands placed on schools to achieve globally driven norms, there were critical challenges related to accountability for principals. Although decentralization may have given school leaders greater autonomy, it also increased their accountability, which may have confused and challenged them.

Role of the Principal in Issues Related to Teaching

Effective principals can impact student achievement in a manner similar to effective teachers, as their actions influence significant school outcomes such as teacher effectiveness and student accomplishment (Grissom et al., 2010). Confusion about their roles and level of autonomy and accountability can hinder principals' effectiveness and can indirectly influence learning, through their influence on teacher hiring, development, and support as well as the creation of proper learning environments (Grissom et al., 2010). Consequently, an excellent principal can improve the chances of students being exposed to high-quality teaching and thus affect the entire school, rather than just an individual teacher (Grissom et al., 2010). The value of school administrators in contributing to student learning has been undervalued, especially in centralized education systems overseen by the MOE, superintendents, and lawmakers (Grissom et al., 2010). Furthermore, teacher competencies in instruction, managing staff, and organizational environment can suffer in quality when principals are uncertain about their scope of authority and accountability (Grissom et al., 2010).

Poor Academic Performance in Public Schools

Even after decentralization, the KSA's TIMSS scores remained low, indicating that the country's educational quality has yet to improve. For example, Saudi Arabia received the lowest score, 429 points, in a fourth-grade science assessment in 2011. There was a significant drop (39 points) from 2011 to 2015 (390 points), followed by a slight increase to 402 points in 2019. All in all, despite the recent increase, the average accomplishments score has declined by 27 points since 2011. These dismal results suggest that decentralization has failed to achieve the MOE's objectives.

Researchers such as Meemar et al., (2018) have investigated the barriers to decentralization in the KSA and have discovered that KSA high-school administrators believed they have limited capacity to apply the new authority that has been given to them by MOE. Furthermore, school principals stated that they had received little to no help exercising their new authority. They had only brief conversations with the MOE and district offices about how to exercise the authority they had been granted. Alyami and Floyd (2019) confirmed that high school principals have limited ability to use the authority delegated to them through decentralization. Consequently, this study delved into the perceptions of high school principals and teachers regarding the process of decentralization and provided recommendations to enhance its implementation.

Research Gap

Given the increased interest in educational autonomy, it is surprising that no research has been conducted on the topic, especially from the perspective of high school principals and instructors (Meemar et al., 2018). Decentralization research in educational settings is especially scarce, as no study has focused on how Saudi high school principals understand the power that has been given to them by the MOE, their authority to interact strategically with high school teachers, and what this means either descriptively or conceptually. I contacted King Fahad National Library in Riyadh to check if the topic has been studied before, and they confirmed that my topic had never been researched previously, giving this study urgency and strengthening its underlying rationale. King Fahad Library is a governmental organization whose mission is to assist researchers and students about topics and studies that have been conducted about Saudi Arabia.

The primary objective of this study was to narrow the existing gap by investigating the comprehension and firsthand experiences of high school principals and teachers as they undertook and implemented newly acquired powers, responsibilities, and authorities resulting from decentralization reforms. Furthermore, the study aimed to gather their recommendations that could contribute to the successful implementation of decentralization. By doing so, this preliminary study served as a foundation for contemplating this issue and proposing potential areas for future research. The discoveries and deductions derived from this study will hold significance for educators, offering valuable insights to principals and teachers in Saudi Arabia, and specifically in Jeddah. This information will be particularly beneficial for them as they navigate the challenges associated with decentralizing their educational systems.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive-design study was to explore high school principals' and teachers' experiences with decentralization implementation, and their recommendation on enhancing such implementation. The study defines decentralization as the empowerment of principals to perform daily operations and make vital decisions in light of recent reforms that the Ministry of Education has undertaken toward decentralizing its education system (MOE, 2020). In the context of this study, the focus of this decentralization is on the 12 new powers afforded to school principals by the MOE starting in 2011.

Research Questions

One main research question, with two research sub questions, were examined in this study.

Main Research Question

What are the perceptions and experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, regarding the implementation of decentralization in the education system?

Research sub questions were derived from this main question:

Research Sub Question 1

In what ways has the decentralization impacted the ability of high school teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to deliver content to learners during the implementation of decentralization in the education system, and what strategies have they employed to mitigate these impacts?

Research Sub Question 2

What additional responsibilities, if any, do they believe would enhance their ability to lead their school and enhance the implementation of decentralization?

Significance of the Study

This study was conducted during a significant period, when KSA leadership had transitioned its education system towards decentralization with the aim of enhancing the quality of education. The process of shifting from centralization to decentralization, as explained by Taneiji and McLeod (2008), presented intricate challenges that could potentially hinder the effectiveness of the implementation. Therefore, comprehending the decentralization process from the perspective of those responsible for its execution at the local level was crucial for the MOE in KSA as it sought knowledge and insights to facilitate the improvement of decentralization.

I believed that, by understanding the experiences of the participants, the MOE could provide better support to high school principals. This support could be manifested through the development of model training programs and seminars aimed at assisting principals and

superintendents in comprehending the transitional process and the concept of decentralization. Such initiatives would foster a shared vision and enhance principals' and superintendents' leadership abilities as they endeavored to improve school performance. Additionally, exploring the understanding of decentralization could present an opportunity to revise the job requirements and hiring processes for educational administrators in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study could also guide local universities in aligning their undergraduate and graduate programs in educational leadership. Specifically, university programs could be designed to incorporate decentralization and emphasize the roles of principals within a decentralized system. Moreover, this study could contribute to the existing literature on educational decentralization, filling a gap that had previously remained unaddressed.

Theoretical Framework

Conducting a credible and reliable study requires researchers to make important decisions regarding research designs and the chosen method of inquiry (Creswell, 2007). These decisions, influenced by researchers' respective sets of beliefs, referred to as research worldviews, are crucial, highlighting the necessity for researchers to elucidate their worldviews and the theoretical frameworks that guides their studies (Creswell & Poth, 2015). This study aimed to explore the implementation of decentralization in KSA, a measure envisaged by the MOE to enhance the quality of education.

School-Based Management

School-based management (SBM) represents a theory of power decentralization in which the delegation of decision-making and responsibility for school matters extended from higher authorities to school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and other members of the school community (Cornito, 2021). It brought about a legal transformation of school administration

bureaucracies, establishing a more democratic framework that advocated a bottom-up approach to educational planning and management. Furthermore, SBM granted decision-making power to members of the school community, fostering and sustaining reforms. Initially implemented in the late 1980s as a response to shortcomings in school administration, SBM aimed to cultivate relationships among parents, school staff, policymakers, and the community, with the ultimate goal of rendering schools more responsible, adaptable, and innovative in designing programs that suited their specific needs. Additionally, SBM embraced the application of suitable teaching and learning practices within schools (Karmila & Wijaya, 2020). In connection to this, school-based management emerged as a policy strategy employed to revamp school administration by empowering school leaders and increasing community involvement in improving performance. School-based quality management underscored a school's authority in enhancing staff performance and fostering community understanding of education.

SBM facilitated heightened participation from internal and external stakeholders, promoting increased school autonomy and accountability. The school community assumed a role in supervising school personnel, evaluating students, and participating in decision-making processes, all of which were expected to enhance student performance and overall school outcomes.

The pivotal role of the school principal in effective school administration was widely recognized and remained unchanged with the implementation of SBM. In fact, the principal's role may have become even more significant. According to Lazwardi (2018), the implementation of SBM fundamentally granted schools greater autonomy to improve the quality of pedagogical implementation outcomes. The primary objective of school administration was to enhance instructional efficiency through managerial freedom and flexibility.

Summary of Methodology

This study was conducted to explore the experiences of high school principals and teachers with the implementation of decentralization. The research employed an interpretative design to gain a deep understanding of the perceived meanings, contexts, and processes associated with these roles (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The selection of participants was done using purposeful techniques, specifically targeting male high school principals and teachers located in Jeddah (Creswell, 2014).

The primary method of data collection was through one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The interviews consisted of two parts: the first part involved gathering demographic information such as school size, district office, and job title, while the second part comprised semi-structured interviews to elicit participant responses and encourage discussions. The interviews, lasting between 45 to 60 minutes, were recorded using Zoom and a mobile device. Data organization and coding were carried out using MAXQDA software and Microsoft Office.

The data analysis approach used in this study was thematic analysis, which commenced promptly after each interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Insights gained from each interview informed subsequent interviews, ensuring refinement of the data collection process. The interviews were transcribed by a hired transcription expert. In order to maintain the accuracy of the transcriptions, Microsoft Word was employed, and the audio recordings were carefully reviewed multiple times to verify their alignment with the recorded content. MAXQDA coding software was then utilized for data analysis, employing various levels of inductive coding techniques. Furthermore, in order to enhance the comprehensibility of the data for readers, quotations from the participants were translated into English from their original language,

Arabic. This step was taken to ensure a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives and insights.

Organization of the Study

This study comprised five sections: background on Saudi Arabia's decentralization process; literature review; methodology; data collection, analysis and findings; and discussion, conclusion and recommendations. This introductory chapter offered a general background on the decentralization process in the KSA, including a statement of the problem and the research questions that will guide the study. The second chapter explored the available literature pertinent to decentralization, while the third chapter described the methodological approach of the study, including my approach to research, data collection, and data analysis, and how I ensured that the study was conducted ethically. Chapter 4 presented the results derived from the data analysis, highlighting the themes that emerged from the study. Chapter 5 delved into a discussion on the results and recommendations based on the findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Education in the KSA

One of the educational goals of the KSA is imparting learners with knowledge and skills to prepare them to live and work in the modern world, while also meeting the religious, social, and economic needs of the country (MOE, 2020). Eliminating adult illiteracy is a major initiative of KSA education, which has gone through massive reforms and stages to arrive at what it looks like today.

Before the creation of formal schools, education used to take place in mosques, where the basics of reading and math were taught. In 1925, a first step toward the creation of a formal educational system began when the government established the first four schools in the entire country. In 1953, the MOE was created, and former King Fahad served as the first minister of education (MOE, 2020). This early Ministry had little authority, and at that time its task was limited to oversight. Soon after, in 1960, the government established the first general office for female education affairs, which was responsible for anything pertaining to women's education, including opening schools, hiring teachers, and creating regulations. In 2002, former King Fahad ordered that the general office for female education affairs be combined with the MOE and that the combined department be responsible for education affairs throughout the country for both genders, male and female (MOE, 2020). On January 1, 2015, King Salman ordered the MOE and the Ministry of Higher Education to be combined into one ministry under the title Ministry of Education, and this ministry would be accountable for running the K-12 educational system and the higher education system as well, for both genders, male and female (MOE, 2020).

General education in the country consists of three compulsory stages. The first stage is elementary, which consists of 6 years of primary education (ages 6 to 12). This is followed by

the second stage, 3 years of intermediate high school (ages 13 to 15). The third stage is 3 years of high school (16 to 18). After these compulsory education levels, students can choose whether to enroll in the various colleges and universities in the country for free (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2019). Since the KSA is a Muslim nation, Islam remains at the core of the Saudi educational system. However, the system is diverse and offers quality instruction in art and science, among other subjects, to ensure that its citizens are competitive in the global knowledge-based economy (MOE, 2020).

The KSA educational system has undergone astounding transformations since the establishment of the Kingdom in 1932. During the formative years of the nation, education was available only to the children of a few wealthy people living in major towns (MOE, 2020). However, this has now changed, as the country has made significant strides in increasing the number of schools and made education free and compulsory at the elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels, increasing accessibility to education for all children (MOE, 2020). This is complemented by various educational funding programs that have increased access to all levels of education for Saudi Arabian citizens.

Recent Reforms in the KSA Education System

The recent, largest, and most important educational reform in the KSA was the King Abdullah Project for Development of Education (also known as the Tatweer Program), launched by King Abdullah in 2007 (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2019). The \$2.4 billion project was aimed at modernizing and improving the quality of education in the KSA to ensure that students were competitive in an increasingly globalized society and were better empowered to engage with the myriad and complex problems of globalization. Specifically, the reform program aimed at creating a workforce that was more educated and competitive than previous generations,

generated national prosperity, and ensured that students had the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of local and international labor markets (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2019). The Tatweer

Program had 10 enabling goals:

1. Empowering districts and schools to manage and lead change.
2. Improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment to improve student success.
3. Providing equitable learning opportunities and support systems for all students
4. Providing early childhood education for all.
5. Providing a world-class environment conducive to student learning.
6. Promoting student health, character, discipline, and welfare.
7. Engaging families and community partners to support a culture of learning.
8. Developing a system to professionalize teaching practice.
9. Leveraging technology to improve school and student performance.
10. Improving governance, leadership, and policies to sustain change Meemar et al., 2018).

The first enabling goals of the reform program sought to develop administrative policies, plans, and regulations that devolved power and authority to school districts and school principals. This was done in order to empower them to make decisions pertinent to education in their regions and schools, which was equivalent to decentralization.

Global Trends Towards Decentralization

Many institutions in private sectors have moved towards decentralizing their organizational structures in order to become more flexible, innovative, and efficient. Alowin (2020) claim that education after the death of King Abdulaziz in 1953 helped the Kingdom improve at a steady pace, due to the discovery of oil and increased enlightenment in international

labor markets. The discovery of oil enabled the advancement of KSA's education system, as schools could be funded to instruct in the principles of Islam and the Arabic language (Alowin, 2020). Many other factors led to achieving this goal, including the motivation to spread knowledge and the need to produce a competent labor force to supply the demand for skilled employees subsequent to the emergence of economic development and urbanization.

Decentralization in Education

Decentralization is the transfer of authority, resources, and responsibilities from central to local levels, including giving the local community powers to make decisions and manage educational resources. According to Khilji et al. (2022), decentralization in education is a policy that reorganizes educational systems, and hands down authority from a single governing body to lower levels of hierarchy. In practice, power and authority that rested in national bodies, such as educational ministries, are given to schools and local governments so that local administrators have more autonomy in making pivotal decisions pertinent to education at local levels (Meemar at al., 2018).

The MOE in Saudi Arabia has been working towards adopting a more decentralized system that permitted more independence for school principals. Despite the Saudi government's plan to permit the decentralization of educational procedures, the situation at the grassroots was different. The existence of a vast disconnection between policy and implementation. Teachers need sufficient training to understand the dynamics of decentralized education systems and how this instructional style influences the leadership of primary and secondary school principals (Alnasser, 2019). Due to Westernization and nationalism, the KSA must establish alliances and associations with countries using the successful implementation of decentralized education systems to boost its economic development and satisfy its labor requirements. According to

Meemar et al. (2018), this decentralization has given school leaders the primary role in making pivotal decisions in the school and has provided for the consultation and participation of interested social actors, with the goal of enhancing quality and efficiency. Decentralization of education systems has also proved to be a critical factor in the development efforts of China, Bosnia, Poland, Guatemala, Singapore, Indonesia, Romania, and Herzegovina.

Decentralization in Saudi Arabia

National cultures have significant impacts on organizational cultures, and they dictate organizational and management structures (Khan & Law, 2018). Culture is showed by the regularity witnessed in the behaviors of people, their varying lifestyles, and how they communicate. According to Hussein et al., 2020, Geert Hofstede maintained that culture possesses a content that is explained by a specific pattern of behavior, including norms, beliefs, values, and personal needs, because culture is a reflection of the motivation of people. Hofstede's theory identifies six systematic differences in national cultures: power distance (PDI), individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance (UAI), masculinity vs. femininity, long-term vs. short-term orientations, and indulgence vs. restraint (Hussein et al., 2020). PDI is the capacity to direct the behavior of others in society. The level of inequity in the balance of power between weak and strong people establishes that the stronger the person, the greater his effort to maintain that power. The power distance score is the most significant determinant of the types of organizational structure typically adopted in a society.

When tested against Hofstede's theory, the KSA has been found to have a high level of power distance, not surprising with their highly centralized education system (Meemar et al., 2018). The MOE in Riyadh is responsible for making vital decisions affecting education in the country (MOH, 2023). These decisions include but are not limited to the hiring of staff, the

setting of educational policies, the development of curricula, the allocation of finances, the selection of textbooks, and the provision of overall supervision and administration in education (Meemar et al., 2018). Before decentralization, school leaders were reduced to school managers, as they had to abide by the decisions of the MOE, which led to increased bureaucracy, stifled initiatives, and increased fear of risk-taking, resulting in increased ineffectiveness in managing schools. Aburizaizah (2020) identified centralization as the greatest challenge facing the KSA's educational system, and proposed the need for decentralization (Poppink & Palmer, 2018). Their research led to the recommendations that prompted the launch of the King Abdullah education reform program to decentralize the KSA education system.

However, as Meemar et al. (2018) have explained, the effectiveness of decentralization depended on the capacity of those at the lower levels to implement these authorities without being overwhelmed. Given these studies identifying the need to balance authority during decentralization, the KSA implemented what Meemar et al. termed *disciplined decentralization*. The MOE retained some authority but devolved specific authority related to direct school management to school districts and school principals.

The Ministry of Education

The MOE is the central body responsible for the overall supervision and administration of educational efforts within the country. Its major roles include hiring staff, allocating financial resources, and setting policies and curricula (MOE, 2020).

School Districts

There are 40 General Administration Districts across the KSA, headed by a General District Manager who reports directly to the Deputy Minister of Education (MOE, 2020) (Appendix A). The overarching goals for the district directorates of education include developing

and evaluating the educational situation in schools to ensure the effectiveness of the educational system, assisting the administration in implementing its policies, suggesting individuals for some positions, and developing financial and service plans and programs for schools and other branches of administration (MOE, 2020). According to MOE (2020), the directorate of education is specifically tasked with the following:

- Follow up the implementation of the office's operational plans and programs after approval by the authority.
- Follow the progress of the educational process in the schools affiliated to the office (schools of general education - schools of memorization of the Holy Quran - schools of literacy programs - institutes and special education programs).
- Suggest the development of regulations organizing the educational supervision process in the office and following up on their development after approval.
- Respond to the office's need for helpers, educational supervisors, and administrators.
- Nominate the supervisory board in schools affiliated to the office (director / agent) according to the controls and in coordination with the Department of Teacher Affairs
- Follow-up on the level of educational supervisors' performance in their offices to improve the educational supervision process, as well as identifying and proposing appropriate training programs for them in coordination with the educational training department in the department.
- Follow-up on the level of school administration performance in schools, as well as that of teachers, laboratory preparers and office lab computer preparers, and provide them with professional development which coordinates with the department's educational training department.

- Study and analyze the plans and reports of the educational supervisors and principals of the schools affiliated with the office, including reports on the curricula and educational techniques accompanying them, and submit the results to the Assistant Director General for Boys' Education in preparation for their submission to the relevant authorities.
- Address the deficit of teachers and administrators in the schools affiliated with the office resulting from leave and emergency cases and ensure their pay is consistent with the relevant authorities.
- Prepare job performance evaluations for the employees of the office and its affiliated schools in accordance with the regulations organizing this.
- Supervise the application of the continuous evaluation list in the schools affiliated with the office in all stages.
- Follow-up on the distribution of shares according to the specialization of the teachers belonging to the office, the distribution of academic courses over the academic months, and the courses of study, according to the distribution schedule, and prepare quarterly reports on that.
- Offer field supervision of everything related to the use of educational materials, methods, laboratories, and educational techniques in educational environments.
- Coordinate with the educational supervisors in the office to select methods for developing teaching and learning processes, appropriate supervisory methods, and the exchange of experiences between them.

- Study notes and suggestions on curricula and academic decisions and submit them to the Assistant Director General for Boys Education Affairs for submission to the relevant authorities in the Ministry.
- Supervise practical education in the schools affiliated with the office for university and college students.
- Develop programs to honor educational leaders and outstanding students in various activities.
- Participate in periodic supervision meetings, whether at the governorate or ministry level.
- Coordinate and integrate with other departments such as student activities, guidance, counseling, student services, exams, admissions, and others with regard to schools supervised by the office.
- Work together with the relevant authorities in evaluating the teaching and learning processes at the various academic levels and developing plans to improve them.
- Estimate the needs of the offices affiliated with the office, including users, drivers, guards, and school equipment, according to the regulations prepared by the School Equipment and Technologies Administration, and follow up on their provision in coordination with the relevant authorities in the administration.
- Oversee the transportation of students to schools in accordance with the regulations and contracts with the private sector and individuals and secure their supplies of fuel and spare parts owned by the Ministry, in coordination with the competent authority in the administration.

