

## Chapter 83

# Gendered Leadership as a Key to Business Success: Evidence from the Middle East

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### ABSTRACT

*Although there is clear evidence of the importance of women in leadership positions, research still shows that women are still underrepresented in management and leadership roles. The percentage of women directors in Fortune 500 companies has been between 16% and 17% since 2011. This lack of women in senior management positions demonstrates that organizations still fail to notice that leadership nowadays has new requirements. Today's organizations are facing a turbulent constantly changing environment, in an open, social and interdependent economy, which requires specific skills and competencies for leading the change. Hence companies should value women's talent. The purpose of this chapter is to present gender issues in leadership and management with a focus on the Arab context and the position of women in the Middle East (ME). Finally, it discusses the most effective leadership style exhibited by male and female managers in the ME for inclusion in HR practices and strategies for the new millennia workforce. The main concerns are HR practices and examples in the ME.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses key issues in Human Resources (HR) with focus on leadership and gender issues in leadership. Leadership in organizations plays a vital role. As businesses operate in an increasingly turbulent, uncertain environment, leadership is required to motivate and inspire employees to perform well and to help the organization achieve its goals. Further, leadership effectiveness is viewed to depend on the extent to which people follow the leader, and to which the organization succeeds or survives.

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Additionally, leadership may differ between different cultures, which create different expectations about leaders, and the leaders' behaviors in different contexts. This chapter reviews the research domain on gender and leadership. It discusses gender issues, such as social identity and social roles with focus on gender identity in terms of femininity and masculinity. All these issues are critical in reference to the culture and the context that leadership is exhibited. For this chapter the situation of the Middle East is explored.

Moreover, this chapter explores gender roles and sex stereotypes in the Middle East. Gender bias is a prominent issue in corporate leadership today. This bias includes various issues such as denying equal opportunity to certain positions due to gender, differences in treatment and expectations of individuals based on their gender and its associated stereotypes. Examples on this area are presented from organizations and research conducted in the Middle East.

As research suggests that Arab women leaders differ from the broader group of women, the authors continue with a discussion of the feminine leadership challenges and opportunities for women and organizations in the Middle East. Research suggests that Arab women leaders' position in management and leadership has improved the past 5 years. Nevertheless, they still face barriers such as the religious environment, the legal framework and the culture, which are discussed in this chapter. More specifically, it is more about the cultural interpretations of religion, which creates a challenge for women in leadership in the region, issues which are in detail presented through research data. This chapter proposes that women in the region mainly adopt a transformational leadership style exhibiting the tendency to communicate, to share their responsibilities. They also put emphasis on emotional intelligence; they are highly committed and give more attention to detail (Marinakou, 2014; Arab Women Leadership Outlook, 2010).

Finally, the chapter not only provides an insight on women in management and leadership in the Middle East, which is a context that is under researched (Marinakou, 2014), but also provides recommendations for corporations in order to meet targets on female management and leadership. It raises awareness of the gender problem and proposes ways to support and encourage female representation in senior management. It also presents initiatives and examples from existing companies in terms of increase female representation in the boardroom. The focus is on HR practices to manage the new millennium diverse workforce, especially for companies that operate in the ME.

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Explore gender issues in leadership and management in the Middle Eastern context with reference and comparison to other studies in Western societies;
- Critically evaluate the differences between male/female and masculine /feminine leaders in the ME;
- Analyze the male and female leadership effectiveness in organizations in the ME; and
- Outline and make recommendations on dealing with gender issues in management and leadership in today's organizations in the Arab context.

## **THE MIDDLE EAST CONTEXT**

The Middle East is a broad region covering areas from Iran in the east to Morocco in the North Africa in the west. Nevertheless, the region is represented by a similar culture, with Islam the main religion

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