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Female Leadership of Today in the United Arab Emirates

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***SESSION PROPOSAL:
INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
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**Women and Leadership in the MENA Region:
Cultures, Context, and Complexities**

Session Chair

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Dr. Norman Wright currently serves as the Dean of the Woodbury School of Business at Utah Valley University. He holds a Ph.D. in Management from Wharton as well as an M.A. degree in Management from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Wright also attended Brigham Young University where he earned a Master's degree in Public Administration and a Bachelor's degree in Economics. Prior to joining the Woodbury School of Business, Dr. Wright was the Founding Dean of the College of Business at Alfaisal University in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He also worked for the American University in Washington, D.C. as a consulting Dean for the School of Business and Entrepreneurship at their affiliate University in Nigeria. He also served as a professor and academic administrator at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates, the American University of Sharjah, and Brigham Young University Hawaii.

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For more than 30 years, Professor Moore has focused her research, consulting, and teaching on the leadership and advancement of women, diversity and inclusion management, as well as developing culturally competent leaders. Professor Moore has been an active participant and national leader in academic and professional organizations committed to the understanding and advancement of women leaders. Moore was the founding consultant and acting director of the Radcliffe Public Policy Institute at Harvard University, Co-Director of the Institute for Women and Organizations, and Chair of the Women in Management Division of the Academy of Management. Moore was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for the 2007-2008 academic year at

Zayed University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. She taught leadership courses in the College of Business Sciences as well as conducted a research project on corporate women leaders in the United Arab Emirates.

Session Description (up to 80 words)

The purpose of this session is to present findings from three recent studies focused on understanding various aspects of women and leadership in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. These include studies or conceptual papers about women in the region generally, as well as those specifically in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. The panelists will then encourage a dialogue that creates broader understanding about cultures, context, and complexities of research and practice in this region.

Session Abstract

Harvard Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1994) once stated that it had become essential for business success to let “talent rise to the top regardless of where it is found and whether it is male or female” (p. 11). In fact, organizations in all sectors (i.e., public, private, and social) are in need of strong, competent leadership and are now looking to both men and women to fill these roles. Of course this is not necessarily true in all regions of the world, but strides are being made. For example, research on women and leadership in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region is finally beginning to emerge and practice is not far behind. This region is a critical area of the world and media on the conflict, people, and culture abounds. Yet, there is still little research that provides insight about the cultures, contexts, and complexities of women and leadership in these countries; there is still much to be discovered and understood. The studies presented in this session will provide insights into unique populations and perspectives that will be helpful for educators, scholars, and practitioners who design leadership programs for MENA women in various sectors and settings. It will also provide important hypotheses and directions for future research.

The purpose of this session is to present findings from three recent studies focused on understanding various aspects of women and leadership in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. These include studies or conceptual papers about women in the region generally, as well as those specifically in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. The first panelist will present a study that looked at data from nearly 1000 UAE organizations and will then outline the state of affairs in the UAE in terms of the presence of women in senior leadership positions. The second panelist will present a paper that included literature from a range of empirical studies and public domain reports, and considers the evidence for a type of blended leadership style that seeks to combine modern management practice and fundamental cultural features while highlighting the role of women in Islamic society. The final paper presented will report on a study aimed to identify the evolution of working women in Jordanian Universities (public and private) from 2000-2009 and the various associated challenges Jordanian women face in accessing leadership positions. After the presentations, the panelists will then encourage a dialogue that creates broader understanding about cultures, context, and complexities of research and practice in this region.

PAPER 1: Female Leadership of Today in the United Arab Emirates

Keywords: Female, Women, Leader, Middle East, UAE

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Linzi J Kemp is an Assistant Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. Her current research studies the presence and increase of female leaders in the public and private business sectors in the United Arab Emirates. Long term, this research will widen out to the Middle East region. Linzi was previously Faculty Associate, Empire State College, State University of New York, teaching and mentoring students in the Centers for Distance Learning and International Programs. Originally from the UK, Linzi has worked there in private and public organizations within education, (lecturer) retail (Area Manager) and the NHS (Administrator). Previous academic and educational experience has been international, including ten years in the UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the People's Republic of China.

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Dr. Susan R. Madsen is a professor of management in the Woodbury School of Business and the Orin R. Woodbury Professor of Leadership and Ethics at Utah Valley University. She has published two scholarly books on the development of women leaders and has authored/co-authored nearly 60 peer-reviewed articles primarily in the areas of leadership, individual change, work-life integration, and academic service-learning. Susan is currently continuing her research on the lifetime development of women leaders in the United Arab Emirates, China, and the U.S. She is also an independent leadership and change consultant and is the founder and chair of the ILA Women and Leadership Affinity Group (WLAG).

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Mohammed A. El-Saidi, Ph.D. is presently a Professor of Statistics and the Director of Utah Valley University's Office of Academic Research. He received his Ph.D. in Applied Statistics from the University of Memphis, a Master's Degree in Mathematical Statistics from the University of Iowa, a certificate in Management and Leadership from Harvard University, and a Master's Degree in Mathematics in Egypt. Recently he was the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs (A-VPAA) and Interim VPAA, both at UVU. Prior to this, he served as the Academic Dean at Texas A&M University – Central Texas, and the Assistant Dean of Assessment at Ferris State University in Michigan. He has held numerous faculty positions as a Professor of Statistics, and served in the editorial boards for several international journals. His research interests are in the areas of cancer and bioassay modeling, approximation of distributions, probability theory, logistic and log-logistic models, statistical computing and data analysis, performance measurement, and strategic planning in higher education.