- Ensure the provision of water, electricity, telephone and sanitation to schools and other administrative units in villages and deserts.
- Oversee the supplying of school supplies, curricula, and teaching aids to the schools.
- Prepare and disburse the finances for the office employees and workers in the schools affiliated with the office.
- Search for buildings to be rented to schools and complete the necessary procedures according to the approved regulations and submitting them to the administration.
- Search for suitable lands to build schools, establish educational projects on them, and bring the result to management.
- Prepare the annual budget draft for the office in coordination with the relevant authorities in the department.
- Organize and store information about the office and its people in a way that helps in its extraction.
- Prepare periodic and technical reports on the progress of work, the activities and accomplishments of the office and its employees, performance obstacles, and ways to overcome them and submit them to the Assistant Director General for Boys Education Affairs.
- Complete any other tasks assigned to them in their field of competence.

School Principals

The superintendents and the principals they oversee are tasked with implementing decentralization at the local level. Decentralization has transferred the responsibility of overseeing authorities, such as administrative authorities, financial authorities, etc., from the

MOE to principals (Appendix A). Decentralization, therefore, gave the local education department much more autonomy and power.

The education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is organized with separate educational institutions for boys and girls. Girls' educational institutions are led by female principals, while boys' educational institutions are overseen by male principals (MOE, 2020). The eligibility criteria for a school principal position includes a minimum of 6 years of teaching experience. Once a teacher has accumulated the necessary experience, they become eligible for consideration, and any qualified teacher meeting the additional requirements for the position can be selected as principal (MOE, 2020).

New (Devolved) Authority

The new authority afforded to school principals in 2011 can be divided into two categories: administrative authority and technical authority (Appendix B contains a complete list of these authorities).

Administrative Authority Responsibilities

According to MOE (2020), the following are the administrative authority responsibilities of the new devolved authority:

- Choose an assistant principal from the list of names provided by the Department of Education.
- Deduct pay from employees' salaries when they are absent or late, and then inform the Department of Education to implement the decision.
- Specify teachers who are to be transferred from one school to another school.
- Transfer any employees in administrative jobs to other schools if their performance has decreased from "excellent" in the last two years.

- Evaluate bus drivers.
- Apply models that support the proficiency of teaching and solve school problems.
- Arrange studies to solve school issues.
- Nominate not more than five employees for professional development in the school year.
- Sign contracts with specialized parties accredited by governmental sectors related to operating the school cafeteria.
- Generate a list of teachers who deserve a financial reward for teaching classes in which they substitute for an absent teacher in addition to working their own 24 credits hours.
- Sign contracts with laborers for cleaning the school, in the case contracts were impossible with the cleaning officers, or in the case the labor was contracted, but not performed.
- Establish contracts with competent institutions to perform urgent maintenance for the school, according to the specialized budget.

Technical Authority Responsibilities

According to MOE (2020), the following are the technical authority responsibilities of the new devolved authority:

- Make temporary modifications to the duration of classes and recess to fulfill educational needs.
- Increase the duration of study for groups of students by approximately one hour, at maximum, per day.

- Close the school in case of emergency for one day, at maximum, and officially inform the Department of Education.
- Communicate directly with governmental organizations in case of emergency.
- Accept students who reside out of the school district.
- Determine when a student's behavior represents a danger against any school employee and transfer the student to another school.
- Add programs that address some of the school problems.
- Execute specified school activities outside the school, for durations of no more than three days.
- Contact the private sector to sponsor school programs that match school goals.

Studies on Principals' Perceptions of Decentralization

Decentralization represents a relatively recent development in Saudi Arabia, but there are limited studies investigating its impact from the perspectives of school principals. Meemar et al. (2018) conducted a study exploring the perceptions of Tatweer's principals regarding their capacity to implement new authorities following decentralization. Meemar et al.'s findings indicated that principals perceived their ability to exercise new authority as constrained, and they expressed a belief that decentralization was not fully effective due to the lack of autonomy in implementing their new responsibilities. Alyami and Floyd (2019) delved into the perceptions and experiences of female school leaders concerning decentralized education systems in Saudi Arabia. The findings revealed that female school leaders perceived the Saudi education system as primarily semi-decentralized, even after the decentralization process. Alyami and Floyd emphasized that, for decentralization to be truly effective, there is a need to enhance teachers' autonomy in exercising authority, and devolve more decision-making authority to school leaders.

Alyami and Floyd examined the extent to which principals believed they could exercise their newly granted authority and found that the exercise of new authority after decentralization varied depending on the specific type of authority, ranging from high to low.

Aburizaiza (2020) investigated principals' attitudes towards their administrative, technical, and financial authority following decentralization. The study indicated that principals displayed positive attitudes towards their newly acquired administrative and technical authority, but expressed negative sentiments regarding their financial authority. Furthermore, Albeladi (2016) explored the perceptions of various education stakeholders, including school leaders, regarding decentralization efforts. Albeladi concluded that decentralization could be more effective if school leaders were granted increased autonomy and responsibility in decision-making processes.

In a recent study conducted by Alotibi (2023), the experiences and perceptions of school leaders and teachers in rural education in Saudi Arabia were explored. Alotibi's primary objective was to provide valuable insights into the challenges encountered by school leaders and teachers in rural areas, and to contribute new theoretical perspectives on Saudi rural schools. Alotibi employed a conceptual framework that emphasized the interrelationships among three key concepts: leadership practice, culture, and continuing professional development. Alotibi discovered that the educational system in Saudi Arabia still required further improvements towards achieving successful decentralization. The findings suggested that there were areas where the system could be enhanced in order to facilitate more effective decentralization efforts.

Decentralization and Improved Performance

Decentralization has emerged as an effective approach in enhancing students' academic performance. For instance, Khilji et al. (2022) revealed that school autonomy resulting from

decentralization had a strong positive impact on students' performances, as assessed through test scores. Similarly, Elacqua et al. (2021) demonstrated a direct correlation between school autonomy and students' test performances. Countries with decentralized education systems tended to outperform their counterparts with less school autonomy, and observed significant positive impacts of decentralization on the academic performances of primary school pupils in sixth and seventh grades.

Further insights into the reasons for improved performance after decentralization were explored by Meemar et al. (2018), who identified enhanced classroom instruction and teaching, among other factors, as contributing to the overall improvement in students' performances. Given such positive outcomes in previous studies, the implementation of decentralization in the KSA is expected to potentially improve academic performances. However, recent trends indicate that academic performances in KSA have yet to demonstrate significant improvement, necessitating a thorough examination of the decentralization implementation within the country.

Despite the potential influence of principals' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors on the success of decentralization, there exists a notable lack of research in this area. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap and provide valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, concerning the implementation of decentralization in the education system.

Decentralization Experiences in China, Turkey, Indonesia, and Jordan

According to Maksun and Firdausy (2020), Indonesia is one country that has embraced a decentralized education system and governance structure. The implementation of this decentralized system involved the transfer of power from the central government to independent regions and departments, enabling schools and key stakeholders to elect their preferred principals

dedicated to enhancing students' educational performance, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. The decentralization policy in Indonesia has led to a systematic impact, allowing local governments and institutions, including schools, to operate more efficiently without significant conflicts and malpractices.

In China, Hou et al. (2019) highlighted the substantial impact of instructional leadership on high school students' academic achievement. School leaders and principals were recognized as pivotal in implementing effective policies and achieving external accountability objectives. The decentralization of educational systems in China has empowered principals to address persistent disparities among various schools. By providing more systematic training opportunities for principals, policymakers can strengthen their leadership skills and work towards enhancing the quality of primary and secondary education.

According to Erguder (2023), decentralization of the Turkish education system has resulted in increased independence for schools in setting goals to be achieved after specific learning periods. This decentralized approach has positively impacted the educational landscape in Turkey, leading to higher enrollment rates of students in pre-school, primary, and secondary levels. Moreover, the decentralized system has also improved the quality of vocational education and facilitated the digitalization of the entire education infrastructure and materials (Erguder, 2023). Other countries have also experienced positive outcomes from decentralization. In an increasingly flexible education system, the decentralization of educational infrastructure has not only enhanced the quality of teacher training but has also advanced tactics for preparing students for colleges and universities (Alotibi, 2023).

Similarly, in Jordan, decentralization in the administrative branch has enabled schools to deliver quality education (Jameel et al., 2021). The decentralized system ensured oversight of

school governance, guaranteeing a constant evolution of quality public service in the educational realm to align with the demands of the current job market.

The Impact of Covid-19 on Teaching

The Covid-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on various aspects of our lives, particularly in the realm of education across the globe. In response to government-imposed restrictions and lockdowns to curb the virus's spread, schools worldwide had to undergo significant restructuring of teaching practices to optimize learning outcomes during this challenging period (Magomedov et al., 2020). Constantia et al. (2021) highlighted the pandemic's impacts on educational leadership, characterizing it as an adaptive system responding to socio-economic and cultural shifts. School leaders, facing remote working conditions, encountered unprecedented challenges, emphasizing the need for timely, accurate, and efficient administrative efforts (Schleicher, 2021). The lack of face-to-face interactions between teachers, students, parents, and school administrators, and the shortage of internet service during the pandemic, reportedly contributed to declining educational outcomes, particularly in the KSA (Alotibi, 2023).

Furthermore, the pandemic exacerbated existing educational inequities, disproportionately affecting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schleicher (2021) highlighted how the pandemic exposed several deficiencies in the educational infrastructure, including inadequate broadband access, a shortage of computers for online instruction, and the absence of supportive learning environments (Bahanshal & Khan, 2021). Nationwide school closures in most OECD nations disrupted traditional schooling models. As a result, teachers had to grapple with unfamiliar pedagogical methods and modes of instruction (Godber & Atkins, 2021). This disruption had a particularly detrimental impact on learners lacking digital resources

and the self-direction required for independent learning, causing them to fall behind in their education. Higher education institutions also faced significant challenges, despite a generally successful shift to online instruction. The closure of these in-person institutions disrupted learning processes and examinations and presented safety and legal concerns for international students (Schleicher, 2021).

Despite the growing global interest in educational decentralization, there remains a noticeable gap in understanding its specific impact within the Saudi Arabian context. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Meemar et al. (2018), Magomedov et al. (2020), Alowin (2020), and Godber and Atkins (2021), primarily focus on the process of implementing decentralization while largely overlooking the perspectives of key stakeholders, including parents, students, and high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Meemar et al. (2018) provided an analysis of principals' viewpoints on new powers given under the Tatweer reform initiative but fell short in scope by focusing predominantly on implementation aspects, thereby neglecting to address the potential impact on students and parents. Furthermore, Sameh et al.'s (2021) study only briefly references Saudi Arabian educational reform, excluding the necessary discussion on decentralization measures. As a result, there is an urgent need for comprehensive, preferably qualitative, research that explores the experiences and recommendations of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, towards these decentralization initiatives and their implications for educational change.

Alotibi (2023) explored the experiences and perceptions of school leaders and teachers in rural education in Saudi Arabia. Alotibi aimed to provide insights into the challenges faced by school leaders and teachers in rural areas and to develop new theoretical insights into Saudi rural schools. The study adopted a conceptual framework based on the interrelationships between

three key concepts: leadership practice, culture, and continuing professional development.

However, further exploration is needed to encompass the experiences of both school principals and teachers in the context of decentralization implementation, and this was the purpose of my study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This qualitative study interpretive research design aimed to explore the experiences of high school principals and teachers with decentralization, and collect their recommendations for enhancing the decentralization process. This chapter included the research design employed in the study, detailing its rationale, the demographics of the participants (including the sampling procedure that was adopted), the methods used for data collection and analysis, and the instrumentation utilized to address the research question.

The main research question was: What are the perceptions and experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, regarding the implementation of decentralization in the education system?

Research sub questions were derived from this question, which were:

Research Sub Question 1: In what ways has decentralization impacted the ability of high school teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to deliver content to learners during the implementation of decentralization in the education system, and what strategies have they employed to mitigate these impacts?

Research Sub Question 2: What additional responsibilities, if any, do they believe would enhance their ability to lead their school and promote student achievement?

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology, following Creswell's (2007) definition, to delve into and comprehend social problems from the perspectives of individuals and groups within the context of the problem. Qualitative research, distinct from quantitative research that aims to test objective theories through examining relationships among variables,

strives to understand the meaning of phenomena, such as the decentralization process in the KSA, as experienced by public high school teachers and principals.

The choice of a qualitative research methodology was deemed most appropriate for this study's objective of gaining in-depth insights into the decentralization process. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explain that qualitative research seeks to grasp social or human problems by exploring the viewpoints of the individuals involved. Therefore, data for this study was collected in the natural settings of the participants, allowing for an authentic exploration of their experiences and perspectives. The data analysis process involved identifying both general and specific themes, aiding in the comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences with decentralization (Creswell, 2007).

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative interpretive research design, with the aim of exploring how participants constructed meaning from their subjective realities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The design operates under the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective but rather influenced by individuals' experiences of their reality. In this context, the study sought to understand the experiences of high school principals and teachers regarding the implementation of decentralization and gather their recommendations for improving its implementation.

The qualitative interpretive research design was chosen based on its focus on comprehending people's perspectives and phenomena that have the potential to impact their lives, rather than testing hypotheses. As the primary objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions related to decentralization, the qualitative interpretive research design was deemed the most suitable approach for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It allowed for an exploration of the complexities and nuances

surrounding the implementation of decentralization, providing valuable insights into the participants' subjective realities and perspectives.

Data Collection Procedures

This study utilized person-to-person semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. According to Creswell (2007), interviews are conversations in which the researcher, as the interviewer, poses questions to elicit information from the respondents, or interviewees. The use of interviews as the main data collection tool was preferred due to its capacity to allow for a deeper exploration of the participants' perspectives and experiences related to the subject under study. Additionally, interviews enabled me to observe and evaluate non-verbal cues, which can provide valuable insights and enrich the data collected.

The choice of semi-structured interviews was driven by several considerations. First, it allowed for flexibility in questioning, enabling the same set of questions to be asked in different ways and sequences, depending on the individual respondents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This flexibility enhanced the possibility of capturing diverse and comprehensive responses from the participants. Second, semi-structured interviews offered the advantage of permitting me to ask follow-up questions to probe and seek clarification on any confusing or incomplete responses provided by the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This ensured that a deeper understanding of the participants' viewpoints was achieved.

By utilizing person-to-person semi-structured interviews, this study aimed to gather rich and nuanced data, capturing the unique perspectives and insights of high school principals and teachers regarding the implementation of decentralization in the educational context. The interviews served as a valuable means to elicit firsthand accounts and experiences, enriching the study's depth and validity.

The interviews for this study were conducted via a UIW student account Zoom web conferencing platform. The decision to utilize Zoom for interviews was based on several considerations. First, the convenience and accessibility offered by Zoom interviews were highly advantageous. As Zoom interviews can be conducted from any location with an internet connection, participants were not required to travel to a specific venue, saving both time and money. This flexibility allowed for interviews to be scheduled at mutually convenient times for both the interviewer and the interviewees, ensuring timely and efficient data collection.

Cost-effectiveness was another key factor in choosing Zoom interviews as the data collection method. Conducting interviews via Zoom eliminated the need for renting physical spaces or hiring professional interviewers, making it a cost-effective option for gathering data.

Prior to the commencement of the interviews, explicit permission was sought and obtained from all participants to record the sessions. Recording was done to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected and to preserve participants' responses accurately. The primary objective of this study was to gain in-depth insights into the firsthand experiences of high school principals and teachers concerning the implementation of decentralization in the educational context. Furthermore, the study aimed to solicit valuable recommendations from the participants to enhance the implementation process and improve the overall understanding of the impact of decentralization on the educational system.

During the Interviews

The interview process in this study adhered to a well-defined interview protocol (Appendix B and D), which entailed the use of open-ended questions to delve into participants' experiences with decentralization. Participants were encouraged to share their recommendations and insights on how to improve the implementation of the decentralization process. The

interviews were thoughtfully structured to comprehensively explore the participants' encounters with the decentralization initiative and to garner valuable recommendations for its enhancement. To ensure convenience and cooperation, the interviews were scheduled at times mutually agreed upon by both the interviewer and the participants, considering their availability and preferences. The duration of each interview session ranged from 45 to 60 minutes, allowing ample time for in-depth discussions and comprehensive responses.

Equipment Used

I ensured improved accuracy in data collection and minimized the risk of losing any information by taking both notes and audio recording the interviews. I utilized the Zoom recording feature during the interviews to capture the discussions. Additionally, as a backup measure, I employed my phone to record the interviews (Miles et al., 2020). This dual approach ensured that the conversations were effectively recorded and preserved for further analysis. Subsequently, I transcribed the recordings verbatim for further analysis, as detailed in the data analysis section. The recording of the interviews allowed me to revisit the audio-recorded data to clarify specific responses provided by the participants. Prior to each interview, I verified that the batteries of both devices were charged, the recording applications were ready for use, and the internet connection was good. To maintain data privacy, the interview data was securely saved and protected on my personal laptop. The data was backed up in password-protected and encrypted files stored at UIW student Microsoft One Drive account, limiting access to myself only (Miles et al., 2020). Detailed discussions on data privacy were included in the ethics section, as addressed below.

Population

The research site for this study was centered on the Jeddah General Directorate of Education, situated in western Saudi Arabia. The chosen research site comprised a total of eight educational offices, encompassing 517 high school principals and 11,573 high school teachers (MOE, 2023) (Table 1).

Table 1

Population at the Research Site, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

No.	Office	Principals	Teachers
1.	Obour Office	57	1,674
2.	Al Hamadaniyyah Office	50	1,150
3.	Al- Salamah Office	75	1013
4.	Alsaffa Office	74	1,830
5.	Al Faiha Office	58	1,987
6.	Al-Waha Office	59	769
7.	Al-Jawhara Office	97	2100
8.	Al- Fadilah Office	47	1050
	Total	517	11573

The decision to focus on schools in the Jeddah district for this research was based on several compelling reasons. Firstly, the district holds significance as the second-largest school district in Saudi Arabia, making it a relevant and representative site for studying educational practices and experiences. Additionally, my affiliation with the school district facilitated access and engagement with the participants, enabling a more in-depth investigation. Moreover, the ongoing “Slum Development” project in the city, initiated on February 13, 2022, had a

significant impact on the local educational landscape. This development project involved the removal of entire residential neighborhoods, resulting in the relocation or permanent closure of numerous schools. As a consequence, the high school experienced a surge in enrollments, highlighting the potential need for more effective decentralized management at the lower levels. This situation further underscored the relevance and importance of exploring the implications and experiences of decentralization in this specific context.

Sample

The strategy utilized was purposive (also known as judgmental) sampling, as outlined by Creswell (2014). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), purposive sampling is a non-probabilistic approach where the researcher exercises personal judgment to select participants who will contribute to the study. This sampling method was chosen to gain in-depth insights into specific viewpoints rather than aiming for generalizability of the results.

Ajagbe et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of an adequate sample size that provides a comprehensive understanding of the research problem while avoiding data saturation, where additional participants do not contribute new information. Malterud et al. (2016) explained that the determination of an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies should be guided by the concept of information power. Information power suggests that, as the sample contains more relevant information, the required number of participants decreases. It was hypothesized that high school principals and teachers possessed valuable information relevant to the decentralization process. The next section explains the process of participant selection in more detail.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

Upon obtaining the necessary approvals from my committee and the UIW Institutional Review Board (IRB) on June 5, 2023 (Appendix A), I immediately contacted the Jeddah General Directorate of Education, seeking their assistance in connecting me with participant high school principals and teachers. The invitation was meticulously crafted and disseminated to the target population via email and WhatsApp as shown in Figure 1. I took the responsibility of personally sending the invitation after obtaining the contact information from Jeddah General Administrative. This approach was chosen to ensure direct communication between myself and the participants, allowing for a more personalized and interactive engagement. By sending the invitation personally, I aimed to establish a sense of rapport and trust with the participants and foster a conducive environment for their involvement in the study. Additionally, this direct interaction facilitated efficient and effective communication, enabling any queries or concerns to be addressed promptly, thereby enhancing the overall research process.

