



Perceptions of Women's Driving in Saudi Arabia: Relationship with Openness to Experience and Happiness

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Abstract: In September 2017, King Salman issued a decree that granted women the right to drive. Until then, Saudi Arabia was the only country in the world that did not allow women such a right. The Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 plans to modernize the country was a leading force towards this change, but measures to make Saudi Arabia a moderate Islamic country and reduce its dependency on oil revenues have garnered mixed reactions. This has created a need to understand the public's opinion on women's driving; but, no tools to measure such perceptions existed. Thus, the aim of the study was to examine the perceptions of women's driving in Saudi Arabia by creating the 'Women Driving Perception Scale' (WDPS). The investigation also focuses on the relationship between such perceptions and levels of openness and happiness. With a reliability of 0.90, the WDPS showed that women are more enthusiastic about their driving than men. Further, there is a positive correlation between the WDPS, openness to experience and subjective happiness, although males score higher on happiness altogether. Factors such as marital and professional status, and women's reasons for driving were also examined. The WDPS was useful in providing insight on the public's perceptions and thoughts on women's driving.

ملخص البحث: في سبتمبر من عام 2017، أصدر خادم الحرمين الشريفين الملك سلمان مرسوماً طال انتظاره يقضي بحق المرأة في قيادة المركبات في المملكة العربية السعودية. وكانت المملكة إلى ذلك التاريخ البلد الوحيد في العالم الذي يحظر على النساء قيادة المركبات. واضطلعت رؤية سمو ولي العهد محمد بن سلمان 2030، الهادفة إلى تطوير المملكة، بالدور الرئيس في رفع الحظر عن قيادة النساء للمركبات وهو إنجاز ران إليه الكثير لمدة طويلة (الجار الله 2017). وقد لاقى مثل هذا التغيير الجذري الذي يدفع باتجاه جعل المملكة العربية السعودية دولة إسلامية معتدلة ويهدف إلى تقليل اعتماد اقتصادها على النفط ردود أفعال متباينة من العامة. الأمر الذي أظهر حاجة ماسة إلى سبر رأي الشعب حول قيادة المرأة السعودية للمركبات بشكل علمي. ولا يوجد أليات قياس مسبقة لقياس ردود الأفعال باعتبار أن حظر القيادة على المرأة أمراً متفرداً بالمملكة غير مسبق. تهدف هذه الدراسة لاستقراء آراء الناس حول قيادة المرأة السعودية للمركبات عن طريق تطوير أداة قياس جديدة سميت بمقياس استقراء ردود الأفعال حول قيادة المرأة السعودية (WDPS). كما تهدف أيضاً إلى قياس العلاقة بين آراء الأفراد حول قيادة المرأة ومستوى تحررهم وسعادتهم. لدى أداة القياس (WDPS) مصداقية عالية تبلغ 0.90. هذا وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن النساء أحرزن نقاطاً أعلى عند استخدام أداة القياس (WDPS) وبالتالي فإن النساء أكثر حماساً من الرجال بخصوص قيادة المرأة. هناك علاقة طردية بين نتائج أداة القياس (WDPS) وبين السعادة الشخصية وقابلية الأفراد لخوض التجارب. إلا أن الاحصائيات أظهرت أيضاً فرقاً جوهرياً بين سعادة النساء والرجال الشخصية حيث أحرز الرجال نقاطاً أعلى في هذه النقطة. أوليت العوامل الأخرى اهتماماً دقيقاً مثل الوضع الاجتماعي والمهني والأسباب التي تدفع النساء للقيادة أو تمنعهم عنها.... الخ. وفي المحصلة، تبين أن أداة القياس (WDPS) لعبت دوراً أساسياً في استعراض واستقراء الرأي العام حول رفع الحظر عن قيادة المرأة للمركبات في المملكة العربية السعودية.



Keywords: Women's driving; Saudi Arabia; Subjective Happiness Scale; Openness to Experience; Women Driving Perception Scale

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Until September 2017, Saudi Arabia was the only remaining country in the world that disallowed women to drive. The reversal of this ban was fully implemented in June 2018. In that time and since, social media platforms like Twitter were bombarded with hashtags equally in support of, against, or skeptical of such a law. The issue was strongly contested and finally allowed after much discussion surrounding the negative economic impact on the country as a result of women not being allowed to go to work as easily as men, as well as safety issues for families making it difficult for women to take their children to hospitals in the case of emergencies as examples. The positive effects of allowing women such rights were also discussed within the context of Islamic law (Hubbard, 2018).

Many countries lauded Saudi Arabia for this long awaited step towards supporting its female citizens. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Prince Muhammad bin Salman made the decision to diversify the country's economy away from oil and encourage Saudis to participate in developing the private sector through an ambitious reform program called 'Saudi Vision 2030' (Aldroubi, 2018; BBC, 2018; Khaleej Times, 2018; Saleh, 2018). The move was met with great enthusiasm and it is believed this milestone will bring other developments in women's empowerment (Damanhour, 2018). The Saudi Gazette reported women celebrating their first rides in the streets of the Kingdom after the ban was lifted. One woman reported stating that she felt more patriotic experiencing the full support of the Crown Prince and King. Many articles were published on the subject (Aldroubi, 2018; BBC, 2018; Khaleej Times, 2018; Saleh, 2018) and multiple tweets were sent on the day the ban was lifted. For example,

"Over 30 years ago, my grandfather had a published news article interview stating his full support for women driving in Saudi Arabia. He would have been happy that this day is finally here, may he rest in peace" (Khaleej Times, 2018).

"This is a very important day and moment for every woman in Saudi Arabia. My feelings are indescribable; I am super happy, overjoyed, and excited to start hitting the road in my city and in my country for the first time" (Khaleej Times, 2018).