Short Description (up to 80 words)

This paper is based on data mined from a major database in the MENA region that tracks information about public and private companies. The paper, with nearly 1000 organizations analyzed, outlines the state of affairs in the UAE in terms of the presence of women in senior leadership positions.

Abstract (500-1000 words)

Research on women and leadership in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region is finally beginning to emerge. This is particularly true of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where a number of researchers (e.g., Kemp, 2011; Madsen, 2009, 2010; Moore, 2010) have begun to explore, through qualitative approaches, the lifetime development, experiences, and perspectives of women leaders in education, government, and industry. In addition, a literature review specifically about female business leadership in the Middle East evidences a rise in their numbers and status. This increase in women in leadership positions has been acknowledged and supported in the UAE. The change has been facilitated by increased access to education for women, which has led to a generation of more qualified, competent, and confident women. The country is led by an enlightened political leadership, and women are now beginning to gain influence- particularly in the public sector. Cultural change is accepting of women in the workplace, and family support for education and work outside the home continues to increase. Yet, there is still concern about the progress of women to business leadership.

Although women have increased leadership roles in the public sector, there is awareness of their lack of presence in the private sector. In fact, a recent article, published on February 13, 2012 in the *Emirates 24/7 Business* (Kapur, 2012), reported that a new study based on data provided by 35,542 listed companies around the world, showed that countries in the Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC) are at the bottom of the list when it comes to women filling the top slots in companies. Of the 44 participating countries, “Kuwait is on 35th position, Oman on 38th, followed by Bahrain on 40th, UAE on 42nd and Saudi Arabia at 44th position. The study shows that in the UAE only 0.99 percent of top employees in a company are women. Although the lack of presence has been documented, no literature provides a detailed look at specific data from organizations that provide a more in-depth look at this phenomenon.

The purpose of this paper is to report on the results of a study that was based on data mined from a major database in the MENA region that tracks information about public and private companies. The paper outlines the state of affairs in the UAE, with nearly 1000 organizations analyzed, in terms of the presence of women in senior leadership positions. In other words, this quantitative research reveals statistics of the presence (or absence) of women in senior positions within the UAE. It includes analysis of where the female top leaders are located within organizations (e.g., board members, chief officers, vice presidents, top management, division or unit heads) and then compares those results with pertinent demographics (e.g., sector, ownership, number of employees). The aim of this presentation is to deliver the details of the study, review its value, and discuss plans for similar studies in various countries within the MENA region.

This is one of the first known scholarly studies conducted on the presence of women leaders in various sectors within the UAE. This study provides helpful insights for government leaders, as well as educators, scholars, and practitioners who work to help prepare women for leadership in this region. For business practitioners, the presence and development of female business leaders extends choice and increases value in the human resource pool. Understanding the current state of affairs is critical to track movement toward a more equitable workforce environment. The presence of women in business leadership in the region is growing, and attention is needed in terms of academic research and publication. The authors believe that it is important that UAE females take up roles in both the public and private sector so they can become more effective role models to a rising generation of female workers.

PAPER 2: Women Leaders in MENA after the “Arab Spring”: Towards an Islamic “Blended Leadership”?

Keywords: Women, Leadership, Middle East, MENA

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David Weir has researched and published extensively on Management in the Arab world and has undertaken consultancy with many leading companies and organizations in the MENA region. He is a regular presenter at major international and regional economic conferences including the GCC summit, at universities, companies and public sector organizations throughout the MENA region and was publicly thanked for his work in the Arab World by His Highness Prince Hassan of Jordan at the MENA economic summit in Amman. He was presented to His Majesty King Hussein and hosted the world-leading Arab Management conferences at Bradford University. He designed and led an innovative MBA program in Dubai with Emirates Airlines as partners and has also taught in Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi, Lebanon, Oman and Libya. David has supervised more than twenty PhD theses on aspects of management in the Middle East. He has many publications including books with Nabil Sultan, and Zeinab Karake-Shalhoub.: The New Post-oil Arab Gulf: Managing People and Wealth: Al Saqi : January 2011, and David Weir: Management in the Arab world; Edward Elgar: forthcoming mid-2012, and many articles and book chapters including: Leadership in the Arab Middle East; Does the Islamic tradition provide a basis for ‘worldly leadership’? chapter 9 in D. Jepson (Ed.) Worldly Leadership: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011.

Short Description (up to 80 words)

This paper pulls together literature from a range of empirical studies and public domain reports, and considers the evidence for a type of blended leadership that seeks to incorporate modern management practice with fundamental cultural features of the role of women in Islamic society. This builds on previous research on well-qualified women managers in the MENA region. By relating to empirical studies, the author aims to transcend the generalities of “Islamic feminism” to translate these concepts into current organizational practice.