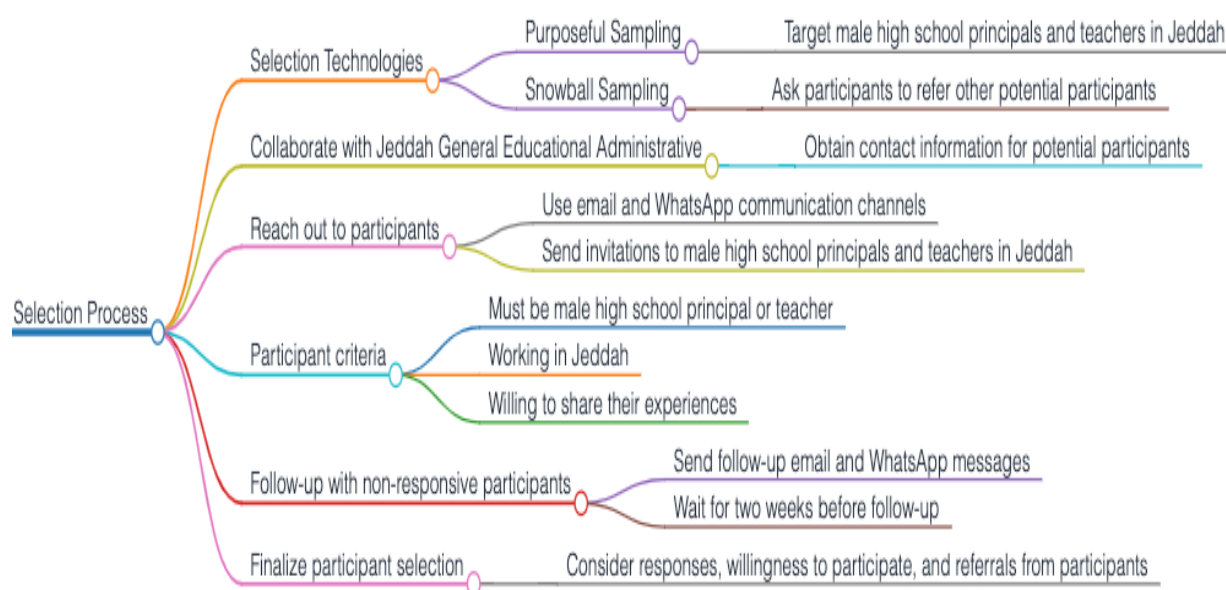
The invitation provided comprehensive information about the research, including its purpose and objectives. Additionally, it explicitly stated that the study had received approval from the IRB (Miles et al., 2020). To ensure effective communication, the email included my contact information. Furthermore, a consent letter was included in the email, which participants were required to read, sign, and return. Finally, the email contained a survey that requested participants to provide specific details pertaining to their roles (either teacher or principal), educational affiliation (southern, northern, etc.), and the size of their respective schools, categorized as student populations of 0-250, 251-500, or 501 and above.

To ensure a representative sample and to minimize bias, all public high school principals and teachers received an email invitation, offering equal opportunity for individuals within the

target population in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to participate in the study. This approach aimed to ensure inclusivity and avoid any potential exclusionary practices. Moreover, a snowball sampling technique was utilized during the interviews, wherein participants were asked to share the survey link with colleagues they believed would be willing to participate in the study. The survey invitation was created using Google Forms. It commenced with a consent form, which was necessary for participants to provide their agreement to participate in the semi-structured interviews and follow-up sessions. I received a substantial number of responses, which assisted in identifying the most suitable candidates for the study.

Figure 1

Selecting the Participants in the Study



Inclusion Criteria

This study specified that only high school male principals and teachers could participate, considering cultural norms surrounding gender in Saudi Arabia. The separation of male and female schools in the country made it challenging for male researchers to conduct interviews with female participants. Moreover, the inclusion criteria mandated that male principals and

teachers possess a minimum of 6 years of experience in the field of education to qualify for participation. Participants were also required to express their willingness to engage in an interview and a subsequent clarification session, as well as consent to the audio recording of the conversations. The selection process, which used purposeful and snowballing strategies, is illustrated in the Figure 2.

Role of the Researcher

In my role as the main researcher, I undertook various responsibilities, such as data collection, recording, analysis, transcription, and ensuring protection and storage of collected data in accordance with IRB guidelines. Drawing on my experience as a high school principal, I had a deep understanding of the limitations and responsibilities associated with these roles. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I built and maintained relationships of trust with the participants. Being a former high school principal and teacher myself, I could empathize with the participants' responses and concerns regarding the implementation of decentralization.

Researcher Positionality

Holmes (2020) referred to the researcher's overall view and the stance they adopt during the research, considering the social and political context. Savin-Baden and Howell-Major (2012) recommended identifying primary identifiers of researcher positionality, including acknowledging personal positions on the topic, considering the researcher's relationship with the study participants, and recognizing the researcher's views on the research context. As a means of ensuring non-biased research, I wrote a bracketing statement that incorporated self-reflection and reflexivity, following guidelines provided by Holmes. This statement covered various aspects, such as my beliefs regarding the research, my history with the research topic, my connection to

the participants, my thoughts on the research findings, and my overall aspirations for the research.

Interview Protocols and Procedures

Zoom interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience, following ethical guidelines and informed consent procedures (Miles et al., 2020). High school principals and teachers were contacted to request their permission to participate, and they willingly signed the informed consent form. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility for participants to discuss relevant issues based on specific questions aligned with the research objectives. Demographic data, such as school size, district affiliation, and job title, were collected during the interviews. Zoom interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes and followed a predetermined question protocol tailored to the participants' roles. The research ensured confidentiality and data security by securely storing consent forms. Participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and no incentives were provided for participation. This study included only the participants who signed the consent agreement.

Ensuring Ethical Considerations

Before commencing the study, I obtained the necessary consents and IRB approvals. Following the receipt of IRB approval, participants were recruited through a mass email sent to the high school, which provided an overview of the research, extended an invitation for participation, and reassured participants about the confidentiality safeguards in place. Given the ethical considerations surrounding autonomy, confidentiality, informed consent, and researcher competence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), participants were provided with detailed information about the data collection process to protect their autonomy and confidentiality. To further ensure participant protection, video interviews recorded via Zoom were deleted, with my retention only

of the audio files and downloaded transcriptions. These audio recordings and transcriptions were securely stored in an encrypted file, identified solely by participant-assigned numbers.

Figure 2

Application of Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis Model



Note: This figure shows the application of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model in the data analysis process. It provides an overview of the steps followed in implementing this model, illustrating my adherence to the systematic process.

Each participant received a noncoercive disclaimer, emphasizing the voluntary nature of their involvement and the option to withdraw from the study at any time (Miles et al., 2020).

Additionally, participants were informed that I was a PhD candidate under the supervision of faculty at UIW, emphasizing my accountability and ongoing supervision throughout the research process.

Data Analysis Procedures

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), data analysis is the process used to answer research question by breaking them into themes and connecting these themes in categories. Data analysis in qualitative research encompasses several steps, including data preparation and organization, reflection and journaling, method-based data organization, creation of participant descriptions and overall themes, and understanding the broader significance of the data (Creswell, 2007). For this study, I employed Thematic Analysis (TA) as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which allowed me to cluster the data into meaningful categories and search for underlying meanings. The data analysis process consisted of several steps, including data preparation, coding, themes development, and interpretation to explore and understand the experiences of Jeddah high school principals and teachers. Figure 2 illustrates step-by-step the data analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model, providing a visual representation of my adherence to each stage of the analysis process, from familiarizing myself with the data to the development of themes.

The following is a comprehensive explanation of the process involved in my thematic analysis.

Become Familiar with the Data

I followed the following steps to immerse myself in and become familiar with the data:

1. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, capturing the participants' responses and expressions.

2. The transcripts were carefully reviewed to ensure accuracy, and identify any potential gaps or errors.
3. I listening to each audio recording without taking notes, then I proceeded to read through the transcripts. During this reading phase, I refrained from notetaking as well.
4. Subsequently, I listened to each audio recording again while simultaneously reading the corresponding transcript.

I engaged in active notetaking, scribbling down observations on a notepad and creating various mind maps and diagrams to enhance my understanding of the data. Through these iterative processes, I ensured that I fully immersed myself in the collected data.

Coding

1. In this phase, the generating codes process involved multiple cycles and levels, requiring repeated reading and analysis of the data to ensure that the generated codes accurately captured the relevant information within each data chunk.
2. I used open coding. The determination of codes for each chunk of data involved a thorough reading of and reflection on its core content or underlying meaning, which resulted in an intimate and interpretive familiarity with every piece of data in the corpus.
3. As the analysis progressed, it became evident that chunks of interview transcripts sharing similar content were assigned the same code, enabling their aggregation under common themes (Miles et al., 2020).
4. I prepared transcripts for importing into MAXQDA. This involved ensuring consistent format and style and anonymizing my participants by allocating each of them a pseudonym and a code to differentiate public (Miles et al., 2020).

5. This process took careful attention, but if not done thoroughly, I can see how this could have caused me many problems as I am proceeding with the analysis.
6. This step ended with 211 codes.

Theme Development

1. Codes were organized into potential themes based on their similarities and relationships (Miles et al., 2020).
2. I examined the codes and some of them clearly fitted together into a theme.
3. Related codes were grouped together to form preliminary themes, reflecting common patterns and ideas within the data. For example, I had several codes that related to perceptions of good practice and what teachers wanted from decentralization. I collated these into an initial theme called the purpose of decentralization.
4. I ended this step with five themes.
5. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately captured the essence of the participants' experiences.

Theme Review

In this phase, I reviewed and refined the preliminary themes identified in Theme Development.

1. I gathered and organized the relevant data associated with each theme, using MAXQDA to facilitate this.
2. I assessed the coherence and support of the themes by examining the data and considering its alignment with each theme.
3. The themes were evaluated in the context of the entire data set, and reduced to be 3 themes.

4. Factors such as logical sense, data support, theme overcrowding, overlap, subthemes, and the possibility of additional themes were considered during the evaluation process.

Theme Definition

The final phase involved refining the themes to capture their core essence (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1. I focused on understanding the message conveyed by each theme and explored how subthemes related to the main theme.
2. The participants' understanding of decentralization and their recommendations emerged as an overarching theme that interconnected with other themes.
3. I created a thematic table (Table 3) to visually represent the relationships between themes.
4. The narrative provided insights into how participants perceived decentralization and offered their recommendations.

Reporting

- The findings were presented in a comprehensive and coherent manner, incorporating the identified themes and their supporting evidence.
- The report included rich descriptions, verbatim quotes, and contextual details to provide a thorough understanding of the participants' perspectives.

Throughout the qualitative procedure, meticulous attention was paid to maintaining objectivity, transparency, and adherence to ethical considerations. My biases and assumptions were acknowledged and managed through reflexive practices, ensuring that the findings accurately represented the participants' voices and experiences.

The use of computer-based programs such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and MAXQDA facilitated the analysis process (Miles et al., 2020). MAXQDA provided the ability to use short phrases and words as codes, utilize a search engine to identify specific words and catch phrases, and generate themes. This approach helped organize the data and minimize researcher bias. Additionally, Microsoft Word was used to create an organized codebook, while Microsoft Excel was utilized for organizing themes, definitions, and codes.

Due to the interviews being conducted in Arabic, an extra strategy was applied. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) proposed two translation strategies for handling data collected in a language other than English. The first strategy involved transcribing the data verbatim and translating the transcript into English for subsequent data analysis in English. The second strategy, which I adopted, entailed transcribing the data verbatim and conducting data analysis in the original language. After completing the analysis, the findings and supporting evidence were translated into English. I included the original transcripts to strengthen the validity and credibility of the study to help readers independently verify the accuracy of the data and interpretations.

The rationale for this study was that it was preferable to conduct the initial analysis on the Arabic transcripts before translating them into English. The participants' use of their native language incorporated nuances and cultural references that were not easily translatable or understandable in English. By analyzing the data in its original language, I was able to gain a more profound understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. This approach aligned with previous studies conducted by Aladsani (2018), Alyami and Floyd (2019), and Alotibi (2023), which also involved interviews conducted in Arabic within the Saudi Arabian context. They reported that analyzing the data in its original language allowed for a deeper

understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences, considering the cultural nuances and references inherent in Arabic.

The back-translation method was employed to ensure accurate translation, following the recommendations of Merriam and Tisdell (2015). Following this methodology helped ensure a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the data while capturing the rich cultural and contextual aspects embedded in the participants' responses. To enhance internal validity and accuracy, I enlisted an expert with a doctorate in bilingual and linguistics, proficient in both Arabic and English, to review the translation process. This ensured a thorough and accurate representation of the study's findings in both languages.

Data Translation Protocol

The process of translation adhered strictly to the guidelines delineated by Beaton et al. (2000), utilizing the back-translation methodology. The principal objective of adopting this approach was to attain content equivalence between Arabic and English. Two professional experts with relevant experience and proficiency were assigned to conduct the forward translation, while two other proficient translators, unfamiliar with the initial version, were tasked with performing the back translation. The translation procedure was set to transpire in the following sequence:

1. Two proficient experts, operating independently, translated the content from English into Arabic. This was to ensure impartiality and eliminate potential bias.
2. Subsequently, two additional professional translators, devoid of any prior knowledge of the content, were tasked to execute the back translation from Arabic to English.
3. The resultant English renditions were then subjected to a thorough review by a bilingual expert from Saudi Arabia. This review was designed to ensure a comparison

and equivalency check between the two versions, thus facilitating the crafting of the final draft of the translated scale.

Bracketing

Credible research should be based on the collected data as much as possible. Husserl's (2006) transcendental phenomenology (also referred to as transcendental subjectivity) acknowledges an investigator's expectations or preconceived beliefs are likely to influence the findings of the study. Phenomenology recommends that the researcher should withhold personal judgement and not allow his subjectivity to inform participants' descriptions. This withholding of judgement is known as bracketing, or epoché. Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology assumes that the researcher has expectations or preconceived beliefs about the phenomena under study. While I went to great lengths to bracket my expectations or preconceived beliefs about decentralization and not to impose them on the participants, I chose to state these expectations or preconceived beliefs beforehand to prevent them from naturally influencing the interviews. My beliefs about decentralization included:

- Decentralization is beneficial to improving education in KSA as it empowers principals to have critical powers and authority that will help in enhancing their leadership.
- Principals have taken on a great deal of the authority and responsibility delegated to them.
- Principals are not fully empowered to assume this decentralized role and the responsibilities that come with it.
- All teachers have the potential to lead, but not all choose to or have the opportunity to do so.

- Teacher leadership is a process and does not occur immediately.
- There are benefits and costs associated with teacher leadership.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

I used several procedures recommended by Creswell (2014) to test validity as shown in Table 2. The study used data triangulation, data reviewing, and member checking to enhance credibility. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), data triangulation is the practice of collecting data from multiple sources or using different approaches to collect the data. In this case, I triangulated the data for the study, collecting it from many sources including high school principals and teachers from various high schools in the Jeddah education district. After collecting the data, I carefully checked the path I took to reach my conclusions, starting from the interview process through the data analysis, in order to evaluate whether the processes, procedures, data interpretation and results were appropriate, and that the procedures were correctly articulated and followed. For instance, I re-listened to the recordings and compared them to the transcripts to confirm that no errors were made during the transcription process.

Next, I conducted member checking to determine that the transcribed data was a true reflection of principals' and teachers' experiences, understanding the implementation of decentralization. In order to do so, I returned the data to the participants and requested them to check its accuracy. The participants were allowed to make appropriate changes to the transcribed data to make it more accurate (Creswell, 2007).

Alternative Interpretation of the Data

In this study, I conducted TA, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to extracting key themes from interview data. I explored alternative interpretations by examining how these themes could be viewed through various cultural and theoretical frameworks,

Table 2*Checklist for Qualitative Data Analysis, Interpreting Findings, Reporting Results*

Analysis Check	What I did	Rationale
The analysis was kept grounded in the data	I repeatedly referred to the interview transcripts that informed my analysis	To reduce the risk of introducing biases or preconceived notions into your analysis
Presentation of the actual data for readers to experience firsthand	I used direct quotations as the core of my reporting as the empirical support for my analysis and interpretations.	Provides readers with firsthand experiences and supports the analysis and interpretations
Interpretation is distinguished from explanation and description	I used direct quotations, descriptions of behaviors, or narratives that capture the essence of participants' experiences.	Essential for clarity and rigor.
Being just for each case before cross-case analysis	I immersed myself in the data for each case. Spent time reading and familiarizing myself with the information.	Essential for a deep understanding
Analysis and interpretations were driven by purpose.	I organized my findings to address core evaluation issues provide actionable answers to support decentralization implementation and inform decision-making about decentralization and policies.	Helped to directly address the research questions and contribute to the study's goals. Help to avoid analyzing data that is not relevant.
Documentation and reporting inquiry methods and analytical procedures were tracked throughout the study Reflexivity and reflectivity were observed.	I extensively explained my methods and analytical process to show the source for findings and interpretations.	Essential for transparency and replicability. Additionally, helped me acknowledge my own biases and potential influences on the analysis, which enhanced the credibility of my findings.
Write-up was done seriously.	During the writing, I made all efforts to ensure that Well-written and free of errors, Well-organized, and easy to follow, and the write-up should be concise and to the point. I received editorial help when needed.	An error-free write-up enhances the clarity and impact of my research.
The case was made for substantive significance.	I explained the significance of the findings, emphasizing that their substantive importance depended on one's judgment. My attention was directed towards evaluating the importance, wisdom, relevance, insightfulness, and applicability of the statements made by both numerous individuals and a select few.	Helps the readers to understand their real-world implications
Both of my critical and creative faculties were employed.	During data collection, I scrutinized my sources and methods. In analysis, I explored unique patterns and connections, and in interpretation, I remained self-critical of biases and open to fresh ideas.	Allows me to uncover unexpected insights while maintaining methodological rigor.

including critical theory and social constructionism, recognizing the presence of alternative interpretations (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Upon thorough evaluation, I concluded that my original interpretations were the most aligned with the data, while remaining mindful of other potential interpretations. This comprehensive approach enhanced the rigor of my findings and showcased my awareness of diverse perspectives, ultimately contributing to a more insightful interpretation of the research outcomes.

Examining Possible Emerging Hypotheses

During the data analysis, I examined the potential for hypothesis development by scrutinizing data for inconsistencies and integrating these insights into broader constructs. This process hinged on the adequacy, credibility, and relevance to the research questions, as well as the trustworthiness of the participants. To ensure authenticity, I viewed their responses skeptically (Goffman, 1959, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 116).

Limitations

A notable limitation inherent in this study pertained to the dynamic nature of the phenomenon under investigation, which specifically focused on the process of decentralization within the educational context. While this research contributes valuable insights into the decentralization process as it existed during the phases of data collection and analysis, it is imperative to recognize that decentralization is a continuous and evolving process.

This study effectively provided a snapshot, analogous to a static image, capturing a specific moment within the broader timeline of the decentralization phenomenon. However, it was unable to account for potential alterations, advancements, or shifts that may have transpired in the decentralization experience subsequent to the conclusion of data collection.

Decentralization, as a multifaceted and intricate process, remained susceptible to influences

stemming from various internal and external factors. These factors encompassed policy modifications, changes in leadership, and shifts in educational priorities. Consequently, the findings and conclusions presented in this research should be interpreted within the confines of the particular timeframe during which the study was executed.

This limitation underscored the necessity for sustained research endeavors and continual monitoring of decentralization initiatives over time. Such endeavors were crucial for cultivating a comprehensive understanding of how this process unfolded and its enduring impact on educational methodologies and outcomes. Subsequent studies can further build upon this research by investigating decentralization at multiple junctures in time, facilitating the tracking of its progress and transformation, and thereby furnishing a more holistic outlook on this inherently dynamic phenomenon.