"I was honored today to obtain a driver's license in Riyadh after passing the practical test; this is a historic day for Saudi women" (Saleh, 2018).



The year of 2018 has brought drastic changes to Saudi Arabia under the tutelage of the King and Crown Prince. The Saudi government announced the establishment of several driving schools specifically for women and the provision of thousands of work opportunities (Aljarallah, 2017). Reforms have also included allowing women to attend sports matches, a lifting of the ban on movie theatres, and the creation of a new law on the protection from harassment for both genders (Fareed, 2018; Kenawi, n.d.; StraitsTimes, 2018). Prior changes had been leading towards greater freedoms for women, including allowing them to work as cashiers in public areas such as supermarkets (August 2010), allotting them a fifth of the 150 seats of the previously all-male Shura Council (2013) and granting them the right to vote and campaign as candidates in municipal elections (2015) (BBCNews, 2015; Gardner, 2013; TradeArabia, 2010).

Women's Driving in Saudi Arabia

Saudi women have struggled to gain the right to drive in the country and prior to the lifting of the ban, there had been multiple attempts by Saudi women to gain the same rights as their male counterparts. Most recently in 1990, a group of women took to the roads of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital city, to protest the ban and urge the government to review their policies; however, they were arrested and had their passports confiscated (Aljarallah, 2017). In 2007, Wajeha Al Huwaider and other women petitioned King Abdullah for the right to drive and a film with Wajeha driving on Global Ladies' Day drew global recognition. Manal Al Sharif, a Saudi women's rights activist, was next to defy the ban. In 2011, she started a campaign called 'Women to Drive Movement'. She filmed herself driving and posted it on social media. She too was arrested and detained several times until released on bail, signing a pledge to never drive or talk to the media (Wright, 2017).

Driving has always been considered a male activity in Saudi Arabia and women not driving, a purely social expectation having little to do with religion. Athoug (2017) examined opinions on Saudi women driving and concluded that much of its resistance had to do with traditionalist's expectations of what they considered normative gender roles. Sheikh Abdullah Al Mutlaq, a professor of Comparative Jurisprudence and former Judge of the Court of Ha'il stated there was no convincing reason for the prohibition of women's driving. His opinion was that lifting the ban might decrease the difficulties caused by the surplus of foreign drivers. An interview was also conducted with Al Mathkoor, a known figure in the Islamic Shari'a world who holds a PhD in Islamic Shari'a from Al Azhar University in Egypt and serves on the Shari'a supervisory boards of many Gulf Islamic banks. He opined that women should be allowed to drive, noting the existence of many fatwas allowing it issued by Al Azhar University and Islamic institutions (Al Faris, 2012).

Socially, opinions also vary. Agencies YouGov and Arab News partnered to discover public opinions. Their results indicated that 80% supported the decision (YouGov, n.d.). A research project conducted by Ipsos called 'She Speaks,' found that one out of five households had a designated driver for females (Minawi & Al-Sahli, 2016) and that a majority of citizens were happy with the reversal. Many saw the ban's reversal as a step towards the modernization of the country and greater independence for women. However, many also feared that women would be exposed to harassment and that traffic conditions would worsen in a nation already known for its high accident rates due to speeding, negligence and regular flouting of traffic and safety laws (Mansuri,



Al-Zalabani, Zalat, & Qabshawi, 2015; Ofosu, Abouammoh, & Bener, 1988). In fact, Al-Balahdi (2017) reported that nearly 20 traffic deaths are recorded daily in the Kingdom.

The reversal of the ban on women's driving also implicates gender inequalities. The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) measures gender-based discrimination in institutions; a study conducted by the OECD Development Centre using the SIGI's information found that gender-based discrimination impedes wellbeing and that current gender-based discrimination in institutions is the cause of a 4.4% decline in the global average level of life satisfaction. Gender equality is considered a significant pathway through which wellbeing can be enhanced (Ferrant, Kolev, & Tassot, 2017). Ferrant and Kolev (2016) show that gender disparities in education, social institutions and across labor markets, undermine economic growth and social prosperity. Present levels of gender-based discrimination in institutions cost the global economy an estimated 12 trillion US dollars. Yet, if women were given equal roles in labor markets, 28 trillion US dollars could be added to the annual global GDP by 2025 (Woetzel et al., 2015). The participation of women in the Saudi labor market is poor and the Vision 2030 has made raising current levels in the market to a higher percentage an essential target (Fattah, 2018).

Zainab Fattah (2018) of Bloomberg Economics writes that the decision to allow women to drive to work will improve women's employment and add almost 90 billion dollars to Saudi Arabia's economic output by 2030 (Aldroubi, 2018). Euromonitor analysts Solovjova and Ladyga suggest that women's mobility should result in more women participating in the labor force, in turn, increasing productivity, income, consumer spending and economic growth. Yet, they warn that the country's current infrastructure may be ill-prepared for the surge in car use and greater congestion is likely. Further, the employment of an estimated 800,000 drivers who previously drove women throughout the nation is increasingly unnecessary (Reynolds, 2018) and the reversal of the ban may free up family funds as a result.

