

Chapter 17

Ascertaining the Interest of Women to Drive Innovation Through Entrepreneurship Post–Pandemic: A Research Study in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

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ABSTRACT

Our prosperity and sustainability in the future depends on the ability to innovate. Therefore, innovation needs to be embedded in all sections of an economy. A research study took place in a higher education setting of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on offering an entrepreneurship major to local women students. The aim was to explore the interest and views of these Generation Z students on driving innovation and entrepreneurship in the country through building homegrown companies. This research is highly relevant as the society re-imagines itself post pandemic. The findings from the research may be useful to members of academia, professionals related to this sector, and policy makers of nations. They may use the information to design suitable academic programs for women that may help drive entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability for every strata of the society in the post-COVID-19 era.

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INTRODUCTION AND MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is as an icon for innovation and creativity. Believing that innovation is the future of human investment, the strategic decision makers in the government emphasize on its importance through embedding it across all sectors of the economy.

Education plays an important role in improving the confidence and ability in entrepreneurial perceptions. Higher education may promote this by creating a culture of entrepreneurship, offering courses and support new ventures to increase self–employment and risk-taking among graduates (Jabeen et al., 2017). Furthermore, an entrepreneurial future generation may aid towards the development and sustenance of the country and its economic growth (Saji & Nair, 2018).

Therefore, the researcher conducted a study on the feasibility of offering an entrepreneurship and innovation major at a federal education institution in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The research inquiry ascertained interest of women students in the field of entrepreneurship, identify opportunities that may be available to graduates of this major and validate the industry appetite for such graduates in the Emirate of Dubai, which has its own valley of entrepreneurs and homegrown companies.

This research is timely and relevant as the society re-imagines the new normal and work order, post pandemic. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the research conducted in a Higher Education setting to achieve innovation, sustainability in education and employment of graduates through the establishment of the entrepreneurship and innovation major in a post pandemic era. The objectives of the research were as follows:

- To identify the feasibility of offering a Bachelor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program at Dubai Women's College.
- To gauge the perception of women students on opting for the field of Entrepreneurship as a business major.
- To collect industry data on Entrepreneurship opportunities
- To highlight other key attributes relevant to the study.

This research may be useful to members of academia, and professionals related to this sector. They may use the research to design suitable programs for women that may help drive entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainability for every strata of the society in the post pandemic era.

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) a “supporter of capitalism through the supply of oil” is a high-income Islamic nation. It is a powerful country in the Middle East due to its growing role in the region (Burden – Leahy, 2009). The people of the country have great affinity towards their government and leadership because of the rapid growth and development the country has experienced under their guidance in the recent decades (Chakravarti, 2017).

The nation today stands as a beacon of hope and holds a new vision for the Middle East region that “supports moderate Islam, empowers women, embraces diversity, and encourages innovation and welcomes global engagement”. For these reasons, United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a home, not only to the Emiratis but also to the expatriates from around the world. There are close to 200 nationalities working and liv-

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