Ethical Considerations

I sought all permissions and approvals from relevant bodies and institutions before conducting this research, including UIW's IRB and the MOE in Saudi Arabia. This helped me to ensure that the research was conducted in an appropriate, ethical way and addressed standard concerns, including reducing harm and maximizing benefits and promoting equity in the distribution of research burdens and benefits. Further, I sought voluntary participation in this research and none of the principals or teachers was coerced to participate in the research. I encouraged principals and teachers to participate by explaining the objectives of the study and assuring that the study would protect their privacy and uphold the confidentiality of the information obtained. Further, the study was only used for the intended purpose of understanding high school principals' and teachers' experiences with decentralization, as implemented by the Jeddah school district, and research would only be shared with third parties with express

permission from the participating principals and teachers. The interview records were kept and stored safely in secure files on my own MacBook laptop. I was the only person with access to information about specific participants and locations. Each audio recording, file, or related item was given a code to identify it. In addition, at the end of the 3rd year after the completion of the study, I will destroy all the data files. Only participants who signed the consent form were interviewed. Consistent with scholarly research ethics and guidelines, approvals were obtained from the appropriate school district officials and the anonymity of the participants were ensured.

Chapter 4: Data Collection, Analysis, and Findings

This study utilized an interpretative research design to explore the experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia regarding the implementation of decentralization. An interpretive design allowed me to collect rich data from direct practitioners to explain how high school principals and teachers interpret their experiences during practicing decentralization (Stake, 1995).

Purposeful sampling technique was employed to select participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data collection involved one-to-one semi-structured interviews, consisting of two parts: demographic information gathering and semi-structured interview questions. The interviews conducted over Zoom lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was adapted to the data analysis. Transcriptions were cross-checked with audio recordings for accuracy, and MAXQDA coding software was used for data analysis. English translations of important quotations were incorporated for a comprehensive understanding of the data.

The main research question was: What are the perceptions and experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, regarding the implementation of decentralization in the education system?

Research sub questions were derived from this question, which were:

Research Sub Question 1: In what ways has decentralization impacted the ability of high school teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to deliver content to learners during the implementation of decentralization in the education system, and what strategies have they employed to mitigate these impacts?

Research Sub Question 2: What additional responsibilities, if any, do they believe would enhance their ability to lead their school and promote student achievement?

Data Cleaning

Interviews were conducted using my password-protected UIW student Zoom account. After transcription, the data were organized and coded into themes, which were also stored on my password-protected UIW student One Drive account, which was accessible only to me. Participant responses were organized by question, allowing for thorough data analysis after the interviews were completed. I began “the process of data analysis by identifying segments of the data that were specific responses to the research questions” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 203). I open-coded each transcript by writing “notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 204). The analysis of data (Creswell et al., 2014) was conducted by analyzing and coding, with the purpose of identifying segments in the data set that may potentially have findings related to the experiences of high school principals and teachers with decentralization. The use of bold text helped to highlight statements that allowed the researcher to pay attention to “recurring regularities in the data and to assign the units into themes or categories” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 203). In order to identify the categories, I used the study’s purpose, the literature review, and the meanings made by the study participants. My goal was “to arrive at structural descriptions” of the participants’ experiences and to identify the “underlying and precipitating factors” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 227) that described participants’ experiences so interpretations could be made based on the research questions of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Demographic Data Analysis

I interviewed two high school principals and four high school teachers from Jeddah City, Saudi Arabia. I collected participant characteristics, such as years of experience, school size, affiliation, and title/role (Table 3). I used purposeful sampling to identify subjects meeting the following criteria: male, high school principal, high school teacher, has at least 6 years of experience. The subject population included six individuals from high schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. I assigned participants pseudonyms for anonymity.

Participant Codes

In this process, each participant was assigned a unique code, and this code is used instead of their real name when referring to their data. This helped to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants, which was a crucial ethical consideration in research. Codes were assigned as follows:

- P1 refers to Principal 1 at High School
- P2 refers to Principal 2 at High School
- T1 refers to Teacher 1
- T2 refers to Teacher 2
- T3 refers to Teacher 3
- T4 refers to Teacher 4

Results Analysis

Data analysis of participants' responses revealed three overarching themes, nine sub-themes, and 15 categories (Table 4). The analysis of the interview data uncovered three main themes: Clarifying Experiences with Decentralization; Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery; and Recommendations to Enhance Decentralization. These themes emerged as a result

of examining high school principals' and teachers' perspectives and experiences, shedding light on their understanding of decentralization, its effects on content delivery, and their suggestions for improving the decentralization process.

Table 3

Characteristics of Each Participant

Participant	Years of experience	School size	Affiliation	Occupation	Interview Length
T1	21	More than 500	Obour Office	Teacher	1 hour
P1	26	More than 500	Al-Jawhara Office	Principal	58 min
P2	15	More than 500	Al Hamadaniyyah Office	Principal	1 hour
T2	18	More than 500	Alsaffa Office	Teacher	40 min
T3	25	More 500	Al Faiha Offi	Teacher	42 min
T4	18	More 500	Alsaffa Office	Teacher	48 min

Note: Table 3 shows the characteristics of each participant: year of experience, school size, affiliation, title/role. Pseudonyms were used to for anonymity and protect the participants' identities.

The theme Clarifying Experiences with Decentralization was the first overarching theme, and it explored the participants' perspectives on the lack of decentralization and support, the cultural impact, and positive outcomes. Participants discussed challenges related to unclear vision, district office control, limited powers of principals, slow communication, and cultural influences. On the positive side, participants highlight improved education quality, alignment with Vision 2030, and readiness for international tests.

Table 4*Overview of Results*

	Theme/Category Name	Impact	Recommendations
3 Overarching themes	Clarifying Experiences with Decentralization	Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery	Recommendations to Enhance the Decentralization
9 Sub-themes	Lack of Decentralization and Support, Culture impact, Positive	Impact on Teachers, Burnout	Realigning some Authorities, Revise the Position Requirements, Exchange Program, Establish Communication channel.
15 Categories	Unclear vision, District Office Control Over Schools, Limited powers of the principals, Slow Communication with Superiors, Age considerations, Cultural and regional influence, Improved Quality, Vision 2030 International Tests	Positive, No impact, Overloaded, Lack of Facility	Teachers Performance Evaluation, Professional Development, Special Qualification

The second theme, Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery, focused on the effects of decentralization on the delivery of educational content. It included sub-themes such as the impact on teachers and other influencers. The categories within this theme included positive impacts, no impact, feeling overloaded, which led to evading responsibilities, and issues related to the lack of necessary facilities such as funds or equipment.

Finally, the third theme, Recommendations to Enhance the Decentralization, explored participants' suggestions for improving the decentralization implementation. It included sub-themes such as withdrawing some authorities to be at a higher hierarchal level only, revising the

position requirements, establishing an exchange program, and establishing an effective communication channel. The categories within this theme were teachers' performance evaluation, professional development, and special qualifications.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis of participant responses revealed high school principals' and teachers' experience with the implementation of decentralization, and their recommendations under Clarifying Experiences with Decentralization, Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery, and Recommendations to Enhance the Decentralization. Using TA Coding by Clarke and Braun (2006), this study revealed three themes, nine sub-themes, and 15 categories (Table 3). I began the data analysis by identifying segments of the data that were related to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data analysis for this study was conducted by employing TA, as guided by the framework provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The purpose was to identify and analyze key themes that emerged from the collected data, which focused on exploring the experiences and perceptions of participants regarding the impact of decentralization in education. Through a rigorous process of data coding, categorization, and pattern identification, I aimed to gain insights into the various dimensions and implications of decentralization. The resulting themes and sub-themes provided a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives and informed the recommendations to enhance the decentralization process.

Main Research Question

The main research question was, What are the perceptions and experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia regarding the implementation of decentralization in the education system?

The following interview questions addressed the main research question as shown in Table 5: Can you describe your experiences as a school principal in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, regarding the implementation of decentralization in the education system? How did it impact your role and responsibilities?

Table 5

Clarifying Experiences With Decentralization

Clarifying Experiences with Decentralization			
Sub-themes	Categories	Sample quotes	Participants
Lack of Decentralization and Support	Unclear vision	“It means that over a period of, for example, ten years, every two or three years a plan emerges. For instance, currently, the educational system is going to undergo a complete change. If the roles were clarified, it would become evident.”	P1
	District Office Control Over Schools Limited powers of the principals Slow Communication with Superiors		T4, P1
Culture impact	Age considerations	“You cannot install cameras inside the school unless you obtain permission from the Ministry or the administration.”	P1
		“The problem is that you see this as an issue more prevalent among the older generation. Nowadays, the young supervisors, whom I just recently encountered, are, Mashallah, very productive and have enlightened mindsets. The older generation comes from a background of authoritarianism and tends to impose themselves. They don't follow the rules as much as they please themselves.”	T3
Positive	Cultural and regional influence	“I believe that people in urban areas have a beautiful management style because they have interacted with foreigners and are open-minded.”	P1, T2
	Improved Quality Vision 2030 International Tests	“The authorities are excellent and have greatly contributed to the development of schools.”	P1, P2, T4
		“The Vision 2030 of Prince Mohammed supports the independence of schools.”	

Theme 1: Clarifying Experiences with Decentralization

Data analysis of participants' responses revealed the first overarching theme and explained the experiences of high school principals and teachers with decentralization implementation. Three sub-themes and eight categories emerged from the principals' and teachers' responses to interview question 1. Table 5 is showing the clarifying experiences with decentralization theme and the categories, codes and some quotations that justified the codes names.

Lack of Decentralization and Support

My first sub-theme revealed from the participants included four categories unclear vision, District Office Control Over Schools, limited powers of the principals, and Slow Communication with Superiors. This theme emerged from the participants' perspectives on the lack of decentralization and support. This theme delves into the challenges encountered due to existing policies and their impact on the implementation of decentralization.

Unclear Vision

Participants reported that they did not have a clear vision of the initiatives that the MOE was adapting, therefore they couldn't add a valuable input. For example, P1 reported:

كل سنتين او ثلاثة تطلع لك خطة مثلا الان سوف يتغير النظام التعليمي بشكل كامل

Every two or three years a plan emerges. For instance, currently, the educational system is going to undergo a complete change. If the roles were clarified, it would become evident.

T2 concurred, highlighting that there were principals who lacked a clear understanding of the authorities bestowed upon them by the MOE. Consequently, they either seek assistance from the district office to clarify their granted authorities or simply choose not to exercise them:

ممکن يكون مو فاهم ان الصلاحية هذي من من صميم عمله فيرجع للمكتب

Does not understand that this authority is inherent to his role and ultimately falls under the jurisdiction of the office.

P2 also shared his firsthand experience with implementing decentralization, highlighting the absence of a clear vision. He mentioned that he frequently becomes aware of updates through social media before receiving official letters from the Ministry of Education, which arrive with delays. P2 said:

اصلا احنا نعرف بالتطورات من تويتر ونجلس فتره زينا زي باقي الناس الي ان يصل تعميم من الوزارة ولا يجي الا و الخبر انتشر فهو مجرد تأكيد للخبر

In fact, we know about developments through Twitter like everyone else. We wait patiently until a circular from the Ministry arrives, and by the time it does, the news has already spread. It's merely a confirmation of what we already knew.

District Office Control Over Schools

All participants unanimously acknowledged that high school principals possess significant authority that occasionally surpasses the powers of the educational office. However, the exercise of these authorities is contingent upon the principal's individual disposition and their relationship with their superiors. For instance, P1 had negative experiences with decentralization as he felt that his power to exercise some of the newly acquired authorities was still controlled by the ministry of Education. The principal retorted,

تخيل من صلاحياتي الغاء الطابور الصباحي بس اذا الغيته اتصل المشرف من المكتب" يحاسبني

Imagine that as a school principal, if I cancel the morning assembly, I would be called in by the office or the supervisor to be held accountable.

This was emphasized by T1, who attested that school principals could have negative experiences with decentralization, since some principals did not have the power to implement some of the attained authorities:

ماتقدر تفصل طالب البين يجي توجيه من فوق

Authority to dismiss students without waiting for guidance from higher authorities or the central administration.

Limited Powers of the Principals

High school principals' authority and decision-making abilities are often confined to specific areas or aspects of school administration. While principals held significant responsibility for managing their schools, their authority may have been limited to certain areas, such as observing spending on budget items with no change, signing contracts with cafeteria contractors, and implementing certain policies that require higher-level approvals. Some participants considered this limitation did not match what was expected from principals. For instance, T4 shared his firsthand experience when he attempted to correct a student's grade, which had been mistakenly entered into the system. He encountered difficulties when trying to make the necessary change:

جا مرحلة التعديل ما عنده صلاحية لان مقفل عليه النظام. رجع للمشرف. المشرف: والله ما عندي صلاحية والله عند مدير المكتب. مدير المكتب: ما عندي صلاحية مدير اوه والله الوزارة قفلتها. الإدارة: طيب الإدارة الوزارة يعني شفت كيف هذا؟ يعني في شي في معضلة كبيرة

It reached the stage of amendment, and he does not have the authority because the system restricts him. He referred it back to the supervisor. The supervisor said, "By God, I don't have the authority; by God, it lies with the office director." The office director responded, "I don't have the authority either; the director, by God, the ministry has restricted it." The administration exclaimed, "So the ministry is controlling the administration. Do you see how complicated this is? It poses a significant dilemma."

Slow Communication With Superiors

Slow communication with superiors was a subtheme that illuminated participants' experiences in dealing with the educational office or the MOE when it came to urgent matters. It highlighted the challenges they faced in terms of delayed or inefficient communication channels and the impact it had on addressing pressing issues in a timely manner. P2 shared his experience in the matter of asking guidance from the educational office:

بعض القرارات عشان يرفع للمكتب ممكن ما يردون الا بعد يوم يومين. يعني تكون المشكلة تفاقمت او انه الحل اصبحت اه ليس لها فائدة.

Some decisions, when waiting to the office, may not receive a response until one or two days later. This means that the problem has worsened or that the proposed solutions have become ineffective.

Cultural Impact

The second sub-theme to the first theme was revolved around the influence of culture. In this subtheme, I present the data that sheds light on the challenges that participants encountered in relation to cultural aspects during the implementation of decentralization. This sub-theme had two categories: Age Considerations, and Culture and Regional Influence.

Age Considerations

P1 shared his own experience with old supervisors. He said:

الاشكالية في ان ترى هذي حادثة تجدها عند الجيل القديم. يعني الان المشرفين الشباب اللي توهم لا انا اشوف انهم ما شاء الله منتجين وعقلياتهم متنورة اكثر. الجيل القديم جاي من السلطويه كذا بيغى يفرض نفسه. ما يطبق النظام قد ما بيغى هوا نفسه.

The problem is that you see this as an issue more prevalent among the older generation. Nowadays, the young supervisors, whom I just recently encountered, are, Mashallah, very productive and have enlightened mindsets. The older generation comes from a background of authoritarianism and tends to impose themselves. They don't follow the rules as much as they please themselves.

During the interview, P1 discussed a perceived problem concerning the management style of certain supervisors. P1 held the belief that this issue was more prevalent among supervisors from the older generation. According P1, the older supervisors may have had a background rooted in authoritarianism, which influenced them to adopt a more imposing leadership approach and be less bound by established rules and regulations. As a result, P1 suggested that older supervisors might prioritize their own preferences over strictly adhering to organizational rules and guidelines.

Cultural and Regional Influence

The second category in this sub-theme was Cultural and Regional Influence.. In this second category, I explored the influence of culture and region. I elaborated on the coding of interviews with the participants, focusing on the challenges they encountered during the implementation process. This category specifically addresses the impact of cultural and regional factors on these challenges. All participants agreed that region has a significant impact on implementation. For instance, T3 said:

ياخي شف المدراء في الرياض فاهمين عملهم و سهلين في التعامل

Look at the principals in Riyadh. They understand their work well and are easy to deal with.

P2 and P1 believed that as well. P2 said:

ومن حكم تجربتنا من واحنا صغار ولا زلت اقول القيادة انا اشوفها افضل في اهل الرياض واهل القصيم. مع احترامي

Based on our experience since we were young, I still believe that leadership is better among the people of Riyadh and Al-Qassim. With all due respect for others.

Positive Experiences

The third sub-theme explored the positive aspects of decentralization. In this code, I provided an explanation of the participants' positive experiences with the implementation of decentralization. This sub-theme consists of two categories: Improved Quality and Vision 2030 with International Tests.

Improved Quality

Some of the school principals and teachers said that they had positive experiences with implementing authorities. Indeed, the principals attested that the positive experiences with implementing newly acquired authorities had enhanced their flexibility and also helped improve the quality of education. For instance, T1 said:

وبالتالي اعطاء هذه الصلاحيات قد يساعد بشكل اكبر في تحسين العملية التعليمية على مستوى المدرسة والذي ينعكس على ادارة التعليم وبالتالي على المستوى العام للوزارة

Granting these authorities may contribute further to enhancing the educational process at the school level, which in turn reflects on the management of education and ultimately on the overall performance of the Ministry.

Vision 2030 with International Tests

The participants were well-informed about Vision 2030, a national initiative led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. They expressed enthusiasm for participating in international tests to objectively assess the progress made in implementing decentralization and its impact on the quality of education. Their aim was to obtain an unbiased evaluation, free from emotional decisions, to gauge the true extent of their achievements. T4 said:

ولكن الخطوة اللي اخذتها الوزارة في عملية تحسين تطوير واعادة بناء المناهج. اللي هي تقريبا المرحلة هذي الان. سيكون في اختبار بعد فترة، نبدأ هنا الان هل التجربة اللي استخدموها في ٢٠١٦ في اخر دورة دورة عقدت فيها الاختبار التيمز هل انه فيه تحسين في الاختبارات؟ هنا تتضح كيف كيف النواتج التحسين اللي صار في المناهج

However, the step taken by the Ministry in the process of improving, developing, and reconstructing the curriculum, which is currently in progress, will involve an upcoming test. Here, we start to assess whether the experience they used in 2016, in the previous cycle when the TIMSS test was administered, has led to improvements in the assessments. This is where the outcomes of the curriculum improvements become evident.

T3 also held an optimistic vision. He stated:

لم تقتصر الدول في وضع كل ما هو من شأنه رفعة مستوى التعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية، وذلك من خلال تطوير التعليم من إضافة مناهج دراسية جديدة وإرسال البعثات ورعاية الموهوبين. تعتبر هذه الأمور من أهم العوامل التي تساعد في نجاح وتحديات تطبيق هذه الصلاحيات

The government has not limited itself to initiatives aimed at elevating the level of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This includes the development of new curricula, sending missions abroad, and nurturing gifted individuals. These aspects are among the most important factors that contribute to the success and challenges of implementing these authorities.

Research Sub Question 1

Research Sub Question 1 was, In what ways has decentralization impacted the ability of high school teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to deliver content to learners during the implementation of decentralization in the education system, and what strategies have participants employed to mitigate these impacts?

The following interview questions addressed the research sub question: In what ways has decentralization in Jeddah impacted the ability of high school teachers to deliver content to learners? Can you provide specific examples or incidents that highlight these impacts?

Theme 2: Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery

Data analysis of participants' responses revealed the second overarching theme and explained the impacts of decentralization on content delivery as perceived by the high school principals and teachers. Table 6 shows two sub-themes and four categories emerged from the principals' and teachers' responses to interview question 2.

Impact on Teachers

Impact on Teachers, the first sub-theme, examined how decentralization had affected the teaching profession. It consisted of two codes: Positive Impact, which investigated any positive effects the participants may have encountered during implementation; and No Impact, which dealt with situations in which the participants indicated that the implementation had little to no effect on how they taught.