Finally, individual personality is also involved. Openness to experience is one of five personality traits in the Big Five Inventory, where high scorers are characterized as broad-minded, intellectual, curious, imaginative, and even unconventional. Low scorers are characterized as more close-minded, inflexible and threatened by uncertainty (Brandt, Chambers, Crawford, Wetherell, & Reyna, 2015; McCrae, 1996; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Weiss, Freund, & Wiese, 2013). They may prefer predictable environments where traditional values and conceptions are enforced (Chirumbolo & Leone, 2010). Close-minded individuals are more accepting of an existing social order that provides a reason for the status quo (Perry & Sibley, 2013). As the decision to drive for many women will lead to a major life transition, levels of openness may play a role in their eventual feelings of self-efficacy and wellbeing. A study by Weiss et al. (2013) suggested that women who score high on openness experience higher self-efficacy that in turn, leads to higher wellbeing when they reject traditional gender ideologies. However, for those who score low on openness to experience, adopting traditional gender ideologies is helpful in maintaining a high level of self-efficacy that leads to wellbeing. "Traditional gender ideology defines a woman's responsibilities mainly on the basis of being a mother and housewife and not on the basis of occupational roles" (p. 1755, Weiss et al., 2013) and is usually disadvantageous for women when compared to men. Adopting traditional gender ideologies may be helpful as it increases predictability and control and



provides stable and clear guidelines during highly uncertain times (Major et al., 2002). Hiel and Mervielde (2004) conclude that high openness to experience negatively correlates with conventional female roles. It may be the case that in Saudi Arabia, openness to experience will be a necessary facet in determining whether individuals will accept social transitions.

It is against this backdrop that we conduct the present study. Measures to transform Saudi Arabia into a more moderate Islamic country and become a knowledge-based economy have not been without resistance. This has created a need to examine the public's opinion on Saudi women's driving. Yet, there are no existing surveys or questionnaires to do so as this situation is globally unique. Thus, we sought to capture this historical moment and examine society's perception of women driving in the nation by creating and testing a new assessment called the 'Women Driving Perception Scale' (WDPS). We also wanted to understand the relationship between levels of openness and subjective happiness.

Methodology

This study aimed to measure the amount of societal acceptance of change, especially in the context of a major social transition, as well as how lifting the women's driving ban in Saudi Arabia would affect the level of happiness of Saudi citizens. It also examines the relationship between an individual's perception of Saudi women driving and their levels of openness. We hoped to gain more clarity around whether there was a difference in the opinions of women on the Saudi driving ban based on marital status, gender, professional status, etc., and what their reasons were for driving as well. We make two hypotheses, which include:

1. The WDPS scores for women will be significantly higher than men's.
2. There will be a statistically significant positive relationship between openness to experience and perceptions about women's driving in Saudi Arabia.

Participants

The study was open to all Saudis and non-Saudis who live in the country and were 16 years of age and older. A snowball sampling method generated 1460 participants. The self-administered scale was distributed through online platforms including email, social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and messaging applications (WhatsApp, SMS). The majority of the sample was female (84%) and Saudi (87%); 71% were single and 64% were college students aged 16 to 30.

Measurement Instruments

Openness to Experience (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) is a measure of intellectual curiosity, willingness to experiment, and tolerance for diversity. The 10-item scale is derived from the Big Five Inventory. It is a 5-point Likert scale with scores ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) with higher scores indicating more openness to experience. The scale is reported to have a reliability of > 0.72 (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008).



Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1997) is a four-item measure of participants' overall happiness. It is a 7- point-Likert scale with scores ranging from 1.0 to 1.7 with higher scores indicating more happiness. The scale has reliability and validity estimates of > 0.8 (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Women Driving Perception Scale (WDPS) is a 36-item scale developed by the authors to measure participants' perceptions of women's driving in Saudi Arabia. We analysed the academic literature, content of newspaper articles, magazines, YouTube videos, weblogs, TV and news articles discussing the subject of women's driving. Then, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 Saudi females randomly recruited and selected via an email advertisement. Five focus groups were also conducted. A total of seven original themes emerged; Safety, Freedom of Choice, Cultural Norms, Logistics and Services, Religion, Economy, and Politics. Each factor had five items except Logistics and Services, which had six (See Appendix A for information on what each theme represents). Finally, a pilot study on 30 college students was conducted to validate the scale. It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree (See Appendix B).

All instruments were translated into Arabic by two experts and back translated by two others into English to ensure comparability and equivalency in meaning.

Procedure

The study was granted ethics approval by Effat University's ethics review board. The self-administered scales were distributed in electronic form. Participants gave informed consent before accessing the scales. The scales were presented in the following order; PWDS, Openness to Experience Scale, and Subjective Happiness Scale.

Results

The descriptive statistics (number of items, mean, and standard deviation) and the internal consistency reliability coefficients for the Women Driving Perception Scale (WDPS), Openness to Experience Scale (OES) and Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Instruments

	No. items	Based on		
		Alpha	<i>M(SD)</i>	Alpha
Openness to Experience Scale	10	0.80	3.59 (0.44)	0.78
Subjective Happiness Scale	4	0.86	4.83 (0.13)	0.72
Women Driving Perception Scale	36	-	3.72 (0.60)	0.90

Principal component analysis (PCA) of the WDPS was conducted to explain the pattern of correlations. Six factors with eigenvalues of 10.65, 3.41, 2.18, 1.55, 1.28, and 1.08 emerged,



explaining 56% of the variance (Table 2). Three items did not load on their respective factors in the PCA analysis. Correlational analyses established a number of significant relationships between the WDPS, OES and SHS (Table 3).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of WDPS Factors

	No. of items	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Alpha
Positive Aspects of Women Driving	12	3.93 (0.22)	0.92
Islamic Aspects of Women Driving	8	4.19 (0.18)	0.87
Cultural Aspects of Women Driving	5	2.57 (0.55)	0.60
Perception of Driving Skills	2	3.69 (0.55)	0.58
Logistics Associated with Women Driving	4	3.91 (0.44)	0.66
Safety Associated with Women Driving	2	3.31 (0.40)	0.70

Table 3

Intercorrelation Matrix of Factors and Scales

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	WDPS	OES
Factor 2	.622**							
Factor 3	.248**	.262**						
Factor 4	.467**	.382**	.250**					
Factor 5	.318**	.236**	-.193**	.186**				
Factor 6	-.107**	-.165**	-.433**	-.079**	.126**			
WDPS	.911**	.813**	.385**	.579**	.413**	-.082**		
OES	.257**	.390**	.115**	.158**	.079**	-.027	.332**	
SHS	.094**	.131**	.022	.066*	.034	-.014	.114**	.427**

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); 0.05 level (2-tailed). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Factor 1=Positive Aspects of Women Driving; 2=Islamic Aspects of Women Driving, 3=Cultural Aspects of Women Driving; 4=Perception of Driving Skills; 5=Logistics Associated with Women Driving; 6=Safety Associated with Women Driving.