Abstract (500-1000 words)

The UN Arab Human Development report of 2002 identified the three most pressing human development deficits in the Arab region to be the acquisition of knowledge, political freedom, and women’s rights. According to this report, these are the main factors holding back human development throughout the Arab region despite considerable natural wealth and great potential for economic and social progress. But progress in these areas has been mixed.

There have been many theoretical misconceptions concerning the role of women leaders in organisational life in the Arab world. For example, the influential characterisations of gender and dependency issues of Hisham Sharabi who coined the term “neo-patriarchy” to describe the social structures of the contemporary Arab world. Some writers from feminist and other perspectives have adopted this terminology relatively uncritically, and some Western commentators for example appear to believe that women are universally barred from the labour market or face implacable obstacles to undertaking paid employment outside the home. But the situation is much more complex and diverse in the MENA region and there are still relatively few reliable empirical research studies.

After the “Arab Spring” of 2011, there is scope for other misleading discourse when these events are perceived from outside the region. Firstly, it is important not to over generalize the situation in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya which is still markedly different from that of other parts of the region, especially in Saudi, Yemen and Syria but also in Morocco and Algeria. It is clear that the young generation of “Facebook Revolutionaries” including, for example, “Women of Egypt” and “New Woman Foundation” have been a factor in particular for young women who have been politicized and radicalized in unexpected ways. Some organizations like the Arab Women's Leadership Institute have initiated training explicitly to empower women for organizational leadership roles. But it is by no means certain that the medium term outcomes of these events will be predictable according to the expectations of westernization, democratization, and secularization that are popularly discussed in western media. The indications are that these cultural expressions are still very much contested terrain and that ultra-rightist and groups like the Islamist party Ennahda are radically opposed to a new role for women in the post-Arab Spring politics.

In fact, since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and certainly in the post-colonial period, women leaders have been features of the MENA region and active across most sectors of society. In this paper we pull together literature from a range of empirical studies, public domain reports by UN agencies and the ILO and consider the evidence for a type of blended leadership that seeks to incorporate fundamental cultural features of the role of women in Islamic society. We then build on the experience of well-qualified and highly-trained and experienced women managers in the public and private sectors in the MENA region. By relating our analyses to empirical studies we aim to transcend the generalities of “Islamic feminism” to translate these concepts into current organizational practice.

PAPER 3: The Evolution of the Reality of Women Working in the Jordanian Universities 2000-2009

Keywords: Women, Leadership, Middle East, MENA

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Amal El Kharouf is a professor of Women's Studies and Gender Issues in the University of Jordan. She has published several books and researches related to Gender, Women's Employment and Education. In addition, she wrote a chapter in the book: "First Decade of His Majesty King Abdullah II, Bin Al Hussein Assuming His Constitutional Powers, Features of the Jordanian Internal Politics," titled: "Role of Women in Political Life during the Reign of His

Majesty King Abdullah II." Moreover, Prof Amal has participated as a researcher in many projects locally and internationally and in different workshops and training courses.

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Description (50-80 words)

The paper reports on a study aimed to identify the evolution of working women in Jordanian Universities (public and private) from 2000-2009, and the importance of this study lies in Jordanian women accessing leadership positions. Integrating women in society and raising their technical and administrative efficiency in the various work sites and areas has become urgent and necessary in order to qualify them occupying advanced leadership positions, and enabling them to participate side by side with men in decision – making and community management.

Abstract

This paper reports on a study aimed to identify the evolution of working women in Jordanian Universities (public and private) from 2000 to 2009. The study does this by identifying: 1) the proportion of female to male workers in different educational institutions and in different fields of knowledge, 2) the proportion of female academics from all male and female academics, and 3) their distribution according to positions of leadership, university levels, and different disciplines. This research also investigated the extent to which universities provide equal opportunities for on-site training and off-site conferences and workshops. In addition, it explored the rate of scientific production and excellence awards for female faculty members, according to the university type, as well as the conditions attached to women's leadership in Jordanian universities and the factors that influence this from the perspective of women working in the public and private universities. Furthermore, this paper reports on findings related to the obstacles that women working in Jordanian universities found with career advancement, if any, and the impact of these obstacles on their work and their role in the administration—especially after the working woman reached a degree of practical and scientific maturity enabling her to highlight this role. The paper concludes by proposing recommendations to increase women's participation in decision making positions.

To achieve the objectives of this study, qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized through a questionnaire given to a sample of employees and academics in leadership positions at all of the public and private universities in Jordan. The most important results of the study are that, although the proportion of female to male workers is increasing in Jordanian public and private universities, it is increasing in different degrees and at an undesirable rate. The same applies to the proportion of female academics from all male and female academics in all fields even though it is also increasing according to the academic rank. The results of the study also suggest that women's access to leadership position requires a practical and distinct personality in addition to the importance of the institutional role and socialization to activate women's access

to leadership positions. It was discovered that women perceive difficulties inside and outside the work environment that affect their career advancement. Finally, the paper outlines the most important advice given by study participants to future women leaders in Jordan; this includes tips to focus on education, emphasize self-development, enhance self-confidence, and set clear achievement goals.