Positive Impact

Some of the participants reported that there was a positive impact on the content delivery in the class as a result of the authorities that were delegated to principals. T1 shared his experience, highlighting the impact of decentralization when it came to school facility issues, such as water

shortage or electricity problems. He emphasized that in such situations, the teaching process became impossible. This illustrated how the authority of the principal played a crucial role in making the decision to end the school day and dismiss the students. T1 said:

الآن من بعض الامور اللي منحت قد يكون هناك مثلا صرف الطلاب بشكل اسرع او مبكر اه لوجود مثلا خلل بالمدرسة. اه على سبيل المثال اه اكرمك الله والسامعين اه اللي هو دورات المياه او انقطاع الماء في المدرسة قد يشكل اه ربة كبيرة على مستوى التعليم اه لا يمكن لمعلم او طالب ان يبقى في فصل وهو في حاجته الى دورات المياه

One of the granted authorities may involve, for example, expedited or early dismissal of students due to certain issues in the school. For instance, in the case of restroom facilities or water disruptions, it can create significant disruption to the educational process. It is not possible for a teacher or student to remain in the classroom while in need of restroom facilities.

T2 expressed agreement with the positive impact of decentralization on content delivery. He highlighted that decentralization granted them the authority to establish communication with the students' families, allowing for collaborative efforts in the best interest of the students. T2 reported that

من خلال منح الصلاحيات للمدرء والمعلمين يتم الاتصال وتوعية اولياء الامور بضرورة متابعتك الطلاب لما لها من الاثر في تحسين مستويات الطلاب وايضا يتم اعتماد حصص اضافيه اثرائية وعلاجية واستثمار الفراغات في جداول المعلمين بما يكمل انصبتهم

By granting authorities to principals and teachers, communication and awareness are established with parents about the importance of monitoring students, as it has an impact on improving student performance. Additionally, additional enrichment and remedial sessions are adopted, and teachers' schedules are optimized to make the most of their time and fulfill their roles effectively.

No Impact

This second category explored participants' experiences, who had varying viewpoints, expressing the belief that decentralization had no impact on the process of content delivery. Indeed, P2 and some other participants held the belief that there was no direct correlation between decentralization and content delivery within the classroom. According to P2, content delivery primarily relied on the individual skills and abilities of the teacher:

Table 5*Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery*

Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery			
Sub-themes	Categories	Sample quotes	Participants
Impact on Teachers	Positive	“Decentralization has led to diversified learning methods that cater to the needs of students. It involves identifying the approaches that students require and working on programs and activities tailored to their learning needs. It promotes student engagement, collaboration, and cooperation to achieve educational interests.”.	T2
	No impact	"Depends on the teacher. If the teacher has the authority and knowledge to deliver information effectively, then it becomes a part of their work. However, these authorities may hinder the educational process, but the actual delivery of information relies on the teacher inside the classroom.”	T4
Burnout	Overloaded	“Unfortunately, some teachers do not take advantage of these granted authorities due to a lack of incentives or the burden of a heavy teaching load, which leaves them with insufficient time to fulfill these responsibilities.”	T3
	Lack of Facilities	“The principal visited us recently at the beginning of the second semester. He said, "Guys, what do you think if we collect money?" Well, why? By God, we don't have tools, we don't have resources. So, what's the reason? To buy a projector. I'm not responsible for paying, I'm not responsible, but I'm forced to pay to deliver information to students through technology.”	T4

لا مافيه علاقة مباشرة بين الصلاحيات والأداء الأكاديمي. لا أعتقد أنهما مرتبطان لأن المشكلة تكمن في شفافية نظامنا التعليمي ... إذا لعبت السلطات دورًا ، لكان ذلك واضحًا الآن

There is no direct correlation between authorities and academic performance. I don't believe they are related because the problem lies in the transparency of our education system . . . If authorities played a role, it would have become evident by now.

The study's findings revealed that some participants believed that content delivery depends on the individual skills and abilities of the teacher alone.

Burnout

This was my second sub-theme in the second theme in this study, Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery. Throughout the interviews, all participants shared their experiences of encountering various challenges that hindered their ability to exercise the delegated authorities granted to them by the MOE. These challenges included heavy workloads and a lack of necessary resources, such as adequate facilities and funding.

Excessive Workload

During the interviews, participants expressed their concerns about being overwhelmed with excessive tasks, which resulted in feelings of burnout and a lack of willingness to take on additional responsibilities, including exercising the authorities delegated to them by the MOE.

T3, for instance, reported that:

المعلمين في الميدان مهلوكين المعلمين ما بيون هذه الصلاحيات الممنوحة بسبب نقص الحوافز أو عبء التدريس الثقيل ، الشغل ما يتترك لهم وقتًا كافيًا لهذه المسؤوليات

Teachers do not take advantage of these granted authorities due to a lack of incentives or the burden of a heavy teaching load, which leaves them with insufficient time to fulfill these responsibilities.

P1 also supported T3 in this. The negative effect of having a large number of students in classrooms was a common theme throughout all the interviews. P1 stated:

في اتساع في الفصل يسبب ضغط على المعلمين لكثرة الطلاب هنا بتأثر سلبي

The expansion of the classroom puts pressure on the teachers because the large number of students here is negatively affected.

Lack of Capacity

Participants in this study stressed repeatedly the serious problem of insufficient capacity to handle the increasing number of pupils. Pupil/teacher and pupil/class ratios were notably too high. This difficulty was most noticeable in classes with unusually high class sizes, which occasionally exceeded 50 pupils. Such cramped classrooms made it difficult for teachers to conduct high-quality instruction and limited their capacity to give each student individualized attention. Participants also expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that, despite the potential advantages of decentralization, they were unable to fully take advantage of it to deal with this problem and enhance the learning environment. The restrictions on efficient content delivery and educational outcomes brought on by a lack of resources highlighted the urgent need for all-encompassing efforts to address this serious issue. During the interviews, P1 stated that

الصلاحيات هذي اثرت على المعلمين داخل الفصول، نعم لها علاقة اي مدير يرى ان عدد الطلاب في الفصل الواحد هو من وجهة نظره لا بد ان لا يتجاوز ٣٠ طالب. بينما في اتساع في الفصل يسبب ضغط على المعلمين لكثرة الطلاب هنا بتأثر سلبي

These authorities have had an impact on the teachers inside the classrooms. Yes, there is a correlation. Any principal who believes that the number of students in a single classroom should not exceed 30 from their perspective. However, an overcrowded classroom creates pressure on the teachers due to the high number of students, which has a negative impact.

Research Sub Question 2

Research Sub Question 2 was, What additional responsibilities, if any, do participants believe would enhance their ability to lead their school and promote student achievement?

The following interview questions addressed the second research sub question as shown in Table 7: In your opinion, what role should teachers play in the successful implementation of decentralization? How can teachers contribute to enhancing the educational experiences of

students under this new system? How do you believe the current decentralization model can be further enhanced to better support high school principals and teachers in Jeddah? Are there any additional responsibilities or resources you believe would be beneficial?

Table 7

Recommendations to Enhance Decentralization

Recommendations to Enhance the Decentralization			
Sub-themes	Categories	Example quotes	Participants
Realigning some Authorities	Teachers Performance Evaluation	“I believe that the authority of evaluating job performance should be withdrawn from school principals and returned to the Ministry because it is a sensitive matter, and it could be mis used.”	P1, T2, T3
Revise the Position Requirements	Professional Development	“It is important to provide practical training courses for educational leaders to enhance their capabilities. This includes self-learning opportunities and hands-on workshops on topics such as Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Continuous Improvement in Basic Teaching (CIBT).”	T4, P1, T3 T4, P1, P2
	Special Qualification	“School principals position need to be only for those who are holding PhD.”	
Exchange Program	Local Exchange	“Rotation is beneficial. So, what is the idea behind rotation? Rotation involves transferring the culture of the principal to a school where a teacher may have been teaching for twenty or thirty years.”	T1, T3, P1, P2
Establish Communication channel		“We need to have an open channel where we can deliver our voice to the policymakers as well as be involved in the decision-making process.”	P1, P2, T2, T4

Theme 3: Recommendations to Enhance Decentralization

Data analysis of participants' responses revealed the second overarching theme and explained the recommendations to enhance decentralization, as perceived by high school principals and teachers. Four sub-themes and five categories emerged from the principals' and teachers' responses to interview questions about their recommendations for better implantation.

Realigning Some Authorities

While all the participants acknowledged the significant impact of decentralization on education quality, they also expressed the belief that certain authorities should be withdrawn from school principals and centralized solely at the Ministry level. One of these authorities was the teachers' performance evaluation. P2, for example, believe this authority could be misused:

أعتقد أنه يجب سحب صلاحية تقييم الأداء الوظيفي من مديري المدارس وإعادتها إلى الوزارة لأنها مسألة حساسة وقد يساء استخدامها.

I believe that the authority of evaluating job performance should be withdrawn from school principals and returned to the Ministry because it is a sensitive matter, and it could be misused.

T4 shared the same belief, emphasizing that granting such authority to school principals could potentially lead to misuse. He highlighted concerns regarding biased judgments that may influence the assessment process. He reported:

قبل تقريبا اسبوعين جانا مدير جديد ولانه مايشوفني كثير اعطاني ٩٨ مع ان ادائي كان ممتاز و استحق ١٠٠

About two weeks ago, a new manager came to me, and because he doesn't see me much, he gave me 98, although my performance was excellent, and I deserve 100.

All the participants suggested that the authority of performance evaluation should be conducted at a higher hierarchical level, because of the need for impartiality and objectivity. They believed that evaluating performance was a critical task that could significantly impact an individual's career and professional development. For instance, P2 reported that:

بعض المدراء الله يهديه يفتقد للموضوعية والشواهد في تقييم الأداء

Some principals, may God guide them, lack objectivity and evidence in performance evaluation.

Revising the Position Requirements

The second recommendation put forth by the participants was to revise the position requirements, as they believed it would enhance the implementation of decentralization. This sub-theme comprised two categories: Professional Development and Special Qualifications.

Professional Development. Participants believed that this was a continuous process before and after being assigned to the position. T1 shared his experience:

بعض المدراء اخر دوره اخذها يوم تعيين مدير

Some principals last professional development taken on the day of appointment of a manager.

T3 commented on professional development as a milestone in the success of the decentralization implementation. He said:

بدون التدريب المستمر ما راح نتقدم

Without continuous training, we will not progress.

T4 emphasized the training quality, saying:

مؤخرا هناك الكثير من الدورات عن الإدارة مثلا يكون تعليم ذاتي ويجب على التدريب التربوي ان يعملوا على دورات تدريبية عملية وليس نظرية عن طريق تجارب هناك الكثير حقيقه مثلا كي بي أي بي ام بي و غيرها.

Recently, there have been numerous management courses available, such as self-learning and educational training. It is essential for educational trainers to focus on practical training courses rather than theoretical ones, utilizing real-life experiences. There are many beneficial programs, such as Key Performance Indicators (KPI), Business Process Management (CITB), and others.

Special Qualification. The second category in the recommendation for school principal requirements pertained to the participants' suggestion to enhance decentralization. They proposed that high school principals should possess a doctoral degree in education or a related

field. This requirement aimed to ensure a higher level of expertise and professionalism in educational leadership. P1 said:

ان يكون المرشح حاصل علي درجة الدكتوراه مثل دورة الارشاد الطلابي زي كذا

The candidate should hold a doctoral degree, such as in Student Guidance, for example, to meet the requirements.

T4 also shared a similar perspective to P1, that school principals must hold a PhD degree, affirming that:

مدير المدرسة لازم يكون بس للي معهم دكتوراه

School principals position need to be only for those who are holding PhD.

During the interviews, all participants, principals and teachers, demonstrated a strong awareness of the significance of education and training. This aspect will be further explored in detail in the findings section.

Exchange Program

The third recommendation put forth by the participants was to establish an exchange program. Some participants, like T2 and P1, suggested implementing the program within Jeddah city itself. On the other hand, T4 recommended an international exchange program across Arab Gulf countries, such as Qatar. This recommendation highlighted the participants' desire to foster cultural exchange, broaden perspectives, and promote educational collaboration, either locally or internationally. T2 asserted that:

حلو لو يكون فيه تدوير المدراء بين المكاتب

It would be great to have a rotation system for principals between educational offices.

T4 shared the same belief but suggested implementing a rotation program for principals internationally throughout Gulf Cooperation Council:

لماذا لا يكون هناك تبادل مدراء مع دول اخري من دول الخليج مثلا عملية تبادل الخبرات مع الإمارات، على سبيل المثال، عندما يتم تنظيم ورش عمل بينهم؟ ويمكن للمدراء المتميزين تقديم دورات تدريبية وبالتالي يتم تعزيز الوعي وعملية اتخاذ القرارات ورفع المستوى التعليمي والإداري داخل المدرسة

Why not have an exchange of principals with other countries in the Gulf region, such as exchanging experiences with the United Arab Emirates, for example, through organizing workshops between them? Outstanding principals could provide training courses, thereby enhancing awareness, decision-making processes, and raising the educational and administrative standards within the school.

Establish Communication Channel

The fourth recommendation put forth by the participants was the establishment of a communication channel. Participants emphasized the need to foster and promote effective communication at all hierarchical levels within the MOE. All participants showed commitment and desire to achieve quality and to meet the expectations that the MOE is trying to achieve by decentralizing the education system. This could be justified by their recommendation that aimed to enhance collaboration, information sharing, and coordination among stakeholders to ensure a more cohesive and efficient educational system. T2 asserted that:

نحتاج الي قنوات تواصل مفتوحة عشان نقدر نوصل اقتراحاتنا الي المسؤولين

We need to have an open channel where we can deliver our voice to the policymakers as well as be involved in the decision-making process.

P2 also emphasized the importance of continuous communication to facilitate the sharing of experiences and knowledge among stakeholders. Their recommendation highlighted the value of open and ongoing communication channels as a means to promote collaboration, learn from one another's experiences, and enhance the overall effectiveness of educational practices. He said:

الاجتماعات المستمرة بشكل دوري تساعد على حل المشاكل ومشاركة الجديد في الصلاحيات و الأنظمة

Regular ongoing meetings help in problem-solving and sharing updates regarding authorities and systems.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on three main themes. The first theme, Clarifying Experiences with Decentralization, explored participants' perspectives of the lack of decentralization and support, as well as cultural influences and positive outcomes. The second theme, Impacts of Decentralization on Content Delivery, examined how decentralization affected the delivery of educational content, including its impact on teachers and other influencers. The third theme, Recommendations to Enhance Decentralization, explored participants' suggestions for improving the implementation of decentralization. Chapter 5 addresses discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

In this qualitative study, I examined the perception and experiences of high school principals and teachers regarding the implementation of decentralization in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted via the UIW Zoom platform. Purposeful sampling was utilized to recruit the participants for this study. The key common thing from all participants' narratives was their unwavering commitment to prioritizing the interests and well-being of their students. It was evident that their primary objective revolved around ensuring the students' success and fostering an environment conducive to their growth and achievement. This sentiment was particularly highlighted by one participant, P1, who explicitly stated, "Our ultimate goal should always be the success of our students."

The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

The main research question was: What are the perceptions and experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia regarding the implementation of decentralization in the education system?

Research sub questions were derived from this question, which were:

Research Sub Question 1: In what ways has decentralization impacted the ability of high school teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to deliver content to learners during the implementation of decentralization in the education system, and what strategies have they employed to mitigate these impacts?

Research Sub Question 2: What additional responsibilities, if any, do they believe would enhance their ability to lead their school and promote student achievement?

This chapter shares the findings, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for additional research studies.

Discussion of Findings

The findings were in line with my expectations and with previously reported research on educational reforms in Saudi Arabia, specifically decentralization. This study focused on the high school principals' and teachers' perspectives and experiences with the implementation of decentralization. The details I identified in this study were supported by previous studies mentioned in Chapter 2, the literature review. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the participants' lived experiences and perceptions of practicing the authorities granted to them by the MOE in their schools, and their recommendations for better practice. One main research question and two sub research questions were answered through personal interviews with two high school principals and four teachers.

After analysis of the data, 3 findings were identified. These findings, their associated data points, and supporting research follow each finding.

Finding 1: Main Research Question

The finding from the main research question was that principals and teachers reported that there was a lack of support with the implementation of decentralization.

Participants expressed their concerns regarding the lack of decentralization and support within the education system due to political and cultural matters. This finding highlighted the challenges associated with centralized decision-making and limited autonomy at the school level. The participants reported that unclear vision, district office control, limited powers of principals, slow communication, and cultural influences hindered the effective implementation of decentralization.

Unclear Vision

The participants' vague grasp of the MOE's activities is referred to as "unclear vision." The participants complained that the specific objectives and plans put out by the ministry lacked clarity and detail. They admitted to having trouble understanding the goals, plans, and anticipated results of these activities, which added to the sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. Their capacity to completely comprehend the direction and goal of the educational system's endeavors was hampered by their unclear vision. During the interview, T1 shared his experiences:

لكن يحتاجون بعض المدراء في بعض الاحيان الى آآ التمكن من المقصود الصحيح في هذه الصلاحيات متى وكيف يتم استخدامه.

Some managers sometimes need to be able to understand the correct purpose of these authorities, when and how to use them.

The principals' and teachers' experiences of their ability to understand the authorities in my study aligned strongly with the research conducted by Meemar at al. (2018). My study findings revealed that participants experienced a restricted capacity to comprehend the administrative authorities delegated to them by the MOE.

Participants in this study said that the lack of clarity in the vision was attributed to the MOE's yearly changes to its plans. P2, during the interviews, highlighted this concern:

كل سنتين او ثلاثة تطلع لك خطة مثلا الان سوف يتغير النظام التعليمي بشكل كامل

Every 2 or 3 years a plan emerges. For instance, currently, the educational system is going to undergo a complete change. If the roles were clarified, it would become evident.

Participants in this study attributed the lack of clarity in the vision to the MOE's yearly changes to its plans. This finding resonates with Alotaibi's (2023) study, where he discovered that constant changes to schools' visions and plans posed a challenge, hindering their ability to be retained and consistently recalled. According to Alotibi (2023), through a documentary

review of the operational plans of six schools in his research, it became evident that they shared similarities in terms of the timeframe (1-year plan) and frequently had identical requirements. Moreover, the majority of participants in Alotibi's study admitted being unaware of their schools' vision, mission, and goals when asked, further aligning with the findings of this study.

The importance of vision in effective leadership has been widely recognized for over 10 years (Bush & Glover, 2014). Bush and Middlewood (2013) emphasized that effective leadership involves integrating, expressing, and developing an organization's vision. Fullan (1988) also stressed the necessity of a common vision within a school, encompassing both the ideal condition for the institution and the transformational process needed to achieve it. Leithwood and Sun (2012) have highlighted shared vision as one of the most effective leadership strategies for influencing school culture. This understored the need for a unique and deeply ingrained vision within an organization for effective leadership (Bush & Middlewood, 2013).

Leithwood et al. (2019) identified the establishment of a school vision and goals as key components of transformational leadership, among six identified dimensions that enable principals to enhance the commitment of participants and foster the development of the organization's members as a collective unit. By sharing the vision, leaders inspire and motivate their employees to work towards a common purpose. Building a shared vision, choosing specific short-term goals, and effectively communicating the vision and goals are all necessary for setting a clear direction (Leithwood et al., 2019). This can foster a sense of unity, alignment, and shared understanding among team members, leading to increased engagement, commitment, and overall performance. Additionally, sharing the vision helps employees recognize the significance of their roles in achieving broader organizational goals, thereby fostering a sense of purpose and

meaning in their work. In other words, schools need a clear direction on what they should be doing as a group to improve education.

District Office Control

District control over the school refers to the level of authority and decision-making power that the district or centralized administrative body has over the daily operations and activities of individual schools within an educational system. It represents the extent to which the district maintains control over various aspects without referring to the procedural handbook. P2, for instance, shared his experiences with the lack of ability to practice the authorities that had been granted to school principals. He stated:

تخيل انا من صلاحيتي كمدير مدرسة الغي الطابور الصباحي يجي المكتب او المشرف يحاسبيني. يعني يناقضون
أنفسهم بأنفسهم

Imagine that I, as a school principal, decide to cancel the morning assembly, and then the office or supervisor reprimands me. They contradict themselves.

P1 recounted similar experiences with the implementation of decentralization, highlighting how it varied depending on the district office. This finding emphasizes the impact of district control on schools, defining the level of authority and decision-making power exerted by centralized administrative bodies over individual schools' daily operations within the educational system. This aligns with the results of Alotaibi's (2023) study, which revealed that centralization in the Saudi Arabian educational system limits the autonomy of public schools, hindering their ability to develop and execute long-term strategic plans. The absence of such plans may make it challenging for school staff to anticipate and address potential challenges and obstacles.