A series of independent-samples t-tests were conducted (Table 4) to compare the means of the six factors of the WDPS by gender. There was a statistically significant difference in the means of the Positive Aspects of Women Driving, Cultural Aspects of Women Driving, Perception of Driving Skills, and Safety Associated with Women Driving factors. However, there were no significant differences in the means of Islamic Aspects of Women Driving Factor and Logistics Associated Factor between females and males.



Table 4

Results of T-test and Descriptive Statistics for WDPS by Gender (1228 Female & 232 Male)

	Gender <i>M(SD)</i>		<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	<i>df</i>
	Females	Males			
F1: Positive Aspects of Women Driving	47.50 (7.99)	45.21 (10.16)	3.25	0.001	287.32
F2: Islamic Aspects of Women Driving	33.50 (5.448)	33.59 (6.13)	-0.208	0.835	303.741
F3: Cultural Aspects of Women Driving	13.02 (3.26)	12.01 (3.39)	4.18	0.000	317.08
F4: Perception of Driving Skills	7.47 (1.63)	6.91 (1.95)	4.16	0.000	295.39
F5: Logistics Associated with Women Driving	15.70 (2.744)	15.49 (3.151)	0.946	0.345	300.78
F6: Safety Associated with Women Driving	6.53 (1.82)	7.09 (1.87)	-4.26	0.000	319.69

* = $p \leq .05$, *** = $p \leq .001$

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the means of the OES, SHS and WDPS by gender. This showed a statistically significant difference in the mean of the WDPS based on gender (Female: $M = 134.7$, $SD = 16.48$ and Male: $M = 130.74$, $SD = 19.22$; $t(298.573) = 2.940^{**}$ $p < .001$, two-tailed). However, there was no significant difference in the mean of OES between females and males. Additionally, we used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the mean of WDPS by Professional Status group, which showed a statistically significant difference between Professional Status group means, $F(7, 1452) = 3.909$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc tests comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the Stay at Home Spouse group had statistically significant lower means than full-time and part-time Employees and full time Students. Table 5 contains descriptive data for the sample's professional status.



Table 5

Descriptive Data of Sample

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Working (FT)	260	133.67	18.734
Working (PT)	36	139.08	13.745
Student (FT)	899	135.00	15.790
Stay at Home Spouse	51	124.14	22.294

Another ANOVA was used to compare the means of the WDPS by marital status. Statistically significant differences between marital status group means emerged from this analysis, $F(4, 1455) = 6.981, p < 0.001$. Post hoc tests indicated that the Married with Children group had a statistically significant lower mean than Single and Divorced groups. Table 6 contains descriptive data for the marital status of the sample.

Table 6

Descriptive Data of Marital Status of the Sample

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Single	1045	135.13	15.810
Married with children	260	129.62	20.843
Divorced	51	138.98	16.556

When female participants were asked whether they had a driving license, only 7% said yes. Yet, when asked whether they had driven before, 40.7% replied affirmatively. More than half said they would drive in Saudi Arabia (63.6%), but 29% stated they would drive after 6 months. Table 7 displays the reasons participants stated for driving in Saudi Arabia. It was presented as an open-ended question at the end of the WDPS. Table 8 displays the reasons participants stated when inquired about their reasons for not driving in Saudi Arabia.



Table 7

Reasons to Drive

Reasons For Choosing To Drive	Frequency
Efficiency/needs	446
Independence	276
Freedom/Human right	142
Saving money	69
Not dealing with drivers	48
For emergencies	45
Personal Choice	42
Safety/privacy	25
To be punctual	10
Religion	1

Table 8

Reasons not to drive

Reasons Not To Drive	Frequency
Safety concerns	98
Personal choice	49
Convenience of drivers	46
Traffic problems	42
Logistics and regulations	36
Societal views	18
Hesitant to drive	18
Economic reasons	7
Religion	6

Discussion

The aim of this study was to create a tool to measure the level of acceptance of societal change, especially in the context of allowing women to drive in a traditional culture undergoing a major transition. The WDPS was created by surveying the literature, conducting interviews, focus groups and piloting the scale to a smaller sample for the purpose of validation. After a Principal Components Analysis, six factors remained within the scale, namely the Positive Aspects of Women Driving, Islamic Aspects of Women Driving, Cultural Aspects of Women Driving, Perception of Driving Skills, Logistics Associated with Women Driving and Safety Associated with Women Driving. The internal consistency reliability of the WDPS for this study was very high with an alpha of 0.90. This shows that the items in the newly developed WDPS adequately captured the perception of women's driving in Saudi Arabia.



A series of independent-samples t-tests reveal interesting information. Overall, women were more enthusiastic in seeing the positive aspects or benefits of allowing women to drive and saw it as a step towards gender equality and enhancement of their social status dovetailing with other reports (Minawi & Al-Sahli, 2016; YouGov, n.d). Women scored higher on the perception of their driving skills than men, which suggests that men may not trust the driving skills of women, or that women overestimate their own due to inexperience (Aldroubi, 2018). This lower perception of men can be seen in some of the negative tweets on the subject of Saudi women driving, i.e., *"Now that women can drive, I expect an increase in road accidents..."*.

Males also reported being more concerned with the safety of women driving, which is not surprising considering the fact that the country has a high rate of accidents (Al-Balahdi, 2017; Mansuri et al., 2015; Ofosu et al., 1988). Yet, no differences were observed between males and females on Islamic and logistical factors of driving which suggests that both genders have similar mindsets on these questions. Single, divorced and part- and full-time working participants scored higher on the WDPS compared to married participants with or without children and may reflect the acceptance of women's driving to fulfill the need to go to work. A majority of women (64%) were keen to start driving within six months of the ban's reversal. Only 7% of women had driving licenses from foreign countries, while 41% had previously driven. The main reasons women cited for wanting to drive included the desire for efficiency, freedom and independence, while those preferring not to cited concerns for safety and traffic, personal choice, and the convenience of having drivers. The differences between male and female responses for each item of the scale were also explored (see Appendix C). The table reveals interesting observations, for example, only 21.9% women agreed with the statement 'Women should have the right to drive without her family permission,' while 41.3% of males agreed with it.

The results of the study are in accordance with the initial hypothesis that women would score significantly higher than males on the WDPS. The study also examined the relationship between the perception of Saudi women driving and levels of openness. No significant differences were found for females and males; however, there was a positive correlation between the WDPS and openness to experience, suggesting that open-mindedness may place a role in the willingness of citizens to support women's driving.

For future research, we recommend a follow-up study be conducted in some time to determine whether such openness remains, as well as examine the levels of happiness of both women and men after this change as gender roles may change as a result. The research can further examine whether and how the government is supporting women by providing services that are specific to their needs. Another interesting avenue will be to examine the effects of driving on women's empowerment. Finally, how women deal with road harassment and traffic stress should also be researched along with a view on how the government develops laws, rules and services for women. Our results not only add to the scientific literature on wellbeing, but they can also be useful in making future policy decisions as they indicate levels of social support for change.



Conclusion

The WDPS was successful in providing an overview of the public's perceptions and thoughts around the reversal of the ban on women's driving in Saudi Arabia. The Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 is one of the main reasons for the ban's reversal. This decision will hopefully improve women's employment and social participation adding to the nation's economic output and competitiveness, as well as to their own happiness and wellbeing and that of their families. International entities such as the United Nations have welcomed this decision as a step towards the enhancement of women's rights and opportunities in Saudi Arabia (Aldroubi, 2018). The BBC (2018) reported that the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres tweeted, "an important step in the right direction" as a response. We concur and welcome additional reforms to improve the lives of Saudi citizens and women in particular.

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Appendix A

The Women Driving Perception Scale items based on the seven original themes: Religion, Safety, Cultural Norms, Politics, Logistics and Services, Freedom of Choice and Economy.

Instructions: Below are 35 statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 – 5 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by choosing the right response. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 5) Strongly Agree
- 4) Agree
- 3) Neutral
- 2) Disagree
- 1) Strongly Disagree

Safety:

1) Women driving will have a <i>negative effect</i> on road traffic safety.	سوف تشكل قيادة المرأة عائقاً على سلامة حركة المرور بالطرق.
2) In the event of a car accident, women will be capable to handle the situation just like men.	في حالة وقوع حادث سيارة، سوف تكون المرأة قادرة على التعامل مع الوضع تماماً مثل الرجال.
3) Male drivers are more likely to get into car accidents than female drivers.	السائقون الذكور أكثر عرضة لحوادث السيارات من السائقات الإناث.
4) Harassment rates by male police officers will increase when women start driving.	معدلات التحرش من قبل رجال الشرطة الذكور ستزداد عندما تبدأ النساء القيادة.
5) Harassment rates by male drivers will increase when women start driving.	معدلات التحرش من قبل السائقين الذكور ستزداد عندما تبدأ النساء القيادة.

Freedom of Choice:

1) Women are willing to drive, but they would prefer not to deal with problems in their cars (e.g. changing tires, car maintenance).	النساء على استعداد لقيادة السيارات، ولكنهن تفضلن عدم التعامل مع المشاكل المتعلقة بسياراتهن (مثل، تغيير الإطارات وصيانة السيارات).
2) Women should have the right to drive without her family permission.	ينبغي أن يكون للمرأة الحق في القيادة بدون إذن أسرتها.
3) Women driving in Saudi Arabia is a very important milestone on the road to empowerment.	قيادة النساء للسيارات في المملكة العربية السعودية هي خطوة مهمة لتمكين المرأة بالمجتمع.



4) Allowing women to drive will decrease their dependence on drivers.	السماح للنساء بالقيادة سيققل من اعتمادهن على السائقين.
5) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia is important step toward gender equality.	إن قرار السماح للمرأة بالقيادة في المملكة العربية السعودية خطوة هامة نحو المساواة بين الجنسين.

Cultural Norms:

1) Men are willing to let their daughters, mothers, wives to drive since there is no law against it anymore.	الرجال على استعداد للسماح لأمهاتهم، وأخواتهم، وزوجاتهم بقيادة السيارة لأنه لم يعد هناك قانون ضد ذلك.
2) Not allowing women to drive is based more on cultural values rather than governmental laws.	- عدم السماح للنساء بالقيادة مبني أكثر على القيم الثقافية وليس على قوانين الحكومة.
3) The Saudi society will take a while to adjust to the idea of women behind the wheel.	إن قرار السماح للمرأة بقيادة السيارات في المملكة العربية السعودية قد يستغرق بعض الوقت من أجل التأقلم الثقافي حتى المجتمع السعودي يتضمن فكرة المرأة خلف عجلة القيادة.
4) Allowing women to drive contributes to the downfall of the society.	تمكين المرأة من القيادة يسهم في سقوط المجتمع.
5) Women drivers will most likely follow rules than men drivers.	على الأرجح ستتبع السائقات النساء القوانين أكثر من السائقين الرجال.