Furthermore, P1 mentioned during the interview that the procedural handbook was not effectively utilized and that there were instances where the district office lacked trust in school principals. He said:

حتى الدليل الاجرائي مرن يحق لمدير ما لا يحق لغيره اي على حسب ما يراه مكتب التعليم ثقة

Even the procedural handbook is flexible, granting certain privileges to one principal that are not granted to others, based on the trust that the education office has in them.

This finding aligns with prior research conducted by Kadasah (2018), which reported significant gaps between policy and its actual implementation in Saudi Arabia. Alyami and Floyd's (2019) findings also concurred with this, revealing a lack of adherence to the procedural handbook and a tendency for decisions to be made in an improvisational manner. Moreover, Hofstede's dimension theory highlights the cultural characteristic of high-power distance in the context of Saudi Arabia, providing further support for my study's findings. This cultural value presents challenges for decentralizing decision-making authority, as there is a prevailing preference for centralized control and top-down decision-making.

These limitations and challenges faced by school principals in exercising their authority at the local level have been recognized in previous studies, including those conducted by Almannie (2015) and Alzamil (2021). Almannie shed light on the restricted roles of school principals in Saudi Arabia, while Alzamil emphasized the significant obstacles they encountered when exercising their authority. Despite retaining a substantial portion of their authority, participants in this study expressed concerns regarding the sluggish communication between school principals and their superiors.

Cultural Impact

Age Considerations

The implementation of decentralization in schools can be influenced by generational differences in thinking, particularly between older and younger individuals. Cultural influences, which can vary across different age groups, play a significant role in shaping these perspectives. It was discovered that age concerns, combined with regional and cultural influences, had a major

impact on participants' perspectives of decentralization. In this study, younger supervisors were seen as more open-minded in supporting decentralization attempts, whereas older supervisors tended to favor centralized methods. This demonstrated how generational variations affect how decentralization was accepted and understood. P2 stated that during the interview:

الإشكالية في ان ترى هذي حادثة تجدها عند الجيل القديم. يعني الان المشرفين الشباب اللي توهم لا انا اشوف انهم ما شاء الله منتجين وعقلياتهم متنورة اكثر. الجيل القديم جاي من السلطويه كذا بيغى يفرض نفسه. ما يطبق النظام قد ما بيغى هوا نفسه.

The problem is that you see this as an issue more prevalent among the older generation. Nowadays, the young supervisors, whom I just recently encountered, are, Mashallah, very productive and have enlightened mindsets. The older generation comes from a background of authoritarianism and tends to impose themselves. They don't follow the rules as much as they please themselves.

This finding corroborates the findings of Alshammari's (2021) research, which revealed a positive association between the tenure of principals and their level of interaction with the school district. Specifically, principals with over 10 years of experience demonstrated a higher propensity for engagement with the school district, in comparison to their counterparts with fewer than 5 years of experience. These results imply a significant correlation between the duration of principal experience and their degree of involvement and commitment to the school district.

This finding can be linked to the cultural dimension of power distance, a concept identified by Hofstede. Saudi Arabia is ranked as having a high-power distance culture, where hierarchical structures and deference to authority are deeply ingrained. It stands to reason that individuals who have spent more time within such a cultural context may develop a greater affinity for centralized and hierarchical leadership styles, thus explaining the heightened engagement observed among older school principals. This connection underscores the profound influence of culture on leadership behaviors, particularly in contexts where power distance plays a prominent role. Hofstede ranked Saudi Arabia as having a high-power distance score of 80.

This means that Saudi Arabian society accepts and expects a high degree of inequality in power and wealth. People in Saudi Arabia generally respect authority and expect leaders to be respected and obeyed. There is a clear hierarchy in society, and people are expected to know their place.

Furthermore, another challenge that can hinder employees' motivation is the factor of aging. According to Huberman's career cycle model (1992), as cited in de Vries et al. (2013), teachers go through five stages in their careers, based on their number of years in the profession: 1-3 years, the launching of a career; 4-6 years, the stabilizing phase; 7-9 years, the phase of new challenges; 19-30 years, the plateauing phase; and 31-40 years, the final phase. The data indicates that as employees get closer to retirement or express a desire for early retirement, their motivation to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) programs diminishes. During the interviews, when participants were asked about their supervisors, they noted that older supervisors found it more challenging to encourage creativity, compared to younger supervisors.

Furthermore, Alotaibi's (2023) study revealed that employees in schools display lower motivation to engage in CPD programs as they approached retirement age, or when they expressed a desire for early retirement. This finding lends support to the notion that older individuals are generally less inclined to embrace new initiatives, such as the decentralization.

Cultural and Regional Influence

This study also found significant differences in management approaches between urban and rural areas, with urban areas showing a more favorable tendency toward decentralization. Notably, one participant claimed that interaction with people from various cultures exposed urban school principals to a more receptive mindset toward supporting decentralization

initiatives. This illustrated the impact of urban environment on management philosophies and their alignment with decentralization concepts. T3 said:

ياخي شف المدراء في الرياض فاهمين عملهم و سهلين في التعامل

Look at the principals in Riyadh. They understand their work well and are easy to deal with.

Based on the responses of participants regarding cultural impact, it was observed that school principals exposed to greater interactions with foreigners tended to develop a more open-minded attitude toward decentralization. This phenomenon can be better understood through Nisbett's (2003) theory, which posits that individuals perceive the world differently based on their environmental contexts.

This study demonstrated that culture exerts a significant influence on the way schools were managed. One participant mentioned that certain conflicts were better resolved in a friendly manner. Additionally, in boys' schools, parents may refrain from directly engaging with the school, leading the school to communicate with the tribal sheikh, who plays a crucial role in connecting with the village community, as discovered by Alotaibi (2023). These findings highlight the importance of understanding and adapting to cultural norms and practices when it comes to school operations and community engagement.

Furthermore, SBM recognizes the influence of environmental contexts on individuals' perceptions, empowering schools with greater autonomy to adapt policies and practices that comply with the unique needs and characteristics of their respective communities. Increased globalization and exposure to diverse perspectives through interactions with foreigners have influenced younger generations and urban leaders, prompting them to embrace more open-minded approaches towards decentralization.

Moreover, the impact of geographical differences on leadership style was evident in the challenges faced by school staff in rural schools, due to their geographical isolation and distance from urban regions. As highlighted by Curran and Kitchin (2021), these difficulties contributed to a lower rate of teacher and leader retention. The unique circumstances of geographical isolation presented additional obstacles for school leaders, necessitating adaptive and innovative leadership approaches to effectively address the challenges.

Alotaibi (2023) conducted a study that showed a notable effect of geographical impact on rural schools, identifying various problems arising from geographical isolation, including issues related to hiring, retaining, housing shortages for employees, and transportation. Consequently, many schools struggle with staffing, leading to the possibility of their being overlooked by new hires and motivating current employees to request transfers to more urbanized schools.

According to Kim & Amani (2021), the majority of the workforce from the six schools resided in cities or other urbanized areas, according to the report. These differences in geographical areas within Saudi Arabia may be influenced by certain cultural and religious beliefs (Kim & Amani, 2021).

Furthermore, culture plays a pivotal role in shaping leadership styles (Lok & Crawford, 2004), influencing how leaders establish goals, communicate, make decisions, and foster relationships with their teams. This dynamic relationship underscores the importance of aligning leadership approaches with the prevailing culture to foster effective leadership within an organization. Understanding the organizational culture is significant for leaders and educators in the schools in Saudi Arabia. Such understanding provides them with valuable insights into the attitudes, expectations, and values held by their peers and students. By harnessing this knowledge, they can effectively cultivate a positive and nurturing learning environment.

Positive Influences

Despite the challenges encountered in implementing the authorities of principals, participants expressed a positive outlook towards the future and the impacts of decentralization. They maintained a sense of optimism, believing that decentralization had provided them with increased flexibility and had positively influenced the quality of education. The participants also attributed their positive perceptions and experiences of decentralization to the clarity of goals, support, and sense of purpose outlined in Vision 2030. Overall, the participants' optimism reflects their belief in the potential benefits and positive outcomes associated with the ongoing process of decentralization. All the participants agreed with T2's statement:

وبالتالي اعطاء هذه الصلاحيات قد يساعد بشكل اكبر في تحسين العملية التعليمية على مستوى المدرسة والذي ينعكس على ادارة التعليم وبالتالي على المستوى العام للوزارة

Granting these authorities may contribute further to enhancing the educational process at the school level, which in turn reflects on the management of education and ultimately on the overall performance of the Ministry.

This finding is supported by Alotibi (2023), who found that the majority of participants felt that giving school principals more powers led to ultimately increasing the outcome quality of their schools and increasing the motivation among the school staff and pupils' attendance.

Vescio et al. (2008) put forth the idea that professional development not only positively influences teaching practices but also has a direct impact on students' achievement. This highlights the crucial role of school principals in the success of professional development initiatives, as they play a significant part in promoting and implementing these activities (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). The involvement and support of school principals is instrumental in ensuring that professional development efforts have a lasting and beneficial effect on both teachers and students within the school community.

As discussed above, the main research question, which explored the experiences of high school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, regarding decentralization, is answered by this study's first finding. Particularly, participants' expressions of concern about the lack of decentralization and support within the education system, due to political and cultural matters, directly address this main research question. This alignment emphasizes the significance of understanding how decentralization impacts educators within this specific cultural and political context.

Furthermore, the main research question and its corresponding findings are connected with the first research problem, The Impact of the Cultural and Political Context on Educational System Decentralization. The challenges highlighted by participants regarding centralized decision-making, limited autonomy at the school level, unclear vision, district office control, limited powers of principals, slow communication, and cultural influences directly address this research problem. This connection underscores this study's importance in providing insights into how cultural and political factors influence the implementation of decentralization in educational systems.

As we move forward, it's imperative to consider new questions that have emerged from these findings. One such emerging question is, What strategies can be developed to effectively mitigate the impact of cultural challenges on the successful implementation of decentralization in educational systems? This question arises from the observed influence of cultural and contextual factors on decentralization experiences and calls for further exploration in subsequent studies. Additionally, another pertinent question that has surfaced is, How can we enhance the confidence of principals and policymakers in the individuals responsible for implementing decentralization, assuring them of their competence and likelihood of success? This inquiry is

crucial for addressing potential reservations or doubts among key stakeholders and ensuring the smooth execution of decentralization efforts in educational systems.

Finding 2: Research Sub Question 1

The finding from research sub question 1 was that school principals and teachers had mixed opinions on the impact of decentralization on teaching and content delivery.

Impact on Teachers

The impact of decentralization on content delivery emerged as a significant finding in the study. The participants expressed varied opinions regarding this matter. While some participants believed that the implementation of principals' authorities had a positive influence on teachers' ability to deliver content, others held different perspectives.

Positive Impact

Some participants believed in the positive impact of decentralization, as T1 shared:

الآن من بعض الأمور اللي منحت قد يكون هناك مثلا صرف الطلاب بشكل اسرع او مبكر اه لوجود مثلا خلل بالمدرسة. اه على سبيل المثال اه اكرمك الله والسامعين اه اللي هو دورات المياه او انقطاع الماء في المدرسة قد يشكل اه ربة كبيرة على مستوى التعليم اه لا يمكن لمعلم او طالب ان يبقى في فصل وهو في حاجته الى دورات المياه

One of the granted authorities may involve, for example, expedited or early dismissal of students due to certain issues in the school. For instance, in the case of restroom facilities or water disruptions, it can create significant disruption to the educational process. It is not possible for a teacher or student to remain in the classroom while in need of restroom facilities.

This finding aligns with the principles of the SBM paradigm, which underscores the importance of catering to the specific requirements of the community and students to enhance educational quality. It provides further evidence that decentralization promotes local autonomy and decision-making, empowering schools to tailor their instructional strategies and allocate resources effectively to suit the local context. By fostering a sense of ownership and accountability, decentralization supports flexible and effective educational approaches, allowing school leaders and stakeholders to actively participate in decision-making processes.

Consequently, the results of this study corroborate the alignment between the benefits of decentralization and the core tenets advocated by SBM theory.

This conclusion finds support in previous studies that have highlighted the crucial roles played by high school principals and teachers in student achievement (Cordell et al., 2019; Kim & Seo, 2018; Persson et al., 2015; Valenta et al., 2010). For instance, Malaysia et al. (2019) conducted a study exploring the relationship between leadership theory and policy reform. Their findings suggested that the emphasis on expertise rather than positional authority, acknowledging schools as professional organizations, and recognizing the widespread diffusion of knowledge and talent is a normative and romantic perspective. However, they argued that this model might be more applicable to developed education systems such as those in England, the USA, and Australia, rather than the predominantly centralized systems found in many Asian countries, including Malaysia (Bush & Ng, 2019).

This is in line with the findings of Hallam et al. (2012), who confirmed that in-school mentoring is more beneficial than coaching because it can strengthen new teachers' connections of trust, friendship, and personal connection, which in turn has a favorable impact on their performance.

No Impact

On the one hand, some of the participants in my study asserted that decentralization and the delivery of content in the classroom had nothing to do with one another. These viewpoints contended that, rather than the decentralization of power, the effectiveness of content delivery mostly depended on the competencies and capabilities of individual teachers. They claimed that regardless of the level of decentralization, instructors' skills, expertise, and teaching methods determined how well content was delivered. These viewpoints emphasized the role of teacher

expertise and pedagogical techniques in enabling efficient content delivery, and these participants contended that, while decentralization may offer opportunities and resources, it could not ensure better results in the absence of qualified and experienced teachers.

This finding contradicts the results of Park et al. (2019), whose study revealed that school principals' support enhanced collective accountability, leading to improved student achievement. It also diverges from the prevailing perspective highlighted by Hallinger and Lee (2014) and Leithwood et al. (2019), which underscores the pivotal role of school leaders in motivating teachers. However, it is notable that my study's finding regarding some participants' belief in the limited impact of principals on student achievement or overall school effectiveness presents a dissenting viewpoint. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that this dissenting opinion does not negate the body of evidence suggesting that school leaders, as demonstrated in the study by Yalçinkaya et al. (2021) investigating leadership style and teacher motivation, can indeed exert considerable influence on teachers' motivation and, by extension, on the overall school dynamic. These diverse perspectives collectively contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted role of school principals within the educational context.

Moreover, Bhengu and Mthembu (2014) conducted a qualitative case study on two schools in a neighborhood that was struggling with poverty, in order to examine the varied approaches they used to improve student achievement. Principals of schools, teachers, parents, and department heads made up the research sample and participated in semi-structured interviews (Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014). Bhengu and Mthembu discovered that factors related to the school could explain variations in student accomplishment. This supports the idea that leadership plays a crucial role in establishing and upholding positive learning and teaching environments in classrooms.

Burnout

Participants who had a negative view of decentralization, on the other hand, blamed its execution for their exhaustion and their inability to use decentralization successfully. They voiced worry that the additional accountability and power brought about by decentralization would put a heavy weight on people, resulting in tiredness and feeling overwhelmed. They also said that a lack of resources and assistance made it difficult for them to fully accept and implement decentralization. These perspectives highlight the necessity for sufficient support mechanisms and resources to facilitate decentralization's successful implementation and lessen its adverse effects on people, while shedding light on potential difficulties and disadvantages of decentralization.

Work Overload

This study revealed that the excessive workload imposed on teachers and the growing number of students present significant challenges in effectively utilizing decentralization. These factors hindered their ability to fully leverage the advantages offered by decentralization.

According to P1:

لسوء الحظ ، لا يستغل بعض المعلمين هذه الصلاحيات الممنوحة بسبب نقص الحوافز أو عبء التدريس الثقيل ، مما لا يترك لهم وقتًا كافيًا للاضطلاع بهذه المسؤوليات

Unfortunately, some teachers do not take advantage of these granted authorities due to a lack of incentives or the burden of a heavy teaching load, which leaves them with insufficient time to fulfill these responsibilities.

This finding aligns with research conducted by Meemar et al. (2018), which revealed that school principals expressed moderate to low levels of confidence in their ability to effectively exercise the authorities granted to them by the MOE. Similarly, Alotibi (2023) noted in his study that work overload was a significant factor contributing to decreased motivation and engagement among teachers.

Furthermore, upon examining the available documentation, Alotibi (2023) found that the Department of Education imposed numerous administrative regulations on school administrators, despite the lack of administrative employees to support them. In Alotibi's study, one of the participating school administrators mentioned that the multitude of obligations placed on the school administration made it challenging to focus on improving the workplace. These administrative burdens add to the complexities faced by school administrators and may further contribute to the challenges in exercising their authorities effectively.

This finding is supported by Doyle and Locke (2014), who studied the challenges in recruiting school principals in U.S. urban areas. Doyle and Locke found that the position of a school leader was a stressful job, and the salaries offered were not good enough, which reduced the desire for this position among potential candidates.

Lack of Facilities

The second category in my second subtheme was the lack of facilities. Throughout the interviews, all participants shared their experiences of inadequate support, whether it was related to insufficient funds or inadequate supplies. For instance, T4 stated:

زارنا المدير مؤخرًا في بداية الفصل الدراسي الثاني. قال: "ما رأيكم يا رفاق إذا جمعنا المال؟" كذلك لماذا؟ بالله ، ليس لدينا أدوات ، ليس لدينا موارد. إذن ما هو السبب؟ لشراء جهاز عرض. أنا لست مسؤولاً عن الدفع ، ولست مسؤولاً ، لكنني مجبر على الدفع لتقديم المعلومات للطلاب من خلال التكنولوجيا.

The principal visited us recently at the beginning of the second semester. He said, "Guys, what do you think if we collect money?" Well, why? By God, we don't have tools, we don't have resources. So, what's the reason? To buy a projector. I'm not responsible for paying, I'm not responsible, but I'm forced to pay to deliver information to students through technology.

As participants asserted in the interviews, insufficient funds or inadequate supplies can hinder the successful implementation of decentralization by limiting resources, impeding complete implementation, creating disparities among schools, restricting autonomy, and impacting teacher morale and engagement. Insufficient financial and administrative support has

the potential to impede the success of decentralization reforms. The administrative staff at the school play a vital role in the execution and support of school services (Tj, 2021).

Alotibi (2023) supported this finding in a study that was carried out in Saudi Arabia, reporting that the six schools in the study agreed on the shortage of administrative staff; in fact, two schools had no administrative staff at all, which reflected the lack of administrative support from the MOE. Because of the shared nature of administrative tasks, the lack of administrative personnel not only had an impact on school leaders' retention but also increased the workload for teachers (Rasheed et al., 2010).

This finding, supported by a study conducted by The Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research, (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation de la formation et de la recherche scientifique, 2014), highlighted that the scope of decentralization reform efforts in Morocco remains limited due to several factors, including the inefficiency of the system in targeting individuals, inadequate financial resources, and the challenges associated with meeting the ever-increasing demand. Moreover, the success of schools and their leaders is, to some extent, dependent on the support offered by the Department of Education. It has been argued that enhancing collaboration between schools and the Department of Education is crucial (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018).

Public schools often grapple with the issue of inadequate resources and equipment, which significantly impact the teaching and learning process (Quansah et al., 2019). This limitation directly hampers teachers' ability to deliver content effectively. Consequently, the shortage of essential facilities in educational institutions emphasizes the pressing need for improvements and investments in educational infrastructure to enhance the overall learning experience for students.

This second finding addresses the impact of decentralization on teaching and content delivery, aligning with the second research question. These findings revealed diverse opinions among school principals and teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Some saw decentralization, particularly the empowerment of principals, as beneficial for content delivery, echoing the principles of SBM that emphasize local autonomy. On the other hand, other participants believed that individual teacher competence played a more substantial role, downplaying decentralization's influence. Negative impacts included exhaustion and resource constraints, as well as challenges such as heavy teacher workloads and inadequate facilities that impeded effective decentralization. These findings underscore the importance of support, resources, and infrastructure improvements to optimize decentralization's advantages and enhance the overall educational experience.