Logistics and services:

1. Having female police officers will make women feel safe while driving.	إن وجود ضابطات شرطة سيجعل النساء يشعرن بالأمان أثناء القيادة.
2. The government should have strong policies to protect female drivers.	يجب أن يكون لدى الحكومة سياسات قوية لحماية السائقات.
3. Women and men should be subjected to the same procedures in driving, to ensure equality.	ينبغي إخضاع النساء والرجال لنفس إجراءات القيادة، لضمان المساواة.
4. More parking buildings should be available to accommodate the increasing number of cars.	يجب توفير المزيد من مباني وقوف السيارات لاستيعاب العدد المتزايد من السيارات.
5. Specific car maintenance services should be provided for female drivers only.	ينبغي توفير خدمات لصيانة السيارات مخصصة للنساء فقط.
6. Female car maintenance services should be run by females only.	خدمات صيانة السيارات المخصصة للنساء يجب أن تُدار من قبل عاملات إناث.

Religion:

1) Islam gave women all her rights,	أعطى الإسلام المرأة كل حقوقها، بما في ذلك الحق في
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including right to mobility.	التنقل.
2) In order for a woman to drive, she needs to have a (Mahram) in the car with her.	من أجل أن تقود المرأة، فإنها تحتاج إلى أن يكون لها (محرم) في السيارة معها.
3) Women driving is not a religious issue as much as it is a cultural issue.	القيادة النسائية ليست قضية دينية بقدر ما هي قضية ثقافية.
4) Allowing women to drive would clash with Islamic practice.	السماح للنساء بالقيادة من شأنه أن يتعارض مع الممارسة الإسلامية.
5) Islam forbids women to drive	الإسلام يمنع النساء من القيادة.

Economy:

1) Rate of unemployment will decrease after women are permitted to drive.	سوف تنخفض نسبة البطالة بعد السماح للنساء بالقيادة.
2) The economy of the country will increase drastically when women start to drive.	سيزداد اقتصاد البلاد بشكل كبير عندما تبدأ النساء في القيادة.
3) Automobile companies will have a new client segment which will increase their income.	سيكون لدى شركات السيارات قطاع جديد من العملاء مما سيزيد من دخلها.
4) Women driving in Saudi Arabia is an essential step in the economic development of Saudi Arabia under the Vision 2030 reform program.	تعتبر قيادة النساء للسيارات في المملكة العربية السعودية خطوة أساسية في التنمية الاقتصادية للمملكة العربية السعودية في إطار برنامج الإصلاح " رؤية 2030 " .
5) Allowing women to drive can relieve the financial burden on some groups of the society such as widows, divorced and single women.	تمكين المرأة من قيادة السيارات قد يرفع العبء المالي عن بعض فئات المجتمع مثل الأرامل والمطلقات والنساء العازبات.

Politics:

1) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia sends a clear message to the world that the changes in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030 are real and significant.	إن قرار السماح للمرأة بقيادة السيارات في المملكة العربية السعودية يبعث برسالة واضحة للعالم بأن التغييرات في المملكة العربية السعودية في إطار رؤية عام 2030 حقيقية ومهمة.
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2) The implementation for women to drive in Saudi Arabia may take much longer time.	قد يستغرق تطبيق قيادة النساء للسيارات في المملكة العربية السعودية وقتاً أطول بكثير.
3) The decision of women driving will lead to other social and economic reforms which will increase women empowerment in Saudi Arabia.	سيؤدي قرار قيادة النساء للسيارات إلى إصلاحات اجتماعية واقتصادية أخرى تزيد من تمكين المرأة في المملكة العربية السعودية.
4) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia will help the goals of Vision 2030 to reduce the large number of expatriate workers and hire Saudi citizens to become reality.	سيساعد قرار السماح للنساء لقيادة السيارات في المملكة العربية السعودية على تحقيق أهداف رؤية 2030 في الحد من العدد الكبير من العمالة الوافدة وتوظيف المواطنين السعوديين لتصبح حقيقة واقعة.
5) The decision to allow women to drive has improved the kingdom's international reputation.	أدى قرار السماح للمرأة بقيادة السيارة إلى تحسين سمعة المملكة الدولية.



Appendix B

The Women's Driving Perception Scale (WDPS)

Instructions: Below are 36 statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1 - 5 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 6) Strongly Agree
- 5) Agree
- 4) Neutral
- 2) Disagree
- 1) Strongly Disagree

- 1) Women driving will have a negative effect on road traffic safety.
- 2) In the event of a car accident, women will be capable to handle the situation just like men.
- 3) Male drivers are more likely to get into car accidents than female drivers.
- 4) Harassment rates by male police officers will increase when women start driving.
- 5) Harassment rates by male drivers will increase when women start driving.
- 6) Women are willing to drive but prefer not to deal with problems in their cars (e.g. changing tires, car maintenance).
- 7) Women should have the right to drive without family permission.
- 8) Women driving in Saudi Arabia are an important milestone on the road to empowerment.
- 9) Allowing women to drive will decrease their dependence on drivers.
- 10) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia is important step toward gender equality.
- 11) Men are willing to let their daughters, mothers, and wives to drive since there is no law against it anymore.
- 12) Not allowing women to drive is based more on cultural values rather than governmental laws.
- 13) Saudi society will take a while to adjust to the idea of women behind the wheel.
- 14) Allowing women to drive contributes to the downfall of the society.
- 15) Women drivers will most likely follow rules than men drivers.
- 16) Having female police officers will make women feel safe while driving.



- 17) The government should have strong policies to protect female drivers.
- 18) Women and men should be subjected to the same procedures in driving to ensure equality.
- 19) More parking should be available to accommodate the increasing number of cars.
- 20) Specific car maintenance services should be provided for female drivers only.
- 21) Female car maintenance services should be run by females only.
- 22) Islam gave women all her rights, including right to mobility.
- 23) In order for a woman to drive, she needs to have a Mahram (guardian) in the car with her.
- 24) Women driving is not a religious issue as much as it is a cultural issue.
- 25) Allowing women to drive would clash with Islamic practice.
- 26) Islam forbids women to drive.
- 27) The rate of unemployment will decrease after women are permitted to drive.
- 28) The economy of the country will increase drastically when women start to drive.
- 29) Automobile companies will have a new client segment to increase their income.
- 30) Women driving in Saudi Arabia are an essential step in the economic development of Saudi Arabia under the Vision 2030 reform program.
- 31) Allowing women to drive can relieve the financial burden on some groups of the society such as widows, divorced and single women.
- 32) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia sends a clear message to the world that the changes in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030 are real and significant.
- 33) The implementation for women to drive in Saudi Arabia may take much longer time.
- 34) The decision of women driving will lead to other social and economic reforms, which will increase women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia.
- 35) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia will help the goals of Vision 2030 to reduce the large number of expatriate workers and hire Saudi citizens to become reality.
- 36) The decision to allow women to drive has improved the Kingdom's international reputation.



Appendix C

Percentage of male and female responses of each item of the Women Driving Perception Scale (WDPS)

Item	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) Women driving will have a negative effect on road traffic safety.	Female	167	260	356	291	154
		13.6%	21.2%	29.0%	23.7%	12.5%
	Male	36	77	35	64	20
		15.5%	33.2%	15.1%	27.6%	8.6%
2) In the event of a car accident, women will be capable to handle the situation just like men.	Female	75	250	349	370	184
		6.1%	20.4%	28.4%	30.1%	15.0%
	Male	36	83	35	56	22
		15.5%	35.8%	15.1%	24.1%	9.5%
3) Male drivers are more likely to get into car accidents than female drivers.	Female	55	203	455	281	234
		4.5%	16.5%	37.1%	22.9%	19.1%
	Male	30	53	65	51	33
		12.9%	22.8%	28.0%	22.0%	14.2%
4) Harassment rates by male police officers will increase when women start driving.	Female	94	319	422	301	92
		7.7%	26.0%	34.4%	24.5%	7.5%
	Male	23	44	50	81	34
		9.9%	19.0%	21.6%	34.9%	14.7%
5) Harassment rates by male drivers will increase when women start driving.	Female	36	160	343	477	212
		2.9%	13.0%	27.9%	38.8%	17.3%
	Male	5	23	35	110	59
		2.2%	9.9%	15.1%	47.4%	25.4%
6) Women are willing to drive, but they would prefer not to deal with problems in their cars (e.g. changing tires, car maintenance).	Female	233	517	273	168	37
		19.0%	42.1%	22.2%	13.7%	3.0%
	Male	68	115	25	14	10
		29.3%	49.6%	10.8%	6.0%	4.3%
7) Women should have the right to drive without her family permission.	Female	85	184	275	287	397
		6.9%	15.0%	22.4%	23.4%	32.3%
	Male	40	56	37	52	47
		17.2%	24.1%	15.9%	22.4%	20.3%
8) Women driving in Saudi Arabia is a very important milestone on the road to empowerment.	Female	30	84	185	401	528
		2.4%	6.8%	15.1%	32.7%	43.0%
	Male	19	20	26	74	93
		8.2%	8.6%	11.2%	31.9%	40.1%
9) Allowing women to drive will decrease their dependence on	Female	0.7%	3.7%	8.6%	34.0%	53.0%
		6	11	16	97	102



drivers.	Male	2.6%	4.7%	6.9%	41.8%	44.0%
		44	91	217	394	482
10) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia is important step toward gender equality.	Female	3.6%	7.4%	17.7%	32.1%	39.3%
		28	30	29	77	68
	Male	12.1%	12.9%	12.5%	33.2%	29.3%
		30	158	422	458	160
11) Men are willing to let their daughters, mothers, wives to drive since there is no law against it anymore.	Female	2.4%	12.9%	34.4%	37.3%	13.0%
		19	30	56	89	38
	Male	8.2%	12.9%	24.1%	38.4%	16.4%
		34	85	230	462	417
12) Not allowing women to drive is based more on cultural values rather than governmental laws.	Female	2.8%	6.9%	18.7%	37.6%	34.0%
		15	15	15	103	84
	Male	6.5%	6.5%	6.5%	44.4%	36.2%
		502	530	145	45	6
13) The Saudi society will take a while to adjust to the idea of women behind the wheel.	Female	40.9%	43.2%	11.8%	3.7%	0.5%
		99	100	19	7	7
	Male	42.7%	43.1%	8.2%	3.0%	3.0%
		31	113	224	330	530
14) Allowing women to drive contributes to the downfall of the society.	Female	2.5%	9.2%	18.2%	26.9%	43.2%
		14	15	26	65	112
	Male	6.0%	6.5%	11.2%	28.0%	48.3%
		7	29	252	467	473
15) Women drivers will most likely follow rules than men drivers.	Female	0.6%	2.4%	20.5%	38.0%	38.5%
		7	22	32	100	71
	Male	3.0%	9.5%	13.8%	43.1%	30.6%
		14	57	238	468	451
16) Having female police officers will make women feel safe while driving.	Female	1.1%	4.6%	19.4%	38.1%	36.7%
		8	13	18	82	111
	Male	3.4%	5.6%	7.8%	35.3%	47.8%
		3	11	126	337	751
17) The government should have strong policies to protect female drivers.	Female	0.2%	0.9%	10.3%	27.4%	61.2%
		6	6	8	53	159
	Male	2.6%	2.6%	3.4%	22.8%	68.5%
		5	31	170	398	624
18) Women and men should be subjected to the same procedures in driving, to ensure equality.	Female	0.4%	2.5%	13.8%	32.4%	50.8%
		6	7	13	68	138
	Male	2.6%	3.0%	5.6%	29.3%	59.5%
		1	27	141	368	691
19) More parking buildings should be available to accommodate the increasing number of cars.	Female	0.1%	2.2%	11.5%	30.0%	56.3%
		2	11	19	54	146
	Male	0.9%	4.7%	8.2%	23.3%	62.9%
		26	87	306	405	404
20) Specific car maintenance	Female	2.1%	7.1%	24.9%	33.0%	32.9%