Moving on, the second and third research problems, Issues Related to Teaching, and Poor Academic Performance in Public Schools, align with the second research sub question, which investigated decentralization's impact on high school teachers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and the strategies they employed to navigate these effects. This study's outcomes, rooted in participants' perspectives and experiences, directly addressed this research question. By scrutinizing the intricacies of decentralization's influence on teaching quality, these findings provided insights in line with the research problem's focus on clear roles, autonomy, and support for school administrators.

Looking ahead to future research, a critical question arises: What role can local governments play in supporting schools to meet the needs of their teachers and students within decentralized educational systems? This question stems from the study's findings, which clearly emphasize the pivotal role of local government support in enhancing the overall educational

experience in decentralized systems. Exploring the extent of local government involvement can significantly contribute to the success of decentralization efforts.

Finding 3: Research Sub Question 2

The finding from research sub question 2 was that school principals and teachers shared their recommendations to enhance decentralization.

Drawing from insights and firsthand experiences with the implementation of decentralization, participant principals and teachers offered valuable recommendations to strengthen the role of school principals in effectively implementing decentralization in educational settings. These recommendations aimed to empower principals and enhance their ability to navigate challenges and leverage the opportunities associated with decentralization.

Realigning Some Authorities

All participants felt that certain authorities should be realigned, leaving school principals with responsibilities that cannot be misused. One authority that the majority of respondents felt should be returned to the MOE was evaluation of teachers' performance. T4, for example, recounted a personal experience in which his principal was replaced, leading to a challenging situation where he had to justify his performance and convince the new principal that he deserved a higher score than the assigned 98. This anecdote sheds light on the potential difficulties faced by teachers when there is a change in leadership, and the need to navigate such situations to ensure a fair assessment of their achievements. P1, in his role as a principal, also concurred with the suggestion that this particular authority could be prone to misuse if it remained at the school level. He highlighted that some school principals evaluate their teachers without providing sufficient evidence or justifications for their decisions. What's even more concerning was that certain principals failed to communicate the grades assigned to teachers

during the evaluation process. This lack of transparency and feedback can hinder teachers' professional development and create uncertainty within the school environment.

The finding on the need to remodel the authorities of school principals aligns with the works of Allheaniy (2012) and Meemar et al. (2018), who identified the need to realign some authorities that were delegated to school principals.

Revise the Position Requirements

The second recommendation that emerged from this study pertained to revising the position requirements for school principals. Two categories were identified within this subtheme: professional development and special qualifications.

Professional Development

Participants emphasized the importance of providing ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge of school principals, particularly in light of the increased demands to improve educational outcomes. They recognized the need for continuous learning and staying abreast of new educational practices, research, and policies. By investing in professional development, school principals could enhance their leadership abilities, instructional strategies, and decision-making skills, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students. This recommendation highlights the significance of supporting school principals in their professional growth and ensuring they have the necessary tools and resources to meet the evolving needs of the education system. T4, for instance, asserted the importance of the quality of provisional development programs:

من المهم توفير دورات تدريبية عملية للقادة التربويين لتعزيز قدراتهم. ويشمل ذلك فرص التعلم الذاتي وورش العمل (CIBT) والتحسين المستمر في التدريس الأساسي (KPI) العملية حول موضوعات مثل مؤشرات الأداء الرئيسية

It is important to provide practical training courses for educational leaders to enhance their capabilities. This includes self-learning opportunities and hands-on workshops on

topics such as Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Continuous Improvement in Basic Teaching (CIBT).

Participants expressed the need for a strong emphasis on ensuring the effectiveness, relevance, and quality of professional development programs. They highlighted the importance of aligning professional development offerings with the specific needs and challenges faced by school principals. Participants emphasized the significance of providing practical and applicable knowledge, skills, and resources that can directly impact their day-to-day responsibilities and positively contribute to school improvement. This recommendation underscores the importance of investing in high-quality professional development programs that are tailored to the unique context and requirements of school principals, ultimately leading to meaningful professional growth and improved educational outcomes. During the interviews, participants expressed disappointment with the training programs, citing mismatched content, underprepared trainers, and random trainer selection as key concerns. Improvements in these areas are needed to enhance the effectiveness of the programs and better meet participants' needs.

The participants' desire for high-quality professional development is justified. A study conducted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) aimed to explore the benefits of effective teacher professional development. Darling-Hammond et al. reviewed 35 well-designed studies, all of which demonstrated a positive correlation between teacher professional development, teaching practices, and student achievements. A study by Mansour et al. (2013) investigated the need for professional growth in Saudi Arabia's urban centers. Their findings suggest that there was no difference in the needs of primary, middle, and secondary instructors. Teachers at all of these levels experienced a similar lack of pedagogical competence and topic knowledge, highlighting the crucial need for professional development. The principal's role has evolved from one of control and management to that of an educational leader who nurtures learner growth, staff

development, parent involvement, and community support while adapting to significant expectations and changes (Mestry & Singh, 2007).

The participants in this study recognized the importance of professional development, especially given the challenges they encountered. Stewart and Matthews (2015) suggested that officials and policymakers should target school leaders to provide necessary professional development, considering their already overburdened and isolated circumstances. Additionally, the examples mentioned earlier demonstrated school leaders' eagerness to develop themselves, either at their own expense or through informal CPD methods. To have maximum influence, school leaders continuously expanded their knowledge and skills to enhance educational practices (Mizell, 2010). As a result, leaders must be committed to CPD to equip themselves with the capacity to handle the complexity of their roles and the wide array of leadership skills and activities required (Arhipova et al., 2018).

This led to some further questions:

- What experiences and requirements do those who work in KSA's schools have for ongoing professional development?
- What are the opportunities and obstacles for CPD?
- In what ways might CPD be supported?
- How can educators and school administrators improve professional learning communities?
- What programs for ongoing professional development are teachers and school administrators in need of?

Special Qualifications

The second category that emerged from the participants' recommendations to revise the position requirements focused on the qualifications and credentials of school principals.

Participants emphasized the importance of reviewing the candidate conditions and assigning

higher qualifications, such as a doctorate degree, for school principals. They believed that this level of education would enable principals to effectively navigate the changing educational landscape and provide the necessary support to their staff members.

This finding is consistent with research conducted by Meemar et al. (2018), which also highlighted the significant impact of education level. Similarly, Alshammari (2021) found that principals with graduate degrees, such as a master's or doctorate, demonstrated significantly positive impact on their schools and on their personnel.

This finding is logical, due to the significant role that school principals play in the decentralization implementation. The distinctions in responsibilities and roles between teaching and leadership highlight the need for special requirements in the preparation and development of school leaders. It is crucial to consider how leadership positions are anticipated, leadership capacity is nurtured, and leadership is continuously cultivated (Moorosi, 2021). To optimize school principals' effectiveness, it is essential to provide them with targeted training programs that focus on human capital, leadership skills, and school culture (Tingle et al., 2019). By making such investments in training initiatives, schools can empower their leaders to excel in their roles and make significant contributions to the overall growth and success of the educational institution. These special requirements for school principals are vital to ensure they are well-equipped to meet the unique challenges and demands of their leadership positions.

A study conducted by Doyle and Locke (2014) supports this recommendation and showed that there is a lack of strategic consideration engaged in identifying talent for school leadership positions. The recruiting criteria employed don't gather enough data to demonstrate a candidate's prior success in raising student achievement levels. Doyle and Locke's (2014)

findings suggest that the recruitment process for school principals in urban areas needs to be improved to attract more qualified and motivated candidates.

Loeb et al. (2010) investigated the distribution of principals across schools in a large school district. They found that schools with large populations of low-achieving and low-income pupils have principals with lower education and experience levels and lower college selectivity. The findings of both Doyle and Locke (2014) and Loeb et al. (2010) suggest that there is a need for better recruitment and selection processes for school leaders, especially in urban areas, to ensure that schools have qualified and motivated leaders who can improve student achievement.

This led to further questions:

- How are school leaders selected for positions?
- What, exactly, are the principals' roles in schools in staff development?

Exchange Program

The participants in this study expressed the belief that the establishment of an exchange program, either within the school district or on a national level, would greatly benefit school principals by facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experiences. According to T4, implementing such a program would not only facilitate knowledge sharing but also serve as a source of motivation for school principals to strive for excellence in their own schools, as they would aspire to become role models for others.

Hirsh et al.'s (2011) study supported this finding. They discovered that principals who participated in an exchange program reported acquiring a more comprehensive understanding of education, reinforcing the notion that such programs contribute to a broader perspective on the subject. Based on the notion that teachers have much to learn from one another, learning communities create and sustain an environment that fosters open communication, dedication, and

collaboration, leading to the personal and collective growth and development of all participants (Lieberman et al., 2011). This highlights the potential benefits of establishing exchange programs that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences among teachers, fostering a supportive and enriching learning environment. Teachers can provide feedback and share experiences during the exchange program activities, which helps to build the trust necessary for effective collaboration (Roy & Hord, 2006).

Establish a Communication Channel

During the interviews, it became evident that participants faced challenges in effectively communicating with their superiors or the district office. A unanimous agreement was reached among all participants that a significant communication gap existed between the lower level and the higher level of the educational hierarchy. For instance, T3 stated that

نحن بحاجة إلى قناة مفتوحة حيث يمكننا إيصال صوتنا إلى صانعي السياسات وكذلك المشاركة في عملية صنع القرار

We need to have an open channel where we can deliver our voice to the policymakers as well as be involved in the decision-making process.

This finding aligns with the research conducted by Kadasah (2018), which highlighted that a lack of communication between policymakers and implementers can lead to misunderstandings during policy implementation. It's worth noting that Kadasah's study emphasized the significance of effective communication in the policy implementation process.

Furthermore, the participants' expressed desire for opportunities to engage with decision-makers and have their voices heard is entirely valid. This sentiment finds support in a study conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (2014), which revealed a positive correlation between employee job satisfaction and engagement. This suggests that when

individuals feel that their perspectives and concerns are valued and considered in decision-making processes, their overall job satisfaction and engagement tend to be higher.

Khourey-Bowers et al. (2005) reinforce the importance of collaboration and effective communication. Their research underlines that teachers who work collaboratively are more likely to be effective in their teaching practices. This emphasizes that teamwork and open lines of communication among educators can significantly enhance the quality of teaching and, by extension, student achievement.

In light of these findings, it became evident that schools should prioritize the creation of a positive school culture that fosters effective leadership and healthy collegial relationships among teachers. By doing so, educational institutions can not only improve job satisfaction and engagement among staff but also enhance teaching practices and, ultimately, contribute to improved student achievement. This underscores the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and inclusivity in educational policy and practice.

The participants' request for an active communication channel with their supervisors was reasonable. It underscored the importance of continuous training in communication strategies for school leaders and teachers to foster effective integration and collaboration (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Nasreen & Odhiambo, 2018). Such training is vital in establishing a conducive environment for productive interactions and cooperation between educators and their superiors, ultimately benefiting the overall functioning of the school.

The technological revolution has an impact on Saudi Arabia's education system. The MOE has created an electronic system to handle all of its internal and external transactions as a result (MoE, 2017). Additionally, they offer e-services for stakeholders to contact the Ministry

directly through websites for e-books with numerous exercises for students (MoEebook, 2019; Tawasul, 2019).

This leads to another question: To what extent is communication between different hierarchical levels within educational institutions effective?

Implications for Theory

By examining the experiences and opinions of high school administrators and teachers regarding the implementation of decentralization in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, this qualitative study adds to the theoretical knowledge of SBM. The study's findings shed important light on the particular elements that affect how decentralization is implemented within the SBM framework. Implementation effectiveness depends on successful stakeholder participation, communication, and capacity-building efforts. The theoretical knowledge of SBM and its consequences in educational contexts is aided by these insights, which also offer direction to policymakers, educational leaders, and administrators looking to improve decentralized implementation within the SBM framework. By examining the intricacies of decentralization implementation in various circumstances and examining the long-term effects, future research can improve on this work. The perceptions of decentralization implementation among the principals and teachers in this study represent the importance of following the assumption of SBM. To improve the current implementation of decentralization, it is essential that the MOE employ the assumptions of school-based management.

Implications for Practice

The success of decentralization in Saudi Arabian high schools depends on effective implementation, which carries significant implications for educational policy and teacher support systems.

Firstly, educational policies related to decentralization should be refined and strengthened. This may involve providing clearer guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of school leaders and teachers within the decentralized framework. Well-defined policies can help ensure consistent implementation and alignment with educational goals.

Secondly, teacher support systems should prioritize professional development programs that equip educators with the skills and knowledge required to thrive in a decentralized environment. Training initiatives can focus on collaborative decision-making, leadership skills, and effective communication, all of which are critical in the context of decentralization. Additionally, educational policies should encourage and facilitate increased community engagement in school decision-making processes. This may involve mechanisms for parents, community members, and local stakeholders to contribute to school improvement plans and policies, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration. Moreover, policymakers and educational leaders should promote data-driven decision-making at the school level. Providing schools with access to relevant data and assessment tools can empower them to make informed choices that align with student needs and educational objectives. Furthermore, recognizing that each school has its unique context, educational policies should allow for flexibility in the implementation of decentralization. Schools should have autonomy to adapt decentralization practices to their specific circumstances while adhering to overarching educational goals.

Lastly, a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the progress of decentralization initiatives is essential. Regular assessments can help identify challenges and successes, enabling policymakers to refine policies and support systems as needed to maximize the benefits of decentralization. These implications highlight the need for policy enhancements, professional development, community engagement, data-driven decision-making, flexibility, and a robust monitoring and evaluation system. By addressing these key areas, educational policymakers and teacher support systems can contribute to the effective implementation of decentralization in Saudi Arabian high schools, ultimately leading to improved education quality and strengthened school-community collaboration.

Limitations

A notable limitation inherent in this study pertained to the dynamic nature of the phenomenon under investigation, which specifically focused on the process of decentralization within the educational context. While this research contributes valuable insights into the decentralization process as it existed during the phases of data collection and analysis, it is imperative to recognize that decentralization is a continuous and evolving process. This study effectively provided a snapshot, analogous to a static image, capturing a specific moment within the broader timeline of the decentralization phenomenon. However, it was unable to account for potential alterations, advancements, or shifts that may have transpired in the decentralization experience subsequent to the conclusion of data collection.

Decentralization, as a multifaceted and intricate process, remains susceptible to influences stemming from various internal and external factors. These factors encompass policy modifications, changes in leadership, and shifts in educational priorities. Consequently, the findings and conclusions presented in this research should be interpreted within the confines of

the particular timeframe during which the study was executed. This limitation underscores the necessity for sustained research endeavors and continual monitoring of decentralization initiatives over time. Such endeavors are crucial for cultivating a comprehensive comprehension of how this process unfolds and understanding its enduring impacts on educational methodologies and outcomes.

Subsequent studies can further build upon this research by investigating decentralization at multiple junctures in time, facilitating the tracking of its progression and transformations, and thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of this inherently dynamic phenomenon.

Recommendations for Future Research

Explore the Impact of Gender on Decentralization Implementation

Future studies should strive to include a more varied spectrum of participants, including both male and female high school principals and teachers. This will make it possible to examine decentralization implementation experiences and perspectives thoroughly while taking into account any potential gender inequalities. Diverse viewpoints can be used to develop a more comprehensive grasp of the subject.

Conduct a Longitudinal Study

To deepen our understanding of the dynamic nature of the decentralization process and its long-lasting effects, it is recommended to undertake a longitudinal study. This research should monitor the implementation and consequences of decentralization initiatives over an extended period. Such an approach will provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of decentralization and allow for a comprehensive assessment of its long-term impact, as decentralization initiatives often take time to manifest their outcomes.

Replicate This Study

This study has provided valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of high school administrators and teachers in Jeddah regarding decentralization, and in filling the current gap in literature due to the lack of research addressing high school principals' and teachers' perceptions. By repeating the study in various cities, including Riyadh, researchers can explore the diversity of experiences and perspectives across different regions of Saudi Arabia. This expanded geographic coverage will help uncover regional variations, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how decentralization is perceived and enacted in various settings. Additionally, it will facilitate the identification of region-specific challenges and opportunities, enabling policymakers and educational leaders to tailor their strategies and initiatives accordingly.

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Appendices

Appendix A

IRB Approval



June 5, 2023

PI: Mr. Mohammed Alaklabi
 Protocol Title: Decentralization Implementation in Saudi Arabian Educational System as Perceived by High School Principals: A Qualitative Study
 Review Category: Exempt
 Expiration Date: 6/05/2026

Project Link: <https://uiw.forms.ethicalreviewmanager.com/ProjectView/Index/1380>
 Reference Number: 2023-1380-EX

Hello,

Your request to conduct the above study has been determined to be Exempt from federal regulations governing human subjects research and therefore exempt from annual review.

The following exemption categories apply:

- Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings that specifically involves normal educational practices., Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

Approved documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Other Supporting Documents	permission from the research site	05/17/2023	1
Recruitment Materials	Mohammed Alaklabi dissertation proposal approval form (part 1) - signed	05/17/2023	1
Recruitment Materials	Invitation E-mail	05/19/2023	2
Instruments for Data Collection	Interview Guide (Principals)	05/19/2023	2
Instruments for Data Collection	Interview Guide (Teachers)	05/19/2023	2
Instruments for Data Collection	CITI 2022	05/19/2023	1
Instruments for Data Collection	Informed Consent A&E	06/04/2023	2

Please keep in mind the following responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Conduct the study only according to the protocol approved by the IRB.
2. Submit any changes to the protocol and/or consent documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to the implementation of the changes. Use the **IRB Amendment Request** form.
3. Ensure that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
4. Report immediately to the IRB any severe adverse reaction or serious problem, whether anticipated or unanticipated, using the **Unanticipated Problem/Protocol Deviation Report**.
5. Report immediately to the IRB the death of a subject, regardless of the cause.
6. Report promptly to the IRB any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of the subjects to participate or continue to take part in the study.
7. Ensure completion and maintenance of an active (non-expired) [CITI human subjects training](#) certificate for all individuals on the protocol.
8. Close the protocol after the project's completion. Use the **IRB Closure** form.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol.

If you wish to continue the study, submit a continuing review request before 6/05/2026. If the study is active on 06/06/2026 it will be administratively closed.

If you need any assistance, please contact us.

Sincerely

Office of Research and Graduate Studies
 Research Compliance
 University of the Incarnate Word
 (210) 805-3555
irb@uiwtx.edu

Appendix B

Interview Guide (Principals)

List of Interview Questions

Decentralization Implementation in Saudi Arabian Educational System: A Qualitative Study

Researcher: Mohammed Alaklabi

Department: Dreeben School of Education (PhD Candidate)

Phone: 210.749.5147

Demographic questions: (Principals and Techers):

1. How many years have you been in the educational filed?
2. What is your educational office? For example, El Safa, Northern, etc.
3. What is the size of your school? Small (100-200) medium (201-500) large (more than 501). As mentioned in the regulation handbook, the Ministry of Education 2021.

Interview Questions:

1. Can you describe your experiences as a high school principal in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia regarding the implementation of decentralization in the education system? How has it impacted your role and responsibilities?
2. In what ways has the decentralization in Jeddah impacted the ability of high school teachers to deliver content to learners? Can you provide specific examples or incidents that highlight these impacts?
3. What strategies or approaches have you employed as a principal to support teachers in mitigating the challenges they face during the implementation of decentralization? How effective have these strategies been in addressing the impacts on teaching and learning?

4. How do you perceive the overall academic performance of students in public schools since the implementation of decentralization? Have there been any noticeable improvements or concerns?
5. From your perspective, what are the main factors within the cultural and political context that influence the success or challenges of decentralization in the educational system?
6. How do you believe the current decentralization model can be further enhanced to better support high school principals and teachers in Jeddah? Are there any additional responsibilities or resources you believe would be beneficial?
7. Can you share any specific initiatives or programs that have been implemented in your school to enhance the implementation of decentralization? How have these initiatives been received by teachers and students?
8. In your opinion, what role should high school principals play in leading and driving the successful implementation of decentralization in Jeddah? What support or training do you think principals need to effectively carry out their responsibilities?

Conclusion:

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences and perspectives on the implementation of decentralization in the education system in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Your responses have provided valuable insights into the impact of decentralization on high school teachers and principals. Is there anything else you would like to add or any questions you have for me?

Appendix C

أسئلة المقابلة البحثية (للمدراء)

قائمة أسئلة المقابلة

تطبيق اللامركزية في النظام التعليمي السعودي: دراسة نوعية

الباحث: محمد الأكلبي

القسم: كلية دريبين للتربية (مرشح دكتوراه)

الهاتف: 210.749.5147

أسئلة تعريفية:

- ١- كم عدد سنوات خبرتك في مجال التعليم؟
- ٢- ما هو مكتب التعليم الخاص بك؟ على سبيل المثال، الصفا، الشمال، إلخ
- ٣- ما هو حجم مدرستك؟ صغيرة (100-200)، متوسطة (201-500)، كبيرة (أكثر من 501). كما هو مذكور في كتيب التنظيم، وزارة التعليم 2021

أسئلة المقابلة:

- ١- هل يمكنك وصف تجاربك كمدير مدرسة ثانوية في جدة بالمملكة العربية السعودية فيما يتعلق بتطبيق اللامركزية في نظام التعليم؟ كيف أثرت على دورك ومسؤولياتك؟
- ٢- ما هي الطرق التي أثرت بها اللامركزية في جدة على قدرة معلمي المدارس الثانوية على توصيل المحتوى للمتعلمين؟ هل يمكنك تقديم أمثلة أو حوادث محددة تسلط الضوء على هذه التأثيرات؟
- ٣- ما هي الاستراتيجيات أو الأساليب التي استخدمتها كمدير لدعم المعلمين في التخفيف من التحديات التي يواجهونها أثناء تطبيق اللامركزية؟ ما مدى فعالية هذه الاستراتيجيات في معالجة التأثيرات على التدريس والتعلم؟
- ٤- كيف ترى الأداء الأكاديمي العام للطلاب في المدارس الحكومية منذ تطبيق اللامركزية؟ هل كانت هناك أي تحسينات أو مخاوف ملحوظة؟
- ٥- من وجهة نظرك، ما هي العوامل الرئيسية ضمن السياق الثقافي والسياسي التي تؤثر على نجاح أو تحديات اللامركزية في النظام التعليمي؟

٦- كيف تعتقد أن نموذج اللامركزية الحالي يمكن تحسينه بشكل أكبر لتقديم دعم أفضل لمديري المدارس الثانوية

والمدرسين في جدة؟ هل هناك أي مسؤوليات أو موارد إضافية تعتقد أنها ستكون مفيدة؟

٧- هل يمكنك مشاركة أي مبادرات أو برامج محددة تم تنفيذها في مدرستك لتعزيز تطبيق اللامركزية؟ كيف استقبل

المعلمون والطلاب هذه المبادرات؟

٨- برأيك، ما هو الدور الذي يجب أن يلعبه مديرو المدارس الثانوية في قيادة ودفع التنفيذ الناجح للامركزية في جدة؟

ما هو الدعم أو التدريب الذي تعتقد أن المديرين يحتاجون إليه للقيام بمسؤولياتهم بفعالية؟

الخاتمة

شكراً لك على وقتك ومشاركة تجاربك ووجهات نظرك فيما يتعلق بتنفيذ اللامركزية في نظام التعليم في جدة، المملكة العربية

السعودية. إجاباتك كانت قيمة حول تأثير اللامركزية على معلمي ومديري المدارس الثانوية. هل هناك أي شيء آخر تود

إضافته أو أي أسئلة؟

Appendix D

Interview Guide (Teachers)

List of Interview Questions

Decentralization Implementation in Saudi Arabian Educational System: A Qualitative Study

Researcher: Mohammed Alaklabi

Department: Dreeben School of Education (PhD Candidate)

Phone: 210.749.5147

Demographic questions: (Principals and Teachers)

- 1- How many years have you been in the educational field?
- 2- What is your educational office? For example, El Safa, Northern, etc.
- 3- What is the size of your school? Small (100-200) medium (201-500) large (more than 501). As mentioned in the regulation handbook, the Ministry of Education 2021.

Introduction to the Interview:

1. Can you describe your experiences as a high school teacher in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia during the implementation of decentralization in the education system? How has it impacted your teaching practices and classroom dynamics?
2. In what ways has the decentralization impacted your ability to deliver content to learners? Have there been any challenges or opportunities that have emerged as a result?

3. What strategies or instructional approaches have you employed to adapt to the changes brought about by decentralization? How effective do you believe these strategies have been in facilitating student learning?
4. How do you perceive the overall impact of decentralization on student engagement and academic performance? Have you noticed any changes in student motivation or achievement?
5. What support or resources have been provided to you as a teacher to navigate the implementation of decentralization? How have these supports influenced your ability to carry out your teaching responsibilities?
6. In your opinion, what role should teachers play in the successful implementation of decentralization? How can teachers contribute to enhancing the educational experiences of students under this new system?

Conclusion:

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences and perspectives on the implementation of decentralization in the education system in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Your responses have provided valuable insights into the impact of decentralization on high school teachers and principals. Is there anything else you would like to add or any questions you have for me?

Appendix E

أسئلة المقابلة البحثية (للمعلمين)

تطبيق اللامركزية في النظام التعليمي السعودي: دراسة نوعية

الباحث: محمد الأكلبي

القسم: كلية دريبين للتربية (مرشح دكتوراه)

الهاتف: 210.749.5147

أسئلة تعريفية:

١- كم عدد سنوات خبرتك في مجال التعليم؟

٢- ما هو مكتب التعليم الخاص بك؟ على سبيل المثال، الصفا، الشمال، إلخ

٣- ما هو حجم مدرستك؟ صغيرة (100-200)، متوسطة (201-500)، كبيرة (أكثر من 501). كما هو مذكور في كتيب التنظيم، وزارة التعليم 2021

أسئلة المقابلة:

١- هل يمكنك وصف تجاربك كمدرس في مدرسة ثانوية في جدة بالمملكة العربية السعودية أثناء تطبيق اللامركزية في نظام

التعليم؟ كيف أثرت على ممارسات التدريس وديناميكيات الفصل الدراسي؟

٢- ما هي الطرق التي أثرت فيها اللامركزية على قدرتك على تقديم المحتوى للمتعلمين؟ هل ظهرت أي تحديات أو فرص

نتيجة لذلك؟

٣- ما هي الاستراتيجيات أو المناهج التعليمية التي استخدمتها للتكيف مع التغييرات التي أحدثتها اللامركزية؟ ما مدى فاعلية

هذه الاستراتيجيات في تسهيل تعلم الطلاب في اعتقادك؟

كيف ترى التأثير العام للامركزية على مشاركة الطلاب والأداء الأكاديمي؟ هل لاحظت أي تغييرات في تحفيز الطالب أو

تحصيله؟

٤- ما هو الدعم أو الموارد التي تم تقديمها لك كمدرس للتغلب على تطبيق اللامركزية؟ كيف أثرت هذه أشكال الدعم على قدرتك

على القيام بمسؤولياتك التعليمية؟

٥- ما هو برأيك الدور الذي يجب أن يلعبه المعلمون في التطبيق الناجح للامركزية؟ كيف يمكن للمعلمين المساهمة في تعزيز

الخبرات التعليمية للطلاب في ظل هذا النظام الجديد؟

الخاتمة

شكرًا لك على وقتك ومشاركة تجاربك ووجهات نظرك فيما يتعلق بتنفيذ اللامركزية في نظام التعليم في جدة، المملكة العربية

السعودية. إجاباتك كانت قيمة حول تأثير اللامركزية على معلمي ومديري المدارس الثانوية. هل هناك أي شيء آخر تود

إضافته أو أي أسئلة؟

Appendix F

Informed Consent Document

Informed Consent Document

Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study of

Decentralization Implementation in Saudi Arabian Educational System, Qualitative study.

University of the Incarnate Word

Authorized Study Personnel:

Mohammed Alaklabi, PhD Candidate

Dreeben School of Education, UIW (PhD Candidate)

Phone: 210-749-5147

Email: alaklabi@student.uiwtx.edu

Key Information: Your consent is being sought for a research study. The purpose of the research is to explore high school principals' and teachers' experiences with decentralization implementation, and their recommendation on enhancing such implementation. If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- Procedures will include participants and the researcher to complete on-to-one interview. Each interview will have a pre-determined set of questions and will approximately 60 minutes in length.

- These interviews will take 60 minutes. The researcher may ask for an additional meeting to ensure sufficient data is collected.
- There are not risks associated with this study.
- You will not be paid for your participation.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate at any time.

Invitation: You are invited to volunteer as one of one of the subjects in the research project named above. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are a high school principal or a teacher in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and you have 6 years of experience in the field of education.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive design study is to explore high school principals' and teachers' experiences with decentralization implementation, and their recommendation on enhancing the decentralization implementation.

What will be done during this research study?

After signing this informed consent, you will be proceed with selecting a time at your convenience to conduct a one-on-one interview. The one-on-one interview will require 45 minutes to one hour of your uninterrupted time. You are one of set of high school principals who will be interviewed for the purposes of this study. The first section of this interview is the Demographic Questions which will provide a demographic profile of the study participants. The second section is open-ended questions seek to gather the data required to respond to the study's questions.

What are the possible risks of being in this study?

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life.

What are the possible benefits to you?

You are not expected to receive any benefits from being in this study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

The results of this study may reveal valuable information that will benefit the Ministry of Education in KSA as it will provide insight and knowledge that can be used to enhance decentralization implementation. Also, it may provide information that is needed to design training and professional development programs for current and future superintendents in Saudi Arabia.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Instead of being in this research study you can decide not to take part in this study without any consequences.

What will being in this research study cost you?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

How will information about you be protected?

Everything we learn about you in the study will be confidential. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. If I publish with results of the study, you will not be identified in any way. The data will be stored electronically on a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for three years after the study is complete.

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study at any time, for any reason. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or the University of the Incarnate Word. You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled. Any information collected from the participant will not be used if the participant decides to withdraw before finishing the study.

What should you do if you have a problem or question during this research study?

If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact the researcher via email at alaklabi@student.uiwtx.edu or via phone at +1210-605-8859 the Faculty Advisor Dr. Arthur E. Hernández via email at aherna8@uiwtx.edu or via phone at +1 (210) 283-6409. If you have additional questions about your rights or wish to report a problem that may be related to the study, please contact the University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board office at +1 (210) 805-3036 or +1 (210) 805-3565.

Consent

Your signature indicates that you (1) consent to take part in this research study, (2) that you have read and understand the information given above, and (3) that the information above was explained to you.

Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date ___ / ___ / ___

Name of Principal Investigator _____

Signature of Principal Investigator _____ Date ___ / ___ / ___

Appendix G

وثيقة الموافقة على المشاركة بدراسة

موافقة مشارك على المشاركة بالدراسة

تطبيق اللامركزية في نظام التعليم السعودي، دراسة نوعية
جامعة انكارنت وورد

الباحث الرئيسي: محمد الاكلمي، مرشح دكتوراة

كلية دربين للتعليم

هاتف: ٥١٤٧-٧٤٩-٢١٠

الايمل:alaklabi@student.uiwtx.edu

معلومات أساسية: الهدف هو للحصول على موافقتك على المشاركة في دراسة بحثية. الغرض من البحث هو اكتشاف خبرات مديري المدارس الثانوية والمعلمين مع تطبيق اللامركزية، وتوصياتهم بشأن إنجاح اللامركزية. إذا وافقت على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، فسيتضمن ذلك:

- ستشمل الإجراءات المشاركين والباحث لإكمال مقابلة فردية. ستحتوي كل مقابلة على مجموعة أسئلة محددة مسبقاً وستبلغ مدتها 60 دقيقة تقريباً.

- ستستغرق هذه المقابلات 60 دقيقة. قد يطلب الباحث اجتماعاً إضافياً لضمان جمع بيانات كافية.

- لا توجد مخاطر مرتبطة بهذه الدراسة

- لن يتم الدفع لك مقابل مشاركتك

- مشاركتك طوعية، وقد تقرر عدم المشاركة في أي وقت

لماذا يُطلب منك المشاركة في هذه الدراسة؟

يُطلب منك أن تكون في هذه الدراسة لأنك مدير مدرسة ثانوية أو مدرس ثانوي في جدة بالمملكة العربية السعودية وعملت 6 سنوات على الأقل في مجال التعليم.

ما هو الغرض من هذه الدراسة؟

الغرض من هذه الدراسة النوعية هو استكشاف خبرات مديري المدارس الثانوية والمعلمين مع تطبيق اللامركزية، وتوصياتهم بشأن تعزيز تطبيق اللامركزية.

ما الذي سيتم عمله خلال هذه الدراسة؟

بعد التوقيع على هذه الموافقة، سوف تقوم باختيار الوقت الذي يناسبك لإجراء مقابلة فردية. ستتطلب المقابلة الفردية من 45 دقيقة إلى ساعة واحدة من وقتك. أنت واحد من ضمن مجموعة من مديري المدارس الثانوية الذين ستتم مقابلتهم لأغراض هذه الدراسة. القسم الأول من هذه المقابلة هو الأسئلة الديموغرافية التي ستوفر لمحة ديموغرافية للمشاركين في الدراسة. القسم الثاني عبارة عن أسئلة مفتوحة تهدف إلى جمع البيانات المطلوبة للإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة.

ما هي المخاطر المحتملة لوجودك في هذه الدراسة؟

لا توجد أي مخاطر جسدية أو عاطفية بسبب مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة بخلاف تلك التي تتعرض لها الحياة اليومية.

ما هي الفوائد المتوقعة لك؟

ليس من المتوقع أن تحصل على أي فوائد بسبب المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

ما هي الفوائد المتوقعة للآخرين؟

قد تكشف نتائج هذه الدراسة عن معلومات قيمة ستفيد وزارة التربية والتعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية لأنها ستوفر المعرفة التي يمكن استخدامها لتعزيز تطبيق اللامركزية. أيضاً، قد توفر المعلومات اللازمة لتصميم برامج التدريب والتطوير المهني للمشرفين الحاليين والمستقبليين في المملكة العربية السعودية

ما هي بدائل عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة؟

بدلاً من أن تكون مشاركا في هذه الدراسة، يمكنك أن تقرر عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة دون أي عواقب.

كم ستكلف هذه الدراسة؟

لا توجد تكلفة عليك بسبب المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

هل سيكون لمشاركتي في هذه الدراسة مقابل مادي؟

لن يتم الدفع لك مقابل مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة البحثية.

كيف ستتم حماية المعلومات المتعلقة بك؟

كل شيء تشاركه معنا في هذه الدراسة سيكون سرياً. الأشخاص الوحيدون الذين يمكنهم الوصول إلى معلوماتك هم موظفي مجلس مراجعة أخلاقيات البحث وأي شخص له الصلاحية بحكم القانون. سيتم تخزين البيانات إلكترونياً على الحاسوب الشخصي للباحث ولن يراها الا فريق البحث أثناء الدراسة وسيتم مسحها بعد ثلاث سنوات من اكمال الدراسة. إذا قمت بنشر نتائج الدراسة، فلن يتم التعرف عليك بأي شكل من الأشكال.

ماذا سيحدث إذا قررت عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة أو قررت الانسحاب من المشاركة؟

يمكنك أن تقرر عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، أو يمكنك التوقف عن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية في أي وقت ولأي سبب. لا داعي للإجابة على أي سؤال لا تريد الإجابة عليه. لن يؤثر قرار عدم المشاركة في هذه الدراسة أو قرار الانسحاب على علاقتك بالباحث أو جامعة انكارنت وورد. لن تفقد أي مزايا يحق لك الحصول عليها. لن يتم استخدام أي معلومات تم جمعها من المشارك إذا قرر المشارك الانسحاب قبل إنهاء الدراسة.

ماذا يجب أن تفعل إذا كانت لديك مشكلة أو سؤال أثناء هذه الدراسة البحثية؟

إذا كانت لديك مشكلة كنتيجة مباشرة لمشاركتك في هذه الدراسة، فيجب عليك الاتصال بالباحث على الفور عبر البريد

الإلكتروني أو عبر الهاتف على + 8859-605-1210 مشرف البحث الدكتور alaklabi@student.uiwtx.edu

ارثر هريناديز عبر البريد الإلكتروني على aeherna8@uiwtx.edu

283-6409 (210) أو عبر الهاتف على

إذا كانت لديك أسئلة إضافية حول حقوقك أو ترغب في الإبلاغ عن مشكلة قد تكون متعلقة بالدراسة، فيرجى الاتصال بمكتب

على + 3036-805-210 1 أو Incarnate Word 3565-805-210 1+ مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية بجامعة

الإقرار

توقيعك يعني أنك (1) توافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية، (2) أنك قد قرأت وفهمت المعلومات الواردة أعلاه، و (3)

أن المعلومات الواردة أعلاه قد تم شرحها لك

اسم المشارك _____

توقيع المشارك _____

التاريخ ____/____/____

اسم الباحث _____

توقيع الباحث _____

التاريخ ____/____/____

Appendix H

Invitation Email

Dear Faculty,

My name is Mohammed Alaklabi, and I am currently a doctoral candidate under the direction of Professor Arthur E. Hernández in the College of Education at the University of the Incarnate Word. For my doctoral dissertation, I am exploring the experiences of high school principals' and teachers' with implementing decentralization and their recommendations to enhance the implementation in the Saudi Arabian Educational System.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. The results of this study may reveal valuable information that will benefit the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia as it will provide insight and knowledge that can be used to enhance decentralization implementation. Also, it may provide information that is needed to design training and professional development programs for current and future superintendents in Saudi Arabia. Your participation is estimated to take approximately 45-60 minutes one-on-one interview.

To participate in the study, you must meet all the following requirements:

- Be a male high school principal or teacher in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- Having at least six years of experience in the education field.

If you have any questions about the research study or your rights as a research participant, please contact the researcher via email at alaklabi@student.uiwtx.edu or via phone at (210) 749-5147 or the faculty adviser Dr. Arthur E. Hernández via email at aeherna8@uiwtx.edu or via phone at (210) 283-6409.

Thank you for your time and effort,

Mohammed Alaklabi
Doctoral Candidate
The University of the Incarnate Word

Appendix I

دعوة للمشاركة في دراسة

عزيزي عضو المعلم،

اسمي محمد الأكلبي وأنا حاليًا مرشح لنيل درجة الدكتوراه تحت إشراف الدكتور/ ارثر هيرنانديز في كلية التربية بجامعة انكارنت وورد. أعمل حاليًا على دراسة اراء وتوصيات مديري ومعلمي المرحلة الثانوية حول تطبيق اللامركزية في نظام التعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية لنيل درجة الدكتوراه.

أود أن أدعوك للمشاركة في دراستي البحثية التي قد تكشف عن معلومات قيمة ستفيد وزارة التربية والتعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية. ستقدم هذه الدراسة المعلومات التي يمكن استخدامها لتعزيز تطبيق اللامركزية. أيضًا، قد توفر المعلومات اللازمة لتصميم برامج التدريب والتطوير المهني للمدراء الحاليين والمستقبليين في المملكة العربية السعودية. قد تستغرق مشاركتك 45-60 دقيقة مقابلة فردية مع الباحث.

للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة يجب ان تستوفي الشروط التالية:

- ان تكون مدير او معلم مرحلة ثانوية.
- ان يكون خبره لا تقل عن ٦ سنوات في التعليم.

إذا كان لديك أي استفسار حول الدراسة أو حقوقك كمشارك في البحث، فيرجى التواصل مع الباحث عبر البريد الإلكتروني

alaklabi@student.uiwtx.edu

او عبر الهاتف ٠٠١٢١٠٩٤٧٥١٤٧

او الاتصال بمشرف البحث الدكتور ارثر هيرنانديز على او aherna8@uiwtx.edu او الاتصال بمشرف البحث على

الهاتف ٠٠١٢١٠٢٨٣٦٤٠٩

وتقبلوا فائق التحية والتقدير،

محمد الاكلبي

مرشح الدكتوراة جامعة انكارنت وورد