services should be provided for female drivers only.		21	30	49	55	77
	Male	9.1%	12.9%	21.1%	23.7%	33.2%
21) Female car maintenance services should be run by females only.		52	193	458	294	231
	Female	4.2%	15.7%	37.3%	23.9%	18.8%
		25	45	57	49	56
	Male	10.8%	19.4%	24.6%	21.1%	24.1%
22) Islam gave women all her rights, including right to mobility.		15	26	238	396	553
	Female	1.2%	2.1%	19.4%	32.2%	45.0%
		8	13	33	64	114
	Male	3.4%	5.6%	14.2%	27.6%	49.1%
23) In order for a woman to drive, she needs to have a (Mahram) in the car with her.		32	67	234	360	535
	Female	2.6%	5.5%	19.1%	29.3%	43.6%
		9	16	48	71	88
	Male	3.9%	6.9%	20.7%	30.6%	37.9%
24) Women driving is not a religious issue as much as it is a cultural issue.		19	36	169	375	629
	Female	1.5%	2.9%	13.8%	30.5%	51.2%
		8	21	13	63	127
	Male	3.4%	9.1%	5.6%	27.2%	54.7%
25) Allowing women to drive would clash with Islamic practice.		32	105	240	362	489
	Female	2.6%	8.6%	19.5%	29.5%	39.8%
		11	18	25	80	98
	Male	4.7%	7.8%	10.8%	34.5%	42.2%
26) Islam forbids women to drive		15	45	192	327	649
	Female	1.2%	3.7%	15.6%	26.6%	52.9%
		9	3	27	56	137
	Male	3.9%	1.3%	11.6%	24.1%	59.1%
27) Rate of unemployment will decrease after women are permitted to drive.		46	124	422	446	190
	Female	3.7%	10.1%	34.4%	36.3%	15.5%
		21	55	67	56	33
	Male	9.1%	23.7%	28.9%	24.1%	14.2%
28) The economy of the country will increase drastically when women start to drive.		23	65	397	477	266
	Female	1.9%	5.3%	32.3%	38.8%	21.7%
		17	36	55	83	41
	Male	7.3%	15.5%	23.7%	35.8%	17.7%
29) Automobile companies will have a new client segment which will increase their income.		5	15	205	626	377
	Female	0.4%	1.2%	16.7%	51.0%	30.7%
		4	6	20	119	83
	Male	1.7%	2.6%	8.6%	51.3%	35.8%
30) Women driving in Saudi Arabia is an essential step in the economic development of Saudi Arabia under the Vision 2030 reform program.		15	40	286	472	415
	Female	1.2%	3.3%	23.3%	38.4%	33.8%
		16	13	38	88	77
	Male	6.9%	5.6%	16.4%	37.9%	33.2%
	18	47	238	464	461	



31) Allowing women to drive can relieve the financial burden on some groups of the society such as widows, divorced and single women.	Female	1.5%	3.8%	19.4%	37.8%	37.5%
		10	19	27	84	92
	Male	4.3%	8.2%	11.6%	36.2%	39.7%
		16	35	251	486	440
32) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia sends a clear message to the world that the changes in Saudi Arabia under Vision 2030 are real and significant.	Female	1.3%	2.9%	20.4%	39.6%	35.8%
		17	15	36	79	85
	Male	7.3%	6.5%	15.5%	34.1%	36.6%
		144	497	385	176	26
33) The implementation for women to drive in Saudi Arabia may take much longer time.	Female	11.7%	40.5%	31.4%	14.3%	2.1%
		34	88	60	43	7
	Male	14.7%	37.9%	25.9%	18.5%	3.0%
		11	36	312	551	318
34) The decision of women driving will lead to other social and economic reforms which will increase women empowerment in Saudi Arabia.	Female	0.9%	2.9%	25.4%	44.9%	25.9%
		11	18	44	102	57
	Male	4.7%	7.8%	19.0%	44.0%	24.6%
		14	46	299	537	332
35) The decision to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia will help the goals of Vision 2030 to reduce the large number of expatriate workers and hire Saudi citizens to become reality.	Female	1.1%	3.7%	24.3%	43.7%	27.0%
		17	21	45	89	60
	Male	7.3%	9.1%	19.4%	38.4%	25.9%
		29	69	322	466	342
36) The decision to allow women to drive has improved the kingdom's international reputation.	Female	2.4%	5.6%	26.2%	37.9%	27.9%
		14	20	44	77	77
	Male	6.0%	8.6%	19.0%	33.2%	33.2%